

Nikolayeva E.B., teacher of the department of general humanitarian and natural sciences of the Sergiev Posad Institute of Toys – branch of the Russian University of traditional art crafts, 141310, Sergiev Posad, Severny Proezd, 5, e-mail skoropuxa57@mail.ru

Student Scientific Society and its role in forming scientific interests of students at the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute

Abstract. The article reveals the significance of involving students from the Sergiyev Posad Toy Institute in research activities and highlights the role of the student scientific society in introducing them to this activity. Engaging students in conducting research on unique toy crafts not only helps preserve and develop traditional artistic crafts but also contributes to shaping creative and active individuals capable of addressing current research, artistic, and technological challenges that arise when creating works in this field of art. This will, in turn, prepare highly qualified and sought-after professionals in the toy industry for the job market.

Keywords: student scientific society, students, education, research, scientific and practical conference.

The issue of the role of science in higher education institutions has been discussed repeatedly. In his welcoming address to participants of the Russian Union of Rectors, President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin emphasized that "the system of higher education is our powerful intellectual resource. Therefore, it is important for Russian universities to strengthen their scientific potential, become modern centers for fundamental and applied research, as well as for developing breakthrough technologies"⁶⁵. A special role in this direction can be played by the Student Scientific Society.

The Student Scientific Society is an association of students aimed at promoting scientific activities within the educational institution [7]. It may include research groups, sections and laboratories.

The Student Scientific Society at the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute was formed in 2019, with its regulations approved, a list of members compiled, a council elected and topics for student research defined. Thus, according to the regulations of the SSS, its goal is to promote the quality of training future specialists, support scientific resources and create conditions for improving students' scientific activities and integrating them into the scientific and educational sphere. The work of the Student Scientific Society is based on annual planning and coordination of research themes. To foster a culture of scientific inquiry among students, joint meetings between

⁶⁵ Putin Urges Russian universities to strengthen their scientific potential // RIA Novosti. – URL: <https://ria.ru/20221125/nauka-1834223847.html> (accessed: February 11, 2025) – Text: electronic.

members of the SSS, researchers from the Art and Pedagogical Toy Museum named after N.D. Bartram and institute faculty are included in the action plans.

The themes of student research cover a wide range of areas related to the study of toys. Typically, these are applied sciences – “disciplines that use scientific knowledge to solve practical problems. They play a key role in technology development and improvement of life quality” [8]. Special attention is paid to humanities and social sciences.

One of the main tasks of the student scientific society is to engage students together with teachers and museum staff in research activities, where ideas are sought, goals are formulated and results are tested. In this process, students benefit from studying exhibits in the exhibition hall of the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute, Art and Pedagogical Toy Museum named after N.D. Bartram and the Gallery of Traditional Arts and Crafts.

In terms of choosing directions for scientific and professional development, the discipline "Individual Project," which is incorporated into the curricula of all programs at the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute, plays a significant role. The course facilitates the identification of students' creative inclinations, while the topics they find interesting in project-based learning often evolve into research topics within the Student Scientific Society [9]. For example, the research titled "Soft Toy: Features of Design and Production" conducted by D. Korneeva, a third-year student majoring in Design (specialty code 54.02.01), presented at the International Student Forum "Unique Art of Russia," was further developed into her final qualifying work titled "Development of Soft Stuffed Toys 'Foxes'".

A special role in the formation of students' scientific interests is played by traditional international forums for students, postgraduates and young scientists entitled "Culture of Russia in the 21st Century: Past in the Present, Present in the Future". Thus, during the forums, students present reports on completed research projects in the form of presentations, speeches and finished product designs. Among such works is the report by fourth-year student A. Kotova titled "Traditional Sergievsky painting with pyrography in artistic Wooden Toy design," which outlined the main issues and findings of the conducted scientific investigation.



Fig. 1, 2. Sokolov V.I. Wooden products with Sergievsky painting. Sergiev Posad Toy Institute

The research was based on the study of the traditional craft of Sergievsky (Zagorsk) painting, which originated in the early 20th century. The student studied the works of V.I. Sokolov, the founder of Sergievsky pyrography painting. Works by this master are housed both in the Art and Pedagogical Toy Museum named after N.D. Bartram and in the

exhibition hall of the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute (Fig. 1⁶⁶, 2).

This type of decorative and applied art was known in Europe since the 17th century and gained popularity in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century thanks to the establishment of the Moscow Provincial Zemstvo's Art Carpentry Workshops, which were subordinate to the Kustarny Museum under the patronage of S.T. Morozov.

In 1902, S.T. Morozov invited V.I. Sokolov to Sergiev Posad—the first prominent Russian artist who lived there permanently, unlike artists like M.V. Nesterov or K.F. Juon, who visited occasionally.

As noted by M. Pyzhov, "it is remarkable that Vladimir Ivanovich did not declare: 'I am a born colorist, a landscape painter whom Levitan himself valued. I will not deal with applied things'". He humbly accepted Morozov's offer. And now Sokolov is much better known as an applied artist than as a painter" [12].

V.I. Sokolov took charge of the Art Carpentry Workshops in Sergiev Posad. New products were discussed and approved weekly at the Kustarny Museum. At one of these meetings, it was decided to develop souvenirs decorated with pyrography painting. V.I. Sokolov undertook the task of designing sketches. His primary goal was to create simple yet beautiful patterns accessible not only to master artists but also to craftsmen without formal art education.

To design forms adorned with pyrography, painting and carving, V.I. Sokolov used samples of antique dishes from the Moscow Historical Museum. Copies were made from these samples and sent to craftsmen in Semenovskiy Uyezd of the Nizhny Novgorod Governorate for mass production [1, p. 152, 159].

In his works, the artist enjoyed contrasting combinations of white snow and bright architectural landmarks, which gave his small boxes a special decorative quality. To create lyrical autumn landscapes, he employed different artistic effects, such as leaving large planes of the wood's natural color in the composition. These surfaces, shining through a thin layer of varnish, turned golden, reflecting the dominant hue of Russian autumn nature [15, p. 94].

S.V. Gorozhanina, a researcher of V.I. Sokolov's life and work, notes that the Art Carpentry Workshop "... began producing numerous goods decorated with pyrography, which became quite popular. These items included eggs, children's toys, Christmas tree decorations, various caskets, furniture decoration and household objects. The artists' imagination seemed boundless. The new style of painting was named after Sokolov. At exhibitions in St. Petersburg, Paris, Liège, Milan and Leipzig items featuring the 'Sokolov-style' pyrography won medals and honorary diplomas".

About this workshop and its operation in the post-war years, we know from the studies of G.L. Dayn. The "Zagorskiy Khudozhnik" cooperative, which served as a prototype for the Sergiev Posad branch of the Union of Artists of Russia, opened a workshop for folk art products, preserving the traditions of Sergiev Posad toys. N.V. Ul'yanov, the artistic director of the workshop, recalls: "We worked in the

⁶⁶ Fig. 1, 2. Photos from the archive of the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute – branch of the Russian University of traditional art crafts.

basement of the central pharmacy on Sovetskaya Square. There was a preparation area, a turning shop and a warehouse, while everyone else worked from home until 1963, when we moved to a new building on Shlyakov Street. Old-school masters such as Vyacheslavov, Paramonov and Zalomaev maintained the tradition of woodcarving..., and V.I. Sokolov and A.I. Shishkin worked alongside us — we used their designs for pyrography. Even today, we still use Shishkin's templates with drawings" [2, pp. 93-94].

We learn more about V.I. Sokolov from the monograph by O.V. Kruglova, head of the department of folk art at the Zagorsk Historical and Art Museum-Reserve [5]. Her husband, M.D. Glinsky, an art historian, designer and head of workshops, contributed interesting works to O.V. Kruglova's book. He designed over 100 drawing samples for lathe-worked products with pyrography. In his creations, the author deliberately draws inspiration from the "Sokolov-style". One notable example is the box titled "Winter in Zagorsk" (1991) [2, p. 96].

N. Voronina has been engaged in pyrography for over 30 years. After graduating from the Zagorsk Art and Industrial College of Toys, she started working in the Zagorsk Art and Production Workshops, where she specialized in burning and painting boxes using the "Sokolov-style" pyrography technique. "You have to fall in love with the line," says the artist about her work, "with its movement, sometimes light as a thread, other times strong and resilient" [2, p. 206].

The author of the research, student A. Kotova, familiarized herself with the creativity and working methods of masters employing the "pyrography painting" technique and developed a manufacturing technology for products using this method.

The material used for painting and pyrography is wood, preferably linden wood. The main tool currently utilized is an electric pyrography device equipped with a wire attachment. It features a voltage regulator to adjust the temperature range of the tip. The tip itself is made from a chromium-nickel alloy wire with a diameter of up to 1 mm.

For decorating wooden items, you need graphite pencils (B-3B), erasers, tracing paper, calque paper or polyethylene terephthalate film.

Preparing the item for work involves sanding it with fine-grit sandpaper along, across and circularly to the grain. After sanding, wipe the piece thoroughly with a cloth to remove any sawdust completely.

Experienced masters draw the pattern directly onto the item by hand. Beginners transfer the chosen design onto the blank using tracing paper, carbon paper or PET film. Pyrography is performed with a single tip, varying the temperature and positioning of the tool. Moving the tip flat creates smooth, glossy brown strokes. When held at an angle or with less heat, the tip allows for precise lines, crosshatching, drawing small floral motifs, clothing details and facial features. Color tinting is achieved using acrylic or watercolor paints, followed by applying a protective masticate or lacquer coating.

Thus, the outcome of the research on V.I. Sokolov's work was the development of a technology for making products using pyrography painting, which

was then implemented in practical sessions for second-year students specializing in Woodworking Technology (specialty code 35.02.03) (Fig. 3⁶⁷, 4).

At the International Student Forum "Unique Art of Russia," held at the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute, a research study by members of the student scientific society—third-year students P. Kurchakov and I. Tereshkin—was presented on the topic "Technological and Artistic Features of Making the Traditional Wooden Toy 'Rocking Horse'".

The subject of the research was not chosen randomly. Horses have been one of the most beloved and widespread toys among children throughout history. It is known that toy horses emerged in ancient times. According to V.A. Polyakova, "the image of the horse for many peoples, including Slavs, personified the celestial luminary" [12, p. 165]. Folk beliefs held that various depictions of horses in toys brought blessings and special solar protection to the child.



Fig. 3, 4. Works by students of specialty 35.02.03 Woodworking Technology inspired by Sergievsky pyrography painting

In the collection of the Art and Pedagogical Toy Museum named after N.D. Bartram, there are horses made from different materials. Particularly notable is a toy that belonged to the children of the royal family. This rocking horse, created by unknown Russian craftsmen, was gifted by Empress Catherine II to her son Paul. The size of a small pony, the horse is carved out of wood, covered with gesso and painted. On its rump sits a leather saddle with stirrups and a blanket embroidered with the monogram of Catherine II.

Rocking horses and pull-along horses were common in many aristocratic families, as evidenced by documentary records, literary works, and paintings by artists. An analysis of literary works describing these toys, conducted by V.A. Polyakova, provides several examples. For instance, in D.V. Grigorovich's novella "The India-Rubber Boy", an indoor playroom for boys is described, which contained "a cardboard troika of gray horses." Toy horses also appear in D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak's story "The Spit". In the childhood memoirs of Anastasia Tsvetaeva, the younger sister of Maria Tsvetaeva, we learn that each child had their own toy horse:

⁶⁷ Fig. 3-11. Photo by the article's author.

Andrey had a black one, Maria had a bay and Anastasia had a white one [11, pp. 46–49].

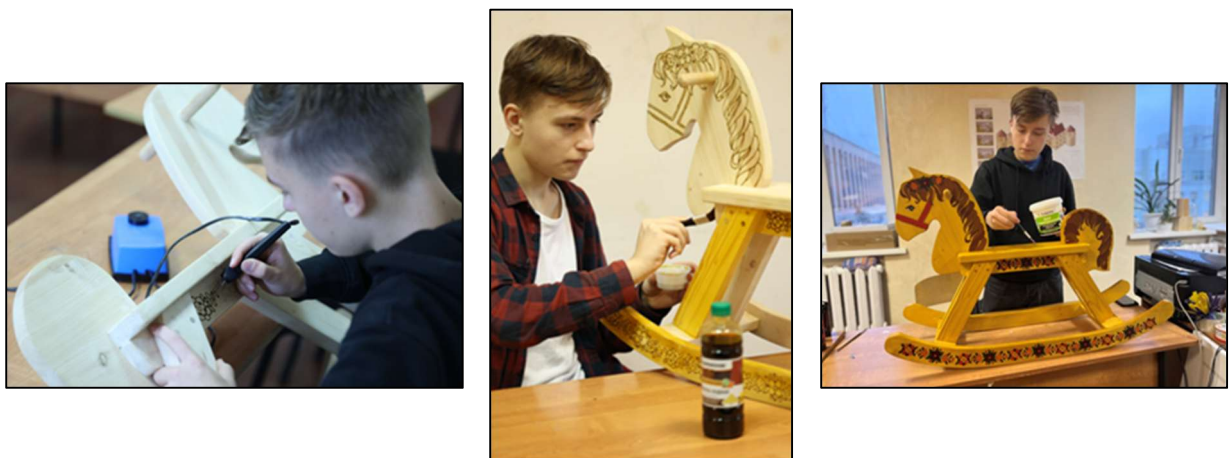
From the realm of paintings featuring toy horses, several notable examples include: S.I. Gribkov's "Children" (1860), V. Chardon's "Portrait of Prince A.I. Baryatinsky as a Child" (1817); among modern works—M.L. Ancharov's "New Year", A.M. Lansky's "Boy with a Toy Horse" and others. The toy horse has long been an essential element in children's games across generations.

As noted by G.L. Dayn, "the little horse is a symbolic Posad urban toy... Nowhere in Russia did they make as many horses as in Sergiev Posad" [3, p. 141]. The first official mention of horse-making in Sergiev Posad dates back to the late 18th century. The "horse goods" produced by local artisans were extremely diverse. They made individual horses, pairs, trios and mounted them on stands consisting of two parallel wooden sticks with four wheels. Most often, Sergiev Posad artisans manufactured what were called "harnesses" [10].

The toy horse became part of the logo of the All-Union Research Institute of Toys and adorned the emblem of the city until the 1980s. Today, the toy horse serves as the emblem of the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute.

The aim of the research conducted by students of the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute was to explore the origins and evolution of various types of toy horses, including the "rocking horse", and to examine the application of new technologies in their production.

Special attention was given to the possibility of joint creation of the wooden toy "Rocking Horse" by students majoring in 35.02.03 Woodworking Technology and 54.02.01 Design (toys design, modeling and decoration). As part of this research, a "Rocking Horse" toy was designed and constructed using carpentry techniques in the educational workshop and it was decorated using pyrography technology (Fig. 5-7).



Figs. 5-7. The process of making the toy "Rocking Horse"

The study revealed that collaboration between a designer and a wood technologist during the creation of a toy represents a symbiosis of creativity and practicality. Armed with imagination and sketches, the designer brings concepts to life, defining the form, color and functionality of the future product. They set the

tone by creating an aesthetically pleasing and emotionally engaging image. Meanwhile, the technologist acts as an expert in material science and wood processing technologies. Their role is to assess the feasibility of the envisioned design, considering the characteristics of the material, equipment capabilities and safety requirements. The technologist optimizes the toy's construction, ensuring its strength, durability and compliance with quality standards.

Collaboration between these professionals enables the creation of a toy that is not only beautiful but also safe, functional and technologically sound. While the designer contributes aesthetics, the technologist adds practicality, achieving a harmonious balance between form and function. The result is a toy that delights both visually and benefits the child.

The study titled "Toy Russian Soldier from the First World War Period" addresses the issue of creating a materialized toy using stereolithography on a 3D printer. The author, I. Marochkin, explored the history of the First World War and the uniforms of various branches of the Imperial Russian Army. The author familiarized himself with the color palette of military uniforms worn by soldiers in the Russian army, along with the fabrics and attire of the Russian infantryman. He then created a sketch of the "Russian Soldier of the First World War" toy using the Blender software, developed a model and printed it using a 3D printer. A continuation of this research work was the diploma project titled "Set of First World War Soldiers," executed using polymer clay (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Marochkin I. Final qualification work on the topic "Toy 'Set of First World War Soldiers'".

Supervisors: E.V. Chekilevskaya, E.B. Nikolaeva

In the early 21st century, distance learning technologies have seen significant development. These technologies are indispensable for individuals with disabilities or those living in remote areas who cannot attend institutions of additional education but wish to pursue creative development. A team of students from the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute, participants in the student scientific society, decided to develop a project called "Russian Toy."

This work focuses on the potential use of modern information technologies in creating an online platform to foster the creative abilities of children living in remote regions and children with disabilities.

The outcome of this research effort is the "Russian Toy" project developed by the students, which can be viewed on the official website of the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute. This project encompasses 12 masterclasses covering various types of toys. Additionally, a virtual museum showcasing the best works created by institute students. Information about the project and relevant links have been published on the official pages of the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute. The informational reach already exceeds 16,000 views (Fig. 9).

Members of the student scientific society actively engage in activities and participate not only in intra-university scientific-practical conferences but also in interregional ones hosted by non-specialty universities such as Moscow University named after S.Yu. Witte in Sergiev Posad and the Moscow Financial and Law University. Following the conference "The Role of Science and Education in Modernizing and Reforming Russian Society," a compilation was published containing articles by students from the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute [14]. Participation in these conferences allows for broader representation of the specialties and training programs offered at the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute while highlighting the traditional arts and crafts of Sergiev Posad.



Fig. 9. Project "Russian Toy" on the official website of the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute

With the participation of the student scientific society, teachers and staff from the Art and Pedagogical Toy Museum named after N.D. Bartram, workshops, quests, meetups, lectures, round tables and forums are being developed and organized. Among these events are the lecture-presentation "The Role of Dolls in the Context of Children's Culture Development," the practical session "History of One Childhood" at the Art and Pedagogical Toy Museum named after N.D. Bartram, the meetup "Toy Crafts of Russia — Cultural Heritage of the Country", the quest "Visiting Folk Toys" and more. Information about these events can be found on the official website of the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute and on social media platforms.

The student scientific society fosters teamwork, collaborative problem-solving and goal achievement. Such group-based work helps cultivate leadership qualities, responsibility and cooperation skills. Involvement of academic advisors, professors and employees of the toy museum and gallery enhances the level of scientific work within the society and improves mutual understanding with students. These skills are crucial for future careers since most professional projects are implemented through teamwork.



Fig. 10. Students participating in the project and research competition "Fair of Ideas – 2023"

It is worth noting the collaborative efforts of students, such as their participation in the competition of project and research works "Fair of Ideas – 2023," held at the Moscow Financial and Law University. There, N. Yagnenkova and M. Mrochko presented the project "Upsycling and Youth Fashion," which won first place and received the special prize for "Best Innovative Project"; Ya. Pilipenko and P. Osipova, with their project "Student Puppet Theater

'Revival', took second place (Fig. 10).

Participation in the activities of a student scientific society can significantly influence the choice of a professional path. Research experiences allow students to better understand their areas of interest and determine the career they want to build. As stated by I.N. Kuznetsov, achieving set goals requires comprehensive interaction between educators, students and scientific institutions, leading to increased interest in science and the creation of new opportunities for the next generation of scientists [6]. Engaging in scientific societies enhances graduates' competitiveness in the job market, as employers value practical experience and research achievements of prospective specialists.

Indeed, some alumni who participated in the student scientific society continued their research endeavors at the Art and Pedagogical Toy Museum named after N.D. Bartram. A.A. Ristovaya now works as an exhibition specialist, K.N. Gorbunova serves as the curator of the foreign toy collection, O.D. Druzherukova oversees the folk toy collection and G.S. Gavchuk is involved in educational activities.

Based on a sociological survey of students regarding their involvement in the student scientific society, results were compiled into a diagram (Fig. 11).

A majority of respondents expressed positive sentiments toward participating in the student scientific society. When asked why they chose to join, students responded that they "have the opportunity to gain new knowledge", "gain collective work experience, make interesting acquaintances and discover something new in the field of science", find it "interesting", see it as a chance to "showcase their abilities" and "boost self-confidence", among other reasons. To the question "Are research projects necessary?" most respondents answered affirmatively, with some elaborating: "I think so. Research projects enable students not only to acquire useful new knowledge but also to work with various programs and identify critical information".

Blue: Participated in a research project under the guidance of a teacher.

Orange: Participated in scientific conferences, seminars, meetups and round table discussions.

Grey: Participated in applied research conducted at the university upon request from industrial enterprises, firms and organizations.

Yellow: The necessity of research projects at the the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute.

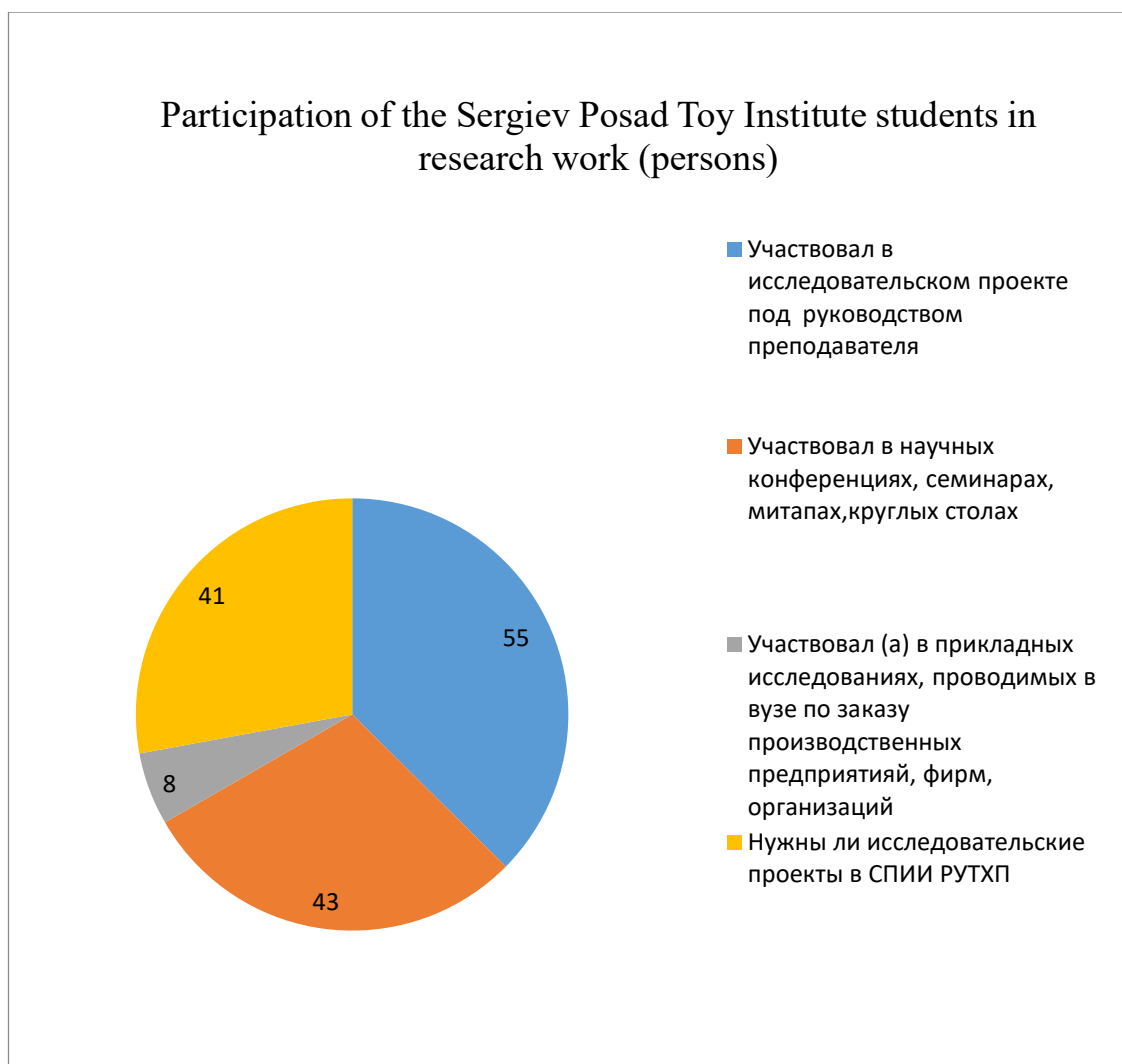


Fig. 11. Participation of students from the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute in research activities at the university

Fostering a desire for scientific activity among students is a multi-stage process dependent on numerous factors, including educational activities, access to resources, motivation and the culture of science within educational institutions. By involving students in the scientific process, the Sergiev Posad Toy Institute shapes not only qualified professionals but also creative, active individuals capable of addressing current challenges.

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