

Tabla – A pedagogical tool for inclusive teaching

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One of the impacts of globalisation is that many countries are faced with similar societal changes, most of which manifest as challenges to the classroom in terms of pedagogy, values, teaching strategies. Issues of achievement, social equality, learner disaffection, teacher stance and teaching strategies, now receive considerable public exposure and attention. In this paper, we prefigure just two elements, which provide the specific focus for informed international educational comparison, that of ‘engagement’ (i.e. learning disaffection and disruptive behaviour) and ‘achievement’. Music therapy is considered a related service modality in special education (IDEA, 1997).[1] It can play an important role in special education because many students with disabilities need special instructional treatment. Music is an ancient method for healing. It neutralizes negative feelings; an increase stress tolerance level and harmonizes inner peace. The use of music therapy can help people who are crippled by various cognitive and bio psychosocial problems. It can also help to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities of various kinds.[2] (*Susan & Sanna, 2004*)

During the past decade, there has been a steady growth in the research base on the impact of music to children with disabilities. A vast majority of the research has mainly focused on music and medicine (Pratt, 1991;[3] Chaquico, 1995)[4] music therapy (Pelliteri, 2000),[5] usefulness of expressive arts (Dixon & Chalmers, 1990),[6] usefulness of music to treat students with emotional and behavioural disorders (Houchens, 1983;[7] Gfeller, 1989,[8] & King, 1994).[9] Very few studies provided a comprehensive view of some disability categories such as autism (Staum, M.J.[10] n.d.; & Stambough, 1996),[11] mental retardation (MR) or cognitive delays, attention deficit disorders

(ADHD), learning disabilities (LD) and physical and other health impairments (POHI). Music integration provide children with concrete, hands-on experiences that are essential to developing each child’s ability to reason, think, solve problems, analyze, evaluate and to enhancing creativity (Houchens, 1983).[12]

Amongst the many challenges for classroom music practitioners is developing inclusive pedagogies which celebrate difference, promote inclusive learning experiences and overcomes learner disaffection in reaching the young people most at risk of exclusion, topics which are globally receiving considerable public exposure and attention.

Methodology

A. Participants

This study consisted of a two-student case study. An informed consent of the parents had been taken to make observations and use the data from the study. Both students were male, Atharva attended public school, was diagnosed as having Asperger’s Syndrome. He had language skills that “appeared normal to his third-grade classroom teacher” and little to no delays in cognitive development (detected early at the age of 18 months). The other student Yash was a child with noticeable impairments in “nonverbal behaviours, such as facial expression and body posture” who additionally faced challenges with spoken language. He also displayed somewhat destructive spontaneous behaviours like “rushing toward people, grabbing hair, biting, making incoherent sounds and throwing himself to the floor”. Yash has been in a self-contained classroom separate from the rest of the students in the mainstream environment, tutored at home. They will be henceforth referred to as student A and student B.

B. Sampling and Analysis

It was known by the researchers before conducting the research that these two students experienced difficulty with social interactions. The final assessment was conducted in an informal manner, and almost all information about the study is presented in a qualitative manner. Each participant was observed individually. Purposive Sampling was used in this research study. The case studies will be analyzed qualitatively to determine common effects or developments with the use of Tabla. It will only describe and not evaluate or assess the case studies.

CONCLUSIONS

Themes from the case studies

A. Common problems encountered during, the sessions with student B

When I first met B at his home with his parents, he had that distant look, or one of detachment. He avoided eye contact at every possibly turn. And while I was talking to his father, he was quietly seated on the chair nearby looking at everything, even the empty ceiling. Yet I knew he was listening intently to our conversation.” “He grew hyperactive, and when someone tried to stop him from touching and moving things around, he got into one of his tantrums. He seemed uncontrollable and inconsolable.”

B. Overall effects

“After a few lessons, we found that he could follow the beat and hence remember the lessons. “Music was the major factor in soothing his nerves in all our sessions. And also the instrument was giving him the opportunity to be able to interact with other people- old and young alike.” Another significant change was in his ability to control his tantrums.” “Throughout the tabla sessions, he showed no temper tantrums or any outward sign that indicated he was an differently abled. I concluded that playing the table was the answer to John’s problem. The pressure involved in the activities I gave him eased every irregular brain-wave, that eventually must have corrected his pattern.”

“This young teenager was so moved by the sound of music, his developmental disability symptoms appeared to have vanished, at least for this moment His ability to learn was almost flawless. He learned to read and identify notes, reading them from the sheet.

Based on Conclusions themes from but failed to provide a control group.

The question of competence in providing music therapy has rarely been the focus of interest in empirical research, as most music therapy research aims at measuring outcomes. Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyse and describe musicians’ learning processes when they study music therapy as a caring intervention. An initial presumption is that musicians are highly qualified to take advantage of the potential of music but need to become familiar with the caring perspective. The music teacher, a learning mentor who is a highly skilled, charismatic and experienced musician, featured in this case provides clear opportunities for pupil participation in the decision-making process and provided a positive attitude about the learning abilities of all his pupils. He develops an inclusive approach to teaching music. He is known for engaging and capturing the imagination and commitment of a group of young people who have very fragmented and difficult personal circumstances. He is responsible for transforming the experiences of these pupils who are seen as disruptive and disaffected learners who would usually be stigmatized, usually excluded, as having special needs by others. He offered musical and emotional support to all and developed good working relationships (i.e. partnerships) between his pupils, their parents (whose vulnerability was, for many parents, often pronounced) and the inter agencies working within and outside the school. He seems to make it work. He seems to be able to motivate the most ‘difficult’ students differently in relation to music. He appears to meet the needs of the learner. Disaffected and bored learners in other classrooms are engaged in his. How does he persuade them to participate fully? Is it through musical and creative activities which confers on them an alternative status or that the tasks initiate a certain kind of social and musical engagement? These are impressive claims. The picture is a complex one. How can we explain it?

Implications

Music creates physiological responses, which are associated with emotional reactions. Music explains the tension release sequence associated with emotional arousal (Abeles, 1980). The speed and intensity of the musical beat creates the different feelings in each type of song. The opportunity to play an instrument can be used

as a reinforce for on task behaviour. Music focuses on accuracy and attention. Learning how to play an instrument can improve attention, concentration, impulse control, social functioning, self-esteem, self-expression, motivation and memory.

1. Connect a particular vocal sound with a particular body movement.
2. Use visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (striking a drum, clapping hands).
3. Use the inherent structure in songs to reinforce a sense of internal order.
4. Use rhythm, steady pulse, and basic beat of music as a model to help student to experience order, sequence, and a sense of consistency.

Special education teachers have used music to alter mood and assess emotional problems. Music allows the individual to invent emotions. Music is viewed as an integral part of all children's lives. Children enjoy listening to music, singing, and humming. Music may effectively enhance the ability to cope with stress. The author suggested that music be found in both music classes and regular education classrooms. She found that integrating literature with musical content helped to bring books alive and that musical classrooms encouraged children to relate and participate in the activities (Giles, Cogan, & Cox, 1991).[13]

Discussions and findings :

The effects of music therapy on children with disabilities are numerous. This paper introduced the background of music and children with disabilities. It explained the rationale behind music integration in an inclusive classroom. Music therapy contributions to cognitive, psychosocial and academic development. It provided practical guidelines to use music to accommodate children with disabilities. The purposes of this study precluded specific designation by disability; rather, the focus was on table influenced peer perceptions and interpersonal skills of the subjects.

The pool of participants for this study was too small to provide a reliable statistic majority or minority, and therefore this study would need to be repeated with a larger pool to have reliable results. Additionally, the non-clinical setting, while more realistic in regard to how people generally communicate, created a setting in which the

researchers did not have full control over all variables (Murdock, Cost & Tieso, 2007, p. 169). Responses were scored as aggressive, assertive, accommodating, appeal to authority, avoidant, and other (Carothers & Taylor, 2004, p. 178-179). He 'stopped trying to achieve the state curriculum outcomes and focused on making music with the students that they valued'

Footnotes

1. IDEA (1997). The Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendments of 1997. Retrieved March 9, 2004 from Web site: <http://www.ideapractices.org>.
2. Educational Benefits of Music in an Inclusive Classroom ERIC, Archive, Susan Sze, Sanna Yu, Aug, 2004, Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) is an internet-based digital library of education research and information sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education.
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5. Pelliteri, J. (2000). The consultant's corner: Music therapy in the special education setting. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation*, 11 (3/4), pp. 379-392.
6. Dixon, G. T., & Chalmers, F. G. (1990). The expressive arts in education. *Childhood Education*, 67, pp. 12-17.
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9. King, R. P., & Schwabenlender, S. A. (1994). Supportive therapies for EBD and at-risk students: Rich, varied, and underused. *Preventing School Failure*, 38(2), pp. 13-18.
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12. Houchens, C. J. (1983). A personal adjustment curriculum for secondary behaviourally disordered students. Paper presented at the Minnesota Conference on Programming for the Development needs of Adolescents with Behavioural Disorders. Minneapolis, MN.
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