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# Higher artistic education in ballroom choreography: Forecast of educational trends



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**Abstract** The objective of this article is to analyze higher art education in ballroom choreography through an examination of current educational trends and a forecast of their utilization. The work employs methods such as comparative analysis, generalization, corporate-pedagogical analysis, analytical-interpretative method, and forecasting modeling. The results assess the specificities of the American experience in teaching ballroom dancing within higher education, European experiences in ballroom dancing instruction, and the primary trends in the development of this choreographic field. Using the gathered information, a theoretical model for teaching ballroom choreography in higher education institutions is formulated, aiming for demonstrably high training outcomes. Innovative stimulation technologies have proven effective, suggesting that their ongoing evolution will significantly impact the advancement of higher choreographic education overall. These cutting-edge sports fitness technologies are poised to play a pivotal role in the training of ballroom dancers, serving as a potent resource to enhance the physical fitness levels of choreographers. The effectiveness of fitness techniques is demonstrated through various aerobic methods, including cardio training and cyclic exercises, as well as distinct dance techniques like Latina, Zumba, oriental dance, among others. Additionally, neurohumoral methods contribute to their effectiveness. In conclusion, it is emphasized that further somatic training, currently utilized in leading European countries, will play an important role.

**Keywords:** ballroom choreography, higher art education, trends, educational model

## 1. Introduction

The development of the modern art of ballroom dance and the improvement of transformations of this variety of choreography and dance techniques will require new understanding when taking into account the transformations in the systems of higher education in the context of modern globalization and digitalization. The introduction into scholarly use of new data on the evolutionary trends of ballroom choreography, the features of educational process identification, and relevant educational programs effectively used in many states has opened the possibility to study this issue through the prism of modern vision. In the recent past, ballroom dancing has evolved along with the transformation of the social structures and cultures of Europe and America, so this issue is of great importance from a sociocultural perspective.

The educational work of many dance establishments has led to the fact that the art of ballroom dancing developed according to certain levels, shaped by the latest methods of higher education and an improved system of cooperation with employers. Such contemporary socioeconomic conditions, responding to new social opportunities, take into account mobility, the capacity for artistic education and professional self-improvement, the updating of one's own knowledge and skills, professional theories and practices, and the ability to use media and modern information resources effectively (Mova et al. 2022; Sun, 2022). These opportunities are important to stakeholders because they are in line with current labor market trends. Consequently, further research development will require separate theoretical aspects related to comprehending and defining further benchmarks of ballroom art evolution, development trends, and improvements.

Modern scientists have recurrently investigated the peculiarities of the transformation of educational approaches of ballroom choreography teaching through the prism of innovative and traditional teaching methods. For example, Keba et al. (2022) highlighted major innovations and traditions in the development of contemporary choreographic education. Bejan (2022) identified the main difficulties of using online elements in teaching ballroom choreography. Mattingly (2022) also notes the integration of "old methods" into the modern educational system. Volbea (2018) traced the possibilities of combining already known methods with modern trends in teaching, noting the effectiveness of such a symbiosis. His conclusions are extremely relevant, as they were made before the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e., before the ideas of digitalization and active use of distance learning gained a large number of supporters.



Sun (2022) explored the possibilities of information and communication technologies in the choreography education system. The researcher focused on an empirical analysis of the benefits and possibilities of modern multimedia technologies. Tsekhmister (2022), based on a study of recent transformational changes in higher education in EU countries, outlined the key prospects for further development of education. Pavliuk (2022) characterized the main trends in the training of ballroom choreographers in the Baltic countries. Bidyuk (2018), who analyzed the problem of professional training of future classical dance choreographers in EU countries, investigated the winning problem. A similar issue was addressed by Androshchuk et al. (2023), who identified the basics of modern teaching of choreography in higher education institutions of Ukraine. Bazela et al. (2022) focused on the main trends in the process of training choreography specialists. Bashkir et al. (2022) also turned to similar studies. However, based not so much on Ukrainian as on international experience. Sehedra et al. (2019) identified creativity as an important element of the work of a choreographer. In particular, when teaching ballroom dancing.

Mova et al. (2022) studied the problem of using information and communication technologies in the training of future choreographers. Artemov (2017) characterized the phenomenon of ballroom choreography in its different types, genres, and formal-technical aspects through the prism of analysis of specific dance programs. Byczkowska-Owczarek (2019) described the importance of the framework of two worlds: art and sport in the ballroom dancer's training system. Based on case studies, the researcher considers that competition, emotion, appearance, and charisma form the institutional foundations of performance itself. Wells & Yang (2021) explored the major uses of ballroom dancing through the lens of its health-promoting function.

The purpose of this article is to analyze higher art education in ballroom choreography based on the parsing of current educational trends, predicting their use. This will allow in the future to make certain adjustments to established teaching practices, taking into account the modern requirements of digitalization, multiculturalism, and new forms of pedagogical cooperation.

## 2. Methodology

A set of interrelated methods and approaches was chosen to implement the goal of the study. In particular, comparative analysis and generalization methods were used to highlight the key features of European and American experience in ballroom dance teaching. Comparative analysis was very useful to emphasize differences between European and American choreography systems. Appealing to the corporate-pedagogical analysis allowed the comparison and identification of unique approaches to the professional training of future choreographers in modern educational systems. As a result of using the analytical-interpretative method, the main trends in the development of higher education in world ballroom choreography were highlighted. Based on the method of forecasting, the main perspective directions and recommendations for improving the training of future ballroom dance choreographers were outlined. The method of forecasting also helped to see innovation in developing ballroom choreography in Ukraine. With the help of modeling, one managed to form a model of ballroom choreography training through the prism of using modern scientific approaches and innovative techniques and teaching methods. In the first stage, we outlined the specific aspects of higher artistic education in ballroom choreography and identified the key variables, factors, and relationships. Then, we collected data and gathered relevant data from the scientific literature. These data will serve as the foundation for our modeling. On this basis, we created a conceptual model, developed a conceptual representation of higher artistic education in ballroom choreography, and identified the main components, interactions, and dependencies. Additionally, we conducted sensitivity analysis to see how changes in input variables affect the output of the model.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Peculiarities of the American experience of university ballroom dance teaching

The highest authority on the teaching and practice of ballroom dance is the National Dance Council of America. It consists of the leading dance organizations of the country, and they are more than a dozen. The purpose of this body is to carry out a number of activities: to represent at the national level the interests of both individual performers and dance establishments involved in the teaching of ballroom choreography, to organize cooperation with interstate and national dance councils around the world, to help establish and maintain optimum standards of education, to provide and review qualifications of ballroom dance teachers, and to determine the level of professional training of judges for national and

Much of the work of American associations focuses on establishing and overseeing appropriate rules of comportment for student dancers and teachers with the power to promote the field among other professions (Volbea, 2018). For example, it is strictly forbidden to behave indecently toward both judges and other participants and spectators, to use sexualization or frankness, offensive movements, revealing dance costumes, etc. (Karoblis, 2019). Thus, given the growing demands on the teaching and ethical standards of ballroom dance, the work aimed at further improving choreographic practices, forming conditions for training creative and qualified teachers through the use of teaching practices, certification, and formation of appropriate teaching experience remains a relevant element (Rakhimov & Mukhamedli, 2022; Sanetra, & Małodobry, 2022).

The ballroom dance teacher certification program is approved by the National Dance Council of America and is implemented under its supervision. Specifically, as decided, special examinations at the Associate, Masters, or Fellow levels

are used to certify teachers. There is also a special stratification of Bronze, Silver, or Gold levels in many types of ballroom dance. There is also additional testing for higher education applicants - for all dance styles where teachers are certified (Karoblis, 2019). To improve choreographic education or to introduce new and improve old teaching methods and follow the modern requirements of artistic philosophy, a separate program of teacher training and education was developed and implemented: the Dance Masters of America Teachers Training School Program. Today, it is effectively used in universities across the country (Silva & Vitiello, 2019). Particularly, it is envisioned that in several levels of the program, which in total includes 7 years of training, trainees will have the opportunity to learn fundamental material on the history and theory of dance culture, improve their teaching skills, and train dancers using the modern methodology, which will allow them to successfully evolve in their professional careers. In their professional career, receive a master's degree, and use the knowledge gained from the program.

Brigham Young University is important for the use of pedagogical choreographic experience. This premier institution of higher education has become the oldest university where the teaching of ballroom dance has evolved into a separate major. The graduate program in ballroom dance falls under the prerogative of the Department of Dance in the College of Fine Arts, which operates within the university's structure. It emphasizes highly professional technical training - each semester, applicants will acquire relevant knowledge and practical skills in many classes of international style (European and Latin American program). The ballroom dance class has approximately 4,000 higher education applicants each year (Brannigan, 2022). An additional performance program, BYU Ballroom Dance Company, has been introduced to improve teaching methods and students' mastery of the secrets of ballroom dance performance. Because of its popularity, it now has more than 150 ballroom dance instructors nationwide.

### 3.2. European experience in teaching ballroom dancing: main trends

In Europe, the lessons of dance theory and methodology combined with innovative types of fitness technology to normalize muscle tone, improve coordination of movements, develop flexibility and appropriate posture, strengthen the musculoskeletal system, etc., are important for the formation of a creative and active personality of a modern ballroom dancer. (Wells & Yang, 2021). The results of the choreographic experiences of leading ballroom choreographers and teachers give grounds to argue that in theoretical and practical training for ballroom dancing, methods of teaching dance through the prism of fitness technology are insufficiently formed. The latter should be used with the optimal calculation of the mode and amount of load, individual abilities, and capabilities at work (Vasiutiak et al., 2021).

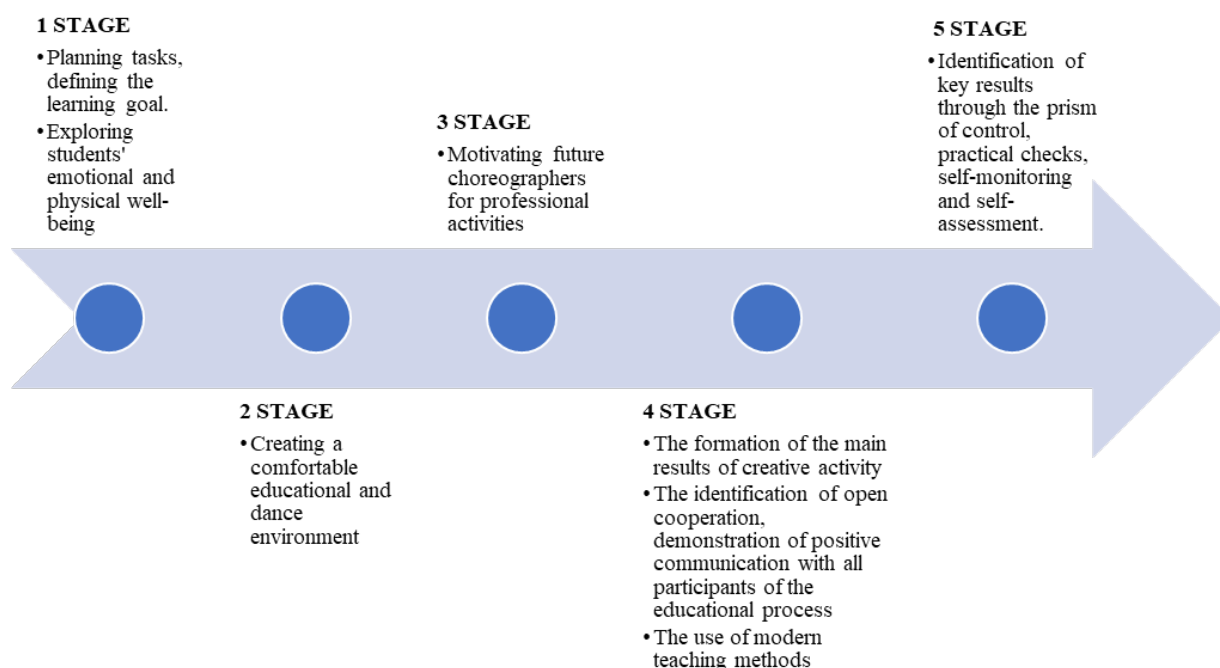
In European schools, ballroom dance is a special way of nonverbal, plastic awareness, manifestation, and tactile perception of the world around, and the search for new forms motivates modern choreographers to consider basic models in motor training (Artemov, 2017). One of these models, depicting the qualitative transformation of the human relationship to the body, is somatic practices. Somatic approaches are introduced into choreography not only through somatic practices but also through the integration of somatic principles into choreographic practices, mainly the ideas of "body-mind wisdom, connection, and breathing principles" (Bidyuk, 2018). The principles of somatic training are actively implemented in art schools in Poland, the UK, and France.

Famous personalities in the field of ballroom dance, principally Alan Fletcher, Paul Killick, Barbara McCole (England), and Anjey Skufca (Republic of Slovenia), have developed authoring dance methods that use modern innovative methods. According to modern paradigms of the development of choreographic education, the teacher-choreographer of the new generation is a universal dancer, teacher, creator, leader, choreographer, moderator, and promoter (Karoblis, 2019).

One believes that innovative ballroom dance teaching techniques, particularly education through the lens of dance experience ("experience-based learning"), simulation methods, interpersonal communication, step-by-step or analytical learning, collaborative learning, and dance animation, are of practical importance. -technologies, use of a reflective diary, somatic learning techniques (Bejan, 2022). Choreographers in Great Britain, as a rule, choose the technique of training intuitively, taking into account several features of the learning process, using the person-oriented approach, and the psychological and physiological students' needs (Bidyuk, 2016).

A model for the innovative study of ballroom choreography should include several periods. In the first period, the lesson is planned, and the teacher should think about the purpose of learning and form specific objectives in the implementation of the practical lesson (Bonavolontà et al., 2021). Accordingly, considering the main objectives, the most effective and optimal teaching methods should be chosen. During the first period, it is also important to organize tests to determine the level of mastery of the previous material (or, in general, to determine the level of physical and theoretical skills of the students). This stage is also called "pretesting for prior knowledge". Then, there is a study of the emotional and physical condition of the students. There is an analysis of the optimal intensity, load, and duration of the second stage is the formation of a comfortable educational and dance environment (Byczkowska-Owczarek, 2019). In the process of implementing the main learning objectives, individual independent work should also be combined with intensive group sessions. At the same time, the third stage is the process of motivating future dancers for professional activity (Mattingly, 2022). At this stage, the research of basic needs, requirements, and motivations of choreographic activity should be realized, and the level of stabilization of professional interests and the level of awareness of personal responsibility for the realization of the main results of professional activity, as

well as the degree of mobilization and activation of basic knowledge and skills, should be determined. At this stage, the development of professional competence is valuable: critical and creative thinking, solving typical tasks in atypical, unique, original ways. The description of the key prospects of the professional development of a ballroom choreographer is also important. The fourth stage is the creation of the results of creative activity. There, the teacher should show positive communication, implement general discussions and instructions, and demonstrate their own experience as an example to follow (Gumenyuk et al., 2021). A variety of modern verbal, nonverbal, written visual methods, video, and audio teaching tools should be used. Teachers should encourage the realization of group creativity and organize a variety of collective initiatives (van der Merwe & Pedro, 2022). In this system, paired or individual interpersonal interaction plays a major role. Additionally, in this period, real success situations should be demonstrated to demonstrate the dancers' technical growth. At the same time, the fifth stage is the determination of the main results through control, verification, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. Different methods of control should be used here (oral, written, test, graphic, program, practical). Of separate importance at this stage is the analysis of the diagnostic procedures and practical skills of each student (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1** Model for teaching ballroom choreography in higher education institutions.

There is an entire system of social-emotional teaching techniques actively used in European countries to increase the level of ballroom skills. The Check-In Emotion technique influences the formation of special skills that contribute to the embodiment of their own emotions through movements in a choreographic piece. An effective method is for students to create a figure at the beginning of the class inspired by how they are feeling at the moment. To do this, the teacher must choose certain methods and means of encouragement, and the students must own the emotion of their figure. For this reason, it is important to perform face warm-ups (Krys, 2022). Students should carry out various exercises to train these kinds of muscles because the appropriate use of muscular resources is an important part of choreographic art in general. Modern researchers prove that such exercises should be performed while facing each other or a mirror (Bidyuk, 2018). Thus, it will help them study their own movements, not being afraid to express their emotional state. Of separate importance are exercises that help students to be aware of their own movements with the help of music.

**4. Discussion**

Researchers have constantly drawn attention to the benefits of the competitive element in the training process (Grosz et al., 2022). The vast majority of scholars have been convinced that permanent competition and participation of higher education aspirants, strengthening the competitive environment, is an adequate response to the challenges of the modern environment (Gumenyuk et al., 2021). In recent publications, however, the determining influence of competition in shaping curricula, plans, and educational organization, students' acquisition of necessary competencies, the understanding of competition, and the dominant incentive has been reconsidered (Yu & Buck, 2022). In fact, the impact of competition can be measured in both positive and negative dimensions (Androshchuk et al., 2023). The unambiguous positive of organizing and using a competitive element in training is that vibrant performances popularize ballroom dancing among the general public. It allows choreographic art to be presented in a broad arena. The gained popularity also provides additional job opportunities



for the best graduates. At the same time, those students who systematically compete and strive for high scores have a stronger motivation to learn ballroom dance in general. However, according to Yu & Buck (2022), the factor of inflated competition in high school ballroom dance students leads to several negative consequences. Particularly, it is mentioned that the key main beneficiary of such competitions is predominantly the institution rather than its students. On the other hand, few students win truly international or national competitions (Olympiads), so many other students consider themselves “failures” (Yu & Buck, 2022). Finally, the overemphasis on competition leads university students to gain a narrow awareness of the meaning and role of ballroom dance, as they become focused primarily on meeting the basic criteria of competitions rather than learning about choreography and realizing creativity in a choreographer's life (Bazela et al., 2022). In addition, such students may lose the connection between the acquisition of theoretical and practical skills.

According to Keba et al. (2022), to improve the professional training of future ballroom dancers, various special methods of physical training for choreographers should be involved. Principally, it is about taking into account the characteristics of the load and other individual qualities, determining the key model features of functional provision, and justification on this basis of the main parameters of special training loads (Stevens & Huddy, 2016). According to Bidyuk (2018), many European universities apply innovative sports fitness technologies. They act as a powerful reserve to improve the fitness level of choreographers. The most effective are considered to be tools such as aerobic technology (cardio training using dance movements; cyclic exercise systems), individual dance technology (for example, latina zumba, oriental dance, pole dance, etc.); neurohumoral methods (stretching, yoga); breathing exercises (bodyflex, special exercises to train breathing muscles with resistance inhalation). There is an appropriate body posture that provides reliable support and artistic “pas” (Karoblis, 2019).

As the results of the study show, some European countries use the somatic model of classical dance training. In the context of modern classical dance development, somatic practices allow choreographers to realize their own movements, endure heavy loads, and increase the professionalism of performances; they also help dancers avoid injuries or recover quickly after them (Bidyuk, 2016). Modern researchers prove that contact between partners plays a prominent role in ballroom dance. Most of the basic sensations come from contact, momentum and weight shift (Byczkowska-Owczarek, 2019). The elements of the partnership connect to form a gestalt effect (Seheda et al., 2019). It is about touch, gaze, impulse, and understanding the interaction between partners, leading to the creation of an “ideal dance partnership” where dancers form a unified dance experience. The mentioned approach to the understanding of partnership through the prism of somatic practices improves the emotional and spiritual state; the partners are guided to a full and highly professional artistic expression of choreographic culture. One believes that in the future, the use of somatic practices such as kinetics, kinesthetics, and ideokinesis because they help to master the basic skills of dance development will be especially popular. It will improve the sense of music and rhythm and musical accompaniment through time and space.

## 5. Final considerations

Consequently, one predicts that in the future, to improve the training of future ballroom choreographers, various techniques that emphasize social-emotional learning will be used. An important aspect is the use of American experience in ballroom dance training programs. A well-thought-out training system makes possible a constant updating of teachers' knowledge, which increases the level of training of students and offers better employment prospects. The involvement of civic organizations in the training process facilitates contact between business and teaching communities. At the same time, the effectiveness of using a competitive approach is debated, with equal amounts of positive and negative impact. The particular focus on imposing competition has led higher education applicants to take too narrow a view of the importance of ballroom dancing, and instead of practising the art of choreography, they begin to pick the best options to please the jury. In addition, such students may lose the connection between acquiring theoretical and practical skills. Consequently, other options for organizing the learning process will remain relevant.

For this reason, somatic learning, which is currently being used in leading European countries, will be of great importance. At the same time, the use of innovative techniques of ballroom dance training, particularly step and analytical training, dance animation, the visual matrix, mental dance cards, and collaborative learning, will also be of practical importance. Innovative stimulation technologies also prove their effectiveness; one believes that their further transformation will affect the development of higher choreographic education in general. Innovative sports fitness technologies will become more important in the system of ballroom dancer training. Indeed, they will serve as a powerful reserve to improve the level of physical fitness of choreographers. Effective fitness techniques are aerobic methods: cardio training; cyclic exercises; separate dance techniques: Latina, Zumba, and oriental dance; and neurohumoral methods. At the same time, when choosing techniques and methods of training, one should focus on a stage-by-stage system of training that takes into account a personality-oriented approach and psychological and physiological students' needs.

## Ethical Considerations

Not Applicable.

## Conflict of Interest



The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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