

Methodology for overcoming artistic gymnastic coaches for the psychological preparation of athletes

Abstract

This article aims to establish a methodology to improve artistic gymnastics coaches for the direction of the psychological preparation process of athletes, an aspect that today presents limitations from theory, practice and properly, from research. A theoretical matrix is assumed that reconceptualizes the term of psychological preparation or psychological training in the field of said sport, an aspect that serves as a starting point to perfect this process. In this case, the methodology is based on the interrelation between the basic elements of sport psychology and the specialized actions of psychological preparation for these athletes. In itself, the constituents of the methodology guide the design of actions that the coaches must carry out once they are trained, everything that must produce significant changes with respect to the results of that sport. For the article, theoretical research methods and techniques were used in essence, such as analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction and generalization, as well as workshops on critical opinion and collective construction.

Key Words: Artistic Gymnastics, sport, improvement, psychological preparation.

Introduction

Sport is a socializing activity par excellence; therefore, the way in which it is valued and respected depends, to a large extent, on the physical effort and preparation of the athletes and, behind them, on the work carried out by the respective coaches.

Today there are countless proposals related directly or indirectly to the improvement of coaches (Marques, Nonohay, Koller, Gauer and Cruz, 2015; Loaiza, Ayala and Ramos, 2015; Cañizares, Pérez and Saura, 2017 among many). However, it is still evident that, up to date, at least in the Ecuadorian sphere, there is no fully defined idea on how to solve this contradiction in artistic gymnastics.

In this environment, there is an urgent need to provide attention to technicians and specialists linked to competitive sport, specifically, those of artistic gymnastics on issues related to advances in science and technology on the importance of the development and promotion of athletes with a high performance and, essentially, on the psychological preparation of them between several and multiple spheres.

In that sense, regardless of that reality, sports training and the coach itself, cannot be outside the influence that science has on the athlete's psyche (Nunomura, Alvez, Duarte, Midori and Santos, 2016), since that, among its functions, it must take as sustenance the laws of psychology and psychic development so that the athlete achieves effective and efficient results. Thus, and regardless of the presence of specialized professionals as part

of the teams, there is a need for the coach to master psychological procedures and techniques that she can systematically put into practice in the interaction with her gymnasts.

It is not strange then to suppose why psychology, according to Sáez (2015), focuses its interest on the interactions coach-athlete, athlete-athlete, athlete-judges, athlete-public, among many others that occur in sports spaces, both to deepen the basic psychic processes that are carried out in them, and to materialize psychological intervention techniques derived from the study of these processes.

All the ideas outlined certify the need for the coach to apply content and processes of Psychology, towards which their improvement must be oriented, in order to be able to put them into practice in a comprehensive and creative way according to the demands of contemporary sport, which is increasingly more rigorous. For this reason, this preparation must be seen in a more comprehensive way as part of the training, whose starting point, in the process of overcoming the trainers, lies in the preparation to determine the real psychological needs of the gymnasts, to then to be able to adequately plan the stages of psychological training, the actions to be developed in each of the components, the methods and procedures of psychic influence, as well as the principles that support the planning of the athlete's psychological component.

Today, it is known that artistic gymnastics is considered a sport that shows the execution of mixed exercises, a competitive art that integrates the gymnast in a continuum of rhythms, melodies, instruments, everything that suggests that the appropriate movement through which emotions are manifested, as expressed by Carreirão and Fernández (2017) and Martínez (2019). During the development of competencies of different levels and complexity, each selection, optional or mandatory, is valued by the judges who, from their own preparation, but also from their subjectivity and modes of apprehension of the various routines, determine the results of the execution through a type of qualification, which can positively or negatively influence the psyche of the athlete (International Gymnastics Federation, 2016).

This denotes that, in the exceptional conditions in which the gymnast performs during training and competitions, and the necessary specialized manifestation of physical and mental efforts to achieve high competitive results, makes the psychological improvement of the coach an essential action to take into account as part of the planning and management process of such preparation. For this reason, this article aims to

establish a methodology to improve these artistic gymnastics professionals for the direction of the psychological preparation process of their athletes.

Methodology

For the development of this paper methods and techniques of investigation were used in the theoretical order such as: synthesis- analysis, induction-deduction and generalization to observe the up date tendencies about the problem; in a way it facilitates to get an idea to elaborate the methodology.

In this way there were programmed many workshops of critical opinions and collective building with 20 coaches of the sports or related to it, which purpose was to value at first time in the theoretical order the credibility of the proposal.

Results and Discussion

If a comparative study is carried out of the particularities of artistic gymnastics with respect to past decades and how this behaves today, it is possible to visualize contradictions regarding to the composition, diversity and types of difficulty in its competitive structure, which is evident in the dissimilar indicators of the load present in training, which is what causes the organic and psychological accommodation of the athletes of this sport with respect to higher stages of preparation.

In common, observe the different points of view of the coaches who have already recognized results when they point out the complexity involved in forming a gymnast who is excellent in competition; which, to a certain extent, corroborates a given reality in which many of them, with an adequate technical preparation, do not achieve the best competitive results due to insufficient psychological preparation to face this challenge.

According to García (2016):

... The coach must be sensitive to the individual differences of the athletes, consistent in her actions, she must know that the personality of the team is a reflection of her own personality, therefore, managing athletes is a true art and science, to be trainers first of "people" and then "champions" in life ...

In this sense, when referring to the preparation that the coaches must achieve, this places communication in the context of sports training in a central place. This knowledge aims to systematize and organize modes of intervention and management processes in it, based on a direction of the psychological training process that leads to the formation of the personality of the athletes.

Taking these considerations as a basis, it is therefore worth noting to emphasize that the improvement of artistic gymnastics coaches, for the direction of psychological preparation, constitutes a process of individual transformation that facilitates converting the sporting context that is the object of attention, into a result of the improvement and updating of the contents, the methodology of science and the values inherent to sport (Pastorino and Ruga, 2016).

Sports Psychology has among its tasks that of responding objectively, with a defined method, to the demands of contemporary sport in terms of preparation techniques and procedures, oriented towards the study, reinforcement and search for balance of functions, qualities and psychic states of the personality, which recognize the achievement of an optimal state of disposition and certainty, during training and its result in participation in competitions.

In itself, psychological preparation provides a starting point that is a necessary tool for daily work and allows to acquire an in-depth understanding of the complex phenomena that occur in training and, therefore, a theoretical, methodological and practical foundation to plan, organize, direct, develop and evaluate professional practice.

It is appropriate to point out that psychological preparation in gymnastics, like the rest of the components of the athlete's preparation, must be specified from the earliest ages and categories of the sports pyramid. In this way, the assimilation of more complex resources depending on age and the degree of complexity of the exercises is ensured early on.

All this bases the place that such training occupies in the coach within the sporting experiential context, for which it is inevitable to place it in communion with the various components of the preparation, which maintain their legitimacy on the basis of their corresponding systems of knowledge, skills and values, in short of professional competencies, which are expressed in the unity of the instructive and educational aspects of the sports training of this sport.

Among other aspects, the coach must understand the importance and objectives of all preparations, know which is the most important at each specific moment, in training or competition, the interconnection between them, the way in which a more useful interaction is achieved. among various aspects. On the other hand, it must be able to prepare athletes to optimally cope with the various demands of each moment and achieve the best benefits.

In short, sports training in this area should not be separated at any time from the influence of the coach on the psyche of the athletes; In this way, in order to achieve an effective improvement methodology for the direction of the psychological preparation process, it is necessary to take into account certain qualities, processes and knowledge; among them:

- Its focus on the knowledge, skills and essential values that the coach must possess in the psychological order for effective work in sports training and the treatment of athletes (Jiménez, 2012).
- The attention that should be focused on the control and evaluation for the psychological treatment of the athletes. In this sense, the evaluation, in the process of sports training, aims to manage relevant information on the behavior of these, to correct this process (Aoyagi, Poczwardowski, Statler, Shapiro and Cohen, 2017; Beckmann and Elbe, 2015; Breslin, Shannon, Haughey , Donnelly and Leavey, 2017). However, in the context that is the focus of this article, there is still a meager number of comprehensive and accurate tests, questionnaires and laboratory tests that evaluate dimensions and indicators in this area of knowledge.

In this process of improvement, it must be taken into account that artistic gymnastics, as a sport that generally has an individual dimension and is specified by opposition, has specific psychological peculiarities, which creates stress and requires coordination.

- As part of the premises that are established, attention must be paid to the fact that the various actions that anyone carries out have a psychological treatment, since they lead to a group of mental operations that favor or not the effectiveness of said actions, which has been investigated and studied from the perspective of the most diverse sports according to the psychological demands of each of them (Batista, Bobo, Lebre and Ávila-Carvalho, 2015).

From the sports practice of artistic gymnastics at the Club D´Fernanda, located in Quito, where the authors of this article work, it has been evidenced in the athletes lack of motivation and combativeness to face their routines, which showed problems at the time to complete some tasks; at the same time, it was evidenced that, on the part of some coaches, there was no planning of psychological actions. In fact, multiple problems were observed in the technical weighting beyond the psychological, fears in the athletes, insecurity, asystematicity of the psychological treatment, pathological behaviors without an appreciable follow-up, loss of motivation, among others, as well as, in some of these cases Cole, Bellizzi, Flegal and Dietz (2000).

As effects of the aspects addressed, the authors developed a methodology for overcoming trainers to direct the process of psychological preparation of artistic gymnastics athletes; methodology that is made up of various phases and moments, as well as actions and orientations that govern its logical and methodological application.

Objective: To prepare the coaches to optimally direct the psychological preparation of artistic gymnastics athletes from sports training and the competitions they face.

Conception of the Methodology: This contribution reveals a procedural character from what has been argued. All this requires that such a process of improvement be organized from a perspective that contemplates a previous diagnosis to the coaches and values their results as a way of solving the current problem. The methodology includes the theoretical assumptions, characteristics and concepts of essence; the objective, already stated; and four phases that will be described and substantiated in the future.

Its characteristics:

- Integrative: it recognizes the harmony of the actions of improvement for the preparation of the coaches, from an approach that tends to integrate the components of the preparation of the athletes, from a conducive atmosphere.
- Contextualized: it responds to the space, media, conditions, idiosyncrasies, demands and needs of gymnastics coaches and athletes.
- Systemic: because the modalities that make up the methodology and the actions to be developed show relationships with each other, present exchange relationships with the environment, through inputs and outputs that make it open and adaptive.

Flexible: Adaptability shows the coach that she has flexible thinking, open to options and solution decisions, which makes it easier for her to establish appropriate relationships with her athletes and makes it possible to include alternatives to find plausible solutions.

- Formative: since in the actions designed it is necessary for the coach to appropriate a psychological culture, as well as a didactic, scientific and contextual culture of sports training.

In this way, in order to achieve the objective, aspects to be considered are taken into account in an unavoidable way, that the unity between the activity-communication-personality, the instructive-educational-developer, between the affective-cognitive, as well as the coach's own individuality and their learning rhythms. The methodology consists of three phases:

1) **Previous diagnosis** of the coaches for the improvement process, whose objective is to know about the initial preparation of the coach to work on the psychological component in training and competitions. In this way, it is investigated to find out about the knowledge she possesses, her potentialities and difficulties. It depends largely on how the rest of the phases of the methodology, what is going to be designed, will be specified. For this reason, it will be taken into consideration that the diagnosis has an individual orientation, although the overcoming from a specific group of trainers is conformed; Also, what is related to the gap between the desired state and the real state will be taken into account, in line with the historical-cultural approach (Vigotsky, 1997) and in accordance with the results or the real behaviors that are expected.

This phase materializes in three moments:

- In the first, the diagnosis is designed for which the objective of the diagnosis is defined, and the methods and techniques to be applied are evaluated; Bibliographic and personal information sources that can provide information are also delimited.
- Second, the diagnostics itself is run.
- Finally, the conclusions are offered from a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

2) **Operational management of improvement.** In a first stage, it is aimed at the creation of a psychological culture in the coach to improve sports training and the participation of athletes in various types of competitions, as well as the achievement of a favorable attitude towards mastering psychological methods and techniques. that makes it easier for you to give new meanings to the roles of athletes. A substantial aspect is found in the planning of the workshops with a collaborative base to facilitate the exchange of experiences and experiences according to the heterogeneity of the group. In this way, each coach has a responsibility with their learning and with that of the rest by sustaining these in a systematic exchange. In itself, the following actions are carried out from a vital pedagogical logic:

- Help participation, recognizing individual modes of expression.
- Use of a concrete and precise language from the accepted technical terminology.
- Reflective processes should be encouraged from group learning.
- Go from simple to more complex topics.
- Coaches' understanding should be accessed through phrases, observations, brainstorming, or other group interaction procedures.

- Assess the effectiveness of the methodology with the same methods and instruments used in the diagnosis.

This system of workshops is visualized as a group interactive learning process, in which the trainers participate in an individual-social balance. In that sense, the most important thing is to meet the objectives. For their development, the workshops must follow the following structure:

- Group formation, for which the prior knowledge of each coach is required.
- Presentation, which is the first contact of the group members; There they can make their expectations, their doubts and their specific needs known.
- Previous diagnosis, by means of questions or participatory techniques, the initial state of each one regarding the subject to be discussed is identified.
- Guidance of individual and team work through dynamics that encourage individual and group reflections.
- In plenary, the results of the teams are presented, which encourages the final discussion and the necessary adjustment with the contributions of the others.
- Qualitative assessment: which is carried out on the basis not only of the results obtained, but also of the process of execution of the assigned tasks and their results.

The content of the workshops integrates the psychological component of the athlete's preparation; that is, in the physical preparation linked to the volitional and motivational spheres; in the technique related to the cognitive and motivational sphere and in the tactics linked to the cognitive sphere.

In a second stage, this phase has a practical sequential organization given by:

- a) Determination of tasks for the coach to plan the psychological preparation of the athletes taking into account the periods and stages of the athlete's preparation.
- b) Design of psychological actions for the coach to fully direct the psychological component from sports training. Thus, emphasis will be placed on preparing for:
 - That the athletes develop capacities to carry out prolonged volitional efforts.
 - Stimulate and convince them.
 - The decision and perseverance in the tasks of resistance, strength and speed.

- That the athletes develop safety in their executions; in this way, they will be prepared to offer explanations before, simultaneously and after the executions.
- Create a psychological basis for them to perform tasks of strength, endurance and speed.
- Teach to develop goals to achieve the proposed objectives; for example, repetitions.
Motivate athletes through autosuggestion to overcome fatigue or stress.
- Create a favorable psychological-emotional climate from the use of psychological methods and techniques aimed at convincing, self-convincing, among others.
- Manage tasks and exercises that constitute a physical and psychological challenge based on complex situations in which the athlete works on fatigue.
- Recognize the results of the physical and psychological preparation achieved.
- Show how to locate reference points of spaces, distances, repetitions, which facilitates disposition, motivation and will.

From the technical preparation, instruct them so that, through self-improvement actions, they achieve:

- Hypothetically anticipate situations that may occur in competition.
- Properly use teaching aids.
- Demonstrate the link between the technical content and the procedural aspects of the execution, taking into account the phases of the motor actions.
- Expose and indicate to the athletes those procedures or technical elements to satisfy the expected purposes in the execution.
- Manage the verbal and written delineation of the technical elements of artistic gymnastics.
- Express to them the value of practical representations of gymnastics.
- Individualize the training by assigning tasks or exercises where the technique that presents difficulty must be executed.
- Positively reinforce the achievements of the athletes after the execution.
- Entrusting athletes with situations with varying degrees of complexity.

From the tactical preparation, instruct them so that, through self-improvement actions, they achieve:

- Use problematic questions.
- Create real competition simulations under stressful situations.
- Create security levels using self-evaluating and evaluative processes.

- Motivate athletes to successfully carry out the load, volume and intensity of the activity, during and at the end of training.
- Manage media where dissimilar tactical exercises of interest are valued.
- Establish interpersonal relationships with your athletes.
- Clearly and accurately demonstrate complex tactical exercises.

c) Execution of preparation actions from the training itself with the guidance of the counselor who directs the improvement process. In this regard, it should be taken into account:

- The adequacy of the fulfillment of the projected psychological actions, the satisfaction and participation of the athletes and the quality of the activities carried out by the coaches.
- The management of the methods and techniques to be used, as well as the elaboration of the rigorous instruments for the collection of the information.

3) **Control and evaluation of the improvement.** This is the third phase of the methodology where a process of evaluation of the transformations operated in the trainers is carried out. For the evaluation to provide the expected results, it is necessary to clearly specify which aspects are to be evaluated and self-evaluated in the process, and to determine the types of instruments or optimal scales in each case. On the other hand, the study of the psychological conditions that are instituted in permanent practices is imposed.

The process of evaluating the feasibility of the proposed Methodology was specified through the holding of critical opinion and collective construction workshops in which 20 athletes and sports professionals linked to artistic gymnastics or similar sports participated, most of them graduates of careers. related with an experience between seven and 15 years. When choosing them, the relationship between their pedagogical and psychological work with the sport in question was taken into account; the link between their work and their skills to work with athletes; and, at least five years of experience in working with artistic gymnastics. They were developed in several stages:

Stage prior to the workshops:

- In the selection of the groups from a global perspective, those who had affinity and professional knowledge for the topic to be discussed in the workshop were chosen.
- Three groups were defined: the first made up of the D'Fernanda Club coaches; the second, by the sports coaches who work in other clubs; and, the third, those who work in other related sports.

- Based on the selection of the groups, it was decided to hold three workshops in which all the professionals would participate.

Stage of implementation of the workshops: During the workshops, the interventions of the participants were recorded, in audio, which made possible the subsequent analysis of the criteria issued. For its execution, it was requested that everyone identify themselves when intervening and proceeded as follows:

- Introduction to the workshop: a presentation was made of the theoretical foundation, the conception and the proposed Methodology. It took about 30 minutes.
- Development of the workshop: it was subjected to collective analysis, which the authors of this article stimulated in order to achieve sufficient argumentation around the object of discussion.
- Conclusion of the workshop: the aspects to be included, eliminated or modified in the Methodology to contribute to its improvement were summarized.

Stage after each workshop:

- A detailed study of the criteria issued by the participants was carried out and a synthesis of the most significant aspects was drawn up.
- The proposal was re-elaborated with the elements contributed by each group and the document to be presented at the next workshop was prepared.
- The results of each workshop were contrasted, counting on the preparation of the participants, which gave foundation to the stated criteria.
- At the end of the last workshop, a synthesis was made of what each one contributed to the proposal, so as to show the dynamics of change.

As a result, a file was documented that collected the collective characterization of the group in question, the record of experiences with the memory of each work session and a synthetic summary of it. Below is a synthesis of the key results:

- The participants agreed that the theoretical and practical foundations that support the Methodology are pertinent, at the same time they suggest increasing aspects related to the methods to be used among the foundations of the proposal.

The theoretical construct was valued as novel, despite the corrections that need to be made.

- Elements of the conception that were not conceived or perfectly defined in the psychological preparation of the sports athletes in the Ecuadorian case are highlighted.
- They coincide in pointing out that the Methodology is viable for its application, based on its particularities, for the improvement of sports coaches.

Conclusions

The methodology presented is a reflection of an organization and structure that facilitates the fulfillment of the stated purposes to ensure that artistic gymnastics coaches achieve adequate preparation regarding the psychological help that they must provide to their athletes, without ignoring, around them, the presence of a group of specialists who help to give rigor and solidity both to sports training and to competition. But, from this improvement, greater effectiveness is achieved due to the degree of relationship and affectivity that exists between the coach and her gymnasts; while developing pedagogical and communication skills to direct sports training and serves as a guide in competitions.

In this way, the coach can also achieve a conscious and dynamic apprehension of the psychological process in the preparation of athletes, which means that she manages this preparation through critical contributions and issuing solutions committed to the sport and the context for which is exceeded; everything that favors a change in the traditional approaches related to this problem.

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