



THE MUSIC EDUCATION SUBJECT IN MODERN EDUCATIONAL TRENDS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Stefanija Leshkova Zelenkovska

Goce Delcev University, R. Macedonia

Aida Islam

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, R. Macedonia

One of the basic ideas in the modern education system in the Republic of Macedonia is increasing the quality of education through the concept, “child-friendly school.” In 2006, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and the office of UNICEF introduced the approach child-friendly school (CFS). In this way, our country joined the countries around the world and led the initiative in eastern Europe to introduce a holistic approach, oriented to a child in the reform of education in several schools and in the whole educational system. The school’s capacity to permanent training and supervisory support and to initiate project activities is aimed at developing several dimensions, which includes inclusivity too. Besides inclusivity, children with complex needs get the opportunity to be educated in specialized schools. Considering the fact that music contributes to the development of children, especially those with special needs, and to better results in other areas of educational content, in this text, we are interested in knowing how and in what way the benefits of music education are used. For this purpose, in our case studies were included educational institutions for children with special needs in the capital city and the teaching plan and program for the music education subject. The analysis showed that there is large space and necessity for using music as the most flexible and functional tool in the educational process of this population.

Keywords: Music education, Educational institutions for children with special needs, R. Macedonia.

INTRODUCTION

Education and upbringing of children and young people with special educational needs are integral parts of the unified educational system, and they are planned on identical or very similar objectives and general principles. It involves adjusting of all educational institutions to the educational needs of all children, regardless of their ability and health. Today, throughout the world, there are various forms of overcoming the segregated forms of upbringing and education of children and young people with special educational needs in order this category not to be marginalized.

Democratic tendencies in the world, which are expressed more and more, reflect very positively in this sphere too, which is evident by the numerous efforts such as equality, integration, modernization, permanence of education, and more. This approach has long been one of the benefits of modern trends in education in the developed countries in Europe and worldwide. To this end, the competent ministries and educational institutions continuously

take action and implement special training to teachers and parents in order to improve the overall educational process of students in this category. The achievement of the principle of universal design is guided by the principle of humanity, availability, and socialization through the adjustment of the school environment, the flexibility of the program, hiring of professional staff, providing appropriate didactic material, implementation of ICT methods, etc.

Commonly known factors not only affect the status of this type of education, relevant to each education (social, political, economic, cultural), but also the different concepts and models arising from different ideologies.

The Republic of Macedonia joins these modern tendencies, particularly since 2006, with the introduction of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and the office of UNICEF. In this way, our country joined the countries around the world and led the initiative in eastern Europe to introduce a holistic approach, oriented to a child in the reform of education in several schools and in the whole educational system. Through strengthening of school capabilities with permanent training and supervisory support, the project activities are aimed at developing several dimensions, and inclusivity is one of them.

Besides inclusivity, children with complex needs get the opportunity to be educated in specialized schools formed and organized according to the type of disability of children. In the capital city, there are two schools for children with mental retardation, with six regional offices, and an institute and boarding school for children with visual and hearing impairments. In these institutions, there are gradations according to the level of mastery of the material and according to the achievement of students, not just by age in classes. Teaching takes place in groups and individually, given that classes are made up of a small number of students. The teaching staff is composed mainly of graduated pedagogues, defectologists, speech-language therapists, and graduated qualified persons in specific areas.

In the overall curriculum, the subject of music education is provided too, which should have a significant role in the education of students in this category because of the benefits of music education as part of the educational curriculum that lie in the multisensory quality of music. Music education, depending on the degree of disability, is provided to help children through listening to music, visual stimulation, movement, and dance, and by stimulating and developing various senses.

Another important benefit of learning music is that it can develop the necessary basic skills, and cognitive and motor skills. Considering the numerous benefits of music education in the development of children, especially those with special needs, and for better results in the other fields of educational contents, herein we are interested in how much and how are used the benefits of music education.

These findings have been aimed at the discourse of our interest to examining the subject of music education through all the components: the curriculum and program, teaching staff, and the conditions of implementing the teaching and the application in practice. To that end, our case study included educational institutions for children with special needs in the capital town through information obtained from some of the teachers of music education.

Children with special needs in the education system in the Republic of Macedonia

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, all children are entitled to education. Primary Education Act states that all children with special educational needs, including gifted and talented children, are entitled to education. Primary schools have an obligation to provide education for children with special educational needs.

For the students with mental and physical disabilities, availability of special plans and programs is projected. It recommends the Ministry of Education to support the issuance of small-circulation textbooks for special education.

According to the **Rules for primary school students with disabilities (1996)**, students with "disabilities" that cannot be integrated into primary schools with other students can be included in special classes in mainstream schools or special primary schools. Since 1998, the Ministry of Education and Science implemented the project titled "Inclusion of children with special needs in the mainstream schools." In 2005, 5 years after its implementation, the project has been implemented in 73 primary schools and 13 kindergartens where children with special needs are included.

This project began with seminars for teachers and associates (psychologists and pedagogues) from the mainstream schools. In the seventh year of the project (2005) was organized mobile service of specialists (such as graduated defectologists, speech-language therapists, tiflopedagogues, or other types of specialists). This service was organized in order to support the teachers in regular schools that have pupils with special educational needs in their classes. As a result of the project, some changes in the Law on Primary Education have been made. With the amendments in the year of 2002 to the "Law on Changes and Amendments to the Law on Primary Education," articles were included requiring elementary schools to provide education for children with special educational needs. Specific forms and methods of work and involvement in the educational process were proposed, as well as other forms of individual and group works.

Many students remain in special schools and institutions, but because of the possibility of inclusion in the mainstream schools, their number decreases.

Special needs education is an integral part of "*Draft—Strategy for Educational development 2001–2010*," prepared in June 2000 by the Ministry of Education and Science. In the second chapter of the document "Social Challenges," there is a segment for inclusion of children with disabilities within which are elaborated different aspects of inclusive education.

In the Republic of Macedonia, compulsory elementary education applies to children and young people with special educational needs too, except for those with moderate and severe psychic developmental disabilities, for which is organized the upbringing—educational process, programmed and adapted to their individual capabilities and needs.

Normatively is regulated flexible system of upbringing and education; a network of facilities is created that meets current needs. Upbringing—educational process is realized by curricula and programs that include specifics, which do not call in question the general educational goals. The teaching is organized within special schools, special classes within mainstream schools, and integration of children with disabilities in the regular classes.

In Skopje, the capital of the Republic of Macedonia, these three types of educational institutions for the education of children with special needs are applied. In the existing system of primary education, in special schools for students with disabilities, special curricula can be used, different from those in the mainstream schools. But, the program in primary upbringing and education specifies that "the basic purpose of this document is to provide opportunities for students with disabilities." Pupils with special educational needs can gain appropriate socialization skills, develop positive attitudes and other social values. Special attention is given to the development of life skills and vocational training.

Music education in the curriculum of specialized schools

Music in the education program for children with special needs is considered to be a convenient means of complex actions on the child's personality, for encouragement of

positive emotions, creativity, independence, teamwork, and responsibility. The significance is even greater, because the curricula provide opportunities for integrated, targeted, and content connection with other items. In this sense, the function of music changes depending on the type of disability, in order to meet the needs of the students. The Bureau of Development of Education of the Republic of Macedonia, which is responsible for this segment of primary education in all educational institutions in the country, has developed curricula for music education for 9-year primary school for children with special needs, which are divided as follows:

- Curriculum for children with impaired hearing;
- Curriculum for children with impaired sight;
- Curriculum for children with developmental psychic disabilities;
- Curriculum for children with autism; and
- Curriculum for children with multiple disabilities (multihandicap).

These curricula differ from that of regular schools in terms of methods, resources, forms of work, method of communication, transferring of knowledge, while in the content, the teaching subjects are identical, since the purpose of upbringing and education is the same for all children. In addition, we will present the educational topics in the curricula from I to VI grade (Primers), while the programs from VII to XI grade are being prepared.

The function of music in the curriculum

The curriculum for *impaired hearing* children in class teaching is taught through music content on the subject music stimulations and rhythmic exercises. Through auditory training, it is provided for the music to help in language competence and production of student that will improve auditory memory which is subject to understanding the auditory signal–the speech. In that function are represented the teaching subjects–Fundamentals of musical stimuli (I grade), Singing–articulation (II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Rhythm and movement (I, II, III grades), Playing children's musical instruments (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Listening to music (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Fundamentals of musical literacy (II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Musical expression and creation (II, III, VI grades), Music grammar (IV grade), and Folk music creation (IV, V, VI grades).

The curriculum for children with *visual impairments* primarily provides multiple targets, of which the most typical for the subject and the teaching is for the students to understand the beauty of nature through music and musical creations, the beauty of human creation, and to feel comfortable and happy. Specific goals are represented and implemented through the following topics: Singing (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Music and movement (I, II, III grades), Playing children's musical instruments (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Listening to music (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Music literacy (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Musical expression and creation (I, III, VI grades), Folk music creation (IV, V, VI grades), and Fundamentals of musical forms (IV, V grades).

The purpose of the curriculum in music education for children with *psychic developmental disabilities* is that they can develop and enrich the emotional life and aesthetic musical experiences to help them in developing their social, intellectual, physical, and health education. These goals are intended to be implemented through the following topics: Singing (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Music and movement (I, II, III grades), Listening to music (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Playing children's musical instruments (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Music literacy (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Musical expression and creation (I, II, III, VI grades), Folk music creation (IV, V, VI grades), and Music grammar (IV, V grades). The

study of music with these students is used as music therapy, based on the fact that each person has a music feeling in himself/herself, consisting of rhythm, harmony, and melody.

Curriculum for children with *autism* is realized with special contents, interactive exercises, designed to acquaint the student with the auditory aspect of the environment in which he/she learns, lives, and which surrounds him/her; to encourage him/her to express him/herself through song and music. Through all program areas of the subject of music education, students also create a basis for emotional development and develop the speech capabilities. Music contents are included in the following program areas: Sounds, noises, and tones (I, II grades), Singing (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Music and Movement (I, II, III grades), Listening to music (I, II, III, IV, V grades), Playing children's musical instruments (I, II, III, IV, V grades), Music literacy (III, IV, V, VI grades), Musical expression and creation (III, V, VI grades), Folk music creation (IV, V, VI grades), Music grammar (IV grade), and Fundamentals of music forms (V grade). For all program areas of the subject music education is recommended the use and necessary combination of all interactive, current modern methods, forms, and didactic and technical means of teaching.

Music education for children with *multiple disabilities (multihandicap)* has a special importance in the development of coordination of movements, orientation in space, and the elimination of unnecessary movements. On the classes in music education, it is provided for the students to develop musical hearing, to develop habits of hearing perception, and to increase the volume of auditory perceptions. The curriculum for the subject of music education includes the following activities: Singing (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Music and Movement (I, II, III grades), Listening to music (I, II, III, IV, V grades), Playing children's musical instruments (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Music literacy (I, II, III, IV, V, VI grades), Musical expression and creation (I, II, III, VI grades), Folk music creation (IV, V, VI grades), and Music grammar (IV, V grades).

Discussion and conclusion

The general conclusion from the field researches is that regardless of the type and degree of disability, children have a very positive approach to music, which causes joy, satisfaction, and a sense of belonging and self-esteem for those children. This leaves an impression of the need for greater presence of music in the curriculum, and not just as a means of entertainment, but also as a challenge to overcome the disadvantage of acquiring musical skills and contents. Additionally, the nature of music allows shifting of the focus of the curricula to the children as the center of the teaching process, and in that way, the curricula may become a wide planning framework for achieving the goals and objectives.

Music education for children with disabilities enables them to participate in group music activities too, which according to some findings of the practical work encourages a sense of delightfulness because of the sense of involvement, self-control, which provides greater motivation and social inclusiveness.

One of the principles that the subject of music education should be conceived according to the type and degree of disability is to respect the individual differences of students in terms of learning and the speed of mastering of the material since the classes are composed of a small population (approx. five children). In that sense, it was established that the individualized approach with procedures of adjusting the content helps in expanding, deepening, and modifying, while overcoming the difficulties, because it is a way for them to learn the basic concepts and skills. Therefore, it is especially important that this subject be taught by graduated music educators with supplemented knowledge for children with complex needs, given the fact that the general teachers-defectologists do not study music in their education.

Regardless of the choice of the teaching form, individual or group, the results depend largely on the extent and manner of engagement and the approach of the teacher. These educators work with exceptionally great love, dedication, and patience, with the challenge to achieve what seemingly looks impossible (performance in choir, playing musical instruments, etc.). Their experience confirms that in practice, public appearances as a final product of musical expression cause great pleasure for these children too, which further contributes to increased confidence.

As to the contents of the curriculum, they are focused on activities in which children express through personal experience of the elements of music (melody, rhythm, form, tone, etc.), through listening, performance, and music creation. Because of the multisensory experience, singing, movement, and feeling that are the fundamental elements of the curriculum in music education, music contributes to the development of sensory perception and psychomotor skills.

Due to the fact that music is utilitarian in all areas of a school curriculum, primarily, there is a need for increasing the number of classes on the subject of music education in all types of disabilities and ages. This would provide space and more opportunities for a more detailed application of the planned teaching contents and purpose-built teaching aids—musical instruments, equipment for production, and reproduction of music. As a part of the modern educational tendencies in the world that are increasingly applied here, of great importance would be the use of the computers, digital music software, like, for example, MTM (Movement to Music) technology and related modern technical didactic tools in the educational concept of these schools. This would be the optimal way to increase the positive effect of the use of music, and the technology, through the affordable play activities, will enable children to overcome the handicap, to release the creativity, and to experience the emotional fulfillment.

References

1. Adamek, M. and Darrow, A.-A.(2005). *Music in special Education*. Silver Spring. Md.: The American Music Therapy Association
2. Bailey, P. (1973). *They Can Make Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
3. Davies, J. B. (1978). *The Psychology of Music*. London: Hutchinson
4. Juslin, P. N. and Sloboda, J. A. (2001). *Music and Emotions: Theory and Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
5. Ockelford, A. (2008). *Music for Children and Young People with Complex Needs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
6. Ockelford, A. (1998). *Music Moves: Music in the Education of children and Young People who are Visually Impaired and have Learning Dissabilites*. London: Royal National Institute of the Blind
7. Scherer, K. R. (1991). "Emotion Expression in Speech and Music", in J. Sundelberg, L. Nord and R. Carlson (eds.), *Music, Language, Speech and Brain*. London: Macmillan, pp. 146-56
8. Sewalkwijk, F. W. (1994). *Music and People with Developmental Dissabilities*. London: Jessica Kingsley www.bro.gov.mk