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**MUSICAL ART AS A MEANS FOR DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL SKILLS IN CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this publication is to conduct a theoretical and applied study of some technological practices through which to work on emotional intelligence in terms of musical education with children with special educational needs. The object of our study are some technological practices developing children's emotional intelligence.

In the theoretical part are examined views of a number of authors related to the nature of emotional intelligence and the specific features of children with special educational needs. The normative basis for pedagogical interaction in this direction is presented. The views of some authors on the specifics of pedagogical activity related to children with special educational needs are discussed. The main parameters of inclusive education are also outlined.

Some of the technological possibilities of musical training have been studied in practical aspects. In contrast to empathy in general, artistic empathy requires a particular art language, comprehensible for the individual. Therefore, in order to develop emotional intelligence of children with special educational needs, it is important that specific technological methods are applied, through which their musical experience is developed. The main focus of the publication is the presentation of a copyright educational training aid, related to the development of emotional intelligence of children with special educational needs through the means of art. Its creation and development is based on the theory of artistic emotions (Holopova, 2009).

It is applicable in pedagogical activities with children with special educational needs, both in elementary school and kindergarten. It is possible to work through different types of art - music, literature, fine arts. The publication presents a way to use art based on music.

**Keywords:** children with special educational needs (SEN), emotional intelligence, pedagogical techniques, empathy, musical education.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Many studies display strong evidence of the importance of music in stimulating different aspects of psychological and physical development of children. Education through music has an important role in working with children with special educational needs (SEN). Musical art continues to have the status of a universal language. An infinite and constantly changing musical world, in which each of us should discover their way of expression and communication through this language, is still under development. Children with special educational needs are facing this choice as well and the role of the teacher is to provide suitable forms of musical-pedagogical influence through which to develop the person's emotional potential as well.

**2. OBJECTIVES**

**The aim** of the present publication is to discover opportunities of implementing music into the conditions of the modern pedagogical process in order to integrate children with special educational needs.

**An object of** research is the role of music as a corrective pedagogical factor in the process of inclusive education in kindergartens and at primary school.

**This role is seen in two aspects:**

- Opportunities for music as an educational factor in the development of children's emotional intelligence;
- Opportunities for music for the development of common and specific skills, necessary for the realization of the musical-communicative act.

**The research tasks** are:

1. To conduct a theoretical research of the specifics of emotional intelligence, necessary to the teachers for effective musical education of children with special educational needs in primary school;
2. To search and use some opportunities for the development of emotional intelligence of children with special educational needs.

**3. METHODOLOGY**

**The methods** used in this research are: observation, theoretical and content analyses of literature on the studied problem.

#### 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Key words in the theoretical plan of the present publication are **inclusive education**, emotional intelligence and children with special educational needs .

##### **What is inclusive education?**

According to the Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education of UNESCO inclusive education is “a process that involves the transformation of schools and other centres of learning to cater for all children – including boys and girls, students from ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural populations, those affected by HIV and AIDS, and those with disabilities and difficulties in learning and to provide learning opportunities for all youth and adults as well.”<sup>98</sup>

Challenges faced by inclusive education are very different in nature. In Bulgaria there is legislation on the basis of which **inclusive education** is organised. „An important condition for integrated education of children with special educational needs is a constant psychological-pedagogical support from a team of specialists. According to the requirements in the 2017 Ordinance of the Ministry of Education and Science the regional inspectorate of education creates teams for a complex pedagogical evaluation consisting of: a resource teacher, speech-therapist, hearing and speech rehabilitation therapist, psychologist, kindergarten teacher, teacher – a special pedagogue from a special school and a doctor. The team evaluates the general development of a child and reports the conclusion in a form. The form consists of a recommendation for integrated education in a mainstream kindergarten or in a special kindergarten, as well as recommendations for pedagogical support. The cited ordinance requires that after the admission of a child to a kindergarten, the team there should execute a complex pedagogical evaluation and prepare an individual curriculum”.<sup>99</sup>

According to D. Jordanova, the challenges facing the Bulgarian education system are "to grant access to general education schools for children with special educational needs, providing them with the environment, as all other children, which is able to educate them according to their unique characteristics, interests, specific abilities and educational needs".<sup>100</sup>

The two scientific views considered are evidence of the fact that in Bulgaria there is a normative base and an outlined goal for the realization of inclusive education. The idea that each child has its own qualities, interests, abilities and educational needs is supported. Therefore, every child with special educational needs has the right to be educated according to the potential he/she has in order to develop and minimize existing deficiencies.

With the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 and ratified by 192 countries, including Bulgaria, the idea of the right of every child to education on the basis of equal opportunities, is becoming global.

For example, „in Hong Kong, inclusive education is concerned with educating all students, including those who are categorised as having special educational needs (SEN). This qualitative study reports three challenges faced by primary schools music teachers required to implement inclusive education. The first two challenges echo those reported internationally – the lack of subject-specific pre- and in-service SEN training and insufficient school-based SEN support for music teachers. The third challenge is the key role of a societal mindset that, by valuing SEN interventions against other educational values, justifies discriminatory training and resourcing. It is against this mindset that these teachers argue and that explains why inclusive education in Hong Kong's primary music classrooms becomes a pathway for both SEN students and their teachers to learned helplessness”.<sup>101</sup>

Inclusion of children with special educational needs in education has become more present, which draws attention to the investigation of processes of socialization of children and young people in inclusive educational conditions. An important condition in this process is the development of their emotional intelligence through art.

##### **What are the challenges in the process of development of emotional intelligence of children with special educational needs through music?**

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<sup>98</sup> UNESCO. (2009) *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*, Published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France, [www.unesco.org/education/inclusive](http://www.unesco.org/education/inclusive)

<sup>99</sup> Topolska, E. Speech Development at Children with Special Educational Needs - 12-th International Conference on Inclusive Education in the Balkan Countries: Policy and Practice, Thessaloniki, Greece, p.p. 381-387, 2010.

<sup>100</sup> Yordanova, D. Integrating and inclusive education, “Integrating and inclusive education. Teacher’s scientific and methodological handbook. Part 2, “Vesta”, Veliko Tarnovo, ISBN 978-954-543-042-8, pp. 9- 21. 2012.

<sup>101</sup> Wong & Chik (2014) Learned helplessness in inclusive music classrooms: voices of Hong Kong primary schools music teachers, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Volume 19, Issue 9, p. p.965-977, 2015.

In **the theoretical part** are examined views of a number of authors related to the nature of emotional intelligence. In order to define the concept of emotional intelligence, several authors' observations will be examined. In the Daniel Golman's book *Emotional Intelligence* notions such as tenacity, confidence, enthusiasm and self-motivation are present.<sup>102</sup>

We believe that musical education provides opportunities for the development of skill in experiencing, describing and reasoning on a particular emotion. Without doubt, music is an emotional art. The information which it carries has an emotional feature and its meaning is "emotionally coloured". Physical emotional reactions are often observed. For example, expressively rhythmic music evokes unintentional hand or leg beating, shaking of the head, etc. Some children start unintentionally adapting this physical reaction into playful movements.

**The question is „What is the role of musical education for the development of emotional intelligence of children with special educational needs?“**

### 5.PRACTICALLY APPLIED SIDE OF THE STUDY

The term *artistic emotion* is essential for the answer to this question. Musical emotion, respectively artistic emotion, is determined by C. Holopova as "a process, result, image and musical, including artistic, experience of the individual".<sup>103</sup>

According to the author "music expresses human emotions and has influence on them, transforms them into specific emotions of artistic type and creates such, inherent in other arts".<sup>104</sup> Scientific views of Holopova are an eloquent proof of the statement that art is one of the most accessible and effective means for the development of human emotions.

Universally recognized is Teplov's conception that "musical experience is by nature emotional experience." Further, the notable Russian musicologist states that "[...]musical comprehension is always emotional comprehension".<sup>105</sup> In this sense it could be said that music creates enough opportunities for the development of emotional comprehension skills and a conclusion can be drawn that through algorithms of emotional information comprehension, as is by nature the musical one, it is possible to work on the emotional intelligence of a child with SEN.

Music influence on the emotional and intellectual potential of a person has been studied in a number of our publications. In the present article we are going to study some technological opportunities of the musical art as a corrective-pedagogical factor.

**On the basis of that we are going to develop our idea for the realization of some musical-pedagogical techniques which could support the integration and socialization of children with SEN.**

The purpose of this publication is to conduct an applied study of some technological practices through which to work on emotional intelligence in terms of musical education of children with SEN in primary school.

Boghossian's observations support this statement: „I start with the observation that we often respond to a musical performance with emotion -- even if it is just the performance of a piece of **absolute** music, unaccompanied by text, title or programme. We can be exhilarated after a Rossini overture brought off with subtlety and panache; somber and melancholy after Furtlanger's performance of the slow movement of the Eroica (of Beethoven). And so forth. These emotions feel like the real thing to me – or anyway very close to the real thing".<sup>106</sup> Undoubtedly, musical art is an emotional art. Therefore, the information which it carries has an emotional essence.

The contents of the musical-educational process in kindergarten and primary schools in Bulgaria is realized through three basic activities: performance, perception, creativity.

#### **With regard to performance**

The performance is very emotional and accessible activity.

According to E. Topolska, singing as a part of the performance activity is suitable for overcoming issues with smooth speech (stammer). Playing a child musical instrument is another performance activity with a positive

<sup>102</sup> Goleman, D. *Emotional intelligence*, Bantam Books, New York, ISBN-13:978-0-553-80491-1, 2005.

<sup>103</sup> Holopova, B. A theory of the musical emotions: the experience of development issues, Academy of Music, 1/2009.

<sup>104</sup> Holopova, B. A theory of the musical emotions: the experience of development issues, Academy of Music, 1/2009.

<sup>105</sup> Teplov, B. <https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Teplov%2C+Boris>

<sup>106</sup> Boghossian, P. , On Hearing the Music in the Sound: Scruton on Musical Expression, The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Volume 60, Issue 1, pages 49–55, Winter 2002.

integrating charge. Interesting and easy to be applied in this process are some pedagogical techniques relevant to the perception and creative activities .<sup>107</sup>

**With regard to perception**

We have discovered that our pedagogical observation leads to an often met pedagogical situation in which a teacher asks the question “Did you like this musical piece?” without creating the necessary arrangements. A well-grounded answer could hardly be expected. Usually children answer “I like it because it is happy.” Another child could share an opinion about the same musical piece, saying that he/she does not like it without giving a particular reason why.

At the beginning of the process of musical perception children identify the message of a music piece subconsciously, based on their own conception of the world and musical experience. This is the reason for the presence of different statements about the same piece.

Even adults often cannot say why they like or do not like particular music. Suslova’s opinion is well-grounded and detailed and covers our pedagogical observations “A person cannot answer whether he/she likes or does not like some musical piece at first hearing because such sympathy appears at a subconscious level.” The authors continue to explain that this stage of the communication process between a person and a musical piece can be expressed verbally through the questions, "Are certain intonations in the piece close to his/her intonation capacity? Does the musical pulsation resonate in the physiological pulsation of his or her body? Does the breadth of the musical phrase match the speed of its raising and retention processes .... The answers to all these questions can be reduced to a single summarizing answer. Its essence is emotional and is expressed by the scale: “I like - I do not like” this piece”.<sup>108</sup>

This emotion occurs at a subconscious level. We would stress that in the process of forming musical empathy, a pedagogue's opinion lies in its basis and intervention is very delicate. As co-experience levels, opportunities of “reading” musical texts also depend on the musically auditory experience, the surroundings and experience of a person. Musical empathy of children with SEN is strongly provoked by mass musical genres, where the criterion of aesthetics sinks into the background. Here comes the delicate role of a musical pedagogue who, in the process of musical-pedagogical interaction, will open the doors to the real values of art.

Very important for us are the methodological surveys of G. Stoyanova carried out in two phases.<sup>109</sup>

In the first phase the musical-educational process is performed through a child's studies, leading to the answer of the question: “What kind of mood does this music convey?” In this phase it is possible to use the Cards for emotional development through art .<sup>110</sup>

In the answers given by children – cheerful, playful, gloomy and so on – could be seen the children's ability to recognize and realize “particular types and characteristics, character and feelings”, expressed in musical contents.



**Figure №1. Cards for emotional development through art**

The cards contain images of fifteen emotional states which can be related to the artistic message of the musical pieces, works of fine arts, literature, photography and other art forms.

They are used in activities based on a musical piece. When working with children with SEN images are only used at ages between 4 and 11-12 years. The proposed set is practically applicable for each piece, included in the educational contents, not only in pre-school but also in primary school. The focus at work with the cards is on the

<sup>107</sup> Topolska, E. Speech Development at Children with Special Educational Needs - 12-th International Conference on Inclusive Education in the Balkan Countries: Policy and Practice, Thessaloniki, Greece, p.p. 381-387, 2010.

<sup>108</sup> Podorovsky, V.& I. Suslova Musical thinking, Moscow. 2001.

<sup>109</sup> Stoyanova, G. Mass music education as a system and as a music teacher. Dissertation for scientific degree of "Doctor of pedagogical sciences", Sofia.

<sup>110</sup> Marcheva, P. Cards for emotional development through art, ISBN978-619-90071-6-7, Sofia. 2015.

development of emotional intelligence in terms of education through music. The aim is to read the emotional message of an artistic process and to refer to their personal moods, experiences and relationships. The activity is intended to enrich children's emotional vocabulary. Having in mind the individual peculiarities of every child, the assessment and the way in which the cards are used to develop his/her "emotional vocabulary" are entirely in the teacher's hands. When working with children in mainstream schools, along with the images, the names of the emotional moods are present on the cards. They are translated into both Bulgarian and English, because in addition to their purpose of developing emotional intelligence, they could serve another educational purpose - enrichment of children's lexical stock of "emotional vocabulary" in two languages.

On the back side of each card there are additional definitions which "redefine" the relevant condition; however, not all of the definitions are synonyms as discovering and enrichment of the emotional spectrum through shades of meaning is also intended. The package also contains eight cards which are intended to assist the teacher. They contain questions related to reading and expressing their own feelings and emotions, with the help of artistic activities – listening to music or children literature, drawing or looking at pictures, etc. Their content actually represents the path which the pedagogical interaction between a child and a teacher is better to follow. The artistic material is at the choice of the pedagogue. The proposed set is practically applicable for any piece of work involved in the educational content in kindergarten and preparatory groups, i.e. the initial stage of learning in general. The use of this textbook is possible also independently, without the use of any artistic material. It can be used by parents and children, teachers and psychologists in a game, training or diagnostic sessions.

#### **With regard to the creative activity**

Another opportunity for work with children with special needs is the game „**Show the emotion**”. **Instructions go as follow** „Show the emotion of the music with the expression of your face and body while listening”. Its effect is developing self-awareness and understanding the personal emotional spectrum.

## **6.CONCLUSION**

**In conclusion** we are going to emphasize that the opportunities for musical art in the process of integrated education are real and could be realized. We are underlining that emotional intelligence is a complex competence, which could be developed in the conditions of musical education of children with SEN. They are part of the set of pedagogical, psychological and socializing techniques, used by specialists working with children with SEN. Emotional influence of art is a particularly suitable way to regulate emotional behavior at children's age.

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