
Practices and Pedagogies in Special Education (SPED) Schools in Singapore: Perspectives from a Music Program for Children with Cerebral Palsy

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Résumé

In Singapore, there are a number of government-funded special education (SPED) schools that caters specifically to students (aged 7-18) with autism spectrum disorder, mild to severe intellectual disability, multiple disabilities and sensory impairments. These SPED schools follow a national framework that identified a total curriculum that is holistic, person-centred, developmentally appropriate, collaborative and coherent, functioning within seven core learning domains of which the Arts is included (MOE, 2021, pp.5-6).

A grant commissioned research study helmed by the co-presenter of this presentation, examined the AISS (Artist-in-Schools Scheme) in SPED schools, focusing on the engagement of students in the AISS programs in and through arts education in terms of benefits, challenges and issues encountered; and through qualitative case studies, locate the practice and pedagogies employed by artist educators in engaging students.

This presentation will focus on one of the qualitative case studies of the AISS program, a music practitioner facilitating a music and movement program and an instrumental ensemble for students with Cerebral Palsy in a SPED school in Singapore. This methodology of this qualitative case study involved the triangulation, analysis and synthesis of data gathered through: i) qualitative surveys for teachers, parents/caregivers and students; ii) intensive interviews with the artist practitioner, parents/caregivers and teachers, as well as; iii) weekly video recorded observations of the music and movement and instrumental ensemble programs alongside; iv) researcher reflective notes.

Moreno et al. (2021) through an integrative literature review about the inclusion of children with Cerebral Palsy (CP) in music programs, reflected upon the need for music practitioners and teachers to have a better understanding about the characteristics and needs of children with CP so as to work out curricular adaptations that would bring out the potential of students and enabling contexts that would trigger accessibility. There is also a call for the provision of knowledge about existing and emerging technologies for inclusive music learning and an emphasis on building a network of support professionals that would foster problem solving (p.553).

This presentation will highlight the symbiotic and collaborative relationships between the music practitioner and school teachers to create a safe and enabling classroom environment towards active musical and socio-emotional engagement of students. The presentation will also point to musical routines and flexible use of musical instruments and tactile materials by the music practitioner as points of invitation, individual and group work, as well as the encouragement of physical mobility and cognitive thinking in students.

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Mots-Clés: arts education, pedagogies, special education