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Use of Music in Special Education and Application Examples from Turkey

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Abstract

Music, as in the case of every individual, is an essential element which makes life liven up and raises its quality for the individuals with special needs as well. Music, besides being entertaining, provides educators and/or therapists with a lot of opportunities for using it with the purpose of education and therapy on various aspects. Many researches related to these functions of music show that using music in the educational programmes of the individuals with special needs yields effective and useful results just like in the case of normally developing individuals. Music can be used in different ways with individuals with disabilities. Both in “music education” in which the musical knowledge and skills are in the centre and the development of these skills through voice and instrument training is the aim and in “education through music” where the music is used as embedded teaching to support the other developments of kids (like cognitive, sensual, psycho-motor), the existence of music in the education programmes of the individuals with special needs increases the effectiveness and permanence of the education and facilitates conducting more enjoyable and highly motivating activities. “Music therapy”, which indicates the use of music for therapeutic purpose is also important as a complementary element in training activities. Whether with the aim of education or therapy, the use of music both in the individual and group education creates an important, inclusive, integrative and stabilizing atmosphere. “Music therapy”, which indicates the use of music for therapeutic purpose is also important as a complementary element in training activities. Whether with the aim of education or therapy, the use of music both in the individual and group education creates an important, inclusive, integrative and stabilizing atmosphere.

Conducting music activities using multi-sensational music education approaches which offer opportunities for creativity and improvisation is a factor that improves efficiency. In this study, by mentioning various uses of music in the field of special education, some examples of application in the field of special education in Turkey are cited.

Keywords: Special education, music education, music therapy, individuals with special needs

1. Introduction

As in the whole world, the number of individuals with special needs is also increasing every day in Turkey (Batu & Kircali-Iftar, 2005). With this increase, the matter of “education and treatment rights” of individuals with special needs who are a part of the society like normally developing individuals comes to the fore. Within these rights, different education and treatment possibilities which could be offered to individuals become a current issue and trying as many different methods as possible to increase the number of ways to reach them comes into prominence. With this aspect, different possibilities of using music can be utilized to enhance the ways to reach individuals with special needs in their education and treatment.

2. Individuals with special needs and special education

Every individual exhibits a variety of characteristics, interests, needs and qualifications. Just as the differences of an individual can be physical, these differences sometimes may be about learning features (Akçamete, 2009; Heward, 2006). While these features focus on "similarities" in normally developing individuals, "differences" play a more dominant role in the individuals with special needs. At this point, individuals with special needs are defined as individuals showing a meaningful difference from their peers at the expected level in terms of individual features and educational competencies (MEB², 2006).

Considering their common features and education requirements, individuals with special needs are divided into separate categories (Enç, Çağlar, & Özsoy, 1981; Haring, 1986; Özsoy, 2002). In Turkey, in Special Education Services Regulation, individuals with special needs are classified according to (a) mental deficiency, (b) hearing impairment, (c) visual impairment, (d) orthopaedic disability, (e) deficiency caused by deterioration of the nervous system, (f) speech and language difficulties, (g)...

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² (tr.) MEB-Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı = (eng.) NEM- National Education Ministry
specific learning disabilities, (h) more than one area deficiencies, (i) emotional cohesion difficulties, (j) chronic disease, (k) autism, (l) social cohesion disabilities, (m) attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder and (n) gifted and talented (MEB, 2006; Cawkaytar, 2008). It is understood from the classification that the features of individuals with special needs are quite different from each other. These varieties also differentiate the features of education individuals with special needs will receive. “Special Education” which may be covered under many different definitions in scientific literature (Ataman, 2003; Culatta & Tompkins, 1999; Özsoy, 2002) is defined -in Decree on Special Education numbered 573- as an education which is conducted by the specially trained stuff to meet the educational needs of individuals with special needs, through specially developed education programs and methods, in an appropriate environment for their disabilities and features (MEB, 1997).

Within the scope of the above definition of special education; there are “special education programs” which are prepared to help them to be able to use their maximal capacity according to different features and capabilities, to integrate them with society by becoming self-sufficient individuals, to support them to be independent and productive individuals (Aral & Gürsoy, 2007). Additionally, in special education programmes, taking individual features of individuals with special needs into account, special adaptations, special materials and special teaching methods and approaches should be preferred.

Special education services for individuals with special needs are carried out in different educational institutions and in different ways such as separate education and joint education. In Turkey, special education services are given in separate boarding and day special education schools, in special education classes in mainstream schools and in general education classes as inclusion education (Kargın, 2009). There are also special education and rehabilitation centers which provide individual and group education services. That is to say, no matter in which rank they are sorted in accordance with the principle of the least restrictive environment (whether in inclusion application or in hospital or care home), no matter which disabilities they have and how old they are, in the education and/or treatment of individuals with special needs, many different educational and therapeutic processes are benefited from (Salend, 2001). In this sense music and use of music can be seen as an effective way in education and treatment of individuals with special needs.

3. Music in special education

Music is an art of sound and rhythm which serves to explain human emotions and thoughts (Uçan, 1996). The effect of music on people is an undeniable fact. It is argued that the babies begin to hear when they are in the mother’s womb and the relationship between human and music starts in pre-natal period (Uçan, 1996). So much so that, at very young ages children can comprehend two elements of music -sound and rhythm-, they can produce sounds in measured tones in harmony with their mother’s lullabies and they can move their body parts in accordance with the rhythm of a music piece (Akkaş, 1993).

Music has such different functions in human life as individual, social, cultural, economic and educational. While among individual functions of music, in order to be a balanced and contented, healthy and successful, sensitive and happy individual, musical stimulation and reaction ways which create a positive impression on cognitive, sensory and psychomotor structures are involved, when social functions of music are considered, providing the interactions among individuals and the exchange of emotions, ideas and impressions through music is mentioned. When cultural functions of music are taken into consideration, it is seen that music influences the other elements of culture and is affected by them and that it can unite different cultures. As for educational functions of music, they cover musical learning and teaching activities, planning, arranging and organising these activities and the structures and processes related to all these. In this sense, music exists as a dimension of education, as a means of education, as an education method and it is also an education area all its own (Uçan, 1996).

Along with the use of music as an education field for individuals with special needs (music education) and as a means of education (education through music), the other dimension of music, that is, the therapeutic side of music is an indisputable fact. The various uses of music are inseparable, moreover, in lessons/sessions it can be switched from one to another. From this perspective, the differences in the use of music in special education appear not as "separation from each other", but as "complement each other".

3.1. Using music in education

3.1.1. Using music as a field of education- music education

When music is considered as an educational field in special education, under the title of “music education” enhancing musical knowledge and skills of individuals is aimed. In order to achieve these goals, for individuals with special needs the following studies are carried out: (1) ear-training studies (such as listening and perceiving differences in sounds), (2) rhythm studies (such as repeating different rhythm patterns), (3) singing studies (such as proper use of breath and voice), (4) creative movement and dance studies (such as moving in harmony with the music or according to the music, etc.), (5) musical story studies (such as voicing a story with music) (Dikiciзащиттаç, 2005), and at higher levels (6) literacy of music (such as writing and reading notes, making bona), (7) musical play studies (such as holding and playing his/her instrument properly, etc.) and (8) musical creativity and improvisation studies (such as producing a music piece with his/her instrument or voice). Through these studies, an increase in musical knowledge and skills of individuals, using his/her voice and instrument properly and expressing him/herself with his/her voice and instrument are expected to be observed.

3.1.2. Using music as a means of education- education through music

When music is considered as a means of education in special education, it is called “education through music” and it is used to support developmental areas other than musical development. These goals are focused on the area of cognitive domain in which mental activities are dominant, in the area of affective domain in which learned emotions are encoded and in the area
of psycho-motor domain in which physical skills are encoded. Apart from these three domains, individuals with special needs also require to be supported in many other developmental domains (such as social and emotional development, language development, daily living and self-care skills, social life and communication skills, independent life skills, learning different concepts and skills, skills of preparing to learn and academic skills) (Güneş, 2005). In the studies carried out, individuals with special needs may obtain a great deal of acquisition during Play activities, establishing eye contact, being capable of eye-hand coordination, using both hands together and one by one in order, using small muscle groups in a controlled and proper manner, playing an instrument individually and in a group,
- during Movement and Dance activities, using small and large muscle groups in a controlled and proper manner, identifying parts of his body and moving them in coordination, increasing the awareness of time and space perception
- during Singing Songs activities, through songs, developing skills and grasping concepts of garments, seasons, animals, traffic, daily life, as an individual using his voice appropriately, singing in the group, identifying himself and the others in the songs in which their names are mentioned, improving his skills of language use, acquiring concepts such as colours, numbers, direction and orientation, opposition and new terms on the matters facing us in our daily lives like clothes, food, traffic, seasons (Knall, 2003). This achievement list can be enlarged based on age, type of disability, qualifications and needs of individual with special needs.

3.2. Using music as treatment
3.2.1. Music therapy
It is known that music has the power to affect human brain, body, his energy level, mood and ideas. Music can excite or soothe, stimulate or relax, direct or set free (Hartney, 2004). Music therapy, which serves humans in this way is defined as a systematic intervention process conducted by the therapists with diplomas who completed the confirmed music therapy programme with an aim of regaining and maintaining the health of the patience, achieving individualized goals with musical experiences and an approach to heal (AMTA, 2012; Bruscia, 1998; Hanser, 1999) In addition to children, adolescents, adults and the elderly, an individual at any age, suffering from Alzheimer’s disease, brain damage, acute or chronic pain, developmental deficit, behavioural deficit, emotional disorder, physical disability, learning disability, multiple disabilities, speech disorder, autistic traits, visual impairment, neurological disorder, hearing impairment, drug addiction, sexual harassment and also mothers in labour can benefit from music therapy (AMTA, 2012; Ak, 2006).

Considering the number of people, music therapy is classified as (1) individual music therapy and (2) group music therapy and considering how the music is used in terms of the nature of the study, it is sorted as (a) active (productive) and (b) passive (receptive) (Strobel & Huppman, 1997). In individual music therapy, patient and music therapist execute the session one to one. In active/individual music therapy session (1a), the patient focuses on being in interaction with the music which the music therapist makes for him/her and via the cited music, the therapist aims to make changes in psychology of patient. Active/group music therapy session (2a) focuses on the interaction and cooperation during music production just like active individual music therapy session. However, this time the interaction is not confined to the interaction between the patient and therapist, interaction between patients also goes into the relationship opportunities, too. In passive/individual therapy session (1b), the therapist makes modal music for the receptive patient and via the cited music, the therapist aims to make changes in psychology of patient. Active/group music therapy session (2a) focuses on the interaction and cooperation during music production just like active individual music therapy session. However, this time the interaction is not confined to the interaction between the patient and therapist, interaction between patients also goes into the relationship opportunities, too. In passive/group music therapy session (2b), one or a group of musician aim to heal a group of receptive patient changing their moods by means of making music with different modes just like in the passive individual music therapy session. It doesn’t seem easy to decide how the applications could be named (“music therapy”, “education through music” or “music education”). Because “active music therapy” and “education through music” have so many parallels and both processes seem very close to each other. At this point, although the features that separate these two notions - music therapy and music education- are not yet clear-cut, it useful to see that these two branches are not separated, but complementary to each other (Adamek & Darrow, 2007; Schumacher, 2003). When examined, it can be seen that there are not big differences in the implementations of these two, except for the presence of “patient and therapist” in one and “student with special needs and special education-music teacher” in the other.

Whether it is used for educational purposes or for therapeutic purposes, the use of music for individuals with special needs yields positive results. These practices could produce effective outcomes if they are conducted with a music and movement education approach in which every individual expresses himself within his capabilities and needs and which is suitable to make necessary arrangements and reductions which involves distinct disciplines within, appropriate for the education approaches of the individuals with special needs and planned in a manner that they integrate these approaches (Eren, 2012).

4. The examples of practices in Turkey
In Turkey, music teachers who graduate from Music Education Departments of Education Faculties of Universities work with individuals with special needs whom they encounter at the schools they are assigned to. However, until 2006 any lesson about special education did not take place in undergraduate programme of music education department. Despite a lesson named “special education” was put into the programme in 2006, it is thought that this development in theory has not made any difference in practice when compared to the past. Music teachers who are qualified about music education can use music as an...

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2 In this section, quotations taken from Knallada have been arranged through some additions by Dr. Eren- the author of this article-, in order to improve the scope and meaning of section.
In Turkey, it is also possible to encounter receptive individual or group music therapy applications (Uçaner & Öztürk, 2009; Ak, 2006). These applications which are not conducted on academic and scientific basis are carried out by TUMATA (The Group of Researching and Introducing Turkish Music).

4.1. Examples of special education music applications in Turkey

In this part, some special music activities which are carried out in Turkey are shortly mentioned by the author of the article PhD Bilgehan Eren. In a private rehabilitation centre, some musical exercises have been carried out individually or in group through Orff-Schulwerk approach to elementary music and movement education. In these studies, music activities have not been divided as studies of musical purposes or studies of therapeutic purposes, sometimes music has been used for educational purposes, sometimes activities have been carried out to serve musical purposes or sometimes music has been used with the aim of therapy according to the nature of the study and the needs of the student.

1) Practice

The first application example is in a nature of scientific research and it has been aimed to use music as a mean and to support non-musical development areas. This study consists of music activities which are conducted to teach concepts to the autistic children through embedded teaching method in which concepts are presented in a way that they are embedded in music activities. In this research, music activities were done with 4 autistic pre-school kids -3 boys and 1 girl- twice a week for a year on such different concepts as colours and emotions. Activities were carried out in the form of singing, movement and dance, playing an instrument, painting through the directions given with music, matching with music, musical story and teaching embedded concepts to autistic children through these activities was aimed. Children learned the concepts in an enjoyable way and they also succeeded in permanency and generalization of learned concepts.

2) Practice

In another study, a musical context study, offering multi-sensorial opportunities, was conducted with a mixed group with special needs (two 4-year-old boys with autism, one 5-year-old girl with autism, one 7-year-old boy with down-syndrome and one 7-year-old boy with mental retardation and physical disabilities) for a period of 3 months. For this study, the group gathered together once a week for a period of one and a half hour and practised rhythm exercises, movement and dance with music, pair and group games, singing, sensory integration activities in the content of a story. Individual special education teachers of these kids were also involved in this study, and thus it was tried to maintain studies similar to the ones done before even there was no music educator in the class. This study served some sub-targets such as learning new words and concepts in the determined context, learning to move with music, to respond to the rhythm, to accompany to a song (with words or body percussion), to increase communication and social skills.

3) Practice

The last study was carried out with a group of adolescents between the ages of 12-18 who work in a workshop called “Independent Living Workshop” under the leadership of the two trainers. This group met once a week for two hours to be involved in some independent living activities and once in a month, some music and movement activities were conducted with a guest tutor. The main purpose of this work was to improve communication skills and social sharing. Under these purposes, some activities such as sharing individual ideas, playing pair games, joint activities in a group cohesion, creativity activities through developing a seed idea from beginning to end, improvisation activities, and also circle folk dances, rhythm games and singing activities were performed. This study was finalized after three months.

5. Conclusion

It is known that music contributes a great deal to the developmental and educational existence of individuals for the artistic and therapeutic purposes. Considering that there are very few platforms where individuals with special needs and their normally developing peers come together, music and musical activities are getting even more important. With music having no strict wrongs and rights as in academic platform (such as a mathematic lesson) and its offering opportunities for creativity rather than being methodological and technical and its being open to various approaches make it indispensable to individuals with special needs.

In the light of this information, it is suggested that some other activities similar to the examples mentioned in this study be organized for all ages and every group of disability, that attempts to hold seminars, workshops and training programs related to music therapy in Turkey as well that are already executed throughout the world be made and that inter-disciplinary studies be
planned, joint activities in which therapist, special education teacher and music teacher communicate with each other be carried out and more lessons and applications regarding special education field be allotted in the institutions where people are trained to be a music teacher.

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