

## PEHPP 2019

### Pedagogical Education: History, Present Time, Perspectives

# INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO TEACHING COMPOSITION IN ART AND PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION

A. G. Porovskiy (a)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Yaroslav the Wise Novgorod State University, Veliky Novgorod, Russia, [Aleksey.Porovskiy@novsu.ru](mailto:Aleksey.Porovskiy@novsu.ru)

### *Abstract*

The article discusses the issues of improving the quality of teaching composition in art and pedagogical education related to the need to develop the creative potential of a future painter-teacher in the context of humanization of education. The author notes that the artistic composition, uniting all the disciplines of the art block in art and pedagogical education, is not sufficiently studied from the point of view of the conceptual apparatus, categories, and terminology. The article suggests ways of productive organization of teaching composition for the formation of professional competencies of university students in art, depictive and pedagogical activities. The article presents the results of surveys of students, graduates, employers and teachers of art disciplines of the specialty "Visual Arts and Continuing Education: Decorative and Applied Arts" at Yaroslav the Wise Novgorod State University. Questionnaires were conducted from 2012 to 2018 and were related to the process of studying the "Composition" training module. The questionnaires contained questions that would reveal students' understanding of the basic principles of the theory of artistic composition. Based on the results of the surveys, the most effective approaches to the design of educational and methodological support for the educational process were identified. The author of the article offers a number of recommendations on the creation of study guides and teaching packages that can be useful for university teachers, teachers of secondary vocational and primary art education.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

**Keywords:** Visual arts, competencies of artistic and depictive activities, process approach, artistic composition, artistic and pedagogical education, painter -teacher.



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## 1. Introduction

Intensive innovative processes that occur not only in the economic and social, but also in the cultural and aesthetic environment of modern man cannot but affect artistic and pedagogical education. In the sphere of professional interests of a painter-teacher, new areas of activity, objects, and concepts appear for fine art and artistic culture. Artistic and pedagogical education must respond in a timely manner to changes occurring in professional art. One of the disciplines of the educational cycle in art and pedagogical education, designed not only to explain the current changes in the visual arts and artistic creation, but also to form professional competencies in the artistic and visual activities of students, is an artistic composition.

The reproduction of a visually perceptible, fixed on a plane or in space sensually-specific image of the phenomena of reality in the process of creating an artwork (works of painting, graphics, sculpture, decorative and applied art, monumental art, graphic design, photo art, etc. ) is regarded to be the art-visual activity to.

The phenomenon of composition in all types of art - architecture, music, literature, painting - has always been of interest to creators and scientists. Probably, even in the early Middle Ages, artists and researchers began to attempt to systematize the knowledge of creating an artwork in various areas of fine art. Architects and art historians, philosophers and painters, physicists, psychologists, physiologists, scientists of other fields studied the nature of art and painting and artistic creation. The fact that artistic composition is the most important theoretical basis of these processes has been recognized by many prominent researchers (Shorohov, 1986).

Is it possible to study artistic creation based only on a rational beginning, excluding the subconscious, feelings and intuition? This question is still open today, especially since in professional fine art the author, artist, painter or, for example, graphic artist does not have to explain his work, because the language of communication between fine art and the viewer is visual communication. However, the problem of systematizing knowledge of artistic composition gained relevance as far back as the 40s of the 20th century, when a professional artistic and pedagogical education was created in the USSR, the essence of which was a synthesis of the artistic, graphic and pedagogical training of a future specialist (Porovskiy, 2011). A painter-teacher serves as a link between professional art and education and, of course, must own the conceptual apparatus of a particular subject related to the artistic and creative unit, including composition.

Despite the fact that the importance of the study of artistic composition in the visual arts has been recognized by artists and science for a long time, today the existing teaching and methodological manuals on this type of art lack theoretical content based on a common conceptual framework, interpretation of laws, categories, principles. This, in turn, negatively affects the design of work programs and educational complexes at the university, which, of course, complicates the process of teaching students artistic composition and can adversely affect the quality of training of graduates with artistic and pedagogical education.

## 2. Problem Statement

The main problem of the study is to find approaches on the basis of which it is possible to systematize the structure of the theoretical content of teaching artistic composition to improve the quality of training of graduates of the artistic and pedagogical direction of training.

The need to solve this problem is due to the following circumstances:

- the need for university teachers in the conceptual apparatus of the theoretical content of the discipline (training module) “Composition” with a logical structure of categories, laws, definitions, terms;
- the need to create textbooks and educational-methodological complexes for students of the university in the discipline (training module) “Composition”, based on a common theoretical basis.

The phenomenon of composition has always occupied the minds of researchers in all forms of art. In the visual arts, Leonardo da Vinci, Alberti, Albrecht Durer, Poussin, Delacroix and others, paid great attention to the study of artistic composition. Studies in the field of composition in the fine arts in Russia were carried out by A. P. Losenko, A. P. Sapozhnikov, P. P. Chistyakov, D. N. Kardovsky, V. A. Favorsky, A. A. Deineka, K. F. Yuon (Shorohov, 1986).

Painter-teachers has long proved the importance of studying composition. The study of this discipline directly affects the creative development of students at different levels of education. As Chernyshev notes, during the period of intensive development of artistic and pedagogical education in the USSR, the study of the phenomenon of composition involved such artists and educators as N. N. Volkov, E. V. Shorokhov, N. N. Rostovtsev, S. E. Ignatiev, Yu. S. Somov and others. Over the past quarter century, N. M. Sokolnikova, O. L. Golubeva, R. V. Paranyushkin, K. T. Dagldiyan, G. M. Logvinenko, V. A. Mogilevtsev et al took part in the creation of study guides on composition. In these manuals, the authors approach the study of composition from different angles: as a decorative composition, a formal composition (Chernyshev, 1999), as a composition in painting, in design, and as a technique for creating an artwork (Mogilevtsev, 2017), as a science, and as a subject. There are other approaches. Often, the problems of artistic composition are considered by art historians on the example of studies of the works of famous artists (Farago, 1991; Greenstein, 1997) or even on the example of one famous artwork (Voloshinov, 1999).

Because composition exists in all forms of art, many compositional terms are the same for visual arts. Concepts such as "symmetry" and "rhythm" are explored, for example, in relation to cinema and other visual arts (Kaldigul, Yeldos, & Yerhan, 2015).

Many manuals for art and pedagogical education, however, are limited to general discussions about the specificity and significance of compositional creativity; consideration in arbitrary form of some of the most famous terms, rules and techniques and, further, a demonstration of examples of their implementation by famous artists in various fields of artistic practice. Even making attempts to enrich the content of textbooks with the achievements of modern science in the field of psychology, semiotics, linguistics, technical aesthetics, etc., in various textbooks, the authors not only give the fundamental categories a different interpretation, but also arbitrarily build a hierarchy of categories. For example, the same concepts

can be called the laws of composition and formal signs, rules and means of expression. Even when naming a law, authors often do not formulate it, limiting themselves to describing an example of the work of a particular master. Chernyshev (1999) writes: “This state of affairs in the field of composition theory was the reason that the knowledge contained in it was in most cases purely informational and descriptive in nature, did not go beyond the narrow empirical experience of traditional types of artistic creation, and did not rise to the level of special theoretical generalizations and logical and methodological transformations” (p. 11). This statement is still relevant today.

Some authors make a list of the laws of composition, in which there may be two, or maybe five or six, while other researchers refuse the composition of laws in general. So, for example, Shorohov (1986) names six laws of composition, and Paranyushkin (2005) writes: “You can call it the laws of composition, but in relation to art, you don’t want to use this harsh word “ law ”, which does not allow the artist to act freely” (p. 4). When explaining the categories of rules, techniques, means of expressiveness, there is also a significant difference in characteristics and definitions.

The result of such a situation with different interpretations of the concepts in the theoretical basis of the discipline “Composition” was the insufficient formation of professional competencies and, as a result, a decrease in the quality of training of painter - teachers. So, as a result of surveys conducted by the author of the article as part of teaching the Composition course at Yaroslav the Wise Novgorod State University (NovSU) in 2012-2015. Out of 50 students in 1-3 courses in the field of study "Visual Arts and Further Education: arts and crafts" 46 (92%) of the respondents gave the wrong answer to the question of the questionnaire about the definition of the term “artistic composition”. 42 (84%) students gave a definition to this concept similar to the definition of the term “layout”. 95% of students also gave incorrect answers to other questions of the questionnaire related to the conceptual apparatus of discipline, the definition of rules, techniques and expressive means of composition. In general, the questionnaire contained five blocks of questions: personal data and creative interests of students; laws of composition; theoretical foundations of composition; rules and techniques of composition; means of expressiveness of the composition. It was found that the majority of respondents (more than 90%) do not have a solid idea of the theoretical foundations of artistic composition.

### **3. Research Questions**

In the course of the study, a search was made for answers to the following questions:

- What theoretical foundations are used today in teaching composition as part of the artistic and pedagogical direction of training university students?
- What approaches to the explanation of the phenomenon of artistic composition exist in artistic and pedagogical education?
- How does teaching the theory of composition affect the quality of training of future artists and educators?
- What are the most effective approaches to teaching composition in artistic and pedagogical education?

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

The aim of the study is to identify the most productive approaches to teaching artistic composition in art and pedagogical education, providing high quality training of graduates, the formation of their professional competencies and the development of creative potential.

The author of the study suggests that teaching composition in art and pedagogical education at a university will be more productive if the content of this scientific discipline is based on categories, laws, and principles of the natural sciences.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The methodological basis of the study is the competence and process approaches. In the context of the study, the competency-based approach allows us to determine the competencies of the artistic and visual activities that should be formed in the process of studying artistic composition. The competency-based approach has long been recognized as dominant in modern education. This approach is often used in studies of contemporary art and pedagogical education (Mishina & Yavgildina, 2015). Nevertheless, there are some contradictions when applying the competency-based approach to the quality of education. The reason, probably, is that only the educational result expressed by a set of competence groups acts as an object of evaluation when applying this approach. In turn, the process approach is focused not only on the assessment of the main characteristics of the final product, but also on the study of the leading parameters of the educational process, which, ultimately, ensure the quality of the educational result - the formation of predetermined competencies in the artistic and visual activity. In the context of this study, the process approach allows us to identify and correct the shortcomings of the process of teaching artistic composition, which do not allow us to productively form the necessary competencies. The choice of “productivity” for the implementation of the process approach has been made for the reason that productivity has not been set initially, it is a reflection of the substantive principles and logic of the process approach itself. In other words, this approach is used to identify the reasons for the insufficient formation of competencies, and the further elimination of this reason provides an improvement in the teaching process.

To achieve the objectives of the study, the following methods were used: theoretical analysis of philosophical, art history, pedagogical literature on research issues; analysis of the current experience of universities in the field of artistic and pedagogical education; poll; questioning, methods of mathematical data processing, generalization of the results of empirical research.

#### **6. Findings**

In accordance with the problem posed, the author of the article conducted a study whose purpose was to identify the reason for the insufficient formation of professional competencies of university graduates in the field of artistic composition.

As a result of surveys conducted by the author among teachers of fine art and representatives of the administration of schools in Veliky Novgorod in 2013-2016, the professional competencies of university graduates in the field of art and pedagogical education were clarified. In the questionnaire compiled by the author of the article, it was proposed to choose from 13 general professional and professional competencies,

those of which the formation of which is most important for the respondent. The survey involved 19 teachers - graduates of NovSU, 12 graduate students of the specialty "Visual Arts and Further Education: Decorative and Applied Arts", 17 employers, 6 teachers of art and creative disciplines. The following most significant professional competencies of the graduate of art and pedagogical education were identified:

- able to use the theoretical foundations of fine art (by type) in the artistic, creative and educational activities;
- able to conduct independent artistic and creative activities in the field of fine and decorative arts.

As a result of applying the process approach to the analysis of the model of the process of teaching artistic composition, as well as by questioning various groups of respondents, it was found that the incomplete formation of students' professional competencies depends on their insufficient mastery of the theoretical course of the discipline (module). This is due to the lack of study guides and teaching packages based on the general conceptual apparatus and the logical structure of the theoretical content of the discipline (module). The author of the article put forward a hypothesis that the quality of training painter-teachers will be high if, when designing the Composition training course, the phenomenon of "artistic composition" will be considered as a scientific discipline based on laws, categories and principles of the natural sciences. As a result of the analysis of theoretical sources, it was determined that when refining the conceptual apparatus of the theoretical course, it is preferable to rely on the categories of the following sciences: physiology and psychology (visual perception), physicists (optical effects), mathematics (parametric calculations), etc.

To improve the quality of training for graduates of the specialty "Visual Arts and Further Education: Decorative and Applied Arts" from 2012 to 2016, the author developed didactic manuals and an educational-methodical complex for the discipline (module) "Composition". When developing the theoretical content of this educational module, composition was considered as a scientific discipline based on categories, laws, and principles of the natural sciences. In accordance with this, the conceptual apparatus of the discipline (module) "Composition" was structured, the list and formulations of concepts were clarified, and some definitions were given.

In 2017-2018, the author of the article, in the process of designing the main educational program of art and pedagogical education on the basis of the Federal State Educational Standard of Generation 3 ++, developed indicators for the achievement of professional competencies of future painter-teachers. The most significant indicators were identified:

- knowledge of laws, rules, methods of work, features of artistic composition in the forms and genres of fine art;
- knowledge of the terminology, and the principles of creating a composition in the forms and genres of fine art;
- ability to show the relationship of the laws of artistic composition with the laws of the natural sciences.

To identify changes in the quality of training of NovSU students in the direction of “Fine Arts and Arts and Crafts”, the author of the article conducted surveys among teachers, the second and the fifth year students and employers. Surveys were conducted from 2016 to 2018. The questionnaire was attended by 6 teachers - scientific advisers of final qualification works, 52 students of the 2nd and 5th year aged 18 to 22 years and 12 employers.

The questionnaire for the 2nd year students contained questions grouped in five blocks: personal data and creative interests; laws of composition; scientific basis of composition; rules and techniques of composition; means of expressiveness of the composition. The largest number of respondents (94%) gave correct definitions and explanations of terms. The questionnaire for the 5th year students contained questions grouped in three blocks: personal data and the choice of the topic of the final qualification work; place of composition in the final qualification work; compositional principles, rules and techniques used in the creative part of the final qualification work. As the questionnaire of the graduation course showed, respondents found diverse artistic interests. Topics for graduate qualifications were related to graphics, painting, graphic design, decorative and applied art, and the teaching of visual arts. All respondents, 18 people, had a clear idea based on what compositional patterns the creative part of the qualification work was carried out.

The questionnaire for teachers contained a question about the degree of formation of professional competencies in the field of composition among the fifth-year students in the process of their work on the final qualification work. As a survey of teachers showed, competencies were fully formed among 45% of graduates, most of whom defended their final qualification work with excellent marks. 55% of graduates had sufficiently formed competencies in the field of composition, most of whom defended their final qualification work at “good”.

The questionnaire for employers contained a question about the level of creative potential of graduates of the specialty. According to the survey, the majority of respondents (83%) replied that their graduates of NovSU in the specialty “Fine Arts and Further Education: Decorative and Applied Arts” have a high level of creative development; a small number of respondents (13%) noted that graduates show sufficient creative initiative in both pedagogical and artistic practice.

## **7. Conclusion**

As the study showed, the study of the phenomenon of artistic composition in the visual arts is relevant. In a modern university, in the framework of art and pedagogical education, up to 10-12 study guides, including those recommended by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, can be used as a basis for teaching theoretical and practical courses of the Composition module. In addition, there are several dozens of study guides, initially dedicated to various areas of fine art and artistic creation, but also addressing the theoretical foundations of artistic composition. The theoretical basis of composition in artistic and pedagogical education are studies that began in the middle of the twentieth century and continued in the 60-80s of the last century. Indeed, today the phenomenon of artistic composition in the visual arts continues to be studied using various approaches.

As a result of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn. A certain decrease in the quality of training in art and pedagogical education is associated with insufficient formation of the professional

competencies of university graduates caused by deficiencies in the process of teaching artistic composition. These competencies are directly related to the development of the creative potential of future painter - teachers. The shortcomings in the process of teaching composition are related to the fact that the available training books and study guides on artistic composition do not have theoretical content based on a common conceptual framework, interpretation of laws, categories, and principles.

The design of training books and study guides, work programs and educational complexes related to the implementation of new generations of educational standards will be successful if the artistic composition is considered primarily as a scientific discipline, the theoretical content of which is based on categories, laws and principles of natural sciences.

Based on the results of this study, it is possible to recommend teachers of art and pedagogical education in higher education institutions when designing work programs and educational complexes to consider artistic composition as a scientific discipline based on categories of the natural sciences, primarily physiology and psychology of perception. Using this approach greatly facilitates the structuring of the conceptual apparatus of the theoretical basis of the discipline (module) and, as a result, improves the process of formation of competencies and the quality of training of graduates.

Teachers of art and pedagogical education at the university can benefit from the experience of applying competency and process approaches in the design of study guides for subjects of the artistic and creative cycle. The simultaneous application of competency and process approaches to teaching the disciplines of the artistic and creative cycle can significantly improve the quality of training of painter - teachers, due to the timely identification of relevant competencies of artistic and visual activities and the prompt introduction of adjustments to the educational process.

## References

- Chernyshev, O. V. (1999). *Formal composition. Creative workshop*. Minsk: Harvest. 312. [in Russ.].
- Farago, C. J. (1991). Leonardo's color and chiaroscuro reconsidered: the visual force of painted images. *Art Bulletin. College Art Association*, 73(1), 63-88.
- Greenstein, J. M. (1997). On Alberti's 'sign': vision and composition in quattrocento painting. *Art Bulletin. College Art Association*, 79(4), 669-698.
- Kaldigul, O., Yeldos, M., & Yerhan, R. (2015). Symmetry and Rhythm in the Art. *Mediterranean Journal Of Social Sciences*, 6(2), 151-156.
- Mishina, A. V., & Yavgildina, Z. M. (2015). *Principles of personalization of content of the competency-based training of students of the artistic-pedagogical specialization. The Social Sciences (Pakistan)*, 10(4), 460-464.
- Mogilevtsev, V. A. (2017). *Basics of composition*. SPb.: 4art. 88. [in Russ.].
- Paranyushkin, R. V. (2005). *Composition: theory and practice of fine art*. Rostov n/D.: Phoenix. 79. [in Russ.].
- Porovskiy, A. G. (2011). *The process approach to the training of fine art teachers*. LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing. [in Russ.].
- Shorohov, E. V. (1986). *Basics of composition*. Moscow: Education. [in Russ.].
- Voloshinov, A. V. (1999). *The old testament trinity of Andrey Rublyov: geometry and philosophy. Leonardo. MIT Press*, 32(2), 103-112.