

THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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Abstract. This article examines the importance of musical activities in the upbringing and holistic development of children with special educational needs. Music is considered as an effective pedagogical tool that contributes to children's emotional, cognitive, communicative and social development. The article highlights the potential of singing, listening to music, rhythmic exercises, playing musical instruments and creative musical activities to support children's self-expression, attention, memory, coordination and interpersonal communication. Particular attention is paid to creating an inclusive educational environment in which musical activities are adapted to the individual abilities, needs and developmental characteristics of each child. The pedagogical significance of systematic musical activities in increasing children's social participation, emotional stability and interest in learning is also discussed.

Keywords: children with special educational needs, musical activity, inclusive education, musical education, upbringing, emotional development, cognitive development, social adaptation, communication skills, creative activity.

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается значение музыкальной деятельности в воспитании и всестороннем развитии детей с особыми образовательными потребностями. Музыка рассматривается как эффективное педагогическое средство, способствующее эмоциональному, познавательному, коммуникативному и социальному развитию ребёнка. Раскрываются возможности таких видов музыкальной деятельности, как пение, слушание музыки, ритмические упражнения, игра на музыкальных инструментах и творческая музыкальная деятельность, в развитии самовыражения, внимания, памяти, координации движений и навыков межличностного общения детей. Особое внимание уделяется созданию инклюзивной образовательной среды, в которой музыкальная деятельность адаптируется к индивидуальным возможностям, потребностям и особенностям развития каждого ребёнка. Также рассматривается педагогическое значение систематических музыкальных занятий в повышении социальной активности, эмоциональной устойчивости и интереса детей к обучению.

Ключевые слова: дети с особыми образовательными потребностями, музыкальная деятельность, инклюзивное образование, музыкальное воспитание, воспитание, эмоциональное развитие, познавательное развитие, социальная адаптация, коммуникативные навыки, творческая деятельность.

INTRODUCTION. In modern education, ensuring equal opportunities for the development and education of every child, regardless of their individual abilities and developmental characteristics, has become one of the important priorities of inclusive education. Children with special educational needs require particular pedagogical attention, an appropriate educational environment, and teaching approaches that take into account their individual developmental characteristics. In this context, the organization of various types of creative activities can play an important role in supporting children's emotional, cognitive, social, and communicative development. Among these activities, music occupies a special place because it provides opportunities for children to express their emotions, communicate with others, develop creative abilities, and participate actively in the educational process. Musical activity is a multifaceted pedagogical process that includes singing, listening to music, rhythmic movements, playing simple musical instruments, musical games, and creative exercises. These activities can be adapted to the abilities and needs of children with different developmental characteristics. Regular participation in musical activities can contribute to the development of auditory perception, attention, memory, coordination, speech-related abilities, and emotional responsiveness. In addition, musical experiences create a favorable environment for children to demonstrate their individual abilities and strengthen their confidence in their own capabilities.

For children with special educational needs, music can serve not only as an artistic and educational medium but also as an important means of social interaction. Joint singing, rhythmic exercises, musical games, and group performances encourage children to interact with peers, follow common rules, listen to others, and coordinate their actions with the group. Such activities can help reduce social isolation and create conditions for children to feel themselves as active members of the educational community. The emotional nature of music also makes it possible to create a positive atmosphere in which children can experience joy, interest, satisfaction, and a sense of achievement. An important characteristic of musical activity is its flexibility. Musical tasks can be selected according to the child's age, developmental level, interests, physical

abilities, and individual educational needs. For example, some children may participate primarily through listening and rhythmic movements, while others may demonstrate their abilities through singing, playing percussion instruments, or performing simple musical compositions. Therefore, an individualized approach to musical education allows educators to involve children in activities according to their capabilities rather than focusing primarily on their limitations.

The role of the music teacher is particularly significant in this process. The teacher should create a supportive and emotionally comfortable environment, select accessible musical materials, provide clear and simple instructions, and encourage every child's participation. The use of repetitive rhythms, familiar songs, musical games, movement-based activities, and visual or tactile supports can make musical experiences more accessible and meaningful. Positive reinforcement and encouragement can further strengthen children's motivation, self-confidence, and willingness to participate in collective activities. Musical activities can also contribute to the development of important personal qualities. Through systematic participation in musical games and creative exercises, children can develop patience, independence, responsibility, attention, cooperation, and the ability to follow instructions. Rhythmic activities can support the coordination of movements, while singing and musical communication can create additional opportunities for the development of speech and communication skills. At the same time, musical creativity allows children to express feelings and ideas that may be difficult for them to communicate through conventional verbal forms. The importance of musical activity is particularly relevant in preschool education, where the foundations of a child's personality, communication culture, emotional responsiveness, and social behavior are established. A properly organized musical environment can make the educational process more engaging and accessible for children with special educational needs. It can also contribute to strengthening cooperation among children, educators, parents, and specialists involved in the child's development.

Thus, musical activity should be regarded as an important component of the upbringing and education of children with special educational needs. Its educational potential extends beyond the acquisition of musical skills and encompasses emotional, cognitive, communicative, social, and creative development. The purposeful and individualized organization of musical activities can create favorable conditions for children to demonstrate their

abilities, participate in collective experiences, develop positive emotional states, and gradually strengthen their social adaptation. Therefore, examining the pedagogical possibilities of musical activity and its role in the upbringing of children with special educational needs is an important issue for contemporary preschool and inclusive education.

RESULTS. Musical activity has considerable educational potential in working with children who have special educational needs. Unlike many conventional educational activities, music allows children to participate through different forms of perception and expression. A child does not necessarily need advanced verbal, reading, or writing abilities to become actively involved in a musical experience. Rhythm, melody, tempo, movement, sound, and repetition provide diverse ways of participating in educational activities. This flexibility makes music particularly valuable for creating accessible learning experiences for children with different developmental characteristics. The content and organization of musical activities should correspond to the individual abilities of each child. Simple rhythmic patterns, familiar melodies, short musical fragments, movement exercises, and instrumental activities can be introduced gradually. Tasks that are initially performed with the teacher can later be completed independently or together with peers. Such gradual progression allows children to experience success and develop a positive attitude toward participation.

Musical activities can also create opportunities for children to discover their individual strengths. One child may demonstrate greater interest in singing, another in rhythmic movement, while another may respond more actively to musical instruments. Recognizing these differences is important because inclusive education should provide opportunities for every child to demonstrate their abilities rather than requiring all children to achieve identical results. Emotional development is one of the important areas supported by musical activity. Music has a strong connection with emotional experience and can help children recognize, express, and regulate different emotional states. Through changes in melody, tempo, dynamics, and rhythm, children encounter a variety of emotional impressions. The teacher can use these characteristics intentionally to create calm, joyful, energetic, or reflective musical experiences. For children who have difficulties expressing emotions verbally, music can provide an alternative form of communication. Facial expressions, body movements, rhythmic responses, vocalizations, and participation in musical games can demonstrate a child's emotional reaction. Consequently, musical

activity can provide educators with additional opportunities to understand children's interests and emotional responses. Musical games can be especially useful for creating positive emotional experiences. Activities involving clapping, movement, imitation, repetition, and response to musical signals encourage children to participate actively. When children successfully complete a musical task, they experience achievement, which can strengthen motivation and confidence. A supportive emotional environment is particularly important for children who may experience difficulties

Rhythmic activities represent an important component of musical education. Clapping, walking, jumping, body percussion, and simple dance movements in accordance with musical patterns can help children coordinate their actions with auditory stimuli. These activities can be organized from simple to more complex forms depending on the child's developmental level. Rhythm-based exercises may also contribute to the development of attention and concentration. When children are asked to reproduce a particular rhythm or respond to a specific musical signal, they must listen carefully and remember the sequence of actions. Repeated practice can gradually improve their ability to focus on auditory information and respond appropriately.

Movement accompanied by music can further connect auditory perception with physical activity. For example, children can move slowly when the music is calm and gradually increase their movements when the tempo becomes faster. Such exercises combine listening, perception, movement, and self-regulation. They can therefore be incorporated into inclusive educational programs as accessible and engaging activities. Communication is another important area in which musical activities can provide pedagogical support. Group singing, musical dialogues, question-and-answer songs, rhythmic imitation, and musical games create situations in which children interact with teachers and peers. These activities encourage children to listen, wait for their turn, respond to signals, and participate in shared actions. Songs with repetitive structures can be particularly useful for children who experience difficulties with verbal communication. Repeated words, phrases, sounds, and rhythmic patterns provide children with predictable structures that can make participation easier. The teacher can gradually encourage children to complete individual words, short phrases, or musical responses. Musical activities can also promote non-verbal communication. Children communicate through gestures, eye contact, body movements, facial expressions, and instrumental sounds. For

some children, these forms of interaction may provide an important step toward broader social and verbal communication.

Participation in collective musical activities can contribute to children's social development. When children sing together, perform rhythmic exercises, or play simple musical instruments as a group, they learn to coordinate their actions with others. They must pay attention to common instructions, observe the rhythm, wait for appropriate moments, and respect the participation of their peers. Group musical activities can create a sense of belonging. Children who may experience difficulties in other social situations can become active participants in a shared musical experience. This participation can strengthen peer relationships and encourage cooperation. The teacher can organize activities in pairs, small groups, and larger groups to gradually expand children's social interaction.

Musical performances can also provide children with opportunities to demonstrate their abilities in front of others. Even a simple performance, such as singing one short phrase, playing a percussion instrument, or performing a rhythmic movement, can represent a meaningful achievement. The emphasis should be placed on participation and personal progress rather than comparison between children. Effective musical education for children with special educational needs requires individualization. The same activity may not be equally appropriate for every child. Therefore, the teacher should consider the child's developmental characteristics, level of attention, communication abilities, sensory responses, motor skills, interests, and previous musical experience.

Discussion. Individualization may involve changing the duration of an activity, simplifying instructions, reducing the number of steps, selecting appropriate musical instruments, or providing additional visual and physical cues. For example, a child who has difficulty maintaining attention may participate in short musical tasks with frequent changes of activity. Another child may require repeated demonstrations before independently completing the task. The principle of gradual progression is also important. Activities should begin with achievable tasks and become more complex as children develop confidence and skills. Positive reinforcement, encouragement, and recognition of individual achievements can motivate children to continue participating.

Simple musical instruments can expand opportunities for creative participation. Percussion instruments such as drums, tambourines, bells, maracas, and rhythm sticks are generally accessible and can be used for various

educational activities. Children can reproduce rhythms, accompany songs, respond to musical signals, or create their own simple rhythmic patterns. Instrumental activities can support independence because children directly produce and control sounds. The teacher can provide structured tasks at first and gradually introduce opportunities for free musical expression. For example, children may be invited to select an instrument and create a rhythm corresponding to a particular emotion, movement, or image.

Such activities can also strengthen children's sense of agency. When a child realizes that their own actions can produce meaningful musical results, they may become more willing to experiment, participate, and express personal ideas. The effectiveness of musical activities largely depends on the professional approach of the music teacher. The teacher should create an atmosphere characterized by respect, patience, acceptance, and encouragement. Children should not feel that their abilities are being negatively compared with those of their peers. The teacher should also observe children's responses to different types of musical activities. Some children may prefer predictable and repetitive music, while others may respond positively to more dynamic and varied musical experiences. Observation allows the teacher to identify appropriate activities and adjust teaching methods accordingly.

Clear instructions are essential. Instead of giving several instructions simultaneously, the teacher can present one task at a time and demonstrate it visually or physically when necessary. Repetition can provide children with a sense of predictability, while gradual variation prevents activities from becoming monotonous. Cooperation between the music teacher, classroom teacher, parents, and other specialists can further improve the organization of musical activities. Sharing information about children's interests, abilities, and progress makes it possible to create more consistent educational support. Musical activities should not be limited to special music lessons. Their elements can be incorporated into different aspects of preschool education. Short songs can be used during transitions between activities, rhythmic exercises can accompany physical development activities, and musical games can support social interaction. For example, counting songs can reinforce basic mathematical concepts, songs about colors and objects can support vocabulary development, and movement-based musical activities can be connected with physical education. In this way, music becomes an interdisciplinary educational resource.

An important outcome is the formation of a positive attitude toward learning and participation. When children experience success in musical activities, they may become more confident in approaching other educational tasks. Therefore, the value of musical activity should not be assessed only by the development of musical abilities. Its broader contribution lies in creating opportunities for children with special educational needs to communicate, express themselves, cooperate with others, and participate meaningfully in the educational environment.

CONCLUSION. Musical activity is an important pedagogical resource in the upbringing and development of children with special educational needs. The analysis of its educational possibilities demonstrates that music can support not only children's musical abilities but also their emotional, cognitive, communicative, social, motor, and creative development. Singing, listening to music, rhythmic movements, musical games, and playing simple musical instruments provide children with accessible opportunities to participate actively in the educational process and express their individual abilities.

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