

A PROPOSED MUSIC SKILLS CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

PROPOSTA DE UM CURRÍCULO DE HABILIDADES MUSICAIS PARA ESTUDANTES COM DEFICIÊNCIA INTELECTUAL NO SULTANATO DE OMÃ

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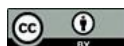
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Abstract

This study aims to propose a music skills curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman in response to contemporary trends in inclusive education and the national educational priorities outlined in Oman Vision 2040. Music education is widely recognized as an effective educational tool for enhancing the cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development of students with intellectual disabilities, as it facilitates communication, self-expression, and active participation in learning environments. Despite this importance, current music education curricula in Omani basic education schools are primarily designed for typically developing students and do not sufficiently consider the developmental and educational needs of learners with intellectual disabilities. The study employed a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the current state of the music skills curriculum for the first grade of basic education. The analysis focused on curriculum objectives, content, teaching strategies, and assessment methods. Data were collected through document analysis of the official curriculum and teacher guides, a review of relevant literature, and consultation with experts in music education and special education. The findings revealed a clear gap between the principles of inclusive education and the existing curriculum structure. Specifically, the curriculum lacks adapted objectives, simplified and progressive content, appropriate

Resumo

Este estudo tem como objetivo propor um currículo de habilidades musicais para estudantes com deficiência intelectual no Sultanato de Omã, em resposta às tendências contemporâneas da educação inclusiva e às prioridades educacionais nacionais estabelecidas na Visão Omã 2040. A educação musical é amplamente reconhecida como uma ferramenta educacional eficaz para promover o desenvolvimento cognitivo, social, emocional e motor de estudantes com deficiência intelectual, pois facilita a comunicação, a expressão pessoal e a participação ativa em ambientes de aprendizagem. Apesar dessa importância, os currículos atuais de educação musical nas escolas de educação básica em Omã são, em sua maioria, elaborados para estudantes com desenvolvimento típico e não consideram adequadamente as necessidades educacionais e de desenvolvimento dos alunos com deficiência intelectual. O estudo adotou uma abordagem descritivo-analítica para examinar o estado atual do currículo de habilidades musicais para o primeiro ano da educação básica. A análise concentrou-se nos objetivos curriculares, no conteúdo, nas estratégias de ensino e nos métodos de avaliação. Os dados foram coletados por meio da análise documental do currículo oficial e dos guias do professor, além da revisão da literatura relevante e da consulta a especialistas em educação musical e educação especial. Os resultados revelaram uma lacuna



instructional strategies, and flexible assessment tools suitable for students with intellectual disabilities. Based on these findings, the study proposes a comprehensive framework for developing a music skills curriculum that incorporates sensory-motor activities, play-based learning, repetition, and performance-based assessment. The proposed framework aims to enhance musical learning, support holistic development, and promote inclusive educational practices in the Sultanate of Oman.

Keywords: Music Education. Intellectual Disabilities. Music Skills Curriculum. Inclusive Education. Curriculum Development. Basic Education. Oman Vision 2040.

clara entre os princípios da educação inclusiva e a estrutura curricular existente. Especificamente, o currículo carece de objetivos adaptados, conteúdo simplificado e progressivo, estratégias de ensino adequadas e instrumentos de avaliação flexíveis apropriados para estudantes com deficiência intelectual. Com base nesses resultados, o estudo propõe um quadro abrangente para o desenvolvimento de um currículo de habilidades musicais que incorpore atividades sensório-motoras, aprendizagem baseada em jogos, repetição e avaliação baseada no desempenho. A proposta visa fortalecer a aprendizagem musical, apoiar o desenvolvimento integral dos estudantes e promover práticas educacionais inclusivas no Sultanato de Omã.

Palavras-chave: Educação Musical. Deficiência Intelectual. Currículo de Habilidades Musicais. Educação Inclusiva. Desenvolvimento Curricular. Educação Básica. Visão Omã 2040.

1 RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

Curriculum development is a cornerstone of modern educational reform, playing a crucial role in enhancing the quality of education and aligning it with the needs of both learners and society. Its importance lies in the ability to keep pace with emerging knowledge and technologies, while addressing individual differences among learners and fostering a comprehensive learning environment that provides equal opportunities for learning and growth (William & Mary, 2023).

Curricula are among the most prominent components of the educational system, representing the cornerstone of the educational process due to their pivotal role in achieving educational goals and enhancing education's contribution to societal reform. They serve as the medium through which the curriculum is implemented and reflect educational philosophy in the form of impactful learning experiences that contribute to learners' development. The effectiveness of these curricula is linked to teachers' competence in delivering the content using modern teaching methods that reinforce the

learner's role as an active participant responsible for their own learning (Gulo, 2024; Torkar et al., 2022).

In light of rapid global transformations, particularly in the era of digital and knowledge-based openness, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive review of the components of the educational system—especially curricula—to ensure they align more closely with current realities and future challenges. Guiding learners' experiences and developing their interests are fundamental pillars of effective educational reform, given their direct impact on the quality of educational outcomes (Nursap & Aisyah, 2024; Ishemo & Hamidu, 2024).

In this context, special education occupies a crucial position as a form of education specifically designed to meet the educational and developmental needs of individuals with various disabilities. It relies on individualized programs implemented by qualified and trained staff and delivered in supportive learning environments that consider students' abilities and differences (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2018). The special education system is based on two main models: inclusive education and separate education, depending on what best serves the learner (Atbaşı & Özdemir, 2020; Kargın, 2023).

In the Sultanate of Oman, the Law on the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled (Royal Decree No. 63/2008) recognizes the right of individuals with disabilities to receive education within the general system according to their abilities and needs. The Ministry of Education implements special educational integration programs, including separate classes within public schools for individuals with intellectual disabilities, along with specialized staff and technical support (Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman, 2022).

Intellectual disability is one of the categories covered by these services. A person with an intellectual disability is defined as someone who experiences significant impairments in intellectual and social abilities, with an IQ below average (i.e., less than 70). The law stipulates the provision of educational programs that are appropriate to these characteristics and implemented within a suitable learning environment (Royal Decree 63/2008, Article 24).

On the other hand, musical skills are considered crucial in developing the cognitive, emotional, and social abilities of children with intellectual disabilities, given the opportunities they provide for non-verbal expression and interaction, as well as

facilitating communication and participation. Studies have shown that music education contributes to improving concentration, developing life skills, and enhancing self-confidence (Doğan, 2024; Ministry of Education, 2021).

However, the reality of teaching musical skills in the Sultanate of Oman still suffers from significant deficiencies, both in terms of content and teaching methods. Current curricula have not been designed according to the characteristics of individuals with intellectual disabilities, which limit their effectiveness and negatively impacts educational outcomes (Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman, 2020, 2021).

Educational literature confirms that traditional curricula, when presented in a standardized manner that disregards special needs, contribute to low levels of participation and achievement among students with disabilities. This literature advocates for the adoption of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which ensures the participation of all students and facilitates their access to content (UNESCO, 2021).

In light of the above, there is a pressing need to develop a music skills curriculum that considers the developmental characteristics of students with intellectual disabilities, is grounded in sound scientific and educational principles, and employs interactive teaching methods that support active learning and empathetic engagement. This is the objective of the current research, which aims to present a scientific framework for developing this curriculum within the context of the Sultanate of Oman.

1.1 Research problem

Curricula are among the most important tools for implementing the educational system, given their essential role in building knowledge and developing learners' skills. In the context of special education, curricula take on a more complex and vital dimension due to the need for adaptations that consider the individual differences and developmental characteristics of the learners. Musical skills are particularly capable of enhancing the cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Music stimulates communication, develops self-awareness, and strengthens social interaction skills (Hallam, 2010).

Despite the growing global recognition of the importance of music education for this group, recent literature indicates that many music programs fail to consider the unique

needs of these students and do not provide an inclusive learning environment. This oversight leads to low levels of interaction and participation (Loreman et al., 2010). In the Omani context, despite UNICEF's support for the Ministry of Education through the development of a comprehensive training guide for teachers of grades 1-4, aimed at enabling them to integrate inclusive curricula for children with disabilities, the music education curricula provided for individuals with intellectual disabilities still lack necessary development and adaptation (UNICEF Oman, 2020).

Based on the literature review and the observations of the educational reality in the Sultanate of Oman, it is evident that the music skills curriculum for individuals with intellectual disabilities requires a comprehensive review and development. This should encompass objectives, content, teaching strategies, and assessment tools, adopting modern scientific foundations that align with the needs of this group and comply with quality standards and contemporary educational trends.

In light of the above, this study addresses the inadequate alignment of the music skills curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman with modern educational trends and the specific needs of this group of learners. This situation necessitates a proposed framework for developing this curriculum.

1.2 Research questions

1. What is the current state of the music skills curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman regarding (objectives, content, teaching methods and strategies, and assessment tools)?
2. What is the proposed framework for developing the music skills curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman?

1.3 Significance of the study

1.3.1 Theoretical significance

The study enriches the educational literature related to teaching musical skills to individuals with intellectual disabilities by presenting a developmental framework

grounded in modern educational principles. It also offers a new perspective in the field of special education by highlighting the importance of integrating music education into curricula designed for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

1.3.2 Practical significance

The study provides a proposal for developing a music skills curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman, enabling relevant authorities to restructure the curriculum in accordance with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and active teaching strategies. It also serves as a practical reference for special education teachers, supporting them in developing curricula that meet learners' needs while taking into account their developmental and emotional characteristics.

1.3.3 Societal significance (in the Omani context)

The study addresses the priorities of the Sultanate of Oman in the care and empowerment of individuals with disabilities, aligning with Oman Vision 2040, which emphasizes inclusion and equity in education. It also aims to improve the quality of life for individuals with intellectual disabilities by enhancing their artistic and social skills through music, thereby promoting their integration into society. Additionally, the study contributes to the development of the educational environment in Omani institutions, particularly in areas that lack specialized educational programs for students with special needs.

1.3.4 Research objectives

- To analyze the current state of the music skills curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman concerning its objectives, content, teaching strategies, and assessment tools.

- To identify the shortcomings of the current curriculum in light of modern educational trends and the characteristics of students with intellectual disabilities.
- To develop a proposal for enhancing the music skills curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman, based on the results of the analysis and previous studies.

1.4 Definition of terms

1.4.1 Curriculum development

Curriculum development is a planned, purposeful, progressive, and systematic process aimed at modifying and improving the content, objectives, strategies, and assessment methods of an educational course to bring about positive changes in the educational system. As changes and developments occur in the world, the school curriculum must adapt accordingly. Therefore, there is a need to update curricula to meet the needs of society (Mohanasundaram, 2018).

Operationally, curriculum development is defined as preparing a proposal for modifying the music skills curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman, which includes reformulating course objectives, updating content, and adopting interactive teaching methods and assessment tools appropriate to the developmental and cognitive characteristics of this group.

1.4.2 Musical skills

Musical skills encompass a set of psychomotor, cognitive, and emotional abilities demonstrated by an individual through musical expression using the voice or instruments. These skills include understanding musical phenomena, applying rhythmic patterns, singing, playing instruments, and interacting with musical elements in a systematic and creative manner. They contribute to enhancing children's personal, spiritual, and social growth while helping them develop self-confidence, critical thinking, and creativity (Foti, 2020; Qarri, 2022).

Operationally, musical skills are defined as the abilities that the developed curriculum aims to cultivate in students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman. This includes simple singing, rhythm recognition, playing percussion instruments, and participating in group musical activities, all tailored to their developmental characteristics and specific needs.

1.4.3 Intellectual disability

Intellectual disability is a disorder characterized by significant impairments in both intellectual functioning and adaptive skills, including conceptual, social, and practical skills. These impairments manifest during the developmental period, typically before the age of 22. Diagnosis involves considering cultural and linguistic differences, recognizing that individuals may exhibit strengths alongside weaknesses, and that providing appropriate support over time can lead to improvements in overall functioning (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities [AAIDD], 2021).

Operationally, Intellectual disability is defined as individuals with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman, under the age of 22, who exhibit deficiencies in cognitive and behavioral performance. This necessitates adapting the content and methods of teaching musical skills to suit their individual abilities and needs within the Omani educational and cultural context.

1.5 Theoretical framework and previous studies

The theoretical framework of the study is organized around three main themes: intellectual disability, including its concept, characteristics, and educational needs; music education and its importance for individuals with intellectual disabilities; and the development of educational curricula for individuals with disabilities, with a focus on key concepts and instructional strategies.

1.5.1 Intellectual disability – concept, characteristics, and educational needs

Intellectual disability is among the most common categories of disability. It is characterized by significant deficits in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior that emerge before the age of eighteen (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities [AAIDD], 2021). The definition has evolved to account for the interaction between individual abilities and environmental and social support, making it a complex phenomenon that extends beyond medical aspects alone (Schalock et al., 2021). According to the American Psychiatric Association, intellectual disability is defined as significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive skills that emerge during the developmental period. Diagnosis, as outlined in the DSM-5, is based on the presence of intellectual disability (typically indicated by an IQ below 70) along with difficulties in adaptive behavior, with symptoms arising before age 18 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Intellectual disability is classified into four levels based on the severity of the impairment: mild, moderate, severe, and profound. Individuals are assessed according to their need for support, rather than solely on IQ, given the varying patterns of adaptation depending on environmental conditions (Schalock et al., 2021; Heward, 2017). Educators categorize individuals into groups such as educable, trainable, and dependent based on the results of intelligence tests like the Wechsler and Stanford-Binet (Morsi, 2000; Shqeir, 2000).

The cognitive characteristics of children with intellectual disabilities include slow mental development, impaired abstract thinking, limited attention and memory, and language delays that affect social interaction (Heward, 2017; Westling & Fox, 2019). They also exhibit behavioral characteristics such as difficulties in social adaptation, repetitive or inappropriate behaviors, and impaired motor development, which may vary depending on the severity of the disability (Schalock et al., 2021). Additionally, disabilities may be accompanied by other manifestations, including an inability to produce, aggressive behavior, or social deviance (Ahmed, 2007).

Educationally, these children require flexible and diverse environments that accommodate individual differences, alongside the development of Individualized

Education Programs (IEPs). These programs should include activities based on repetition, simulation, and hands-on learning to enhance both academic and social skills (UNESCO, 2020). Research underscores the importance of integrating audiovisual media into education and the vital role of family and community support in facilitating the child's progress (Westling & Fox, 2019).

Among the most prominent contemporary educational approaches are Segan's sensorimotor method, which emphasizes sensory perception; the Montessori method, which merges life and school experiences; individualized instruction that considers individual differences; and learning through practical activities (Wehmeyer et al., 2017; Lillard, 2018; Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2020; Domitrovich et al., 2017).

Accordingly, schools for students with intellectual disabilities must adopt active learning practices, such as discussion, role-playing, simulation, and cooperative learning (Masri & Zulkipli, 2025). Furthermore, rich sensory environments help connect abstract concepts to concrete ones, thereby enhancing students' social and cognitive functioning (Agostine et al., 2022).

Emotionally and socially, children with intellectual disabilities often face challenges in adjustment and relationships, which can lead to feelings of inferiority or withdrawal (Jacob et al., 2022; Oner et al., 2020). Social inclusion is a cornerstone of justice and human dignity for this group, providing them with equal opportunities to participate and make decisions in their lives (Bigby et al., 2023). This underscores the need for comprehensive psychosocial support, alongside academic education, to foster a sense of belonging and intrinsic motivation (Hassani & Schwab, 2021). Studies also confirm that iterative experiential learning in a supportive environment is essential for developing positive behavior (Westling & Fox, 2019).

1.5.2 Music education and its importance for individuals with intellectual disabilities

Music education is a field that aims to develop an individual's musical abilities by cultivating auditory, rhythmic, and melodic awareness while expanding artistic and emotional understanding through voice, movement, instruments, and group activities. It extends beyond teaching musical skills and seeks to promote holistic development in cognitive, social, emotional, and motor aspects (Danek, 2024). The objectives of music

education include stimulating creative expression, developing aesthetic sense, and enhancing social interaction skills, in addition to supporting language, attention, and perception. For children with intellectual disabilities, music education offers a unique dimension by facilitating learning, building self-confidence, and fostering effective communication (Hallam & Creech, 2016).

As an educational tool, music education allows children with intellectual disabilities to engage in rich and diverse experiences that contribute to their overall development. These musical experiences are designed to accommodate varying abilities, selecting musical activities appropriate to each child's level and adapting instruments and techniques to meet individual needs, all while considering diverse educational and developmental goals. Research indicates that musical activities support social, motor, and cognitive development, as well as enhance self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment (Turan, 2006). However, working with this group requires special equipment, and the teacher's competence is crucial in observing and responding to children's reactions. Salmon (2000) emphasizes the importance of the teacher's ability to observe children's sensory and motor responses, adjusting, repeating, and adapting musical tasks based on their needs.

Music education fundamentally aims to develop an individual's musical and artistic skills while fostering their latent potential, particularly in children with intellectual disabilities. This requires teachers to create flexible educational plans that account for individual differences and developmental stages, integrating musical, educational, and social objectives (Öner, 2014). According to Lee (2016), singing enhances linguistic and social skills, while playing musical instruments develops fine and gross motor skills and encourages cooperation. Musical movement activities help children grasp abstract concepts through sensory experiences, while listening to music fosters emotional expression and a sense of rhythm. Additionally, musical storytelling contributes to improved attention and concentration.

Music education should extend beyond playing instruments and singing; it must also incorporate dance and movement activities that cater to children's abilities and encourage creativity. Teaching methods, such as (Dalcroze, Orff, and Kodály) can create rich and responsive learning experiences (Hallam & Creech, 2016). For instance, Karşıyakalı Doğan (2020) revealed that using the Orff method in conjunction with social

stories helped children with disabilities learn and perform rhythmic patterns with their bodies and instruments. Similarly, Öziskender Flinn (2020) demonstrated that movement- and play-based music education enhanced the singing and musical interaction skills of a child with moderate intellectual disability.

The literature demonstrates the effectiveness of music education in achieving multiple goals, both within the musical framework and in promoting social, behavioral, and cognitive development. Numerous studies have shown the impact of music on developing social skills (Pektaş, 2019; Sakarkaya et al., 2018; Sağırkaya, 2014; Yılmaz, 2010, 2022), reducing problematic behaviors (Berrakçay, 2008), developing daily living skills (Ertekin, 2015), and teaching academic concepts (Eren et al., 2013; Karşıyakalı et al., 2014).

For instance, Filianou and Stamatopoulou (2013) demonstrated that music and movement education helped children aged 7 to 10 years become more aware of their bodies, reduce behavioral problems, and enhance teamwork and attention. This evidence clearly indicates that music education serves as a comprehensive educational tool, which not only develops musical skills but also contributes significantly to improving the overall quality of life for children with intellectual disabilities. It promotes their social integration, enhances their communication and expression abilities, and supports their independence in daily life.

1.5.3 Developing educational curricula for individuals with disabilities

Curricula are fundamental tools used by societies to build and shape the personalities of their members, reflecting their philosophies, cultures, and beliefs. They embody the aspirations and ambitions of these societies for future generations as well as their current realities and the crises they are experiencing. Some countries have recognized this and made radical modifications to their curricula, leading to significant advancements across various levels and remarkable accomplishments in the fields of science and knowledge.

Educators and researchers recognize the role of curricula in nurturing generations of learners and equipping them with the skills and knowledge essential for their holistic development and the advancement of their societies. Just as other educational concepts

have evolved, the concept of curriculum has also undergone significant development in response to life's complexities and changing methodologies, necessitating adjustments in educational foundations and approaches to meet contemporary demands (Boumaaraf & Saed, 2016).

The curriculum consists of four essential and interconnected elements. **Educational objectives** are the central elements of the curriculum, as the other components closely link to them. Educational objectives refer to the planned learning outcomes that society, the educational system, and the school aim to help learners achieve based on their potential and abilities, and in accordance with the resources available to the educational institution. Content includes the courses and educational topics, along with their associated concepts, facts, and the mental and physical skills required, as well as methods of research and critical thinking. **Teaching methods and tools** vary according to the nature of the content and the educational context, encompassing how knowledge is presented and learning is facilitated. **Assessment** serves as a fundamental tool for measuring the extent to which educational objectives are achieved. It aims to gather evidence that validates educational hypotheses and their pedagogical applications, thus helping to improve the educational process and ensure its effectiveness (Ihsan Al-Din, 2016).

Integrating the core elements of the curriculum with music education programs for children with intellectual disabilities is essential to ensure the effectiveness of the educational process and improve outcomes. According to a study by Kilani et al. (2022), the objectives of teaching musical skills to this group should focus on supporting the child's holistic development physically, mentally, psychologically, emotionally, and socially, enabling them to integrate into society as responsible and productive members. These objectives include fostering a spirit of cooperation and teamwork, helping children understand the value of their role within a group and the importance of the group to the individual, and instilling an awareness of their rights and responsibilities. Furthermore, opportunities for free self-expression should be provided to help release pent-up emotions and expend excess energy, contributing to psychological stability and mental clarity. In this context, music can serve as a productive form of recreation for children during their free time, whether through listening, playing, or creating, to enhance their personal and social development.

Curriculum development is closely linked to the concept of curriculum and its interpretation. In the past, curriculum was often reduced to course syllabi and textbooks. Today, however, it encompasses all educational experiences and activities provided by schools under the supervision of teachers, aiming to enable learners to interact with these experiences and acquire knowledge, skills, and values (Boumaraf & Saad, 2016).

Curriculum development is a systematic process designed to improve the fundamental components of the curriculum, including objectives, content, teaching methods, and assessment, in order to achieve quality education that meets learners' needs. For individuals with disabilities, development involves adapting the curriculum to suit their sensory, cognitive, and motor abilities, ensuring effective inclusion in the learning environment (UNESCO, 2017).

Curriculum improvement relies on a holistic development philosophy that addresses all components rather than focusing on a single element, as was common in traditional approaches. Modern trends emphasize enhancing the overall curriculum framework while ensuring the integration of its components, tailoring educational experiences to learners' needs, interests, and future aspirations (Kilani et al., 2022; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

Curriculum improvement is an ongoing and dynamic process intended to make the educational experience more effective and relevant to contemporary life. This is achieved through comprehensive reviews of study programs, the development of innovative teaching methods, and the updating of assessment tools, thereby enhancing the balance between knowledge acquisition and the development of skills and values in learners (Al-Za'ayi, 2025).

Developing curricula for students with disabilities is a key pillar in achieving inclusive education, as it helps remove educational barriers, enhances opportunities for participation, and enables students to acquire both academic and life skills (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Effective curriculum development for inclusive education requires strategies that respond to the diverse needs of learners while supporting broader educational goals. This includes **adapting content** by tailoring objectives, simplifying language, reorganizing learning sequences, and incorporating multimedia resources to make lessons accessible and engaging (Tomlinson, 2014). Equally important is **diversifying teaching**

approaches, using active learning, sensory-motor activities, cooperative tasks, and integrating arts and music with movement to enhance understanding and participation. Ensuring **alignment** between learning objectives, instructional content, and teaching methods guarantees consistency with students' needs and national curriculum standards, supporting coherent teaching and fair assessment practices. **Continuous assessment** further strengthens learning by employing flexible tools such as feedback, scorecards, and project-based evaluations to monitor progress and guide instruction (Black & Williams, 2009). Supporting these efforts, **professional development for teachers** equips educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement inclusive practices effectively. Finally, integrating the curriculum with national development goals, such as **Oman Vision 2040**, encourages creativity, social inclusion, and meaningful participation, fostering an educational environment that benefits all students.

2 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

To answer the questions that define the research problem, the following procedures were implemented:

2.1 Identifying requirements

Identifying the requirements of students with intellectual disabilities in music education curricula by reviewing a wide range of learning resources, including specialized references, educational books in the field of teaching individuals with intellectual disabilities, music skills courses, and teacher guides for music education courses tailored to individuals with intellectual disabilities in various Arab countries. This also included analyzing numerous research papers and studies that addressed the teaching requirements of this population.

2.2 Reviewing reports

Reviewing reports from various disability organizations regarding the importance of education for this group and their specific educational needs. Additionally, experts

were surveyed on the most critical educational requirements for individuals with intellectual disabilities that educational institutions aim to incorporate into their curricula, both in general and specifically within music education curricula.

2.3 Preparing a requirements list

Preparing and refining a list of the requirements for students with intellectual disabilities that must be included in the music skills curriculum for the first stage of basic education.

2.4 Curriculum evaluation

The content of the current first-grade music skills curriculum was evaluated in light of the specific teaching requirements for students with intellectual disabilities, as outlined in the requirements list. This evaluation involved assessing the curriculum objectives and comparing them to the needs identified for these students. An analysis of the first-grade music skills curriculum revealed that some musical concepts and skills were repeated without clear examples of how to effectively impart them to students. Additionally, there was a lack of references in the teacher's guide regarding their integration with typically developing students as part of the inclusion system in schools. These findings will be considered when preparing the revised curriculum.

The first-grade music skills curriculum and the results of the analysis were presented to a group of experts in music education, curriculum development, and teaching methodologies, following an explanation of the analysis's purpose, objectives, and procedures. The reviewers confirmed the validity of the curriculum analysis and the soundness of its results.

2.5 Evaluation of teaching strategies and activities

The evaluation of current teaching strategies and educational activities within the curriculum involved visits by researchers to several schools in the North Al Batinah

Governorate, where they observed students during their field training. Music skills teachers confirmed during interviews that there were shortcomings in addressing the needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities. They noted that the teaching methods were primarily designed for typically developing students, leading to a lack of activities tailored for this group and insufficient participation in musical activities suitable for individuals with disabilities, despite the presence of an inclusion mechanism within these schools.

2.6 Evaluation of the course's teaching aids

An evaluation of the course's teaching aids revealed that the available resources are limited to rhythm cards and introductory cards for some music education concepts. Consequently, the current curriculum minimally addresses the needs of students with disabilities concerning teaching aids.

2.7 Course evaluation process

A review of the course evaluation process revealed that the music skills curriculum lacks comprehensive assessment requirements for students with intellectual disabilities and does not provide sufficient variety. Furthermore, most evaluation methods are unsuitable for evaluating these students.

It is evident that the music skills curriculum must consider the needs of students with intellectual disabilities and their specific requirements. This consideration should be reflected in both the curriculum itself and the teacher's guide, which serves to support music skills teachers in their classroom practices. Therefore, a proposed framework for the first-grade music skills curriculum, addressing the needs of students with intellectual disabilities, has been developed.

2.8 Preparing the proposal

The proposal for the first-grade music skills curriculum incorporates the needs of students with intellectual disabilities. This proposal was developed by establishing the

foundations for the revised curriculum, aligned with the Sultanate of Oman's Vision 2040. A comprehensive list of the needs of students with intellectual disabilities was compiled, informed by the analysis of the existing first-grade music skills curriculum, the characteristics of these students, their educational needs, and the adaptation of enrichment and remedial educational activities to address various learning challenges.

The proposed curriculum framework was initially reviewed by several professors and experts specializing in music education, curriculum, and teaching methods to gather their feedback. All necessary modifications were made to these elements, resulting in a final curriculum ready for implementation with students with intellectual disabilities.

3 RESULTS

Answering the first research question which, states " What is the current state of the music skills curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman regarding (objectives, content, teaching methods and strategies, and assessment tools)?", the researchers analyzed the content of the first-grade music skills curriculum. It was found that the teacher's guide is limited to topics suitable for typical students and does not address other disability categories. The same curriculum is taught to both typical students and those with intellectual disabilities, lacking specific activities tailored to the latter group. The examination of the music skills curriculum revealed a significant gap. Despite modern trends toward inclusive education, there is currently no dedicated guide or textbook for music skills specifically designed for students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman, whether within the broader field of special education or focused solely on this population. This indicates a clear deficiency that necessitates expansion and development.

Given the absence of a dedicated music skills curriculum or guide for students with intellectual disabilities, the "Teacher's Guide for Music Skills for First Grade" was analyzed as the closest resource for adapting materials for this group, due to its simple content and appropriate sensory-motor focus. The guide consists of four learning units, each containing several lessons centered on listening, singing, movement, and musical instrument identification. While these components are essential elements of music skills,

the lessons are not tailored to meet the specific developmental and cognitive goals of children with intellectual disabilities.

Additionally, the language of the songs used is relatively complex, containing vocabulary that may not align with the linguistic comprehension level of this group. The guide also lacks necessary repetition and gradual progression, which are crucial for learning. Furthermore, it does not incorporate modern teaching methodologies suitable for individuals with intellectual disabilities, such as the Orff, Kodály, or Dalcroze approaches that have proven effective in teaching children with diverse abilities.

Table 1

Introduction: Distribution of lessons within educational units

Educational Unit	Lessons	Activity topics
Unit One My Dear Homeland	3	National Anthem (singing) – Rhythmic Unit Nawar (rhythm) – Musical Appreciation (listening and appreciation)
Unit Two My Happy Family	3	My Family Anthem (singing) - Measure and Dividing Line (solfège) - Band Instruments (playing)
Unit Three My Popular Games	3	The game "You See Me Cut the Chains" (kinetic rhythm) - The kroosh mark and the corresponding stroke (rhythm) - High and deep, speed and slowness (solfège)
Unit Four My Musical Rules	3	Number Anthem (singing) - Duple meter (solfège) - Musical staff (solfège)
Unit Five My Musical Piece	3	My Prayer Anthem (singing) - Band Instrumental Piece (playing) - Solfège
Unit Six Oman, My Song	3	Oman Anthem (singing) - Fifth melodic distance (solfège) - Vocal exercise (singing)

3.1 Objectives

The guide includes general musical objectives, such as developing musical awareness through attentive listening, acquiring singing and rhythmic skills, fostering expressive movement, and becoming familiar with various musical instruments. Based on these general outcomes and performance expectations, the list of objectives can be expanded to include enhancing performance proficiency, developing learners' musical awareness, boosting self-confidence, promoting integration into group and community activities, cultivating artistic appreciation and musical concepts (such as melody, rhythm, and harmony), expressing ideas and opinions using musical terminology, and developing auditory discrimination by recognizing contrasts between sounds and musical styles. This approach fosters a sense of belonging to Omani musical heritage and the ability to

distinguish between folk and Arabic musical instruments. While these objectives are clear, the guide lacks provisions for adapting the learning experience for individuals with intellectual disabilities and does not incorporate developmental or functional objectives that align with their specific needs.

3.2 Content

The content encompasses a range of activities related to singing skills (including Anthems like "My Family," "Numbers," and "My Prayer," along with solfège melodic exercises), movement (the game "You See Me Cut the Chains"), playing instruments (a piece for band instruments), and listening activities. It features rhythmic exercises that involve clapping and simple instruments such as drums and cymbals, as well as recognizing the sounds of instruments like the tambourine, cymbals, castanets, triangle, bells, and xylophone. However, this content does not adequately meet the needs of children with mild intellectual disabilities. It requires modifications in terms of language simplicity, pattern repetition, and the incorporation of supporting visual aids.

3.3 Teaching strategies and methods

The guide suggests a range of strategies, including cooperative learning, learning through play, repetition and imitation, and linking movement and rhythm. While these methods are suitable for sensory-motor education and align with the abilities of individuals with intellectual disabilities, they are not specifically tailored to address their unique musical abilities and needs.

3.4 Evaluation tools

The guide lacks evaluation tools suitable for individuals with intellectual disabilities and relies solely on observing responses during activities. There are no standardized measurement tools or adaptive performance scales, which makes it challenging to use with students experiencing varying developmental difficulties.

3.5 Areas of musical skills in basic education

Modern educational literature indicates that the areas of music education in primary school include listening and appreciation, solfège, singing, playing instruments, movement expression, and creativity (Zaytoun, 2023; Elwakeel, 2020). These areas advocate for the integration of practical and theoretical activities and the use of music to develop children's auditory, linguistic, physical, and social intelligence.

In reference to the "Teacher's Guide for Musical Skills for the First Grade of Basic Education," issued by the Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman (2022), it is evident that while the guide mentions learning outcomes within these areas, it does not address the needs of children with intellectual disabilities. Specific aspects such as simplifying concepts, repeating activities, and diversifying presentation methods are not considered. This highlights the necessity to develop a guide that aligns with the characteristics and needs of this group.

Table 2

Musical skill domains, descriptions, and expected learning outcomes in the primary stage based on the teacher's guide

Area	Description	Example from the teacher's guide	Expected learning outcomes according to the document
Solfège	Performing melodic and rhythmic exercises using solfège syllables and basic rhythmic notation.	Identifying <i>crochet</i> (quarter note), <i>minim</i> (half note), and rests; clapping rhythmic patterns.	Recognizing rhythmic symbols and note durations; performing rhythmic and melodic patterns using musical notation.
Singing	Vocal expression through singing songs and simple musical pieces.	Singing anthems such as "My Family" and "My Numbers"; vocal warm-up exercises.	Singing anthems such as "My Family" and "My Numbers"; vocal warm-up exercises.
Playing Instruments	Using simple musical instruments to produce rhythmic and melodic sounds.	Using simple musical instruments to produce rhythmic and melodic sounds.	Using simple musical instruments to produce rhythmic and melodic sounds.
Listening and Appreciating	Developing listening skills and the ability to recognize musical sounds and concepts.	Developing listening skills and the ability to recognize musical sounds and concepts.	Developing listening skills and the ability to recognize musical sounds and concepts.

Movement	Expressing rhythm and melody through body movement and physical activities.	Performing rhythmic movements accompanying songs or musical pieces.	Connecting movement with musical rhythm and melody and expressing musical ideas through physical motion.
Creativity	Encouraging musical improvisation and simple composition.	Improvising rhythmic patterns using hand instruments.	Creating simple rhythmic phrases, expressing musical ideas freely, and representing sounds through drawing or performance.

Table 3

Analysis of music learning activities in the grade 1 teacher's guide and suggested adaptations for students with intellectual disabilities

Area	Example from the teacher's guide	Observation/Suggested Adaptation
Solfège	An exercise for reading musical notes (do, re, mi) using hand signals.	The activity does not provide a gradual progression in difficulty suitable for students with intellectual disabilities. Adaptation: Begin with a single note before introducing additional notes, provide intensive repetition, and use visual supports such as colored cards or tactile materials to represent musical notes.
Singing	The song "School Is Beautiful."	The song includes abstract vocabulary and complex grammatical structures that may be difficult for students with intellectual disabilities. Adaptation: Simplify the lyrics, use familiar and concrete vocabulary, and support understanding by linking words with pictures or illustrative gestures.
Playing Instruments	Playing the tambourine to accompany a song or anthem.	The activity lacks a gradual progression in motor skill development and does not incorporate supportive instructional strategies. Adaptation: Break the activity into smaller sequential steps, begin with slow rhythmic patterns, and provide physical or visual guidance for correct hand positioning.
Listening and Appreciating	Listening to the sound of the violin and distinguishing it from the flute.	The activity is not supported by visual or tactile materials that could assist students with sensory or cognitive needs. Adaptation: Present images of musical instruments, provide tactile models or miniature representations, and repeat the sounds with clear verbal descriptions to support recognition.
Movement	Performing rhythmic movements to accompany songs.	The activity may require advanced motor coordination that could be challenging for some students with intellectual disabilities. Adaptation: Simplify the movements, break them into smaller steps, and provide repetition and individual guidance during practice.
Creativity	Creativity activities are not clearly included in the teacher's guide.	The absence of improvisation or simple composition activities indicates a missing component of musical development. Adaptation: Introduce simple vocal or rhythmic improvisation activities using body percussion or hand instruments, and encourage students to create their own rhythmic patterns.

The analysis of the music skills curriculum guide for the first grade of basic education in the Sultanate of Oman reveals that the content focuses on developing

fundamental musical skills through simple sensory and motor activities. While some teaching strategies could be adapted for students with intellectual disabilities, the absence of clearly tailored objectives, content, and assessment methods for this group limits the curriculum's effectiveness. This underscores the necessity for developing a music skills curriculum specifically designed for students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman.

To answer to the second question which states, "What is the proposed framework for developing the music skills curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman?" the researchers have developed a proposal for a music education skills course. This proposal focuses on proposing an adaptive content framework for individuals with intellectual disabilities, incorporating a variety of activities, strategies, and teaching methods that align with the content, educational objectives, and the nature of the disability. It includes the integration of elements of the educational process with the cultural identity of Omani society, coinciding with the educational goals of the basic stage and linked to the National Development Plan for Oman 2040 to support community integration. This involves using flexible tools suitable for observing and assessing the performance of individuals with disabilities.

Table 4

The suggested proposal

Basic skills	Sub-skills	Content items	Strategies	Practical examples of activities
Listening	Distinguishing environmental sounds	Distinguishing environmental sounds	Distinguishing environmental sounds	Distinguishing environmental sounds
	Distinguishing musical sounds	Sounds of simple musical instruments (drum, tambourine, xylophone)	Learning through play	Listening to instrument sounds and attempting to imitate them.
	Distinguishing between different sounds	Identifying the source of the sound	Repetition	Identifying the source of sound (live/non-live) in the classroom or via recording.
	Motor response skill to sound	Distinguishing between similar and different sounds	Repetition	Distinguishing between similar and different sounds, and signaling or moving in response to audible sounds.
	Distinguishing sound type	Distinguishing between high and deep voices, fast and slow voices, rising and falling voices	Modeling	Performing an anthem that uses different voices (high/deep, fast/slow, rising/falling).

	Expressing the type of sound through movement	Performing the anthem (voice movements)	Learning through play	Performing an anthem using gestures and movements (raising the hand for a loud sound, bowing for a low sound).
	Matching sound to movement	The kinetic expression of the type of sound	Repetition	The kinetic expression of the sound type using jumping, walking, clapping, and matching the sound to the appropriate movement.
Singing	Pronouncing words correctly and clearly	Presenting a simple lyrical model of notes	Modeling	Present a simple lyrical model of the notes (do, re, mi, fa, sol) with clear pronunciation of the words.
	Singing notes from Do to Sol	Imitation of tones	Learning through play	Imitating tones through sound games (listen and repeat, sing along with a hand gesture indicating the psychological effect).
	Fixing tones in auditory memory	Repetition of melodies	Repetition	Repeating musical notes gradually, individually and collectively.
	Opening the mouth correctly while singing	Opening the mouth while singing	Modeling	Demonstrating how to open your mouth correctly while singing.
	Controlling the articulation of letters while singing	Controlling the articulation of letters while singing	Learning through play	Using a mirror or directional signs to accompany the singing performance.
	Improving vocal pronunciation	Improving pronunciation and singing	Repetition	Repeating words and tones with vocal performance correction.
	Singing high and deep pitches	High and deep pitches singing	Modeling	Performance of vocal models illustrating high and deep voice.
	Distinguishing between vocal registers while singing	Distinguishing between vocal registers	Learning through play	Audio games for distinguishing between sound pitches.
	Voice pitch control skill	Voice pitch control	Repetition	Training in transitioning between high and deep notes.
	Solo singing	Solo singing	Modeling	Performing a solo singing demonstration in front of the students.
	Confidence in vocal performance	Enhancing confidence in performance	Learning through play	Solo singing accompanied by movement or gesture.
	Group singing with the team	Group singing	Modeling	Presenting a model of organized group singing.
	Musical collaboration	Musical collaboration	Learning through play	Forming simple musical groups using band instruments.
	Adhering to the group rhythm	Adherence to the group rhythm	Repetition	Group singing based on auditory memory.
Rhythm and	Distinguishing different rhythms	Listen to the anthem, focusing on the rhythms.	Modeling	Listen to a short anthem containing different rhythms, explaining each rhythmic note, then point out each note as you listen.

	Executing rhythm through clapping	Clapping, any audible rhythm	Learning through play	"Clap with me" game: Clapping to a specific rhythm, which the students then imitate.
	Accompanying the rhythm to the melody	Accompanying the melody with appropriate rhythmic clapping	Repetition	A short musical piece is played, and the students line up to clap to the appropriate rhythm for each musical phrase.
	Imitating musical movements	Show movements such as clapping, walking, jumping	Modeling	Performing specific movements to the rhythm, and the students imitate them step by step
	Developing balance and coordination	Dancing and both random and directed movement.	Learning through play	"Move Your Body" game: Students move around the classroom space to music.
	Performing simple rhythms	Performing rhythms in the style of Carl Orff (band instruments)	Repetition	Students are divided into groups, each group performing rhythms using their hands or a small drum (tambourine).
	Coordinating movements with music	Show a model of dance or movement with music	Modeling	Performing a series of movements synchronized to music, explains the timing of each movement, and then the students imitate him.
	Motor and musical cooperation	Group movement exercises accompanied by rhythm	Learning through play	Forming circles or rows, moving the body to the rhythm, with students taking turns.
	Maintaining rhythm and harmony	Repetition of rhythm and movement performances to solidify the skill.	Repetition	Review the rhythms and movements learned in previous sessions, integrating them into a continuous group performance.
Playing music	Holding instruments correctly while playing	Holding the band instruments (castanette, tambourine, jingles, triangle, drum) correctly while playing	Modeling	Demonstrate how to hold the castanets, maracas, and jingles correctly, and ask the students to imitate.
	Controlling instruments while playing	Practice holding the band instruments (castanette, marak, jalajil, triangle, tambourine) correctly	Learning through play	Training game: Students exchange instruments and practice the correct way to hold them.
	Proper playing technique while seated	The skill of playing band instruments (castanette, marqué, jingles, triangle, tambourine) correctly while seated	Repetition	Seated exercise: Students sit correctly in front of the instrument and play a simple rhythm.
	Playing each hand separately.	Skill in playing band instruments (castanette, marak, jingles, triangle, tambourine) with each hand separately	Modeling	The teacher demonstrates how each hand plays individually, and the students imitate him.
	Successfully playing each hand separately.	Practice playing each hand separately	Repetition	Individual training: Students play simple musical phrases first with their right hand, then with their left.

	Hand coordination skill while playing music	The skill of playing band instruments (castanette, marakish, jalajil, triangle, tambourine) using both hands	Modeling	The teacher demonstrates how to join hands together to a simple musical phrase.
	Playing with both hands together in a harmonious manner	Integrating both hands while playing band instruments (castanets, maracas, jingles, triangle, and frame drum).	Repetition	Group exercise: Students play musical phrases together, focusing on hand coordination.
	Playing accompaniment on musical instruments	Playing accompaniment for easy musical phrases.	Repetition	Group exercise: playing accompaniment for songs such as the Melody Anthem, Rhythm Signs Anthem, Sound Movements Anthem, and Numbers Anthem.
	Quick response and interaction with music	Enhancing control and interaction with rhythm	Learning through play	Game challenge: Students play rhythms with changes in speed or sudden stops.
Cognitive skills	Focus skill	Developing focus and belonging through musical games	Learning through play	The "Numbers Anthem" game: Students clap to the rhythm according to the numbers mentioned in the anthem.
	Visual discrimination, the skill of integrating the senses.	Linking colors and rhythms to enhance visual and auditory memory	Learning through play	Students link rhythms with colors: Example "Clap the rhythm around the red circle three times".
	Counting and rhythm. The skill of temporal discrimination.	Practicing rhythm with numbers to solidify temporal understanding	Repetition	"Numbers and Time Values" Exercise: Students clap or bang to the rhythm according to the specified numbers and time values.
	Linking music to community values.	Applying the cultural values and meanings of Omani society	Modeling	Performing the anthem "Good Morning" or "Clean Dishdasha" with a focus on community culture.
	Physical expression. The skill of creativity and improvisation. The skill of linking music to daily life.	Integrating musical movement with everyday words and free interaction	Learning through play	The students perform movements to accompany the words of the anthem, with the opportunity given to free improvisation.

4 DISCUSSION

The results revealed a significant deficiency in the music skills curriculum for the first grade of basic education in the Sultanate of Oman concerning the needs of students with intellectual disabilities. The same curriculum is taught to both typical students and

those with disabilities without adapting the objectives, content, teaching strategies, or assessment methods. This reflects a gap between the principles of inclusive education and the actual application of the curriculum.

The results also indicated the absence of a specific music education curriculum or guide for students with intellectual disabilities. This absence limits the utilization of music's educational and developmental role in fostering the sensory, motor, emotional, and social aspects of this group. Content analysis revealed that although the musical activities were diverse, they were not tailored to the specific characteristics of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Additionally, they lacked progression, repetition, and sensory support—essential elements in the education of these students.

These results are consistent with educational literature, which confirms that children with intellectual disabilities experience slower cognitive development, weaknesses in abstract thinking, and limitations in memory and attention. This necessitates the design of educational curricula that emphasize progression, repetition, sensory-motor support, and the use of concrete rather than abstract experiences (Heward, 2017; Westling & Fox, 2019). Furthermore, current trends in special education indicate that the effectiveness of education for these children is closely linked to how well objectives, content, and teaching methods align with their individual needs within flexible educational plans that account for individual differences (UNESCO, 2020; Schalock et al., 2021). This context explains the shortcomings identified by the study regarding the current curriculum.

The results also indicated that music education teachers in inclusive education environments face multiple challenges, a finding supported by previous studies (Akay, 2023; Atterbury, 1998; Gfeller et al., 1990; Frisque et al., 1994; Güven, 2011; Sönmez, 2017; Kutlu, 2018). These challenges include the lack of adapted music curricula, limited practical guidance, and the absence of adaptive assessment tools based on performance, which hinders the monitoring of students' progress.

The theoretical framework emphasizes that the development of music education curricula for individuals with intellectual disabilities should be grounded in a comprehensive curriculum philosophy that integrates objectives, content, teaching methods, and assessment techniques into a cohesive framework. This framework prioritizes individualized adaptation, diversification of teaching strategies, and the adoption of performance-based assessment (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Tomlinson,

2014; Black & Wiliam, 2009). Accordingly, the proposed approach in this study addresses these shortcomings by offering a comprehensive methodological framework for a music skills course tailored for individuals with intellectual disabilities. This framework focuses on adapting objectives and content, diversifying sensory-motor activities, employing suitable teaching strategies, and adopting flexible, performance-based assessment methods. It also considers the cultural specificities of Omani society, thereby contributing to the support of inclusive education and enhancing the quality of education for this group in the Sultanate of Oman.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a curriculum or guide specifically for music skills directed at students with intellectual disabilities in the basic education stages in the Sultanate of Oman.
- Adapt the objectives and content of music education to align with the developmental, sensory, and motor characteristics of individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- Employ suitable teaching strategies such as learning through play, imitation, repetition, and sensory-motor activities in the music instruction for this group.
- Diversify musical activities to include areas of listening, singing, movement, and playing instruments, with an emphasis on musical creativity.
- Develop flexible assessment tools based on organized observation and performance assessment to monitor the progress of students with intellectual disabilities.
- Train music teachers on the principles of inclusive education and teaching methods for students with intellectual disabilities.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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