

International and National Experiences in Applying an Inclusive Approach in Music Classes

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Abstract: This article analyses international and national experiences in applying an inclusive approach in music classes. The study views inclusive music education not merely as the placement of learners with different abilities in one classroom, but as the purposeful transformation of lesson goals, musical content, teaching methods, communication, assessment and emotional support. Internationally, the article relies on UNESCO and UNICEF principles that inclusion requires the removal of barriers in curriculum, pedagogy and the learning environment. Nationally, it examines Uzbekistan's developing inclusive education agenda and the scholarly contribution of F.U. Qodirova and M.A. Asadullayeva. The article argues that music lessons possess a special inclusive potential because rhythm, sound, movement, singing, listening, improvisation and ensemble work can be adapted without depriving learners of meaningful artistic participation. The scientific value of the article is in synthesizing global inclusive standards with national musical-pedagogical practice and in defining methodological conditions for accessible, culturally relevant and emotionally safe music classes.

Keywords: Inclusive education, music classes, national experience, international practice, special educational needs, differentiated instruction, music pedagogy, accessibility, participation, correctional pedagogy.

Introduction: The modernization of contemporary education has placed inclusion at the centre of pedagogical theory and school practice. In music education this issue has a special character, because the lesson is organized not only through verbal explanation and written tasks, but also through hearing, voice, rhythm, movement, emotion, memory, bodily coordination and collective performance[1]. For this reason, applying an inclusive approach in music classes cannot mean only allowing a learner with disability or special educational needs to sit in the same classroom. It requires the reconstruction of the whole educational process: the selection of songs and listening materials, the regulation of sound intensity, the adaptation of instruments, the organization of group work, the use of visual and tactile supports, the prevention of psychological discomfort and the assessment of progress according to individual

development. Inclusive music education therefore becomes a pedagogical field where artistic development, social justice and humanistic communication operate together[2]. UNESCO states that every learner matters equally and that inclusive education works to identify and remove barriers from curricula, pedagogy and teaching. UNICEF also explains that inclusive education means real learning opportunities for children in the same classrooms and schools, including groups historically excluded from ordinary education. These ideas are directly relevant to music lessons. If a teacher relies only on uniform singing accuracy, fast notation reading or public correction of mistakes, some learners may become passive observers[3]. However, when the lesson includes differentiated rhythmic tasks, visual cards, body percussion, movement alternatives, peer support, adapted instruments and creative

improvisation, pupils with different abilities can participate in the same musical experience through different routes. Such participation does not lower the value of the lesson; on the contrary, it broadens the meaning of musical achievement[4]. International experience shows that inclusive music education is most successful when accessibility is combined with artistic quality. Many schools and community projects use universal design for learning, cooperative learning, adapted notation, sign-supported singing, percussion work, digital sound technologies and music therapy elements. The main methodological idea is that the child should not be mechanically adjusted to a rigid curriculum; rather, the curriculum and the learning environment should become responsive to learner diversity. This changes the teacher's role. The music teacher becomes a designer of differentiated activity, a facilitator of peer cooperation, a mediator between artistic expression and developmental needs, and an evaluator of individual growth[5]. Uzbekistan's national experience is also moving toward this paradigm. Under the Concept for the Development of Inclusive Education in Public Education in 2020-2025, mainstream schools have gradually opened their doors to children with disabilities. UNICEF Uzbekistan reported that 225 regular schools began this process in 2022 and that by 2024 more than 530 schools had included 1,195 children with disabilities[6]. These reforms create a practical demand for subject-specific methodology. Music classes are especially important in this regard because Uzbek musical culture contains collective singing, folk melodies, rhythmic movement, moral-aesthetic education and strong traditions of artistic upbringing. If these resources are methodically adapted, they can support communication, emotional expression, cultural identity and social integration[7]. The relevance of the article is determined by the contradiction between the institutional expansion of inclusive education and the insufficient methodological readiness of many music teachers to organize accessible lessons. The purpose of the article is to reveal the pedagogical and methodological significance of applying an inclusive approach in music classes by comparing international principles with national Uzbek experience. The article proceeds from the assumption that inclusive music education becomes effective when learner-centred differentiation, universal accessibility,

emotional safety, culturally relevant musical material and interdisciplinary cooperation are integrated into one lesson system[8]. From a pedagogical point of view, inclusion changes the goals of music lessons. Traditional lessons usually focus on singing accuracy, music literacy, knowledge of composers, repertoire memorization and collective performance. These aims remain important, but they should be expanded through inclusive values. A music lesson should also develop emotional responsiveness, communication, cooperation, listening culture, self-confidence, respect for difference and the ability to express feelings through artistic means. The success of an inclusive lesson cannot be measured only by the technical quality of performance. It should also be evaluated through learner engagement, participation, independence, social interaction and positive experience of belonging. The methodological problem is that many teachers support inclusion in principle but experience difficulties in planning, assessment, repertoire selection and classroom management. Some teachers fear that individualized support will slow down the class; others focus only on the learner with special needs and unintentionally reduce peer interaction; still others use the same task for everyone and expect spontaneous participation. These contradictions require a scientifically grounded methodology that connects inclusive pedagogy, music education, differentiated instruction, universal design for learning and formative assessment. The purpose of this article is therefore to substantiate the pedagogical and methodological foundations for integrating inclusive education into music lessons and to show how inclusive principles can be transformed into practical teaching strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review shows that Uzbek scholarship has already formed important theoretical foundations for inclusive pedagogy, while music-specific inclusive methodology is still developing. Among Uzbek scholars, F.U. Qodirova is significant because her work interprets inclusive education as a complex pedagogical, psychological and legal phenomenon rather than a narrow correctional practice. Her 2022 textbook "Inclusive Education: Theory and Practice" explains the essence of teaching children with disabilities in inclusive conditions, the legal and normative

foundations of inclusion, and pedagogical-psychological aspects of work with learners who have hearing, visual, intellectual, speech, physical or autism-related difficulties. For the present article, Qodirova's contribution is important because it allows music lessons to be understood as part of a broader inclusive educational system. In this framework, the music teacher should not separate artistic goals from developmental, communicative and social adaptation tasks[9]. The second relevant Uzbek scholar is M.A. Asadullayeva, whose publications are directly connected with inclusive music education. Her academic works include studies on the importance of music in the development of adolescent learners in inclusive education, requirements for primary-school music teachers in inclusive settings, the significance of music in inclusive classes, and educational-correctional approaches through music lesson activities. Asadullayeva's contribution is valuable because she transfers the general principles of inclusion into the concrete space of music pedagogy. Her research orientation shows that the music lesson can function simultaneously as an artistic, correctional, emotional and communicative environment. If Qodirova provides the theoretical foundation of inclusive education, Asadullayeva specifies how this foundation may be realized through singing, listening, rhythmic movement, teacher competence and differentiated classroom management[10]. The connection between these two scholarly directions forms the methodological basis of the article. Qodirova's approach clarifies the categories of accessibility, individualization, special educational needs and pedagogical support; Asadullayeva's works show how these categories become lesson procedures and musical activities. Their ideas indicate that Uzbekistan is moving from declarative inclusion toward methodological inclusion, where every subject teacher needs practical models and scientifically justified techniques. At the same time, the literature suggests the need to connect Uzbek traditions with international concepts such as universal design for learning, praxial music education, community music and assistive technology.

METHOD

The methodological part of the article was based on a qualitative, comparative and pedagogical-analytical

research design. The comparative method was used to identify similarities and differences between international and national approaches to inclusive music education. UNESCO and UNICEF principles of barrier removal, equal participation, accessible materials and teacher preparation were compared with Uzbekistan's developing inclusive education practice and with the works of Uzbek scholars in inclusive and music pedagogy. The analytical method helped to determine how general inclusive principles can be transformed into concrete music lesson strategies, including differentiated vocal tasks, adapted rhythmic exercises, visual and tactile support, cooperative ensemble activity, flexible assessment and emotional support. The study also used theoretical generalization, because inclusive music education cannot be understood through one discipline only. It includes special pedagogy, general didactics, music methodology, developmental psychology, correctional pedagogy, cultural studies and educational management. Therefore, music classes were examined as a multi-layered pedagogical environment in which artistic, social, emotional and developmental results are interdependent. The hermeneutic method was used to interpret participation not as simple physical presence in the classroom, but as the learner's possibility to hear, feel, move, respond, create, cooperate and be recognized by classmates and the teacher. Pedagogical modeling was also used. On the basis of the analysed experience, the inclusive music lesson was modeled as a flexible system consisting of diagnostic preparation, adaptation of musical material, multimodal presentation, cooperative performance, differentiated feedback and reflective evaluation. Diagnostic preparation means that the teacher studies learners' abilities, limitations and interests. Multimodal presentation means that sound is supported by visual, movement-based, tactile and verbal forms. Cooperative performance means that pupils receive different but equally meaningful roles. Differentiated feedback means that achievement is assessed through individual progress, participation, expression and cooperation rather than through technical correctness alone.

RESULTS

The results show that international and national experiences converge around one central idea:

inclusive music education is effective only when it creates real participation, not symbolic access. International practice proves that inclusion in music classes requires the removal of curricular, communicative, physical, psychological and assessment barriers. A learner with special educational needs should not be forced to perform the same task in the same way and at the same pace as every other pupil. Instead, the teacher should create several pathways to the same musical aim. One pupil may sing a melodic phrase, another may play a rhythm on a percussion instrument, another may respond through movement, and another may identify musical mood through visual cards. These forms are pedagogically equal if they develop musical understanding and social participation. The national experience of Uzbekistan shows that inclusive education is gradually entering mainstream school practice and that music teachers must adapt to this new reality. Uzbek music classes contain strong inclusive resources because they use collective singing, folk rhythms, children's songs, moral-aesthetic content and emotionally familiar melodies. Such material can reduce distance between learners, support motivation and connect children with shared cultural values. However, national traditions should be adapted carefully. Uniform singing, strict imitation and public correction may create discomfort for some learners. Therefore, cultural continuity must be combined with methodological flexibility. The study identifies teacher competence as the decisive factor in inclusive music education. The teacher must know how to regulate sound for pupils sensitive to noise, support children with speech difficulties during singing, involve learners with hearing impairment through rhythm and visual cues, provide movement alternatives for pupils with physical limitations, and prevent isolation in group performance. Assessment must also be reconceptualized. In an inclusive music class, achievement should include progress, participation, effort, creativity, emotional expression and cooperation. The proposed model therefore consists of accessibility, differentiation, cultural relevance, emotional safety and cooperative creativity.

DISCUSSION

A productive discussion of inclusive music education can be built through the polemic between two foreign scholars: Keith Swanwick and David J. Elliott.

Swanwick's aesthetic and developmental interpretation of music education emphasizes musical meaning, perception, imagination and sensitivity to expressive form. From this perspective, inclusive music classes must not reduce music to therapy, entertainment or simple social adaptation. Learners with special educational needs have the same right to genuine artistic experience and aesthetic growth as all other pupils. Swanwick's position is important because it protects the artistic integrity of the lesson and warns teachers against the danger of offering only simplified or secondary tasks to learners who need support. Elliott's praxial philosophy challenges a narrow aesthetic understanding by interpreting music as human action, social practice and participatory musicianship. For inclusive music education, this view is very important because it shifts attention from abstract musical perfection to active engagement in musicking. A learner who cannot sing accurately may still participate through rhythm, movement, digital sound, improvisation or ensemble support. From the praxial perspective, the main question is whether the learner is included in meaningful musical practice that supports personal and social development. Elliott's approach therefore strengthens inclusive methodology by recognizing diverse forms of musical agency. The polemic between Swanwick and Elliott should not be interpreted as a contradiction in which one position excludes the other. Inclusive music pedagogy needs both views. Swanwick prevents inclusion from losing musical depth, while Elliott prevents music education from becoming accessible only to pupils who already possess conventional musical skills. In practice, this means that a teacher may choose artistically valuable national or world musical material but present it through flexible forms of action. A song can be listened to, sung, accompanied by percussion, expressed through movement, discussed through emotion cards or reconstructed through group creativity. In this way, the same musical material supports both aesthetic perception and practical participation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the application of an inclusive approach in music classes is a necessary direction for modern education. International and national experiences show that inclusion is not the mechanical placement of learners with special educational needs in ordinary

classrooms, but a transformation of content, methods, communication, assessment and classroom culture. Music education has a special inclusive potential because it offers several forms of expression: sound, rhythm, movement, voice, listening, image, technology and collective creativity. This diversity allows pupils with different abilities to become active participants in a shared artistic process. The article shows that international principles advanced by UNESCO and UNICEF should be connected with Uzbekistan's national reforms and scholarly traditions. F.U. Qodirova's theoretical interpretation of inclusive education provides the general pedagogical foundation, while M.A. Asadullayeva's music-specific studies reveal practical ways of applying inclusion in music lessons. The discussion of Swanwick and Elliott proves that inclusive music education should preserve artistic depth while expanding participation. Therefore, an effective inclusive music class should be organized through accessibility, differentiation, cultural relevance, emotional safety and cooperative creativity. Future research should focus on adapted Uzbek-language musical materials, teacher-training modules, diagnostic tools and experimental verification of inclusive music methods.

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