



Connotation, Characteristics and Implementation of Integrated Music Education for Special Needs Children

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to study the music education of special needs children (including but not limited to children with autism, intellectual disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders, etc.) in the context of integrated education. It analyzes the connotation and characteristics of integrated music education, and makes suggestions on the implementation path of integrated music teaching for special-needs children, including the selection of teaching content, the use of teaching methods, and the design of teaching evaluation; it emphasizes the unique role of music in promoting the all-around development of special-needs children, and stresses that interdisciplinary cooperation should be further strengthened to deepen the understanding of the characteristics of music learning for special-needs children, and to perfect the integrated music education. It was emphasized that interdisciplinary cooperation should be further strengthened, understanding of the characteristics of music learning for children with special needs should be deepened, and the curriculum system and assessment mechanism of integrated music education should be improved, so as to provide children with special needs with more scientific, effective and personalized music education support.

Keywords: special needs children, inclusive music education, connotation

1 Introduction

In 2022, the National 14th Five-Year Plan of Action for the Development and Enhancement of Special Education proposed: "To follow the laws of special education, to aim for appropriate integration, to promote integrated education, to adhere to respect for differences, and to integrate in a diversified manner, so as to enable children and adolescents with disabilities and ordinary children and adolescents to grow and progress together." "[¹] Integrated education is the inevitable trend of the development of the cause of persons with disabilities in China, integrated music education is a discipline of integrated education, integrated education in China is still in the exploratory stage, the complexity of the object of special education, the differences are significant, and the difficulty of teaching [²], as in other disciplines, children with special needs, as a special educational group, are still faced with a number of challenges in the teaching of

music, but the music education of the However, the attributes of aesthetic discipline and the connotation of "humanistic care" of music education have a special role to play in promoting the physical and mental development of children with special needs, which can bring positive psychological and social benefits to children with special needs, and the study of integrated music education for children with special needs can have a positive impact on promoting the development of integrated education. This paper focuses on the basic connotation and characteristics of integrated music education for special-needs children in the context of integrated education, analyzes and reflects on its basic connotation and characteristics, and then tries to put forward reasonable teaching paths on this basis, and puts forward suggestions for integrated music teaching for special-needs children.

2 Basic Connotation of Integrated Music Education for Children with Special Needs

2.1 Building a "Suitable and Integrated" Teaching Ecology with "Aesthetic" Education as a Cornerstone

In ancient China, many philosophers have already put forward the role of music aesthetics in the edification of people. Zhuang Zi wrote in *Zhuang Zi - The World*: "To act with rituals, to play with music and to smoulder with kindness, is called a gentleman" [3], Zhuang Zi believes that music is an important means to achieve harmony, music With its unique melody and rhythm, it is able to harmonize the human heart and produce pleasant and calm emotions, thus contributing to the purification and harmony of the mind. In Zhuangzi's philosophy, music is not only an enjoyment of art, but also a medium for spiritual cultivation. There is an international consensus that the educational environment has a significant impact on children's mental and spiritual health, especially in the case of children with special health problems [4]. Children with special needs often face a variety of challenges, including physical, intellectual, and emotional barriers. The pedagogical ecology constituted by music aesthetics can also help them relax and relieve stress; through the cultivation of music, it can stimulate the deepest kindness and love of ordinary children, cultivate their compassion and sense of responsibility, and promote the formation of a "suitable and integrated" pedagogical atmosphere.

2.2 Highlighting the "Emotional Education" Function of Music and Fostering a Collective Sense of "Suitable Integration"

Music education is not only aesthetic education but also emotional education. The emotionality of music education is reflected in the fact that it mobilizes the aesthetic subject's auditory consciousness and uses emotion as an intermediary to connect and communicate the aesthetic subject with the aesthetic object, thus forming an organic whole process of life activities. Studies have shown that autistic people's preference for music is higher than verbal stimulation [5], and that music can trigger a relatively

long-lasting emotional response in autistic children ^[6]; and for adolescents with mild mental retardation, musical activities can expand the children's emotional range and contribute to the development of empathy, enhancing their ability to empathize ^[7]; the "emotional education function" of music conveys a positive sense of integration, creates a friendly teaching atmosphere, mobilizes positive emotions in all, relaxes the body and mind, and fosters a collective sense of appropriateness for integration.

2.3 Utilizing the Social Function of Music Activities and Establishing a Teaching Mechanism that is "Suitable for Integration"

Since ancient times, musical activities have often taken place in communities, tribes or families as a process of collective participation and shared enjoyment. Sima Qian, in the Book of Music section of the Records of the Grand Historian, recorded in detail the development of music in ancient times and its role in social life, mentioning its ability to move the heart, stimulate emotions and bring people together ^[8].

Modern music education provides young people with the opportunity to work with others by organizing team activities such as choirs, bands, or ensembles. In order to achieve the best results, each person must fulfill his or her role dutifully and pay attention to the coordination of rhythm, harmony as well as intonation. This collaborative experience not only develops youth's musical skills, but also teaches them to listen to and respect the opinions of others, thus fostering teamwork. In group music activities, special needs students can compensate for their physical or psychological barriers through the power of music, and they can also realize their self-worth and social integration through various music activities.

3 Characteristics of Integrated Music Education for Children with Special Needs

3.1 Intrinsic Properties: Integration is Intrinsic to Music Education

In the context of integrated education, music education, compared with other subjects, gives children with special needs more room for learning choices. For example, children with intellectual disabilities may not be able to recognize music scores and master music theory, but they do not reject the appreciation of music and rhythmic movement, and some of them are uniquely gifted in dancing and singing, which gives them opportunities to integrate into the group and establish connections with other people through the music class. Some children with autism have a strong interest in music appreciation and playing instruments, which can naturally stimulate their interest in learning and allow them to listen and play as well as the general student population. Studies have shown that people with autism may have challenges in processing emotions from social stimuli, but that they are better at understanding emotions expressed through music (i.e. musical emotions). (i.e., musical emotions), and music represents an area in which some individuals with autism show strengths and significant levels

of interest ^[9]. We can say that music education is an "inclusion-friendly" program, depending on the diversity of the subject itself.

3.2 Functional Attributes: Music has a Therapeutic Function

The therapeutic function of music provides music education with the prerequisites and developmental advantages of "suitable integration" compared to other disciplines. Music can alleviate negative emotions, increase stress tolerance and inner peace, and the use of music therapy can help people with disabilities due to different cognitive and biopsychosocial problems ^[10]. Studies have shown that rhythmic training in music can improve an individual's attention level, especially in terms of weak speech and language processing skills and improvement in attention deficit symptoms ^[11]; music can help children with ADHD to increase their memory functioning and auditory perception, which can help to improve learning abilities ^[12]; from a medical perspective, music can have a From a medical point of view, music has many positive effects on the development of children with special needs, which makes it a positive factor in inclusive education.

3.3 Value Attributes: Interdisciplinary Integration

Integrated music education for children with special needs is music education in which children with special needs are integrated into the general group of children, and its interdisciplinarity is reflected first and foremost in the integration of special music education with traditional school music education. In the period when integrated education was not popularized, the main task of traditional school music education was to cultivate the musical skills of all students, to teach musical knowledge, to improve students' artistic quality, and to follow more of a selective training mechanism; but when more and more special needs children enter the ordinary school environment, traditional school music education can no longer be compatible with the continuous development of integrated education, and special music education must also become a part of school music education, and traditional music education must be renewed. As more and more special needs children enter the regular school environment, special music education must become a part of school music education, and traditional music education must be updated to meet the needs of different types of special needs children. The second level of interdisciplinary integration is reflected in the integration of music with other disciplines, for example, the synthesis of music and art, music and dance, music and drama, and so on. Encouraging students to express their understanding and feelings of music through different artistic elements can develop students' multiple intelligences and broaden their channels of learning knowledge and experiencing the outside world.

4 Implementation of Integrated Music Education

4.1 Development of Individualized Music Lesson Plans

In China, the Guidelines for Evaluating the Quality of Special Education Provision, issued in 2022, explicitly states, "Individualized education and teaching programs should be developed to address the characteristics of special students and to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of classroom teaching" [13]. Music teachers develop individualized lesson plans designed to provide each student with a personalized learning experience that meets his or her unique learning needs and ability level. This involves assessing each child's musical fundamentals, learning rate, and interests, and then selecting appropriate content, methods, and tempo based on this information, and research has shown that appropriate adaptations of materials and adjustments to objectives are considered effective ways to serve the needs of special learners in the music classroom [14]. In addition to this there is a need to observe how children with special needs reflect on the content of the group lessons and the level of integration, especially the assessment and adaptation of musical abilities is of utmost importance to ensure that children with special needs are appropriately challenged and supported in integrating their music learning so as to stimulate their learning motivation and potential.

4.2 Integrated Music Therapy Program

For exceptional students, music therapy is often defined as meeting the physical, psychological, cognitive, and social developmental needs of exceptional children as they develop through the implementation of targeted musical activities [15]. Research has shown that music therapy can be used to improve conditions for children with a variety of disorders, including attention deficit disorder, cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorders, pervasive developmental disorders, and other basic skills [16]. "Improving the quality of special education and promoting the integration of medicine and education" is an important requirement of the Ministry of Education's Special Education Enhancement Plan (Phase II), and the integration of music therapy into music education is an important pathway to building "appropriate and integrated" music classrooms for children with special needs, which has already been recognized in Europe and the United States, where the development of integrated education is more mature. This has been widely promoted in Europe and the United States, where the development of integrated education is more mature. In 1978, the United States incorporated individual and group music therapy into the school teaching context of general and special integration, and the results showed that "appropriate social skills enable them to integrate into, and benefit from, musical or non-musical mainstream contexts" [17]. In general education settings, music therapy programs can be a specific mediator of integrated education in schools, a means of precise implementation of integrated music education, which can effectively help children with special needs to be assisted and trained in the process of integration into the community.

4.3 Utilizing Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies

Researchers have found that positive social interactions with peers can enhance the learning process for students with disabilities, and many classroom-based peer-assisted learning interventions have been created and implemented in a variety of content areas. For children with special needs, especially those with autism, improving their social interaction is a very important need, and social interaction cannot be separated from contact with the surrounding environment. The most appropriate environment for education is in real, natural situations. For example, in singing activities, they can practice songs with children with special needs to help them master melodies and rhythms. Interaction-type dance is often used in fusion music activities, this type of dance is generally a clear rhythm, rhythmic stability, simple movements, when working together with special students in an interaction-type dance, the teacher can be based on the peer-assisted Terry, so that the ordinary students to give more help to the special students, with the rhythm of their limbs, which also cultivates the ordinary students to pay attention to the disadvantaged groups, to help others, to accept the character of others. This also cultivates the character of ordinary students to pay attention to the disadvantaged, help others and accept others.

5 Conclusion

As an innovative educational model, integrated music education for children with special needs not only enriches the learning experience of children with special needs, but also shows remarkable results in promoting their sensory integration, emotional management and social skills. The implementation of integrated music education requires educators to have an interdisciplinary knowledge background, focus on individualized teaching, and continue to explore and innovate the forms of musical activities. This is what we want to break through in future research. In general, integrated music education for children with special needs has both educational and therapeutic functions. Defining the connotation and characteristics of integrated music education for children with special needs and proposing implementation strategies can provide practical guidance and theoretical basis for the construction of an educational environment that is "suitable for integration".

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