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**ARTISTIC AND EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL OF THE  
CONTEMPORARY MUSICAL TOYS**

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***Abstract***

The authors refer to the problem of preferences and use of children's musical toys in practice of educational institutions and in the family, disclose the educational opportunities of the contemporary musical toys from the standpoint of the reality and aesthetic perfection's artistic cognition. The materials of the research are modern musical toys for children from the first year of life to 10 years. The scope of the review included two aspects. The formal side of the question was studied - what must necessarily be at preschool and elementary school. It means adherence to the requirements for the implementation of the educational program of preschool education of the Federal state educational standards of preschool education and requirements of the Federal standards of primary general education in the field of musical toys and musical instruments for use at classes in pre-school educational institutions and at primary school music lessons. The informal side was explored, where the focus was targeted on a wide range of various musical toys, which are traditionally sought after by parents, the experience of families with different numbers of children. Interviewed families were with approximately equal levels of material wealth. On the example of some educational programs, the authors give a detailed analysis of the recommended variety of musical toys. In addition, the article shows the main characteristics of musical toys; consider the advantages and risks of using electronic musical toys; made conclusions about the significance of various toys with artistic and aesthetic positions.

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## 1. Introduction

The modern world of childhood cannot be imagined without numerous and attractive musical toys, filling the life of a growing man with creative joys and new impressions. The importance of musical toys and games, as well as accessible musical instruments for the social and cultural, artistic and creative development of the growing generation, is considered in numerous works of Russian and foreign researchers (Morari, 2016; Dasen, 2017; Paslaru, Morari & Gagim, 2016, etc.). The rapid development of technologies and systems now contributes to an even greater variety of musical toys, including electronic music, filled the playing space of children in the family circle, in preschool educational institutions, primary school.

In this regard, it is interesting to refer to the main Russian government documents that regulate the availability of necessary gaming equipment to ensure the full, artistic and educational development of children of pre-school and primary school age. When considering the Federal state educational standard of preschool education (hereinafter - FSES of PE), we note the most important thing: ensuring "maximum implementation of educational potential space of the Organization, the Group ... "with the aim of" realizing Programs ..., materials, equipment and implements for the development of preschool children" (FSES of PE 3.3.1: 13). At the same time, it is stated that "the Organization independently determines the means of training, including technical, relevant materials (including consumables), game, sports, recreational equipment, inventory necessary for the implementation of the Program " (FSES of PE 3.3.5: 15).

For example, let's turn to some educational programs. The program "Origins", along with the programs "The World of Discoveries", "Childhood", "From birth to school", is one of the most widespread in Russia, recognized by a broad scientific and pedagogical community. The proposed content in it is educational area "Artistic and aesthetic development "that includes the section "Music". From the infant age, the Program provides the acquaintance of children with sounding children's musical instruments, etc. (Origins: 15-16). Further, for example, for children of younger preschool age, "Playing children's musical instruments", "Music play-dramatization" (Origins: 68 - 73) is suggested.

In the Annex to the Program in the list of exemplary structural components of the developing object-spatial environment, the list of exemplary structural components of the development of the subject-spatial environment mentions the "Developing Environment of Creative Activities," where according to each age period a list of necessary "Musical toys and equipment" for children: infancy (rattles, bells, sound mobiles, pianoforte); Early age (rattles, bells, metal telephone, boxes, tambourines, drums, audio recordings); junior preschool age (rattles, bells, a metal telephone, boxes, tambourines, sounding drums, children's maracas, audio recordings); senior preschool age (bells, tambourines, sounding drums, children's maracas, castanets, glockenspiels (including from separate blocks), xylophones, ratchets, bells, whistles, audio recordings (Origins: 136 - 138).

"Developing environment of cognitive-research activity", starting from the infant age, presupposes the presence of sounding toys, rattles of different shapes, toys for sensory development, producing different sounds, etc. (the so-called "Development mats"); section "Toys and equipment for experimentation" - dynamic toys, wheelchairs, including noise effects, folk toys-games (bear-dancers, etc.); section "Means of information and communication technologies: interactive toys" provides for children to have musical toys

and toys with effects (peeping animals with sounds, etc.), in accordance with age - toys developing direction (phones, etc.) (Origins: 139-140).

Approximate partial educational program for young children (1 - 3 years) "First steps" is another example of the currently tolerated variability and diversity of the content of preschool Russian education. If the structure of the program is unchanged (target, content, and organizational sections) and the availability of the educational field "Artistic and aesthetic development", the Program provides a list of materials and equipment for early age groups, there is a special section "Materials for the musical development of children" (First steps: 129 - 134).

It is assumed that in a children's institution should be a music room "equipped with musical instruments (piano or grand piano, accordion, etc.)"; in a group room, a "musical corner" is necessary, in which there must be "children's musical instruments, such as tambourine, drum, ratchets, spoons, bells, pipes, metal and musical toys" (First Steps: 108). Authors of the program "First steps» emphasize the need of experiment with sound objects, which contributes to "the formation of children's interest in the world of sounds," the development of "the ability to differentiate sounds" (First Steps: 53 - 54).

Turning to the consideration of the Federal educational standard of primary general education (hereinafter - FES of PGE), we emphasize the fundamental unity with the level of preschool education in the issue of equipping the educational process. Thus, "Educational institutions independently from allocated budgetary funds and additional financial resources raised in accordance with the established procedure should ensure the equipping of the educational process at the level of primary general education" (FES of PGE: 26).

It can be said that when studying the formal side of the issue at the level of normative documents and the most common educational programs, there are no obvious limitations for the many-sided creative development of children and the full realization of the artistic and educational potential of a modern musical toy. A much more difficult task is to study the possibilities of modern musical toys from the informal side, in the family. For more details, see Section 6.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The variety of modern music toys provides an obvious opportunity for a wide choice, both for educational institutions and for families where children grow up.

At the same time, the abundance of musical toys, especially electronic, diversity in appearance, attractiveness and expressiveness is not a guarantee and condition for effective creative and diverse development of growing children. For example, the age limits of the use of very common contemporary electronic musical toys - "designed for children ... years" - often erased, "blurred". Let's say about the inherent "programmed" electronic musical toys and instruments, "prescription" of their actions, which significantly narrows the space for independent and intensive creative searches for growing children (Stukalova, Grebennikov & Ruchkina, 2018).

If we consider a musical toy as an opportunity to recreate in the sounds of the real and imaginary world (Dziedziewicz & Karwowski, 2015), it becomes clear how the initially set "set" of functions and programs, melodies, rhythms, timbres, etc., predetermines the "framework" for the development of artistic perception (Polyudova, 2016: 8), creative imagination and thinking, but as a whole, significantly limits the

process of development of general and special abilities of growing children (Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016). We also note the "synthetic" (artificial or "lifeless") nature of the sound of electronic musical instruments, which in itself hardly creates a holistic view of children about the sound and multicolored picture of the modern world.

It should be mentioned about the existing ambiguity and multifaceted artistic and aesthetic images of modern musical toys, including electronic ones. It is enough to pay closer attention to the combination of "incompatible" colors, often the form and the very embodiment of the appearance of people, animals, birds, etc., far from reality and aesthetic perfection, but taking place to be. This is directly related with the existing variety of musical toys, and above all, in terms of appearance and sound (from the simplest and primitive to multi-timbral, colorful), and accordingly with the manifestation of various properties and possibilities for application, beginning with pragmatic, utilitarian and ending with really teaching and creatively developing. Let us also note the apparently growing trend of the purely "entertaining" of the contemporary children's musical toys and instruments, demonstrability without much sense and content, which significantly impairs the artistic and educational value of modern music toys, contributes to the development of sustainable "light-weight" attitude to the very process of the game and mastering the basic necessary skills for this.

### **3. Research Questions**

The solution to this problem is the following: What is a modern musical toy? What is its value from the artistic and aesthetic standpoint? What are the main characteristics and distinctive properties in comparison with the musical toys of the last century? What and how can such a toy of the child of the XXI century teach? What criteria should a modern musical toy match for the diverse creative development of a growing child?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The study aims to identify the artistic and the educational potential of a musical toy, its role and significance for the creative development of modern children of preschool and primary school age.

### **5. Research Methods**

#### **5.1. Theoretical analysis of regulatory documents**

*Theoretical analysis of regulatory documents* that assumed a detailed study of the requirements mentioned above for the conditions for the implementation of educational programs for preschool and primary general education (Campbell, Denham & Howarth, etc., 2016). The analysis provided not only the identification of necessary and recommended diversity of musical toys for use in educational practice in accordance with the existing typology (Boyakova, 2016).

There was also a generalized comparison, a comparison of completeness of musical toys (musical tools) for training and development at different levels modern education, preschool and primary general education.

## 5.2. Purposeful pedagogical observation

*Purposeful pedagogical observation*, with the help of who studied the modern look of musical toys, their value in terms of teaching and harmonious development of children, the distinctive properties inherent in the toys of the 21-st century, the characteristic features and the artistic and aesthetic image. Special attention was paid to the study of the proposed and distributed extensive information on various musical toys, while the review dealt with the content and objectives, matched age characteristics.

## 5.3. Conversations

*Conversations* with parents provided for clarification of the situation in the family regarding the presence or absence of musical toys of a child (children), the number and variety of toys, including electro-musical, manifestations of interest (episodic, periodic, sustainable) of children of different ages growing up. Special attention was paid to the initiator of the purchase of musical toys (to the child and / or his peers, parents and / or their friends, acquaintances, etc.), motivation questions (which induces the game, independently and / or with the help of parents and / or other family members, which prefers and why), as well as the time factor, including how much time and when the child engages with musical toys (daily, weekend, parental leave, communication with parents and / or peers, senior and / or younger brothers, sisters, etc.).

## 6. Findings

The pedagogical observation involved concerned the appearance and artistic and aesthetic image of the contemporary musical toys in the logic of conventional typology (Boyakova, 2016). In this row, soundless toys, or rather images of various musical instruments, take place both in preschool educational institutions (which is more common), and in elementary school. One example of application of images of tools in a modern school can be textbooks on music for 1-4 grades, where the musical instruments of the symphony orchestra and the orchestra of folk instruments are presented on the fly leaf (Alekseeva, Shkolyar, 2012, 2013).

Obviously, there are no fundamental changes in the appearance and appearance of such depicted musical instruments. Accordingly, such a "visual" acquaintance with them, educational value for a growing person is obvious, and the artistic and aesthetic image as a whole is unchanged.

Sounding musical toys with an uncertain height, with any sound of one height, and also with a fixed melody (or several melodies) are offered to modern children in all their variety of materials, sizes, colors, shapes, etc.

We note their external appeal for children, and parents, too, since instructions and explanations to them begin, as a rule, from the words "developing", "world of art", "world of childhood», "fascinating", "cognitive", "it will be interesting to the child", etc. And this is unquestionable, because acquaintance with the world of others and musical sounds, their diverse intonations and properties enriches artistic perception and musical-auditory representations of children, develops creative imagination.

The newest technologies of the modern world contributed to appearance and new musical toys, which can be called conditionally integrative. They combine elements ("carriers of meaning") of different types of art, from two and more. For example, sound and color, sound and paint, sound, light and color,

sound and movement, etc. There are a lot of toys of this type, we will quote the most popular ones, starting from those intended for the smallest children. This is a "musical ball with lights", when, during movement or shaking, colored lights and various melodies are played (from one to three, etc.). Musical toy "Palette", where there are buttons in the form of tubes with paint. When you press on each tube sounds a certain melody and a light comes on. Musical dance floor mat "First steps" with touch buttons on surface and sound effects; "Little Friends" is a toy where funny sounds and lights symbolize the emergence of various animals and birds.

For older children, "Drum with piano" - a musical toy that has a keyboard with eight keys of different colors, there is a keyboard above the key board drum with the function of clockwork rhythms and flashing lights of different color. The toy assumes the possibility of listening various musical instruments (pianoforte, flute, tambourine, violin, saxophone), while it itself can play a variety of preset melodies. Let's name also rather popular musical phone with a camera with a set of various tunes (up to ten), light effects, the reproduction of various sounds, photos of animals, etc.

We also note the appearance of very diverse electronic musical toys or instruments, "children's" options musical instruments for adults, respectively for children of preschool and primary school age. For example, children's guitar with adjustable tempo and volume, musical keys and recording of songs (from five to fifteen and other); electronic synthesizer (37 keys, 8 instruments and additional rhythms, etc.) with a removable microphone; among functions - adjustment of volume of sounding and speed of a rhythm, sound effects, etc. Or a children's electronic drum kit with different musical styles, sounds, rhythms, as well as the ability to adjust the tempo, volume, mode of demonstration and recording. Interestingly outdoor electronic piano, on which the child can play both hands, and feet. Among the functions and features - a set of different tunes (up to ten) and instruments (saxophone, piano, organ, violin, guitar, harp, trumpet, etc.). Fun for children in all respects microphone with a platform-speaker, disco ball with multi-colored lights, sound effects, etc.

The existing variety of musical toys and tools for children listed above is not limited, although it remains beyond the scope of our consideration (recall only extraordinary demand in performing practice the synthesizers, the game of which is taught mainly in musical schools and children's art schools).

The value of contemporary musical toys and instruments, including electronic toys, is obvious. Their appearance, modern, as a rule, "catchy", spectacular look and variety of functions with a set of teaching and developing tasks are attractive for parents and children, cause genuine interest and revitalization (Valiahmetova, Salpykova & Nurgayanova, 2014).

The study involved 112 families living in Moscow and the Moscow region. Based on the results of interviews with parents, it was revealed that these or those musical toys were available and / or are available in each family (table 1).

**Table 01.** Priorities (preferences) of parents while choosing musical toys for children.

Types of the contemporary musical toys	Parents' preferences while choosing (%)
Mute toys with images of different instruments	5
Sound toys with an uncertain sounding height	84
Sound toys with any sound (sounds) of the one height, with a fixed melody (melodies)	92
Musical toys with elements of various kinds of art ("integrative")	75
Analogues of musical instruments for adults	48
Children's folk musical instruments	8
Electronic musical instruments for preprofessional education	15

As a rule (approximately half the time, 48%), desire to play with musical toys occurs spontaneously in children and mainly on weekends, if the family does not leave for rest, to relatives, etc. The duration of the lessons is small -from a few minutes to ten to fifteen minutes. In most cases, according to parents, children prefer bright, colorful toys, comfortable for the hands and with euphonious melodies. About a quarter (23%) of modern musical toys for children from the families interviewed were presented by relatives, friends of parents, etc.

When choosing a musical toy, parents are predominantly (78%) are guided by an attractive appearance (colorful), a soft and pleasant sound, a kind of convenience application (hygiene, safety, compliance with the size of the hands of a child); on teaching, developing problems draws attention to three a quarter of the interviewed parents (75%). About soundless musical toys in order to create a game situation and develop common and special abilities of children three quarters of parents, as a rule, have no idea. As a child grows up musical toys are given to younger children, including children of friends, colleagues, close relatives, etc. Sometimes they aren't stored as a memory or for some other reason. In the life of a modern growing child, in a vast space of the world of his childhood, a musical toy (by example of the interviewed families) is not "the most-loved".

The exception is those children who, from the very early childhood learn to play any musical instrument.

It is well known how easily, and quickly small children learn buttons, consoles, functions, procedures, etc. therefore, the recommendations in the instructions for use in any age can be considered rather conditional, and this "universality" of the age-specific application peculiarity, a kind of distinctive feature of electronic musical toys.

## 7. Conclusion

A modern musical toy in its diversity of appearance and purpose organically combines traditions (from typology to artistic value) and innovations related to the intensive development of new technologies, technical means and capabilities (Morari, 2016).

Various musical toys, starting with elementary and including modern electronic musical tools, remain for the growing child of preschool and primary school age an irreplaceable resource in knowledge of the sound, colorful variety of the surrounding world.

Value and importance of modern and diverse musical toys with artistic and aesthetic positions is to recreate the real and imagined world of childhood through an understandable and accessible range of musical, voiced images (Karstad, Kvello & Wichstrom, etc. 2014).

For the level of pre-school education, priority toys should be considered with an uncertain height, with sounds of the same height and with a fixed melody (melodies). At the same time, for the development of children of preschool age (5-6 years) electronic musical instruments (analogues of musical instruments for adults), like guitar, accordion, balalaika, piano, synthesizer, percussion instruments are also available.

For elementary school children, elementary musical instruments — analogues of musical instruments for adults, electronic musical instruments for preprofessional education are of special interest (Fiske & Taylor 2013).

From the point of view of artistic education, training and versatile development of an objective criterion of a musical toy, including electronic, for children of any age can be considered the availability of a real opportunity for independent creative experiments.

To reduce the risk of stereotypical thinking in the broad modern practice of preschool and primary general education, as well as in the family, it seems logical and expedient to use the most diverse existing musical toys: elementary, various materials, sizes, colors and forms, complex, formed throughout the development of human civilization, continuing their lives in another, "electronic" form, and the newest musical instruments, created already in the XXI century.

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