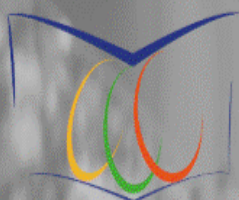


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DISCOVERING THE SPORTS TALENT IN AMATEUR BOXING: FROM VISION TO REALITY

DESCUBRIENDO EL TALENTO DEPORTIVO EN EL BOXEO AMATEUR: CAMINO A LA REALIDAD

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Resumen

Este estudio está centrado en la necesidad de desarrollar un sistema multidimensional orientada en la detección y dirigida a los niños con talento en el ámbito del boxeo, como factor importante que afecta tanto a la efectividad de las siguientes etapas del proceso general de selección y orientación deportiva, como logros futuros deportivos y la auto-realización de estos niños.

A partir del análisis de los datos obtenidos del estudio, se realizó un cuestionario a 83 expertos e instructores en el boxeo en Bulgaria, demostrándose que un sistema de este tipo multidimensional para la detección de niños con habilidades para alcanzar la excelencia en el campo de boxeo amateur en este momento no existe. La selección deportiva se lleva a cabo después de que los niños se han dirigido al boxeo en forma sistemática, dedicándose a este tipo de actividad.

Palabras Claves

Talento deportivo – Boxeo amateur – Atletas jóvenes – Bulgaria

Abstract

This study focuses on the necessity of elaborating a multidimensional system for discovering talented children and their guidance to the boxing field, being an overly significant factor, which effects on both the effectiveness of the next stages of the overall process of sports selection and orientation, as well on the future sports achievements and self-realization of these children.

Considering the analysis of the data from survey conducted among 83 experts and trainers in the boxing field in Republic of Bulgaria, it was found that such a multidimensional system for discovering children with abilities for getting good results in the amateur boxing field currently, does not exist. The sports selection is carried out once after the children have been guided to boxing and have systematically begun to practice this type of activity.

Keywords

Sports talent – Boxing – Young athletes – Bulgaria

In the context of the contemporary Bulgarian society and the dynamic development of sport and sporting achievements worldwide, it has been outlined the necessity of redefining and contemporizing of basic formulations and concepts, related to the high-level sports achievements in the amateur boxing field. The main focus of the current study lies down on the theorizing the specifics of the initial detection and orientation in this sport, as well as on the need for practical realization of the vision for transition from one-dimensional to multidimensional models for discovering of talents in the amateur boxing.

The initial sports selection (discovering of talents) is one of the main factors, contributing for increasing of the efficiency of the sports preparation process, which in turn directly reflects on the future sports achievements of athletes. This is why a large part of the study researches in the sporting field are primarily directed at clarifying the nature and specificity of the processes that contribute for discovering and identifying of talents, and their guidance to some specific type of sport where they could be able to unleash their own potential and thus achieve high-level results.

The selection process can be defined as a system of different actions aimed at finding individuals possessing somatic, psychological and motor characteristics, enabling them to get high scores and make progress in some sports discipline in the future.

According to V. Guba, the sports selection is a multistage and a process of many years, spanning all the periods of sports training. It is based on the complex study of the athlete's abilities and on the establishment of favorable preconditions for stimulating the process of self-development and self-improvement of the individual in the indicated sport. Sports orientation yet, is a system of organizational and methodological activities of a complex nature, on the grounds of which the narrow specialization of the individual in a particular sport is determined.¹

N. Popov stressed on the existence of a close organic relationship and interaction between the sports orientation and selection. The selection and orientation processes do not always pass at all stages of development of the athlete in the same sequence. The implementation of the sports selection as a conformity achievement process between the individual and the sports discipline on the one hand, and between the personality and the sports activity on the other, is actually unthinkable outside and regardless of the sports orientation. The author argues that the selection is stultified if some inner orientation towards a specific sports activity is absent. In his view, both before and during the selection, guidance, orientation and motivation of the athlete have been carried out.²

A. Abbott and D. Collins highlight that the discovering of the individuals with the greatest potential of achieving sports perfection is an important and difficult issue for the governing bodies, coaches and sponsors. Considering the existing limited resources for the athletes to make progress, the process of discovering of talents and their development is essential in order the mistakes and downfalls to be reduced. In order effective systems for identifying and development of talents to be established, sponsors should agree with the

¹ Губа, В. П. *Основы спортивной подготовки. Методы оценки и прогнозирования (морфобиомеханический подход)*. Москва: Издательство „Советский спорт“, 2012: 35.

² Попов, Н., Я. Барбас. Въпроси на спортния подбор и психологическа пригодност на състезатели по борба. София: НСА-ПРЕС, 2003: 21.

multilateral and dynamic nature of the sporting talent and to give the children opportunity to turn into successful and mature performers.³

According to D. Pearson, G. Naughton and M. Torode, the main definition for discovering talents lies within the natural gift or the ability for achieving highest quality. Finding a talented individual in an indicated sport however, is rather multiform and complex, due to the dynamics of the interaction between major components. A talented athlete can be discovered by characteristics which are at least partially genetically determined. In addition, the talent among adolescents could be found within the interaction of innate abilities, a young age mature game demonstration and revelation of high sports-specific skills.⁴

The Bulgarian scientific literature uses the “sports selection” and “sports orientation” terms, while concerning the subject in English, they are used “detection”, “selection” and “identification” of talents. “Detection of talents” refers to children who have not systematically been engaged to some specific sport so far, while the “identification” and “selection” part have permanently been implemented on subsequent stages part of the sports selection, where children have already been actively involved in the specific sporting activity.

According to Williams and Reilly, the identification and support, the encouragement and stimulation of talent are in close connection and dependencies between one another (Fig.Nº1). The development of sports selection and orientation models should follow the formula of this interaction.

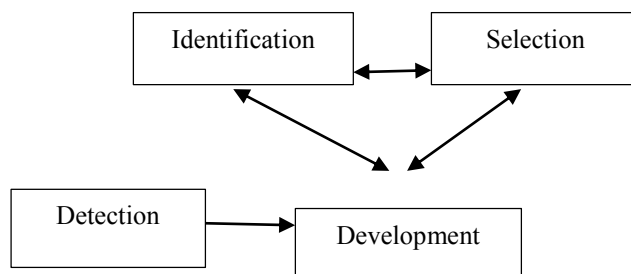


Figure 1
Talents Identification and Development Model⁵

In recent years globally there is a significant amount of research, related to the detection and development of sport talent. The prevailing opinions are that the one-dimensional, traditional processes for talent identification are ineffective. Moreover they are quite subjective, categorized by numerous authors as “natural selection”, and usually focused on children, who already practice some kind of sport. Of course, sport practice can be influenced by friends, family and sport popularity in particular region, etc. These factors,

³ A. Abbott y D. Collins, Eliminating the dichotomy between theory and practice in talent identification and development: considering the role of psychology. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, Vol. 22 (2004) 395–408.

⁴ D. Pearson; G. Naughton and M. Torode, Predictability of physiological testing and the role of maturation in talent identification for adolescent team sports. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 9: (2006) 277-287.

⁵ A. Williams y T. Reilly. Talent identification and development. *Journal of Sport Sciences*, 18 (2000) 657-667.

however, overcome the spontaneity, which create risk for slowing down the sport performance in the long run. This might happen, because random selection is closely linked to overcoming birth deficits.⁶

That is why the research is oriented towards the development of scientifically based multidimensional model for detection and identification of talented children. We focused on amateur boxing in Bulgaria. In this regard we conducted a survey with eighty-three experts and trainers in the Bulgarian boxing. We asked them about the current status, specifics and prospects of initial selection in amateur boxing. In order to achieve a larger sample size of the respondents we created an online survey, which included twenty-four questions related to the problematic issues. Only two of the questions are open, others belong to the group of closed questions as predominant part of them are scaled and allow respondents to specify the degree of occurrence of a particular characteristic.

The research showed that the respondents have long-term experience: twenty-one per cent have experience in this field over twenty years; eighteen per cent - eighteen or nineteen years; thirteen per cent - sixteen or seventeen years; twelve per cent - fourteen or fifteen years in the sphere of boxing. These results allow us to assume that the respondents are familiar with the specifics and challenges of sports selection in amateur boxing.

As it was already stated, the initial selection refers to children, who have never been involved, systematically or purposefully, in the particular sport. This stage of the overall process of selection and orientation in amateur boxing refers to the discovery of talents. Of course, talent detection should be combined with favorable conditions for its development within the long-term sport process. In the survey, experts mark that the initial selection in amateur boxing “significantly increases the efficiency of sports preparation process” (eighty-nine per cent of the respondents).

Indeed, as professionals share, improving the system of sports selection reflects directly on the quality of the training process and achieving high success in competitive activity. Recently, the differentiation between elite players and all the other is deepened and complex. High sport achievements are directly related to the complex set of anthropometric, physiological, motor and psychological characteristics, which are individually determined. This is why the detection of talented children in boxing is a guarantee for high sport achievements as well as for filling the sports reserves of our country.

It is necessary to clarify that the focus of the processes for sports selection and orientation are not bound to the discovery of predisposition. These processes also include high productivity of research as to outline the perspectives of the young athlete. One of the major problems is the age in which the system for talent detection in sport will be implemented. In this case the sport is boxing.

Our research shows that seventy-three of the respondents are aware about the importance of the initial stage of selection in amateur boxing. However they do not carry out such a selection. Only twenty-three per cent of them say that they do initial selection (Figure № 2).

⁶ E. Wolstencroft (ed.), *Talent Identification and Development: An Academic Review. A report for sportscotland by The University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 2002).

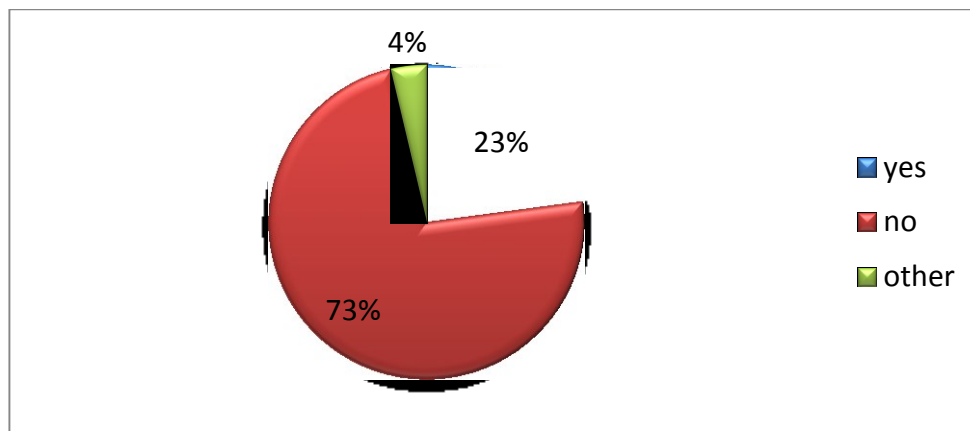


Figure 2
Distribution of answers of the question:
"Do you carry out an initial selection and orientation in boxing?"

The research finds out that significant proportion of the professionals in Bulgaria, state that there is no up-to date, effectively functioning system for initial selection in boxing. Twenty-eight per cent from the respondents say that there is "no such a system" and only twelve per cent state that the system actually exists (Figure № 3).

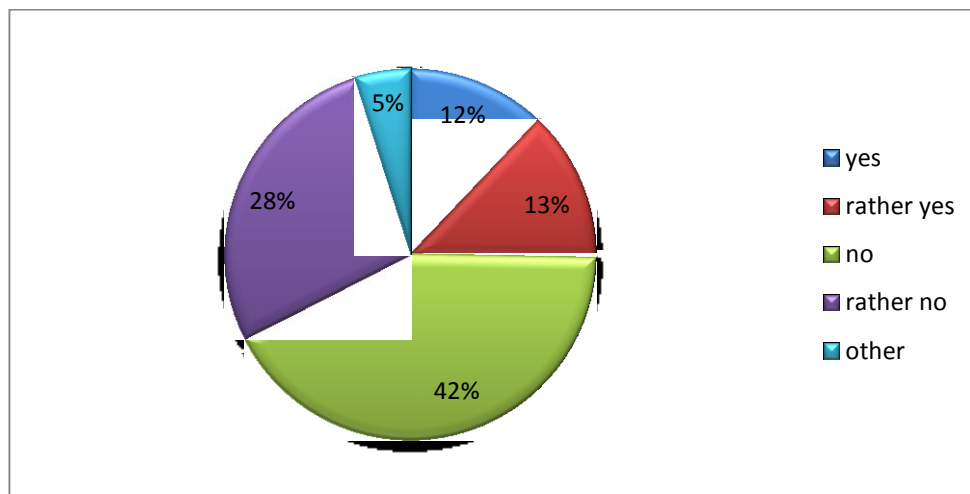


Figure 3
Distribution of answers to the question:
"Do you think there is up-to date, effectively functioning system for initial selection in boxing in Bulgaria?"

The next question from the survey is: "Do you think Bulgarian boxing needs a system, for initial selection and orientation of children, which is modern and adaptive to the new world realities?" The majority of the respondents (sixty-five per cent) give positive answer, twenty-three per cent of them give the answer "rather to". The data confirms the need to develop a modern system for talent detection in boxing.

The detection of sport talent is a key moment in the construction of the effective modern processes, by which high sport achievements are reached. Recently in Bulgaria there is a discussion about the limited resources of the country (material, technical, financial, etc.) These resources have impact on the deterioration of sport results. In this sense I think the major task is to find the right opportunities, which will help in overcoming and alleviating the handicaps in the particular area. Focusing on the human resources and the detection of sport talent, as well as creating favorable conditions for development is a crucial component in the progress of amateur boxing in our country.

Global experience in similar problems shows that the development of scientifically based programs for detection and identification of sport talents has a primary impact on the performance of athletes. In this sense the achievement and maintenance of high sport performance, should be done by activating the available resources. Also the development of innovative programs for early talent detection should be a key component in our National Sport Strategy.

The completed empirical research allows us to obtain information about the criteria: how the active boxing contestants, who responded in the research, have been directed to this sport. Analysis of the results shows that the major significance is given to the children's interest of boxing (little bit more than twenty-six per cent), after that is the motivation for success (around twenty per cent), psychological characteristics (fourteen per cent), physical abilities (nearly thirteen per cent) (Figure № 4).

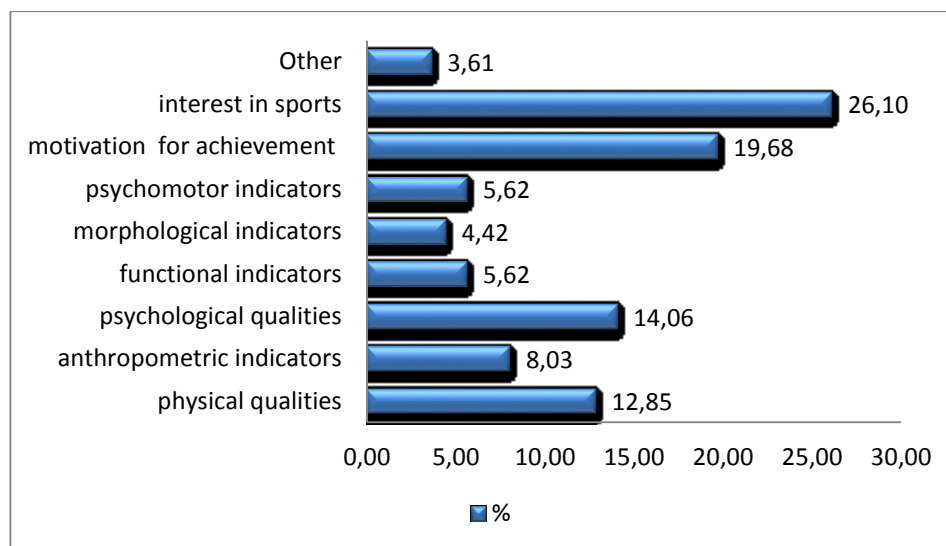


Fig. 4

The distribution of answers to the question:
 "If you have been an active athlete, point on the basis of what criteria you have been directed to boxing? (point to three of the following replies)

Data show that in practice children were directed to amateur boxing, mostly under the influence of the friendly, media and family environment, based on the interests of the children to this sport (Fig. № 5).

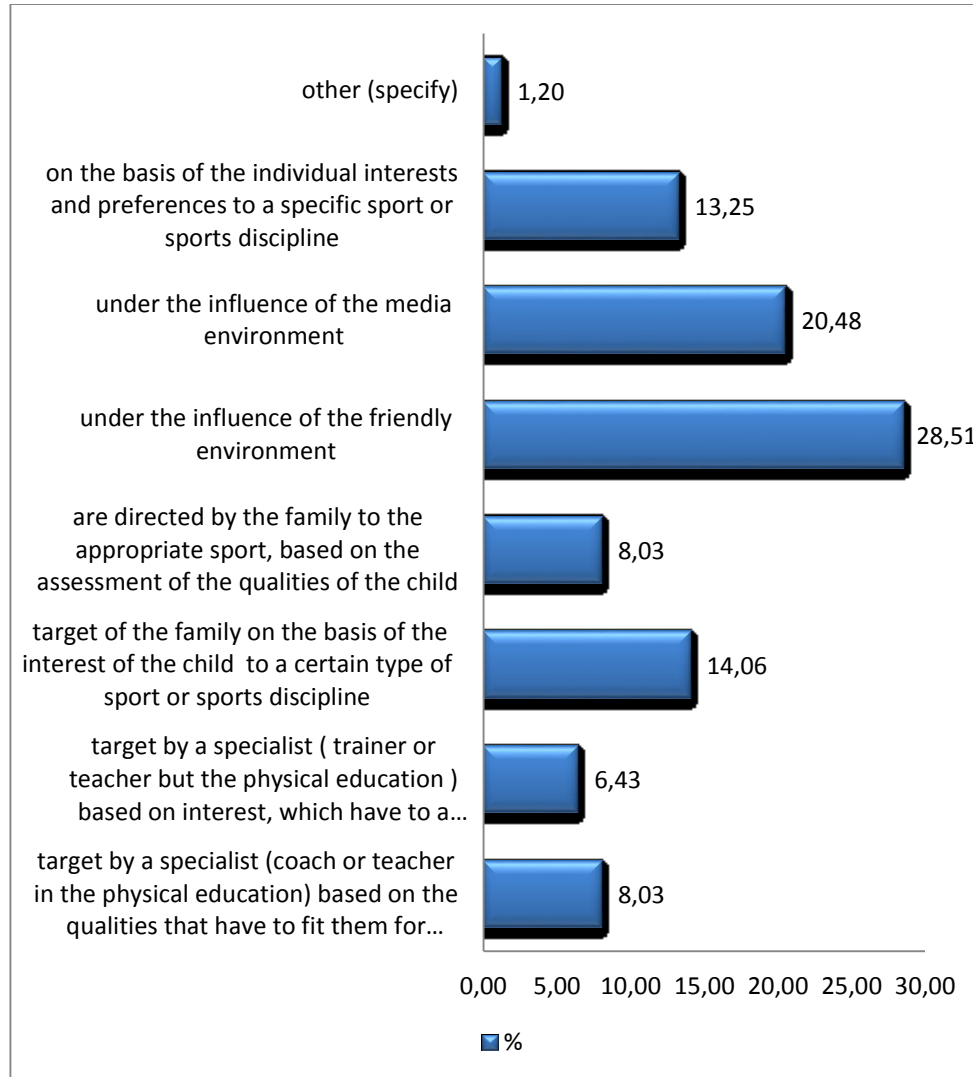


Fig. 5

The distribution of answers to the question: "How do you think the kids choose sports with which to deal. (point to three of the following replies)

The conducted survey about the current situation in sport selection in amateur boxing, provide data and the opinion about the appropriate age for starting the initial detection, according to the experts. As you can see on figure № 6, most of the respondents (fourty-three per cent) accept the age ten-eleven years, as appropriate for starting the process. Another portion of them accept the age twelve-thirteen years. In this research the attention is focused on male selection for amateur boxing. All the conclusions do not include females, involved in boxing.

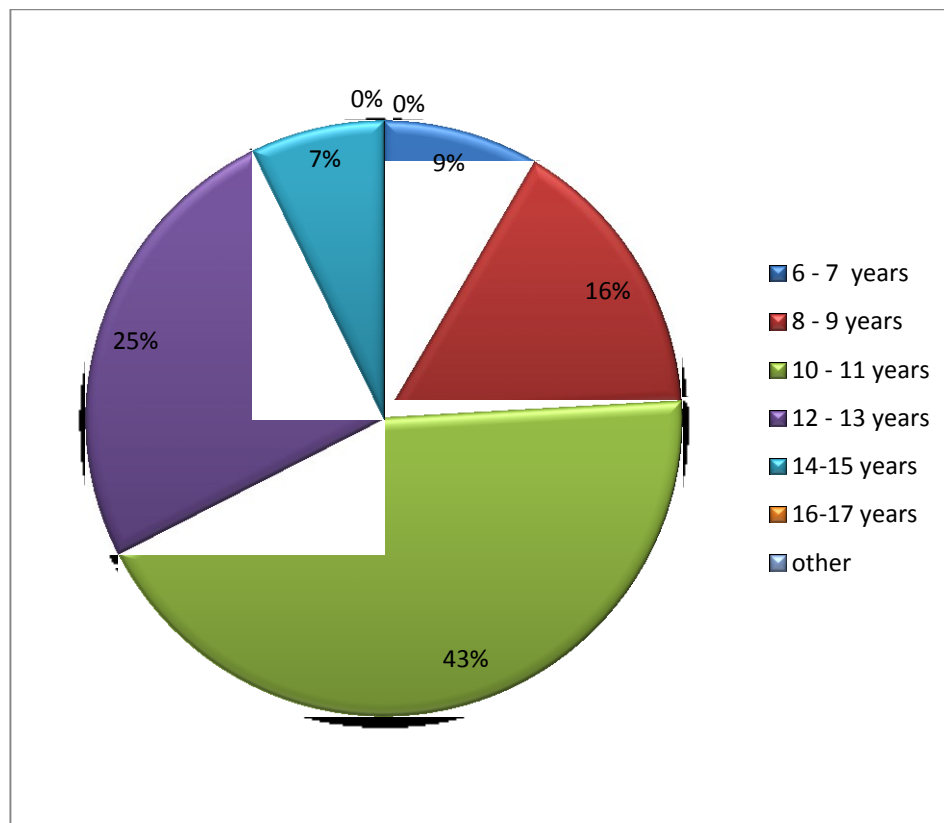


Figure 6

Distribution of answers to the question: "In your opinion, what is the appropriate age for starting the initial selection and orientation in boxing?"

Both varieties of boxing - amateur and professional, are associated with tremendous psychophysical pressure.

Analyzing the characteristics of this sport, VI. Chernev stresses that boxing is a sport with acyclic explosive dynamic nature of the movements. They take place with variable intensity. The physical activities in boxing are associated with great amount of emotional excitement, as well as maximum and sub maximum power.⁷

According to Iv. Angelov, it is inappropriate the initial selection to be done only with exercises for general physical training. Although, that kind of selection allows specifying the physical qualities of talented children, it is usually considered as inaccurate and inappropriate, since it does not take into account possible compensation for qualities. For example, insufficient punching power, is often compensated by the high rhythm of the match or great endurance; lack of endurance and strength - with spatial-motor sensations and considerate/quick reactions; inadequate speed- with great operational thinking and good forecasting skills (considering the opponent), etc.⁸

⁷ Чернев, Вл. *Морфо-функционална характеристика на състезатели по бокс* (Дис.). София, 2007.

⁸ Ангелов, Ив. Тестове за подбор на боксьори. *Треньорска мисъл*, № 5: 1975: 71-79.

According to V. Bruzas, A. Stasiulis, A. Cepulenas, P. and others, competitive boxing matches are characterized with dynamic movements, changing situations, variety of punches and defense strategies, as well as tremendous physical pressure. During the duel, boxers should keep the intensity of the match, the force of impact, the speed and accuracy of movements, even with increasing fatigue. During the match the energy in the body, depends on the aerobic and anaerobic energy production and interaction. The aerobic capacity affects endurance, in other words boxer's ability to get tired as well as his ability to maintain high intensity during the duel.⁹

In conclusion, as we already mentioned our survey focused on the opinion of the Bulgarian boxing experts and trainers, about the current condition and specifics of the initial sport selection. The survey enables us to make the following conclusions and generalizations:

- 1) A significant proportion of the respondents confirms that in Bulgaria there is no up-to-date, effective system for initial selection and orientation in boxing.
- 2) Experts are united around the idea that the initial selection in amateur boxing significantly increases the efficiency of sports preparation process in this sport;
- 3) The range for the beginning of the talent detection process in boxing is specified: 10-13 years old.
- 4) Confirms the need for modernized system for talent detection in amateur boxing.

The discovery of talented children boxing is a complex and multi factorial process in which on the basis of pre-selected and systematic criteria and indicators is carried out selection of kids who have the potential for excellence in this sport. Results of effectively functioning system for selection of talented children in boxing are not intentional and focused solely on sporting results, but are connected with the specificity of the self-realization of the athletes who have the potential for successful implementation of the particular sport activity.

A summary can be pointed out that the new realities in the global context require overcoming exacerbated reactivity and inertness in the process of opening of sports talents and targeting science-based multidimensional systems of selection and orientation of children in boxing that are consistent with results from modern interdisciplinary research in World Science.

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⁹ V. Bruzas; A. Stasiulis; A. Cepulenas; P. Moskus; B. Statkeviciene and V. Subacius, Aerobic capacity is correlated with the ranking of boxers. *Perceptual & Motor Skills: Exercise & Sport*, 119: 1 (2014) 50-58.

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