

Integration of Music Activities in Primary Education for Cognitive Development: A Comparative Study of Selected Asian Countries

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Music activities are increasingly recognized as meaningful pedagogical tools for supporting children's cognitive development in primary education. This study examines how music activities are integrated into primary education in four selected Asian countries: Sri Lanka, Singapore, Japan, and Malaysia. The main purpose is to compare the types, purposes, and pedagogical uses of music activities and to consider how they contribute to attention, memory, sequencing, language development, creativity, problem-solving, and executive functioning. The study used a qualitative comparative design based on secondary sources, including curriculum documents, education policy materials, official publications of the ministry, and recent empirical literature. The data were analyzed and synthesized based on research objectives, which were predetermined themes for the current study. The findings show that Singapore and Japan provide more structured curriculum models for music education, with clearer learning outcomes and stronger links between music activities and skill development. Malaysia offers a multicultural model in which music supports both cognitive flexibility and intercultural understanding, although implementation is affected by teacher preparation, resources, and facilities. Sri Lanka has a strong cultural and aesthetic foundation for music education; however, the purposeful use of music as a cross-curricular strategy for cognitive development requires further strengthening. The study concludes that music should not be treated only as an aesthetic subject or performance activity. When carefully planned, singing, rhythm, movement, listening, instrumental work, and creative music-making can become powerful learning experiences that support children's holistic cognitive, social, emotional, and creative development.

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