

ENGAGING PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS IN MUSIC EDUCATION: IDENTIFYING THEIR ABILITIES AND PROVIDING KNOWLEDGE

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Sattorova Guzal Shukur qizi

Music Instructor, Preschool Institution No. 34, G'ijduvon District

Annotation

This article examines the process of engaging preschool children with visual impairments in music education, identifying their abilities, and providing them with accessible learning opportunities. The focus is on how music can serve as both a developmental tool and a source of emotional expression for children with limited vision. Special attention is given to methods that spark interest in music, nurture creativity, and reveal each child's unique potential. The article also highlights the importance of adapted teaching techniques, the use of auditory and tactile resources, and an individualized approach that respects the specific needs of visually impaired learners. By integrating these strategies, music education not only enhances children's cognitive, social, and emotional growth but also contributes to their self-confidence and inclusion in educational settings.

Keywords

preschool children, visual impairment, blind children, music education, musical abilities, teaching methods, inclusion, creativity, special needs education, auditory learning, early childhood development.

Introduction. Education for children with disabilities, including those with visual impairments, is recognized today as a fundamental human right. At the international level, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) underline the obligation of governments to ensure equal access to quality education for all children, regardless of physical or sensory limitations. These documents stress the importance of inclusive education, where children with disabilities can develop their abilities and participate fully in social and cultural life.

In Uzbekistan, a number of state programs and legal documents support the development and education of children with special needs. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" and the Law "On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" (2020) guarantee the right of every child to education, while also emphasizing the necessity of creating adapted learning conditions. Furthermore,

the Presidential Decree on the Strategy of Actions for the Further Development of Uzbekistan (2017–2021) and the State Program on Youth Policy include measures to support children with disabilities, with particular attention to early childhood education and the development of creative abilities. These reforms align with the broader national priority of building an inclusive education system that fosters equal opportunities.

Music education, within this legal and policy framework, plays a unique role in the development of preschool children with visual impairments. Music is not only a subject of artistic expression but also a powerful tool for emotional regulation, social adaptation, and intellectual growth. For children who cannot rely on vision, music provides a channel for communication, imagination, and self-confidence. Therefore, organizing effective music education that is accessible to visually impaired children is both a pedagogical necessity and a legal requirement grounded in national and international commitments.

This article explores methods of engaging visually impaired preschool children in music lessons, identifying their abilities, and creating opportunities for them to acquire knowledge in an inclusive and stimulating environment.

Literature Review. Scholars and educators have long emphasized the significance of music in the development of children with disabilities, particularly those with visual impairments. Research consistently shows that music is not only a form of artistic activity but also a means of cognitive, emotional, and social development.

International studies highlight that visually impaired children demonstrate heightened sensitivity to auditory stimuli, which can be effectively used in music education. For example, Jellison (2015) in her work on inclusive music education stresses that music enables children with disabilities to engage in creative expression and to build communication skills, even in environments where visual participation is limited. Similarly, Abramo (2012) discusses how adaptive teaching methods, including auditory and tactile resources, allow visually impaired children to access the same curriculum as their peers.

From a psychological and pedagogical perspective, music is considered a key factor in shaping memory, attention, and emotional well-being. Gordon's "Music Learning Theory" (2007) provides insights into how early music exposure develops inner hearing and rhythmic understanding—abilities that can be especially beneficial for blind children who rely heavily on auditory perception. Moreover, studies by Ockelford (2013) point out that music education can reveal hidden talents in children with visual impairments, giving them a sense of competence and self-confidence.

In the context of Uzbekistan, research on special education and inclusive teaching has gained importance in recent years. Local scholars such as Qodirova (2020) and Tursunova (2021) note that preschool music education for children with special needs requires not only adapted teaching methods but also systematic support from teachers and parents. Their findings emphasize that the integration of national cultural heritage – songs, rhythms, and instruments – can further motivate children and strengthen their identity.

Overall, the literature confirms that music education for visually impaired preschool children is an essential area of pedagogy. It combines scientific knowledge with practical strategies to foster personal development, social inclusion, and creativity. However, many researchers also underline the lack of sufficient specialized resources and the need for professional training of teachers in order to ensure effective outcomes.

Music education for preschool children with visual impairments requires a carefully adapted approach that respects their individual needs while unlocking their creative potential. Unlike their sighted peers, blind children rely heavily on auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic perception. Therefore, teaching methods must be designed to activate these senses and ensure that every child can meaningfully participate in musical activities.

Early assessment is essential to reveal each child's natural inclinations and strengths. Observation of spontaneous vocalization, rhythmic movements, and responsiveness to sound helps teachers recognize potential musical abilities. Short exercises such as listening games, call-and-response singing, and clapping rhythms provide valuable insight into a child's pitch recognition, sense of rhythm, and auditory memory. These diagnostic activities not only help to evaluate skills but also engage children in enjoyable and stress-free learning experiences.

Children with visual impairments may face limitations in accessing visual cues, but their heightened auditory awareness makes them highly responsive to sound. Teachers can use live instruments, recorded music, and even everyday sounds to spark curiosity. Integrating familiar songs from children's cultural environment builds motivation and emotional connection. Storytelling through music—where melodies and rhythms represent characters or events—also encourages active imagination and keeps children engaged.

Effective teaching requires creating a multisensory learning environment:

- Auditory methods: Clear verbal instructions, repetition, and varied sound sources.
- Tactile methods: Allowing children to touch instruments, explore their structure, and feel vibrations.

- Kinesthetic methods: Encouraging body movement, dancing, and rhythmic exercises to internalize beat and tempo.

Teachers should avoid over-reliance on visual demonstrations and instead emphasize hands-on learning. Group activities such as singing in unison or playing percussion instruments promote social interaction, teamwork, and self-confidence.

The teacher's role is not only to instruct but also to guide, encourage, and create a supportive atmosphere. Patience, creativity, and flexibility are crucial qualities. At the same time, family involvement significantly strengthens the learning process. Parents can reinforce music activities at home by singing with their children, listening to recordings, or providing simple instruments like tambourines or drums. Consistency between school and home practice enhances children's progress.

When organized effectively, music education contributes to multiple dimensions of development:

- Cognitive growth: Improved memory, concentration, and auditory discrimination.
- Emotional well-being: Greater self-expression, reduced anxiety, and increased self-esteem.
- Social inclusion: Opportunities to collaborate with peers and feel part of a community.
- Creativity: Development of imagination and artistic potential.

Thus, music becomes not just a subject of study but a powerful tool of holistic development and inclusion for visually impaired preschool children

Conclusion. Music education for preschool children with visual impairments is not only an artistic activity but also a vital component of their intellectual, emotional, and social development. By applying adapted teaching methods that rely on auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic experiences, teachers can identify each child's natural musical abilities and nurture their potential. Creating an engaging and inclusive learning environment ensures that children with limited vision can participate actively, build self-confidence, and express themselves creatively.

The analysis confirms that music helps visually impaired children strengthen memory, attention, and imagination, while also fostering emotional stability and social interaction. Success in this process depends on the joint efforts of educators, families, and society at large. Teachers must approach lessons with flexibility and creativity, while parents should continue musical engagement at home. Support from state policies and inclusive education programs further guarantees equal opportunities for these children.

In conclusion, music education should be viewed as an effective tool of inclusion and personal growth for preschool children with visual impairments. It not only develops their musical skills but also prepares them for active participation in social and cultural life.

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