

# Music Education for Children with Intellectual Disabilities in China

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## Abstract

Beautiful music can not only help their intellectual development, but also improve their ability in interpersonal communication, is an indispensable part of the implementation of aesthetic education. Through various teaching methods such as music appreciation, music games, rhythm training and singing teaching, children with intellectual disabilities can develop their hearing, sense of rhythm, memory, ability to feel music and attention, etc. Music education plays an irreplaceable role in the education of other disciplines for children with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, we should adopt planned, diversified and targeted teaching methods for students with different degrees and individual differences. Develop effective music curriculum. Through these various teaching methods, we can attract the interest of mentally disabled children in learning music, stimulate their emotions, cultivate and improve their image thinking ability, and promote their intellectual and emotional development, so as to achieve the significance of education, treatment and rehabilitation. This article presented music education for children with intellectual disabilities in China.

**Keywords:** Music Education; Children; Intellectual Disabilities; China

## Introduction

Children with intellectual disabilities are often referred to as retarded children. Children with intellectual disability is a kind of congenital mental disease, generally referring to children with intellectual and emotional development disorders, their intelligence level is lower than normal children of the same age, and the speed of development is slow, accompanied by behavioral disorders, the incidence of intellectual disability in children is 5 in 10,000. Intellectual disability, also known as intellectual deficiency, refers to the brain by organic damage or due to genetic factors of chromosome aberration and gene mutation, resulting in brain development, cognitive activity disorders and comprehensive mental activity disorders; The development of intellectual activities caused by congenital or acquired factors remains in a relatively low stage, which is called intellectual retardation, and is collectively referred to as intellectual disability from the perspective of special education.

Whether children are mentally disabled or not is mainly judged by IQ tests. The so-called IQ is a relative measure of the intelligence level of people calculated by relevant formulas according to the intelligence test results of the subjects. One measure is to divide an individual's intelligence test score by the intelligence test score of the same age group and multiply it by 100 to find an individual's IQ. This is calculated by setting the average IQ of the same age group at 100. Through testing, children with intellectual disabilities can be divided into five levels :

Level1 : Critical lag. An IQ of 70 to 79. Such children generally recover after early education and training.

Level2 : Mild mental retardation. The IQ is 55-69. With the right education and training, such children can be close to normal.

Level3 : Moderate mental retardation. An IQ of 40 to 54. After special training, it can form a certain ability to live.

Level4 : Severe mental retardation. An IQ of 25-39. With special training, you can only improve to a certain extent.

Level5 : Extreme mental retardation. An IQ below 25. Such children require lifelong supervision.

### **Physical and mental characteristics of children with intellectual disabilities**

The performance characteristics of children with intellectual disability can be divided into two categories : psychological characteristics and physiological characteristics. The main perceptual ability is slow and slow, such as in daily life, the stimulus is very bright, large, and long lasting, they can feel; Lack of concentration, they tend to be easily distracted by other sounds or distinctive things, so they cannot concentrate; Mechanical memory is the best mental ability of children with intellectual disability. Many things that need to be learned by thinking are learned by mechanical memory. Language barriers;80% of children with intellectual disabilities have language barriers, difficulty in pronunciation, and vague and unclear words. A very small number of children with intellectual disabilities can speak, but the content is extremely poor, unable to express their own meaning. There are also poor abstract thinking skills; Poor willpower; Rapid mood change; Poor ability to live independently and stereotypical behavior and language (Wang, 2014).

#### **Physiological characteristics**

According to existing studies, the body shape of children with intellectual disabilities, mainly including height, weight and sitting height, is basically the same as that of normal children, and there is no obvious difference. Their physical function and physical quality compared with ordinary children mushrooms, also did not show a significant gap. Some studies have clearly shown that their physical fitness is obviously not as good as normal children, which may have two reasons, one is that intellectual backwardness affects their activities, which in turn affects their physical fitness : the other is that when measured, they may not put their level into play. It should be noted that due to the different causes of intellectual disability, its physical form maybe different (Cheng, 2016).

### **Psychological characteristics**

Children with intellectual disabilities lag significantly behind their peers in intellectual development. They generally have the following psychological characteristics :

In terms of perception : the speed of perception is slow, the scope of perception is narrow, and the content of perception is general and inaccurate. Overall perception appears to be significantly slower than normal children.

Memory : there will be a lot of distortion and error in the reproduction, fragmented, lack of logic, meaning and connection; Slow memorization and poor retention of memory; Memory representation is poor, undifferentiated and unstable.

Speech : speech appears late and develops slowly; Small vocabulary, lack of coherence; The meaning of words is vague, unable to express their ideas clearly and clearly, and the words do not convey the meaning.

Thinking : poor judgment, can not fully understand the object, lack of generalization ability; Difficulty understanding the exact meaning of concepts, especially abstract concepts; Poor analytical skills and illogical thinking; The concept of numbers is difficult to grasp, and simple calculations are difficult to complete. Attention is not easy to concentrate, narrow attention range, poor stability, difficult to distribute attention.

Personality : emotional tension, depression, negative depression or laughter loss; Be hostile to others; Lack of self-confidence and self-control, difficult to stick to the end; Extremely withdrawn.

It can be seen from the above explanation that mentally retarded children are generally not low in a certain psychological process, but the level of all aspects of the entire psychological activity is very low.

With the general characteristics of the intellectually disabled children mentioned above, they are not identical to each other, and they will also show great differences due to different degrees of intellectual disability and some other reasons.

At the same time, due to the impairment of brain function, children with intellectual disability lose a good material premise for their personality development, and the formation and development of personality are limited to a certain extent, which affects the development of their good personality and shows different personality characteristics from normal children. Such as lack of initiative, easy impulse, poor self-control, poor thirst for knowledge. And lack of appropriate social behavior or accompanied by obvious social behavior disorders, so their education and teaching training is particularly important. And only as early as possible to implement targeted special education and training, in order to receive better results.

### **Music education and special education**

#### **The relationship between music education and special education**

With the development of society, the relationship between music education and special education has become more and more close. Since the 1980s, music has been listed as an important educational course in the special teaching plan formulated by the National Education Committee. The plan clearly puts forward the music teaching for special children, in addition to achieving the aesthetic purpose of ideological education, it also requires that from the actual point of view, pay attention to the compensation and correction of students' physical and psychological defects, reflecting the basic principle of combining education and treatment. The possibility of compensation and correction of music education for special

children is closely related to the age of disabled children, the younger the age, the greater the role of compensation. Therefore, it is possible for them to recover to different degrees if they start at an early age. In recent years, with the development needs of special education in China, many scholars have introduced some advanced teaching methods to music education for special children in China, and achieved some research results (Teng, 2007).

### **The necessity of music education for children with intellectual disabilities**

The physiological and psychological characteristics of children with mental disabilities determine the possibility and necessity of music education for them. The general intelligence level of children with intellectual disabilities is lower than that of normal children, and the speed of emotional and intellectual development is slow. Most of them have different degrees of behavioral, cognitive and language defects, and there are certain obstacles in their life and study. According to Orff's theory of music therapy; Sound stimulation has a convincing power to stimulate children's conscious or unconscious reactions. Vivid music can not only stimulate them, but also help them to be more influenced in the process of mutual communication. Make their responses positive and purposeful in the non-threatening environment created by the music. Because children with intellectual disabilities have a low cognitive level, unclear concept of right and wrong, and immature personality development, good music education can make them more moved. After they enter music works, they can produce music internalization, arouse inner resonance, and get emotional development (Han, 2020).

American Music Therapy Association meaning Music therapy is defined as the clinical and evidence-informed use of music interventions<sup>2</sup> to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship in order to meet physical, emotional, mental, social and cognitive needs.

Meaning music class as a special course in the education of children with intellectual disabilities, plays a unique role in cultivating students' sentiment, purifying their hearts, beautifying their behaviors, and cultivating students' innovative thinking and practical ability with its unique artistic function and aesthetic feeling. In the actual teaching, according to the special psychological characteristics of children with intellectual disabilities, individual differences and special needs of individual children, special education methods are adopted for music teaching of children with intellectual disabilities, so as to improve their cultural knowledge and promote their ability to adapt to social life. The integration of music psychology and neurological research into music teaching method can not only enable children with intellectual disabilities to master certain music knowledge, but more importantly, develop more potential value beyond music education itself, such as emotional regulation, emotional cultivation and behavior correction for children with intellectual disabilities (Zhang, 2017).

### **Importance of music education in special education**

Music education for special children is one of the important educational methods in the field of special education. In our country, many special children have not received early education or special training, and their potential abilities have not been developed in a timely and effective manner, which greatly limits the development of their abilities in all aspects and seriously affects their quality of life. Therefore, various experts and scholars are studying and exploring the effective methods of rehabilitation training and special education for special children, and the unanimous conclusion is that music education has remarkable effects and

music education plays a very important role in special education. For children with special needs, they can use music as a means to exchange ideas and emotions with each other. Due to the cognitive and expressive abilities of children with special needs, it is difficult for them to communicate with each other. Music education provides them with a means to express and communicate, and uses music as a way to train themselves to make up for the defects in their sensory and operational abilities. Let music as a form of entertainment, enrich their lives, change their narrow scope of life, heavy burden of life situation, through music to develop their spirit of unity and cooperation, enhance collective, group consciousness, change the lonely, closed habits of life. Therefore, I think that if the music teachers in intellectual education schools have high professional quality, and according to the characteristics of the implementation of music education in intellectual education, the concept of music teaching is integrated into the education of children with intellectual disabilities. No matter in the teaching environment, teaching methods, several possibilities of improvisation, teacher staffing plan, repertoire, teachers, teaching evaluation, or implementation difficulties for special children, it has the ideal effect that other teaching subjects cannot reach. Therefore, the use of music to correct and compensate the physical and mental defects of mentally disabled children may be a golden key to truly open their hearts.

### **Significance of music education for special children.**

In our daily life, music is everywhere. From street advertisements to short videos on mobile phones, from busy cities to comfortable villages, we can hear the beautiful melody of music flowing around us almost every day. People's love for music is almost innate. Learning music can not only improve children's hearing ability, memory ability and judgment ability, but also play a very important role in cultivating people's temperament and edifying people's sentiment. For special children, carrying out music education can not only enhance their connection with the real world through special media, but also help them develop their unique sensory abilities, and promote them to develop a positive attitude, healthy aesthetic taste and high aesthetic ability.

Music education has always played an important role in our education. In recent years, music education for special children has also begun to receive high attention from all walks of life, especially for children with visual defects. Music education has opened a window for them. Although these children have physical defects, their thinking ability is still relatively agile, and their development in some aspects even exceeds the level of normal children. Survey data show that whether it is normal children or children with physical or intellectual disabilities, as long as there is no hearing deficiency, then the baby can perceive the surrounding sounds at 4 months of age, and even give some responses to some sounds, usually this response comes from body movements. In other words, except for children with hearing impairment, special children's perception of music is not much different from that of normal children, but due to certain factors, they cannot effectively express their true feelings through language or text. When conducting music education for children with physical or intellectual disabilities, teachers need to adopt specific educational methods and means to help them learn smoothly. It has been proved that systematic music education for special children can not only eliminate their inner inferiority and make them face life with a positive and optimistic attitude, but also improve their aesthetic cognition and form correct values (Liu, 2019).

### **The value of music education in the education of special children**

Most of the special children due to physical or intellectual defects and obstacles, their hearts will also have certain problems, and even some special children after being ridiculed and discriminated by peers or society, self-esteem will be damaged, become depressed. Therefore, music education can promote the healthy physical and mental development of special children, cultivate their sentiments, promote their communication with peers, and play a certain role in adjuvant therapy.

#### **Cultivate sentiment and develop aesthetic ability**

Music education itself is a medium to teach auditory art and aesthetic art through music, which can enrich people's emotions and thoughts, improve people's ability to feel, create and appreciate the beauty of music, teach us to know the world, feel life, create life, and promote the harmonious development of people. The music education of special children takes aesthetics as the core, aiming at cultivating them to form a sound and healthy personality, guiding them to learn to accept themselves, enjoy life, and develop their aesthetic ability. Through the bridge of music, special children can feel the scenery and things in nature and life, feel the emotions and care from this world, and feel the beauty and warmth in life. Special children can express and enrich their emotions through music, and they can also look forward to life. For special children, this is also the most basic and important value of music education (Li, 2020).

#### **Improve communication skills**

Due to physical defects, many special children have a sense of inferiority, dare not communicate with the outside world, and immerse themselves in their own world all day long, which is not conducive to their future development, and has a great impact on their study, work and life. Music is a special language that transcends national boundaries, gender and age, and plays an important role as a "bridge" in People's Daily communication, as well as for special children. Listening to music can make people relax and feel good. Whether it is in the music classroom or in the social environment, learning music can help guide special children to communicate harmoniously with people or nature, enhance their initiative and enthusiasm in communication, and improve or solve the problem of poor communication of special children to a large extent.

#### **Play the role of adjuvant therapy**

Music helps to develop the mind, promote the special children to live a better life, and form a good aesthetic. I was born to be useful. As long as the teachers have enough patience and the students are firm enough, they can always prove that "gold will shine." The famous conductor Zhou Zhou is a severely mentally retarded child. With the help of teachers and parents, he became the first mentally retarded genius conductor in history with his love for music and strong perseverance. This is the best embodiment of the important role of music education for special children, and fully shows that music can play a certain healing role in the physical and psychological development of special children. In short, music education for special children is an important part of music education, which plays a very positive role in promoting the healthy and happy growth of children. A sound music education mechanism for special children can effectively reduce their feelings of inferiority and loneliness, and play an important role in helping them find self-confidence and integrate into society.

In summary, it plays a pivotal role in the field of special education to carry out planned, targeted and diversified music teaching activities for children with intellectual disabilities. Music is a kind of expressive art. Giving students a musical stage to express themselves can develop their self-confidence and optimistic attitude. Therefore, music can not only regulate the emotions of children with intellectual disabilities, but also compensate their physical and mental defects, and promote the coordinated development of their body and intelligence to a certain extent. Music, as a non-threatening medium, can be one of the channels through which they communicate with the outside world.

### **Problems in music education for children with intellectual disabilities.**

Music education for intellectual retarded children started relatively late in our country and its development was unbalanced in various regions, which is a relatively weak link in our education in intellectual schools. In recent years, China began to attach great importance to the development of quality education and training school began to strengthen and attach importance to art education, but to some extent, the music education of mentally retarded children in China is still at a relatively backward stage. At present, there is a lack of music teaching methods and corresponding textbooks for children with intellectual disabilities in China, and the research on this aspect is relatively few. Therefore, there are still various problems in the teaching materials, teaching methods and curriculum of music education for children with intellectual disabilities (Han, 2020).

### **The teaching material**

At present, the teaching material used in music classes in some schools is Music (Trial), Teaching Material for Full-time Education School. There are eighteen volumes in this series, with one volume on trial every semester. According to the response of many special music teachers, the content of this textbook is relatively difficult, which is higher than the cognitive understanding ability of children with intellectual disabilities. This will reduce children's interest in music class to a certain extent, and thus fail to achieve the effect of education and rehabilitation.

### **Course setting**

According to the relevant materials, there is very little literature on music education for children with intellectual disabilities in China, even the new music curriculum standards do not involve music education for children with intellectual disabilities. In recent years, the reform of basic music education in China has made remarkable progress. However, as the disadvantaged group of children with intellectual disabilities, their music education has not been improved.

### **Teaching methods**

Due to the low level of intelligence and cognitive understanding of children with intellectual disabilities, it is particularly important for teachers to play a leading role in classroom teaching, and the teaching methods suitable for children with intellectual disabilities are also more important. The use of teaching methods directly affects the education and rehabilitation effect of music on students and determines the quality of teaching effect. The author found in the case of consulting materials that many special education in the process of teaching are severely constrained by traditional educational concepts, too much

attention to the mastery of subject knowledge and skills, ignore the essential characteristics of the poor cognitive ability of children with intellectual disabilities. In music education, education and rehabilitation complement each other. We should not only focus on teaching, but ignore the rehabilitation effect of music.

At present, most of the research results in the field of music education for children with intellectual disabilities come from front-line teachers in primary and secondary schools, and a small number of university teachers are gradually involved in this field. From the existing research results, the phenomenon of repeated research is serious. Some articles have similar research contents, perspectives and results, and even several articles have eight points of similarity from title to content, and different authors publish them in different journals. The reason for the repeated phenomenon is the author's research ability and level, and the reason for the assessment requirements of the teaching and research work of each unit. No matter what kind of teachers, they should be engaged in teaching, whether engaged in teacher education, or engaged in front-line teaching, they should strive to become researchers (Jiang,2015).

meaning At the present stage, Peizhi schools adopt a mixed education model, and all special children attend classes together, so there is a lack of pertinence in teaching methods. At present, the Ministry of Education is actively improving the curriculum and teaching materials of smart schools, which has been paid attention to, if added to the targeted and distinctive teaching methods, the teaching effect will be doubled.

### **Fully understand children with intellectual disabilities and improve the effectiveness of classroom teaching.**

The core concept of the new curriculum reform - "Everything for the development of every student, pay attention to every student, pay attention to every student's learning emotions, learning emotions." How to educate mentally disabled children correctly has become a crucial issue in compulsory education.

### **Cultivate good learning habits and promote the cultivation of practical ability of children with intellectual disabilities.**

Most children with intellectual disabilities have poor consciousness, poor learning habits, lazy brain and lack of perseverance and confidence to overcome difficulties. Therefore, in teaching, it is necessary to urge them to complete learning tasks on time and develop the habit of independent thinking, so as to cultivate good learning habits and promote the formation of practical ability. For example, in class, after every blackboard writing, I would step down from the podium to check the notes of mentally disabled children. For the students who did not take notes or did sloppy notes, I would timely educate them to correct small mistakes. For the students who did well in notes, I would timely praise them and say, "So-and-so has made a lot of progress recently, and the font is very correct. In this way, the mentally disabled children can grasp the basic knowledge and basic skills more firmly, so as to change passive learning into active learning, so as to achieve the learning effect.

### **Encourage children with intellectual disabilities to express themselves more at different levels.**

Children with intellectual disabilities have a weak foundation and do not learn consciously. Even when they return home, they rarely go to read books to review and consolidate knowledge. If they are forced to force knowledge on them blindly, their learning pressure will be increased virtually, resulting in more aversion to learning. So, how to improve their learning enthusiasm, so that they are willing to learn. First of all, teachers' motivational language is very important to cultivate students' self-confidence and stimulate students' interest in learning. I often say : "You all love learning, the teacher believes you can do it, come on!" Behave yourself well in class and encourage others to learn, and the teacher will be proud of you." Secondly, teachers should collect more information about their learning, get to know each student, and then try their best to improve their learning interest, let them speak in class as much as possible, and encourage them to "you are great, keep working hard, and your grades will be improved."

### **Careful observation, multiple understanding, to find out the defects, the right medicine.**

We should have a comprehensive understanding of children with intellectual disabilities, and then use after-school time to provide targeted counseling, from easy to difficult, from easy to deep, step by step, and persevere. Sometimes also want to make friends with him, understand, master personality, and then learn to enlighten with tolerance, with love, timely find bright spots, often praise. For those who are not adapted or immature, they should train their attention, urge them to learn, stimulate their interest, organize interesting and beneficial activities, and let them actively participate in them, show themselves, and establish self-confidence. For those with personality problems, teachers should do not criticize in public, protect their self-esteem, cultivate good living habits, encourage more, tell more inspirational stories, and encourage them to make continuous progress. For those who miss classes due to various reasons, students should be organized to help each other and take time to make up lessons. For those who miss school due to family reasons, they should visit their homes regularly, communicate with their parents, and do more ideological work for their parents.

### **Conclusion**

People should pay more attention to the physical and mental needs of children with intellectual disabilities, especially in the case of today's pluralism, intelligence, and theory are generally recognized, and music education for children with intellectual disabilities is not an optional "decoration". Music education for children with intellectual disabilities in mainland China is still in its infancy, and relevant researchers need to broaden their horizons, strengthen theoretical research, and conduct research in combination with major problems in the practice and development of music education for children with intellectual disabilities.

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