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**QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF ART EDUCATION AT SCHOOL:  
COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

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***Abstract***

The authors consider the problem of the general art education quality and its assessment in a historical context; show the benefits of art education over a number of decades; reveal a variety of historically established ideas about the quality of education in music and the visual arts. Some normative, instructive, program and other documents, as well as draft concepts on this issue for the period from 1910 to 2016, have become material for the study. By the example of individual historical materials and documents, a general description was made and the specific features of art education at different stages of its development were shown, the main activities of students (art perception, understanding and studying, artistic creativity, practical activities, artistic and practical skills and skills, analysis and others), including in the context of federal state educational standard; the interrelation of strategic orientations, goals, objectives and approaches to the assessment of the art education quality at school has been considered. Detailed consideration of the distinctive features, the common and special in art education, comparison of principled positions and approaches that existed in historical periods, analysis of the students' priorities and main activities allowed making a conclusion about historical lessons of the past for the present. The authors emphasize the importance of high-quality art education for the present, put forward ideas relating to solving actual problems of school art education, taking into account the specifics of art objects, conclude on the of ideas' evolution regarding art education quality and its evaluation.

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## 1. Introduction

The problem of quality in general, as well as the quality of education and its assessment is of particular interest to modern researchers (Alias, Masek, & Md Salleh, 2015; Cheng, Qiu, & Xiao, 2019; Davis, Norris, Malone, McKay, & Son, 2018; Elpus, 2015; González & Pradier, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2017; Podgornik & Mažgon, 2015; Stukalova, 2018; Waber, Boiselle, Forbes, Girard, & Sideridis, 2019, etc.). It is quality education, including art education that is the determining factor in the development of the national intellectual and creative potential, which guarantees each country successful, efficient economic, social, cultural, scientific and technological development.

It is well known how great in their influence is the value of school art education (music lessons and visual arts) for the growing person creative individuality development, the ethical principles, aesthetic ideals and value orientations (Morari, 2015a, 2015b). Throughout the historical development of the Russian education system, for various reasons, the priorities and goals of the children general education have changed. Concepts of the art education quality were changed immanently, any of its features, characteristics and attributes varied, supplemented or lost. Let us give most illustrative examples.

In the context of this paper's problems, the draft reform of the secondary school submitted to the State Duma of the Russian Empire on June 12, 1910 and subsequently withdrawn and removed from consideration is interesting. In accordance with the Project, in all gymnasiums of three varieties with eight years of education, it was intended to "develop the academic performance and behavior of students in elementary, seven-year and secondary schools and strengthen the spiritual strength" of students, "prepare them for persistent mental work", "for systematic persistent work", develop "internal interest and constant striving for truth" (Konstantinov, 1956, p.118).

It was in this Project that the "characteristics of the level of knowledge" of the pupils at the end of the course, including the subject "Drawing", were presented. As conceived by the Project developers, students who graduated from a gymnasium course with ancient languages (the first type - with two, the second type - with one ancient language) should have been able to fix the simplest objects from nature.

Graduates of the third-type gymnasiums with two new languages as a result of training in the subject had to not only be able to "draw ornaments, architectural motifs", but to show "familiarity with the perspective" (Konstantinov, 1956, p.120). In modern programs, such skills are usually characteristic of primary school students. The further development of Russian art education is due to the emergence of a documents' number, which mention, or not, any qualitative characteristics of education in the field of music and visual arts. This Regulation on the Unified Labor School of the RSFSR (*Narodnoe obrazovanie v SSSR. Obsheobrazovatel'naya shkola*, 1974), "The Basic Principles of the Unified Labor School" (or the Declaration) of the State Commission on Education of October 16, 1918 (*Direktivy VKP(b) i postanovleniya Sovetskogo Pravitel'stva o narodnom obrazovanii*, 1947, pp.262 – 272), Programs of the first and second stages of the Unified Labor School (*Programmy dlya pervoj i vtoroj stupeni semiletnej Edinoj Trudovoj Shkoly*, 1921) etc. Here we would say for comparison about the introduction history of a point system for assessing the students' educational activities in 1837 (*Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshheniya*, 1837), on the abolition of the scoring system of "knowledge of ... students" in 1918 (*Narodnoe obrazovanie v SSSR. Obsheobrazovatel'naya shkola*, 1974, p.133), about the Instruction 1944 on the application of the digital five-point system for assessing the students' academic progress and

behaviour at elementary, seven-year and high school (Direktivny VKP(b) i postanovleniya Sovetskogo Pravitel'stva o narodnom obrazovanii, 1947, pp. 278 – 279).

This Instruction is an example of the relationship between quantitative and qualitative assessment of students' academic progress.

Let us turn to the main ideas of the 1921 Programs on art various types.

First of all, the content of education of that time is focused on “nurturing the children creative feeling” and their “will to action”, assisting in the “child emotional life” development, in which “mental work acquires a creative character,” and in general, it is assumed “education through art”, which “becomes a direct and strong ally of labor education” (Programmy dlya pervoj i vtoroj stupeni semiletnej Edinoj Trudovoj Shkoly, 1921, pp.307 – 310). In programs for teaching music and visual arts, the priority is the same “active moment of co-creation,” and the development at school of the ability to “give children the experience of the future life, the one they have to live,” the ability to “see and hear, to feel the world and oneself in this world”, to recognize “art that is pure, clearly and openly speaking to the human sense, and not lessons ...”, etc. (Programmy dlya pervoj i vtoroj stupeni semiletnej Edinoj Trudovoj Shkoly, 1921, pp. 310, 318 – 320, 325). With all the scale of the stated goals and objectives, correlate the priorities of that time, such as educating a “new person”, developing the “creative energy” of children, “free manifestation of the spiritual forces” of schoolchildren in all forms and forms of artistic practice, learning the ability to “see and hear, feel the world and oneself in the world”, etc. with fairly specific indicators of assessing the quality of education in the arts, the most difficult task.

And in this example, it is obvious that the strategic goal of art education that was proclaimed and then actively promoted, generalizes, absorbs, perhaps even “blurs the boundaries” for a detailed assessment, and by and large does not provide for specific quality indicators.

Subsequently, the Decree of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) “On Primary and Secondary School” dated August 25, 1931, raises the problem of pupils getting a sufficient level of general education, while talking about the works of 1920s, which show the necessity avoid early specialization in secondary schools and “develop a minimum of knowledge in detail” (Narodnoe obrazovanie v SSSR. Obsheobrazovatel'naya shkola, 1974, p. 157). The idea of "a minimum of knowledge" to some extent will be embodied later, in the Instructive letter of the Gorky Regional Department of Public Education.

This Instructional Letter provided for the preparation of students for the delivery of standards for the “Art for the Children of Workers” badge (Instruktivnoe pismo «Podgotovka i sdacha norm na znachok "Iskusstvo Detyam Trudyashixsya", 1934). In addition to stating the objectives, main tasks and organization of the process, the Instructional Letter included the developed standards for the visual arts, music and other forms of art for school students, as well as a minimum amount of theoretical knowledge and practical skills for different age groups, sample questions for school students. Thus, in the visual arts, it was necessary to make sketches, drawings, sculptures, with the subsequent submission to a special commission and further selection for the exhibition of art works.

Children had to own a pencil, coal, watercolor, and at the same time "consciously reflect the most characteristic moments of objects", depict monochrome and colorful compositions, place them on a piece of paper "most expressive and expedient", be able to convey the proportions of objects, the movement of

a human figure (Instruktivnoe pismo «Podgotovka i sdacha norm na znachok "Iskusstvo Detyam Trudyashhixsya", 1934, pp. 5 – 7).

In addition, knowledge of the main types of fine arts for children of 11 - 12 years old (grades 5-6 of the modern secondary school) was taken into account; the ability to verbally describe the content of Russian or foreign artist picture for students aged 13-14 years (grades 7-8 of the contemporary school).

It was supposed to conduct “passing standards in music” not only at classes, but also in the circles - string instruments and choir, in the presence of a special commission. Proper singing was provided, “collectively, no more than 10 students,” if necessary, individually.

A list of questions relating to the authors of the performed music was proposed (W. Mozart’s Rondo alla turca and the Internationale was mentioned), the names and sounds of various musical instruments (piano or grand piano, balalaika, Russian accordion, etc.), the names of Russian classical composers, classics of the West and Soviet composers, and also names of the songs learned in a class, etc. (Instruktivnoe pismo «Podgotovka i sdacha norm na znachok "Iskusstvo Detyam Trudyashhixsya", 1934, pp. 8 – 9). Thus, the "norms" for each of art objects assumed the verification of theoretical knowledge and practical activities certain amount (playing music, drawing, sketching, etc.).

In the future, gradually there is a process of the general education in the visual arts and music goals field and objectives changing.

Thus, the elementary school program of 1943, for example, in music, is aimed at raising the children general culture, expanding and enriching their musical horizons, educating students of musical speech, and generating interest in music.

According to the program developers, based on the certain professional skills’ development, such as "it is elementary to understand the structure of musical works, their content and artistic value", as well as through the "musical hearing, rhythm and voice development", learning to sing "in the choir and ensemble ", including singing a capella and singing on notes, it is possible to achieve the stated goals (Programmy nachalnoj shkoly, 1943, p.114).

The idea of educating school students of musical culture as part of their whole spiritual culture found its further embodiment in the activity of D. B. Kabalevsky in 1970 - 1980s and in the art education concept created by this educator-musician (Programmy obshheobrazovatelnyx uchrezhdenij. Muzyka. 1-8 klassy., 2006, etc.). D.B. Kabalevsky’ position regarding the problem of the general music education quality is obvious from his thoughts concerning the priority of children's dedication to music (“what” and “how”), sense and understanding of this kind of art (Alekseeva, 2018) but not learning problems (“what” to teach specifically and “how” to evaluate the results). For comparison, let's say about the approaches described in other publications (Zandén & Ferm, 2015; Stolz, 2017).

The question of developing specific criteria for artistic, creative and students’ general aesthetic development is raised in the draft Concept of art education as the students’ aesthetic education system foundation (Konceptsiya hudozhestvennogo obrazovaniya kak fundamenta sistemy esteticheskogo vospitaniya shkolnikov. Proekt, 1989). As part of the scientific support for the Concept implementation, we are talking about the need for special criteria for the teacher to control the teaching artistic subjects in various programs results.

Summarizing the above, it is difficult to say that by the beginning of the 21st century, in the art education theory and practice, there was a scientifically based and universally implemented system for assessing the education in art subjects quality at secondary school.

At the same time, it can be said that by the end of the 1990s, in the Russian general art education history, a certain experience had been gained in implementing various approaches to assessing the education in music and visual arts classes' quality. A comparative description of the priorities of art education and students' activities is presented in Section 6.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The development and further approval in Russia of federal state educational standards for primary, basic and secondary (complete) general education marks the beginning of a fundamentally different approach to assessing the music and visual arts education quality at modern school (FSES, 2009, 2010, 2012). The essence of the problems is as follows.

On the one hand, there is a federal state educational standard as a social contract, a fundamental state document with a specific system of clear and detailed requirements for subject, personal and metasubject results, including the general art education quality, and there is an obvious need for mandatory compliance with the requirements of the standard for students learning outcomes of basic educational programs in art subjects at school.

On the other hand, the existing requirements and domestic experience of evaluating theoretical knowledge about art and its types, practical skills and abilities of musical and graphic activities leave the children spiritual and moral feelings, their true attitude to the folk art traditions originality as the generations spiritual memory, beyond students' true understanding of the art life content, its special, imaginative nature, etc.

At the same time, the extreme complexity of an objective assessment of the growing person artistic culture level as part of general spiritual culture, as well as real educational results related to students' artistic perception, artistic knowledge and artistic creativity at school, is obvious (Dziedziewicz & Karwowski, 2015).

There is another problem related to the assessment of art education quality for those students who at this stage of their general artistic development at elementary or basic school have insufficient or no abilities in the music and visual arts field.

The standard approach to assessing the of art education quality for such children often deprives them of immediate joy from meeting art at school, limits the space for independent searches and ideas in various types of educational activities, complicates the creative possibilities development and the coherent artistic picture of the world.

## **3. Research Questions**

These problems solution determines the range of addressed issues: What are the historical lessons of the past for high-quality art education and what is its significance in response to the challenges of modern time?

Is there a relationship between strategic priorities, goals, objectives and established approaches to assessing the quality of art objects?

What is the meaning of promising ideas for the problems solving of assessing the students' modern art education quality?

How should the specifics of art objects be taken into account when assessing the education quality at modern school, taking into account the requirements of federal state educational standards' implementation?

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

The study is aimed at studying the Russian art education historical experience, considering the general and particular in the existing approaches to assessing the education in music and visual arts classes quality, identifying promising opportunities to overcome existing problems of assessing the art education at modern school quality.

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

In the course of the study, a comparative historical as well as theoretical analysis of individual normative, instructional, program, and other conceptual documents related to secondary schools and art objects (currently music, visual arts; previously drawing and singing) was conducted.

The choice of the analyzed documents for the period from 1910 to 2016 due to the presence in their content of characteristics, features, etc., relating to the level, norms, art education quality and its evaluation.

#### **6. Findings**

Predetermining the study results, let's say about an attempt to take into account quantitative indicators and qualitative characteristics of the mastering art education results on the example of the Project of scientifically based modernization content and teaching the subject area "Art" technologies' concept (Proekt nauchno-obosnovannoj koncepcii modernizacii sodержaniya i texnologij prepodavaniya predmetnoj oblasti "Iskusstvo", 2016). For comparison, you can watch, for example (Campbell et al., 2016).

The Project has a comprehensive criterion-assessment base for the subject area "Art", where the generalized result of the content development by students is composed of the personal artistic development dynamics' qualitative assessment (without a mark) and educational achievements quantitative assessment and subject actions and metadisciplinary character with a possible mark (Proekt nauchno-obosnovannoj koncepcii modernizacii sodержaniya i texnologij prepodavaniya predmetnoj oblasti "Iskusstvo", 2016, p. 66).

It also describes in detail the criteria and indicators of the interest in art development, artistic literacy, works of art emotional and moral response (qualitative assessment); educational achievements in the field of various artistic knowledge and skills (quantification). Compare, for example, with the approaches of Tran, Ho, Mackenzie, and Le, (2017), Ferm, Vinge, Väkevä, and Zandén (2017).

At the same time, the authors of the project emphasize that the leading role is played by the dynamics of the students' general artistic development assessment.

And the assessment of students' educational achievements is necessary, first of all, to identify the deficiencies in their professional and educational activities by the teacher. It is also noted that "in no case should the assessment procedure be a way "to punish students by assessment" (Proekt nauchno-obosnovannoj koncepcii modernizacii sodержaniya i texnologij prepodavaniya predmetnoj oblasti "Iskusstvo", 2016, p. 68).

The undertaken research showed that the ideas about the art education quality and the possibilities of its assessment were diverse, and varied depending on the corresponding changes in the general education system.

To a large extent, the changes taking place were determined by the goals and objectives set forth, as well as by the approaches to the "subject of evaluation" that had taken shape at the beginning of the 21st century.

In some cases, this is the amount of music and the visual arts theoretical knowledge, in others - the skills and abilities in the field of artistic practice.

And only in the Project of the scientifically grounded concept of the subject area "Art" 2016 content and teaching technologies modernization the possibilities for art education quality holistic assessment are summarized in the relationship of theoretical knowledge and artistic practice, taking into account the students' individual characteristics.

This position seems to be extremely important in relation to children who do not show interest in art objects during the school period, including in view of the slightly developed abilities in the music and visual arts field.

Comparative characteristics, clearly demonstrating the general and particular, distinctive features and properties on the example of art education identified, historically established priorities and the students' main activities are presented in Table 01.

**Table 01.** Historical priorities of art education and the students' main activities: a comparative description.

<b>№ №</b>	<b>Year of the document</b>	<b>Document's name</b>	<b>Priorities of art education</b>	<b>Main activities</b>
1	2	3	4	5
1	1910	Secondary school reform project	Spirituality, perseverance, interest	Artistic and practical skills
2	1921	Programs of the Unified Labor School first and second stages	Creativity, spirituality, education, work	Ability to see, listen and hear, understand and create
3	1934	Instructive letter "Training and delivery of standards on the badge "Art to the Children of Working People"	A certain amount of knowledge and skills (norms)	Theoretical (required amount of knowledge) and practical activity (singing, drawing, sketch, etc.)

4	1943	Primary School Programs	General culture, artistic outlook, interest, development of abilities	Elementary analysis of works of art, practical activities (singing, drawing, etc.)
5	1974	Basic principles and methods of the music program for general education school	Spirituality, culture, dedication interest	Perception of art, feeling, comprehension
6	1989	The concept of art education as the foundation of the students' aesthetic education system (project)	Artistic exploration of the world, artistic, creative and general aesthetic development	Creative perception of art, expanding the experience of artistic creativity
7	2009, 2010, 2012	Federal state educational standards of general education	Spiritual and moral development and education, spiritual values and culture, individual development, creative work, etc.	Universal learning activities; perception, analysis and evaluation of art, artistic and practical skills
8	2016	The project is science-based the concept of modernizing the content and teaching the subject area "Art" technology	Artistic culture, artistic development, emotional development of the world, development of artistic and creative abilities	Variety of artistic creation, perception of art, artistic knowledge and skills

## 7. Conclusion

Appeal to the issues of art education quality and its assessment is not fundamentally new for the Russian school.

Consideration of the Russian art education development process on the basis of the documents and materials studied indicates an ambiguous understanding of the general art education quality and the availability of different approaches to its assessment (the amount or "norms" of knowledge, the level of mastery of practical skills, etc.).

On the example of domestic historical experience, it is obvious: the so-called strategic priorities with "broad" goals and objectives of general art education make it difficult to assess its quality in relation to indicators, criteria for achievement. And on the contrary, more specific, target reference points and narrowly focused tasks of teaching music and visual arts at school, as a rule, leave without proper attention issues related to the purpose of art as a world artistic mastery universal way.

The dominance of any one component in the evaluation of quality - theoretical knowledge or artistic and practical activities - leads to a "boundaries" significant narrowing of the music and visual arts development, the brightness and simplification loss of its figurative, emotional perception by children, minimizing the possibility of students' generalized, holistic view of art and its meaning in the modern person and society life.

One of the obvious lessons of the past in terms of art education quality is the need to teach art with the specificity of its content - the moral and aesthetic experience of all mankind, accumulated over many centuries.

Domestic historical experience teaches contemporaries that the art education quality is achieved not only for the sake of quality, according to continuously changing norms, levels and requirements, but, first of all, for the harmonious and every growing person all-round development.

Achieving the actual quality of art education at modern school can, in the opinion of the authors, be considered an exhaustive answer to the challenges of modernity, since mastering art is an irreplaceable resource in the inculturation of the young generation, the children's value orientations and aesthetic ideals development, and a respectful attitude to Russian artistic traditions and national priorities.

On the example of historical experience, it is obvious that there is a need, opportunity and prospects for implementing an integrated approach to assessing the modern art education quality.

At the same time, an integrated approach in the interrelation and interaction of goals and objectives, content, methods and forms, requirements of federal state educational standards will become the basis for translating the idea of younger generation upbringing and education the into art using a wide educational practice.

Based on the art objects specifics, for the successful implementation of an integrated approach to assessing the art education quality in a wide practice, the principle of flexibility as permissible deviation within the limits of education established (expected) planned results for all students is extremely important.

And in the first place, this applies to those children who, during the period of schooling, do not manifest or have little special abilities and / or need to communicate with art.

Based on the consideration of normative and instructive materials number, concepts and other fundamental government documents, we can state: the ideas evolution process about the assessment of art education quality (the characteristics of its levels, norms, criteria, etc.) proceeds in the direction of concretization, detailing requirements for theoretical and practical results and students' achievements.

How this will affect the of the children artistic education quality in general and contribute to the improvement of the general, artistic and spiritual culture of the present and the future young generation of Russians will be evident from further research.

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