

PRECONDITIONS FOR FORMATION OF ARTISTIC REFLECTION AMONG PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: INSTRUCTIONAL ASPECT

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Summary

The article examines the preconditions for formation of artistic reflection among preschool children, as determined by regulatory documents on education. It is emphasized that the requirement for the formation of reflection as a mental property of an individual is formulated in regulatory documents on education at all levels – preschool, general secondary, higher (professional) one, which indicates its importance as a cross-cutting mental quality in the structure of an individual. Given the complexity of the phenomenon of reflection in the context of the age characteristics of preschoolers, as well as taking into account the specifics of music as an intonation-sound art that is perceived by the organ of hearing, the article specifies the content of the musical-sensory development of preschoolers as a necessary stage that precedes and contributes to the effective formation of their artistic reflection.

Key words: artistic reflection, preschoolers, musical and sensory development, instructional aspect.

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1. Introduction

As Ukraine's education system undergoes reform, its fundamental principles are being reimaged, its development priorities are being redefined as new contemporary civilizational challenges emerge, and the core principles of innovative pedagogy are being developed and integrated into educational practice. The youth-oriented modern society pushes for socially active individuals who possess strong inner intellectual, moral, ethical, cultural and creative potential. They are expected to recognise their own agency, engage effectively in a variety of cognitive activities, think critically, reflect on their own actions, regulate their behaviour, value their personal development and education, and strive for successful self-fulfilment both in their personal lives and as members of society. This is what explains the new concept of "reflection" in contemporary educational practice guidelines, which involves a psychological capacity that enables individuals to consciously evaluate their own actions, promoting self-improvement and self-development of their personal identity.

Crucially, the development of reflection as a personal psychological attribute is mandated by the practice guidelines governing the Ukrainian education system at all levels: preschool, general secondary, and higher education. This has prompted pedagogical science and practice to develop theoretical, methodological and practical foundations to developing reflection among education seekers of various age groups, including preschool children; the preschool stage representing the first and one of the most significant steps in a child's personal development. This is the "starting platform for personal development" (*Bazovyi komponent doshkilnoi osvity*, 2021:3), during which the foundations of self-awareness are established and

key personal, cognitive, spiritual and social qualities begin to develop. All of the above forms the relevance for the present study: the prerequisites for the development of artistic competence in preschool children.

The goal of the study: Based on an analysis of the Basic Component of Preschool Education (state standard) and the scientific psychological and pedagogical literature, the article aims to justify methodological approaches to supporting the musical and sensory development of preschool children as a necessary prerequisite for artistic reflection.

Research methods: general scientific methods (theoretical analysis and synthesis, comparison, generalisation, abstraction, citation).

2. Analysis of Recent Research and Publications

Over the recent years, the phenomenon of reflection has actively studied across a range of scientific disciplines. Reference sources prove that the concept of reflexion originally emerged in the history of philosophical thought, where it meant a “process of thinking or contemplating by an individual on events occurring around them”. R. Descartes regarded reflection as a human capacity to focus on the content of one’s own thoughts. J. Locke distinguished between sensation and reflection, interpreting the latter as a special source of knowledge, calling it in inner experience (*Slovnyk, 2006 : 159*). The contemporary scientific discourse regards reflection as a broad, dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon that varies in structure and forms of expression, leading to a large number of its interpretations in academic texts. According to M. Zabrotskyi, educational psychology defines reflection as a form of self-knowledge expressed through the contemplation over one’s own experiences, feelings and thoughts (*Zabrotskyi, 2002*).

L. Tuz, investigating the impact of reflection on the personal development of preschool children, notes its significance given how crucial this age period is for shaping children’s personality traits and inner world. The researcher believes that well-developed reflection forms the basis for later personal and cognitive development and acts as a key mechanism for emotional and behavioural self-regulation, as well as for self-understanding within the “self-conception” framework (*Tuz, 2002*). The author also emphasises that methodologies aimed at effectively developing reflective abilities in preschool children remain insufficiently elaborated (*Tuz, 2002 : 234*).

The revised version of Basic Component of Preschool Education (state standard) outlines seven priority areas and requirements for the level of development, education and upbringing of preschool children, ensuring continuity between preschool and primary schooling. These areas include approaches that are particularly relevant to our study, specifically: “The Child in the Sensory and Cognitive Environment” and “The Child in the World of Art” (*Bazovyi komponent doshkilnoi osvity, 2021 : 1, 2*). The guidelines identify key competencies that children must develop at the preschool age and continue to build upon in primary and secondary education, including “sensory and cognitive” and “artistic and creative” competencies. Sensory and cognitive competence in preschool children is defined as the ability to use their sensory system during exploratory activities. Learning outcomes should include positive motivation, as well as research skills such as analysis, comparison, generalisation and self-control. It is also interpreted as a cognitive experience accumulated across various types of activity (*Bazovyi komponent doshkilnoi osvity, 2021 : 3*).

The area of a “Child in the World of Art” aims to develop artistic and creative competence in preschool children by engaging them in a range of artistic activities, particularly musical ones (singing, music and rhythmic movements, playing children’s musical instruments,

listening to music, visualising musical images and reproduction via their own performance). Gaining such artistic and creative competence is assessed in their emotional and value-based attitude to art, the basic knowledge and skill system, which includes reflective abilities to contemplate over their artistic experience, impressions and attitudes towards artistic activity (*Bazovyi komponent doshkilnoi osvity*, 2021:22). O. Polovina, a co-author of the State Standard for Preschool Education, emphasises that “artistic activity in preschool childhood should not only be a result of an external pressure, but also a gradual process of mastering (developing and controlling) their emotions, moving from awareness of the external world towards exploration of their inner world. The researcher therefore highlights the importance of developing the ability to understand their inner aspirations, evoke positive emotional states and feelings, and express them through artistic and creative activity (*Polovina*, 2021).

A. Shevchuk highlights the importance of developing basic reflective skills in preschool art education as the ability to discuss one’s artistic experiences, impressions and attitudes towards artistic activity with others (*Shevchuk*, 2023); she also considers potential methodological ways of achieving this in educational settings. She finds morning meetings in preschool institutions to be an effective form of interaction between adults and children, supporting children’s personal and social development, including reflection, through the sharing and applying of experiences, opinions, thoughts and impressions in communicational interactions with peers. The researcher proposes themes for such morning meetings, for example: “Musical Experience”, “Theatrical Experience”, “Dance Experience”, “Drawing Experience”, etc. (*Shevchuk*, 2023 : 22). According to her, the purpose for these morning meetings lies in giving children the opportunity, based on using their newly-obtained skills and impressions towards artistic experiences, to get involved in reflection through self-analysis and self-consideration of their own musical actions, emotional responses, experiences, sharing them with others.

A. Shevchuk also highlights the teacher’s role as a facilitator who enables and creates conditions for children to express themselves freely and independently, supporting their willingness and need to share their emotions, knowledge and skills while ensuring they feel heard (*Shevchuk*, 2023 : 22).

Given that play is the leading activity in preschool childhood, preschool education guidelines developed a range of didactic games, including music didactic games, aimed at building children’s knowledge and skills in musical art. These are integrated into the development of artistic and creative competence (*Zavalko K*, 2010), (*Kozak, T.*, 2023), (*T. Lisovska*, 2022), (*S. Matviienko*, 2017). The methods for facilitating musical and sensory games primarily includes the development of children’s auditory perception for musical sound qualities, enabling them to emotionally perceive and understand music, perform it, and perceive the world around them through the music (*Vetluhina N.*, 2002).

It is worth noting that research in early childhood art education shows that insufficient attention is given to preparing future preschool teachers to support the development of children’s musical and creative abilities. In particular, according to a study by O. A. Mkrtichian (*Mkrtichian*, 2020), the vast majority of students in Preschool Education programmes at universities do fully not appreciate the importance of children’s musical and creative development or their reflective abilities, and tend to view this task of early childhood art education to be a “possibility but not a necessity” (52%). Another group of students (36%) considers themselves “practically ready” to implement musical and creative development tasks in preschool settings, while other students (12%) acknowledge that they are not prepared for such work. Based on these results, the researcher concludes that the professional training of future preschool educators does not sufficiently address the requirements of fostering children’s musical and creative

development and the formation of their artistic and creative competence as an integrated whole (Mkrtichian, 2020 : 112). Overall, the reformed areas in preschool education, being an integral part of Ukraine's education system, require further theoretical grounding and the development of practical and methodological approaches for their implementation in educational practice.

3. Age-Related Characteristics of Preschool Children and their Consideration in Education of Art

The didactic principle of accessibility, as a certain system of initial requirements for the educational process, is centred on the need to take into account the natural characteristics and capabilities of children in certain age groups, as well as the specific features of their psychological development and level of readiness. Together, these factors ensure the effectiveness of the educational process and identify the methodological approaches to its content and organisation. Below are the key psychological characteristics of preschool children that should be considered when developing their artistic reflection.

According to age psychology (*Age Psychology, 2005*), the main types of activity in preschool children are object-related activity, speech and play. In object-related activity, children learn to use different objects (for example, when playing noisemaker instruments) and to communicate with others through language. Early childhood is regarded as a particularly sensitive period for language development. For this reason, verbal interaction should remain a central focus in all educational activities. Play is especially important at this age, particularly role play, exploratory games, story-based role play and imitation games. Play is considered the foundation for developing many future skills. Through object-related activity, speech and play, characteristic psychological developments of this age begin to emerge, most notably the first signs of self-awareness, self-studying and self-identification, as demonstrated in children's frequent use of the word "I". This indicator reflects a child's awareness not only of their external actions, but also of their inner, personal experience. In psychology, the "self-concept" is seen as the highest concentration of a child's subjectivity, their external and internal activity, as well as spiritual contemplation (*Age Psychology, 2005*). This period of childhood is particularly sensitive for the development of reflexivity and the desire for independent behaviour, as an expression on the right to independence and individuality – "I will do it myself". Children also need attention and recognition, which is in general a sign of their emerging personality.

Thus, developing preschool children's musical and sensory abilities as a prerequisite for shaping artistic reflection necessitates the facilitating teacher to take into account the psychological and personal characteristics of this age. This consideration ensures the effectiveness of the educational process and the successful achievement of its learning goals.

4. Methodological Aspect of Developing Children's Musical and Sensory Abilities as a Component of Artistic Reflection

Let us dive into the methodological side of developing musical and sensory abilities in preschool children, which is considered to be the key part of the educational process. As the Ukrainian scholar and practitioner in music education O. Rostovskyi notes, neither the educational process itself nor its positive outcomes are possible without a methodology (*Rostovskyi, 2011 : 9*). The methodology of music education is based on the specific characteristics of music as an art, its sound-based and intonation-based nature, as well as its multi-functional properties. In both research and practice, it is generally accepted that art serves as

a unique and irreplaceable means of harmonising the personality, a wide-ranging influence on emotional, intellectual and volitional development.

A crucial issue in developing artistic and creative competence, as well as its component of artistic reflection in preschool children, is recognising the specific nature of music as an art based on the sound that is perceived and understood through hearing. The ability to hear, feel and understand music depends on the development of particular auditory capacities, a special sensitivity towards music, which expresses sound-related information hidden in the intonational meaning. In musical art, these abilities are commonly referred to as musical capability, generally understood as the “musical hearing”. The development of musical abilities in children, which together form this complex and multifaceted skill, the musical hearing, provides the foundation for the entire process musical learning. However, musical hearing is not inborn. It is found in physiological and sensory predispositions, which can, under certain conditions, either be developed into musical ability or disappear if they are not sufficiently supported. As shown in practice, many preschool children are initially indifferent to music, making engagement in musical activity quite challenging. Simply listening to music does not mean a child is truly hearing it. The ability to listen to and perceive music is a part of musical activity based on the auditory nature. Therefore, the lack of preparedness, development or ability to perceive music can undermine the learning process, as well as its performance.

Thus, the development of musical and sensory abilities is a necessary prerequisite for artistic reflection in preschool children as part of their artistic and creative competence. This process involves the capacity to perceive sound and distinguish the basic properties of musical sound (pitch, duration, intensity and quality) in their simplest relationships (*Vetluhina N., 2002*). N. Vetluhina lists the following the objectives of musical and sensory development in preschool children: the development of auditory attention; learning to recognise changes in contrasting and similar sound patterns by ear; as well as building skills in listening analysis of musical sound.

Considering the importance of musical and sensory development in preschool children as the starting stage of their overall musical growth, a facilitating teacher should understand and adhere to key theoretical and methodological principles of music pedagogy (*Rakityanska, 2018*):

- Musical education and the musical development of preschool children, which are, first of all, the development of musical hearing that reflects the intonational and sound-based nature of musical art. Without sufficient attention to the development of auditory skills and the ability to navigate the rich and varied world of musical sound, a proper musical education becomes impossible;

- The foundation and starting stage for the gradual development of musical hearing is the development of musical and sensory hearing, being the ability to perceive the main properties of musical sound by ear: pitch, duration, quality, intensity as well as their relationship. As an initial form of sensory engagement with musical sound at the physiological level, it provides an essential basis for more complex mental processes involved in children’s musical cognition such as perception, thinking and imagination. If musical and sensory ability is neglected, the development of an ability to fully perceive, understand and perform music in all its stylistic and genre diversity may be slowed down or even rendered impossible. For this reason, the development of children’s ability to perceive and distinguish the fundamental properties of musical sound is one of the primary tasks of preschool music education;

- Musical and sensory abilities on their own do not guarantee effective musical activity, as they are innate qualities that simply reflect the ear’s natural sensitivity to musical perception. Through active involvement in music, these inborn hearing capacities gradually develop

and are transformed into basic musical skills that ensure successful participation in musical activities;

- The more often a child is directly engaged with music, with their auditory analyser actively involved, the more developed their sensory abilities become and the better capacity they have to perceive music;

- Preschool age is considered the most favourable period for developing musical and sensory abilities, due to the anatomical and physiological maturation of the sensory organs, which at this stage are particularly sensitive and easily influenced from the outside. During a methodologically sound teaching, children's auditory acuity for musical sound becomes noticeably stronger. If this period is missed, the sensory and auditory system in the later childhood becomes less sensitive and less responsive to external stimulation;

- The ability to perceive, feel and distinguish the basic properties of musical sounds by ear is regarded as a foundation for developing musical abilities and is essential for successful participation in musical activities. Whether children's innate potential for musical hearing is further developed or gradually diminishes depends on how effectively this development is organised through appropriate methods;

- Similar to the phonemic hearing, the ability to distinguish speech sounds through language acquisition in a language environment, musical hearing, which is based on the perception of musical sound, should also develop in an appropriate educational setting. The setting should be dominated by direct music, creating an emotionally engaging atmosphere through specially organised listening and performing, rather than treating music as background sound;

- Musical and development in preschool children is supported through specially organised listening and training activities lead by the facilitating teacher in the form of music and sensory games;

- A crucial principle in sensory education is the perception of music using several senses at the same time (hearing, sight and touch). Perceiving and understanding the features of musical sound is a complex process. For this reason, combining what children hear with what they see, and sometimes what they touch, makes the learning process clearer and more accessible. This approach highlights the importance of using visual teaching aids in music learning, modelling the basic properties of musical sound and supporting the development supporting the development of auditory, visual and tactile understanding using examples available;

According to N. Vetluhina, the methodology for developing musical and sensory abilities in preschool children depends on the following sequence of stages (*Vetluhina N., 2002*) :

- Developing the ability to listen to music with focus and attention;
- Accumulating sensory and auditory experience through listening to and performing music (singing, playing noisemaking instruments, plastic activities, etc.), as well as through the analysis of music in terms of its basic sound properties by ear: high and low sounds; loud and soft dynamics; short and long sounds; musical and noise-related sounds; quality of musical instruments; voice quality;

- Developing the ability to perceive the key properties of musical sound by ear (sound pitch, duration, dynamics, quality) in their expressive meaning;

- Reinforcing and generalising the auditory impressions obtained concerning the sound properties through verbal language. When talking about and analysing music, children should be able to understand and use terms such as “high sound”, “low sound”, “long sound”, “short sound”, “musical sound”, “noise sound”, etc. At the early stages, it is beneficial to rely on associations and comparisons familiar that are familiar to children (such as thin, bright and high

sound compared to thick, dark and low sound; “butterflies and birds flying high” or “a heavy bear walking slowly and clumsily”.

Following these methodological principles in organising musical and sensory development in preschool children is essential for achieving effective results.

5. Conclusions

The goals of reforming preschool education system shape the professional areas for the facilitator’s activities. Art has a unique ability to influence and harmonise a child’s inner world and support their psychological and personal development. This can only be implemented in educational practice if the specific nature of music is taken into account, namely, that it is experienced during auditory and sensory perception. This is why musical and sensory development in preschool children is regarded as key priority and a necessary prerequisite for developing artistic reflection as part of children’s artistic and creative competence.

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