

THE DIAGNOSTICS OF A PRESCHOOLER'S READINESS FOR LEARNING TO PLAY A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

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Abstract

The article discusses the problem of diagnosing a preschooler's readiness for learning to play a musical instrument. Preschool age is favorable for preparing a child for further training to play a musical instrument. Pre-instrumental training of preschoolers is a specially organized process for developing readiness to play a musical instrument, which includes the development of motivation, musicality, physical and mental qualities, as well as the accumulation of musical knowledge. Readiness of a child for learning to play a musical instrument is an indicator of the achievements of his or her personal development in the preschool period and is the basic level for mastering playing a musical instrument. Considering the structure of the readiness of a preschooler for learning to play a musical instrument, we distinguish personal, motivational, physical and emotional readiness. According to the results of the diagnostics of 25 preschoolers, it was found that 28.0% of children had low level of readiness for learning to play a musical instrument, 56.0% had average level of readiness and only 16.0% had a high level of readiness for learning to play a musical instrument. The results have shown insufficient level of maturity of their readiness for learning to play a musical instrument, which allows distinguishing areas of work for the development of a course on pre-instrumental training of preschoolers. Meanwhile, in our opinion, during musical lessons with preschoolers in kindergartens, elements of pre-instrumental training can also be implemented and the formation of readiness for learning to play a musical instrument can be carried out as well.

Key words: *preschooler, readiness for learning to play a musical instrument, pre-instrumental training*

Introduction

Musical education and training, an early-age music education in particular, allow introducing children to cultural values. The process of teaching children to play a musical instrument from the preschool age becomes widespread in our days. Pedagogical science and practice prove that education, which is carried out in accordance with age characteristics and taking into account the latest achievements in the field of musical pedagogy, becomes an important factor in the musical and aesthetic development of children, promotes not only the formation of the spiritual potential of the individual, but also creates the preconditions for the successful development of a harmonious personality, introducing children to cultural values. The process for children learning to be players includes being provided with the opportunities to listen to good models of playing, to play that is appropriate, being encouraged to listen with concentration and to focus on detail and being given encouragement and feedback (Young, 2009). Therefore, the process of teaching children of preschool age to play a musical instrument requires the formation of their readiness for learning to play a musical instrument.

The problem of readiness for learning to play a musical instrument attracted the attention of many musicians-teachers. In particular, there were considered such topics as the psychological and pedagogical basis of instrumental performance (Савшинский, 1961; Баренбойм, 1979; Коган, 2004; Цыпин, 2016), pedagogical conditions for the achievement of the unity of the performing and general musical development of students (Zavalko, 2013, etc.), the process of initial mastering of playing a musical instrument (Берлянчик, 2000; Мильтопян, 2003; Сташевська, 2012, etc.). A quite thorough and versatile methodical system of learning to play different musical instruments (violin, piano, recorder, cello) was formed in institutions of primary music education. The problem of training for learning to play a musical instrument had been solved partially in the concepts of such teachers as Orff (see Frazee, 2006), Jacques-Dalcroze (Dalcroze, 2009), Kodaly (see Houlahan, 2008), Suzuki (Suzuki, 1973), Szilvay (Szilvay, 2002). Each of these educators focuses on a certain type of musical activity (singing, playing elementary musical instruments, listening to music, etc.) as the basis of music education of the child. At the same time, many issues regarding the organization of preschoolers' preparation to learning to play a musical instrument did not receive proper coverage in the scientific and methodological literature.

The object of the research: preschooler's readiness for learning to play a musical instrument.

The aim of the research: to determine the level of preschooler's readiness for learning to play a musical instrument.

Theoretical Basis of the Study

Preschool age is considered by L. Vygotsky (Выготский, 2004) not only as the restructuring of needs and motives, reevaluation of values, which is fundamental in the transition from one age to another, but also as a period of intensive development of a person, capable for perception and understanding of one's own states and emotional manifestations of other people, which is considered as a condition for successful adaptation in society. According to Leontiev (Леонтьев, 1981), the whole mental life of

the child, his/her relation to the surrounding world, when he/she begins to define his/her own behavior, is restructured in preschool age, and mental development is not spontaneous but by education controlled process.

By revealing the mechanisms underlying the teaching of preschool children, Vygotsky (Выготский, 1991) formulates the thesis of the zone of proximal development (*зона ближайшего развития*), which determines the achievement of the child in direct collaboration and under the influence of an adult, and, in contrast, the set of already 'ripe' functions that provide an independent solving of a certain range of tasks by the child.

Терлов (Терлов, 1985) believes that preschool age is characterized by its own features: emotional sensitivity, interest in exciting creative tasks, intensity of thinking and creative activity. According to Naumenko (Науменко, 1982), preschool age is extremely important for mastering musical culture. The earlier music enters into human life, the deeper and more precisely this art will occupy a place in a human soul, because foundations of various qualities and properties of the person, his or her interests and abilities are being laid during the early period of life.

In our opinion, the preschool age is also favorable for the child's preparation for further learning to play a musical instrument. To this end, it is important to develop and implement a course of pre-instrumental training. Pre-instrumental training of preschoolers is a specially organized process for developing readiness for learning to play a musical instrument, which includes the development of motivation, musicality, physical and mental qualities, as well as the accumulation of musical knowledge. Pre-instrumental training should ensure the formation of readiness for learning to play a musical instrument.

The child's complete readiness for learning to play a musical instrument, on the one hand, serves as a unique indicator of achievements of his/her personal development in the preschool period, and on the other hand, it is the basic level for mastering playing a musical instrument, and an indicator of readiness to accept the position of a subject of educational activity. According to Elkonin (Эльконин, 2005), an important element of readiness for learning is the development of arbitrary behavior, transformation of an external rule into an internal position.

Considering the structure of preschooler's readiness for learning to play a musical instrument, we distinguish personal readiness, motivational readiness, physical readiness and emotional readiness.

The motivational readiness of a preschooler for learning to play a musical instrument consists of positive notions about learning and the desire for creative expression in music. For Maslow (1970) and Rogers (1990), the first step towards creative activity is the child's own initiative. It is necessary to observe after child, noting the moments of his/her own authorship, to help realize him/her own individuality, to learn to appreciate himself/herself as a creative person. The personality's need for musical activity is defined by Tarasov (Тарасов, 1979) as a mental state which creates preconditions for the perception of musical values, the specific feature of which is the focus not on the result of activity, but on the process itself.

Bozhovich (Божович, 1972) discovered that 6-7-year-old children have a desire to study. The desire to study of a child of the senior preschool age is the stage of development of his/her initial needs in external impressions. The new level of cognitive need of older preschool children is expressed in the fact that they have an interest in cognitive tasks. A significant moment in the formation of motivational readiness for learning is the emergence of arbitrary behavior and activity, that is, the emergence of child's needs and motives of such a structure in which he or she becomes able to conquer his/her immediate impulsive desire for consciously set goals.

In terms of expectancy-value motivational theory (Eccles et al., 1998; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), six facets underpinning children's personal beliefs seem particularly relevant for learning to play an instrument (McPherson & Davidson, 2006):

- Interest: the personal satisfaction gained when playing and practicing alone and with others, plus the love for the repertoire learned;
- Importance: the degree to which learning the instrument fits with personal goals about what the child hopes to be good at;
- Usefulness: whether learning the instruments is constructive and functional for what the child wishes to do, both now and in the future;
- Difficulty: whether the learning process creates obstacles or is perceived as being more difficult than other activities with which child is engaged;
- Competence: for which playing and performing become activities in which the child would like to succeed;
- Confidence: the empowerment felt for developing the skills necessary to master challenges associated with learning and performing on the instrument.

We agree with Ginzburg (Гинзбург, 1988) on determining the classification of motives of the senior preschool age children:

- Cognitive (educational), rising directly to cognitive needs;
- Broad social motives based on the understanding of the social need for education;
- Positional motive associated with the desire to take a new position in relations with others;
- External motives in relation to the training, for example, subordination to the requirements of adults;
- The game motive, inadequately transferred to the new - the educational environment;
- The motive of receiving a high grade.

The hierarchy of motives is a prerequisite for mastering the arbitrariness of behavior. The given classification is taken as the basis of motivational readiness of preschooler for learning to play a musical instrument.

The personal readiness of a preschooler for learning to play a musical instrument is expressed in the development of such personal substructures as musical abilities and the formation of attention. Musicality is an individual-psychological quality of a personality that provides productivity of any kind of musical activity (creation, performance, listening). It turns out in creative artistic playing and the deep feeling of musical images (Хауменко, 1982). Теплов (Теплов, 2003) offers a concept of

musicality, the main indicator of which is the emotional sensitivity to music, but the main abilities include musical ear (sonority) and the sense of rhythm. At the same time, there are two components of the musical ear – perceptive component, associated with the perception of melodic motion (harmony sense) and reproductive component (the ability to auditory presentation of melody). According to Teplov, the ability to auditory presentation creates the core of the musical memory and musical imagination.

An important component of personal readiness for learning to play a musical instrument is the maturity of preschooler's attention. Under attention we mean orientation and concentration of psychic activity of the individual on a certain object in conditions of distraction from others. This mental process is a condition for the successful implementation of any activity, both external and internal, and its product is qualitative performance of activity. Attention has external and internal manifestations. External manifestations include tense posture, focused look; internal include changes in the body, for example, increased heart rate, breathing, the allocation of adrenaline in the blood, etc.

The level of preschooler's attention development is evidenced by the formation of its elements: concentration, stability, distribution and switching. Concentration is being determined by the extent to which the child is targeted at work. An indicator of stability is the time of focusing on the object and the amount of distractions from it. Switching is being manifested in the transition from one object or activity to another. Distribution occurs when the child performs several actions at the same time, for example, tells the poem, moving around the room.

Preschool childhood is a period when emotions - as special individual experiences, having a pleasant or unpleasant mental tinge and related to the satisfaction of important needs - dominate all aspects of the child's life, managing and regulating all of his/her mental functions. Mastering the ability to express emotions by older preschoolers, as defined by Zaporozhets (Запорожец, 1986), already testifies to the manifestation of certain emotions that have a significant influence on the motivation of their behavior and activities, adjusting their plans. Emotional readiness of a preschooler for learning to play a musical instrument is understood as the reduction of impulsive reactions and the ability to perform not very attractive task during long time. Vygotsky (Выготский, 1986) believes that the leading role in the development of the personality of preschooler, the regulation of his/her mental functions belongs to the emotional sphere. Emotional self-development is a series of interrelated areas, each of which has its own specific ways of influencing the emotional sphere and includes:

- development of emotional response,
- development of emotional expression,
- formation of ideas about the diversity of human emotions,
- formation of emotional vocabulary.

Development of children's physical qualities, especially strength and endurance, which largely depends on successful training, adaptation to the prevailing static position (especially when they hold instruments as violin, cello), raising the level of a mental activity becomes particularly relevant in the preparation for learning to play a musical instrument. Physical readiness of the child for learning to play a musical instrument consists of maturity of physical qualities (strength, endurance, agility, flexibility, speed)

and maturity of body coordination. Successful training of children to play a musical instrument requires the diagnostics and adjustment of their physical development (stiffness, excessive relaxation, poor coordination, etc.). Often along with muscle tension, there is an opposite state of the muscles – excessive relaxation, which does not allow you to make movements that require a specific muscle tone. In this case, it is necessary to strengthen the muscles and develop the flexibility of the joints, which will help the child in the development of a differentiated sensation of muscle condition.

The results of physiological studies (Дубораї, 2002) show that at least four hours of active motor activity per week have a training effect on the body of the child. Exercising below this threshold do not have any effect. The Dubogay recommends daily exercise in reflecting the ball from the wall, jumping on a rope, sitting down from the position on the back, increasing the number of repetitions every day by one time.

Coordination is the ability to adapt the movements of different parts of the body. Therefore, when playing a musical instrument, separate elements of movement must be connected to a single motor action, which is made economically, not tightly, plastically and clearly. Coordination of movements can be trained and it is exposed to the pedagogical process, specifically aimed at its development. The high degree of coordination of movements makes a positive impact on the mastering children with new motor skills, which are very much when playing on a musical instrument.

Method and sample

The research on readiness for learning to play a musical instrument involved 25 5-6-year-old children, who were taking part in a musical education program at the kindergartens of the *Family Art Club* (Kyiv city, Ukraine) and the *Montessori Family* (Cherkassy city, Ukraine). Appropriate techniques and tasks were selected for each component of readiness.

Motivational readiness for learning to play a musical instrument was being researched on the basis of an adapted method of motivation studying by M. Ginzburg (1988). The method allowed to reveal the relative expressiveness of the motives that lead children of the senior preschool age to the learning (cognitive motive, social motive, positional motive, external motives, game motive or motive for receiving a high grade). The characteristics of the levels of motivational readiness are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the levels of the maturity of motivational readiness of preschoolers for learning to play a musical instrument

LEVEL	POINTS	CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEVEL
Low	1-2	The absence of personal meaning for learning to play a musical instrument or the presence of only external motives to it
Medium	3-4	A combination of positional, external, and game motives for learning to play a musical instrument
High	5	Expressed personal meaning of motivation for learning to play a musical instrument, the prevalence of cognitive and internal motives, desire to succeed

During the research on the personal component of the readiness for learning to play a musical instrument a comprehensive diagnostics of musical abilities was used (Сулейманов, 2012) and the method of studying musical and auditory attention (Миколінська, 2015).

The comprehensive diagnostics of musical abilities (Сулейманов, 2012) includes three tests: diagnostics of musical-rhythmic ability (the test *Rhythm*); diagnostics of melodic ear (test *Melody*); diagnostics of harmonic ear (test *Chords*). This diagnostics are based on the principle of comparing the rhythmic patterns, melodic patterns and chords with each other. Since preschoolers are not familiar with the musical notation, the tasks were based on the comparison of two rhythmic (melodic, harmonic) passages, which were repeated in one case, but differed in the other. Differences were built from the very sharp to less sharp, almost identical. The examinee had to answer the question: *Were the two passages repeated or different?* Each subtest had 20 tasks. Diagnostics was performed individually with each child.

Diagnostics of the maturity of musical-auditory attention was carrying out on the results of students' performance of musical tasks. Tasks were divided into two blocks, which were grouped by types of musical activities. The purpose of the tasks of the first block was to determine the level of maturity of the properties of musical-auditory attention during the perception of music; the second block included tasks related to the skills of creating rhythmic accompaniment, the reproduction of the rhythmic pattern of a famous song. Generalized characteristics of levels of personal readiness are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of the levels of the maturity of personal readiness of preschoolers for learning to play a musical instrument

LEVEL	POINTS	CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEVEL
Low	1-2	melodic and harmonic ear, musical-rhythmic abilities are developed weakly; the child does not perform the ability to concentrate on musical sound, the ability to stability, selectivity, switching and distribution of auditory attention
Medium	3-4	melodic and harmonic ear, musical-rhythmic abilities are developed partially or unevenly; musical-auditory attention is characterized by a limited, fragmentary ability to concentrate on musical sound, by relative stability, selectivity, switching and distribution of auditory attention
High	5	melodic and harmonic ear, musical-rhythmic abilities are developed well; musical-auditory attention is characterized by a high degree of intensity of concentration on musical sound, ability to stability, selectivity, switching and distribution of auditory attention

The emotional readiness of preschoolers for learning to play a musical instrument was being researched on the basis of the method of *Study of the emotional manifestations of children during playing the plot scenes* (Урунтаева & Афонькина, 1995). There were selected situations from the child's life and the child was asked to portray the proposed situations. If the children did not express the feelings and emotions of the characters clearly or they were expressed incorrectly, the situations were being described once

more with storytelling of what each character is experiencing. The assessment was being carried out at three levels (see Table 3).

Table 3. Characteristics of the levels of the maturity of emotional readiness of preschoolers for learning to play a musical instrument

LEVEL	POINTS	CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEVEL
Low	1-2	The child cannot identify and show emotional state independently, a set of expressive-mimic means is very small
Medium	3-4	The child determines and depicts the emotional state of another with the help of an adult, is able to empathize with another, but cannot express his or her own emotions objectively because of small amount of expressive-mimic means of communication
High	5	The child determines and depicts the emotional state of another independently and uses a large set of expressive-mimic means of communication

Physical readiness for learning to play a musical instrument was being determined by the quality of performing of physical exercises: standing on one leg with closed eyes; drawing a circle in the air with one hand and a line with the other; simultaneous stepping and clapping; the plasticity of performing movements for music. For these tasks we used the following songs: Tchaikovsky's *Waltz of Flowers*, Schumann's *Santa Claus*.

In addition, each child was offered to jump with a rope until getting tired. This activity characterizes not only the hopping ability of the child, but also the speed of its motor reaction, ability to perform combined actions with other subjects, and also determine the dexterity of the child. The correlation between coordination of movements during jumping and development and coordination of the movements of the muscles of the hand during writing, as well as during playing the musical instrument, was revealed.

Lifting the body in the seat from the position lying on the back reflects the readiness of the muscles of the back and abdomen for prolonged static loads while sitting behind the instrument (piano, cello), or holding a musical instrument (violin).

Generalized characteristics of the levels of the maturity of physical readiness of preschoolers for learning to play a musical instrument are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Characteristics of the levels of the maturity of physical readiness of preschoolers for learning to play a musical instrument

LEVEL	POINTS	CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEVEL
Low	1-2	Muscle stiffness, excessive muscle relaxation, poor coordination of movements, up to 10 jumps on a rope, up to 10 times lifting the body
Medium	3-4	Partial muscle stiffness or muscle relaxation or coordination of movements, up to 20 jumps on a rope, up to 20 times lifting the body
High	5	Possession of relaxation and tension of muscles, coordination of multi-directional movements, more than 20 jumps on a rope, more than 20 times lifting the body

Results of the Research

To determine the real state of maturity of readiness for learning to play a musical instrument three levels were identified: low, medium and high. The level of readiness of the child to study was determined based on the number of points: 0-7 points – low level, 8-14 – medium level and 15-20 – high level. Summing up the results of the diagnostics of preschoolers' maturity of the formation of readiness for learning to play a musical instrument, three levels were identified (see Table 5).

Table 5. Distribution of preschoolers by levels of maturity of readiness for learning to play a musical instrument

COMPONENT OF READINESS	LEVEL OF READINESS					
	<i>Low</i>		<i>Medium</i>		<i>High</i>	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
Personal readiness	12	48.0%	9	36.0%	4	16.0%
Motivational readiness	8	32.0%	13	52.0%	4	16.0%
Emotional readiness	10	40.0%	11	44.0%	4	16.0%
Physical readiness	6	24.0%	16	64.0%	3	12.0%
General level of readiness for learning to play a musical instrument	7	28.0%	14	56.0%	4	16.0%

Thus, 28.0% of preschoolers are characterized by the absence of personal meaning to learning to play a musical instrument or the presence of only external motives. They have poorly developed melodic and harmonic ear, musical-rhythmic ability; the ability to concentrate on musical sound and the ability to stability, selectivity, switching and distribution of auditory attention are not detected. They cannot identify and show emotional state independently and have a very small set of expressive-mimic means; their physical condition is characterized by muscle stiffness or excessive muscle relaxation, poor coordination of movements.

56.0% of preschoolers are characterized by a medium level of their readiness for learning to play a musical instrument. In particular, their motivation is characterized by a combination of positional, external and game motives for learning to play a musical instrument. They have partially developed or unevenly expressed melodic and harmonic ear, musical-rhythmic ability. Their musical-auditory attention is characterized by a limited, fragmentary ability to concentrate on musical sound, relative stability, selectivity, switching and distribution of auditory attention. They determine and depict the emotional state of another with the help of an adult, are able to empathize with another, but cannot express their emotions objectively because of small amount of expressive-mimic means of communication. Their physical condition is characterized by partial muscle stiffness or muscle relaxation, not sufficiently developed coordination of movements.

Only 16.0% of preschoolers have a high level of readiness for learning to play a musical instrument.

Conclusions

The diagnostics of preschoolers has shown insufficient level of maturity of their readiness for learning to play a musical instrument. At the same time, the relevance and results of the diagnostics allow to distinguish areas of work for the development of a course on pre-instrumental training of preschoolers, in particular:

- *Motivational training.* Formation of positive perceptions about learning music and the desire for creative self-expression, based on the cognitive (educational) motives of preschoolers, is a prerequisite for qualitative training.
- *Personal training.* Development of musical abilities, with emphasis on the development of the sense of rhythm, the combination of the development of melodic and harmonic ear, facilitates learning to play a musical instrument significantly. Formation of attention requires work on such elements as concentration, stability, distribution and switching.
- *Emotional training.* Working with the emotional sphere of preschoolers will reduce impulsive reactions and teach them to perform a not very attractive task, because learning to play a musical instrument requires the development of a variety of skills and the repetition of typical tasks.
- *Physical training.* Physical readiness should provide strengthening of muscles and development of joint flexibility as the basis of mastering the posture during playing any musical instrument. Work on coordination of movements will facilitate more rapid mastery of new playing movements.

Authors stress that the formation of preschoolers' readiness for learning to play a musical instrument can be carried out during musical lessons in kindergartens by using elements of pre-instrumental training.

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