

SPA-162

## **Exploring the Inclusion and Equity in Music Education**

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### **Abstract**

As Edward Said (1991) argues, European music's autonomy and hegemony have been believed and taken for granted for at least a century. At the very moment when the avant-garde or contemporary music of the West challenged European tonal music tradition and looked to the non-Europe for a way out of its impasse, music education in Japan found itself inscribed with the framework of the superficial or counterfeit nineteenth century musical traditions of the West along with an aspect such as a major or minor key function. Presupposing the audience, many music teachers have valued music composed by professional composers above anything children could achieve themselves, and failed to understand the value of music beyond concert and competition. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to develop a new music education curriculum in order to bring inclusive education into music classroom, based on the concept of soundscape and universal design. The research question was: how can music teachers develop all the children's creativity at nursery, elementary, secondary and special needs schools? In order to answer this question, the authors undertook an action research at secondary and special needs schools as well as semi-structured interviews with junior college students in the department of early childhood education in Aomori, Japan. The action research showed that all students from secondary and special needs schools were able to collaborate and create their own music without valuing foreign music and music composed by others. What should be noted here is that the junior high school students learned most from the special needs students (children with pervasive development disorder; down syndrome; autism and so on) in terms of musical flexibility and creativity. After the class, a junior high school student commented: "Not knowing what to do, his (a special needs school student) moves let me know a model." Through the concept of soundscape as a tool towards universal design in music education, there must be a way for all the students from the nursery, elementary, junior high and special needs schools to work together at some point. The interviews with junior college students, at the same time, showed that many students in the nursery department have blind faith in European tonal music. Based on the above, the authors also attempted to propose a new curriculum design in order to bring the inclusion and equity into the music classrooms, referring to Rashomon Approach as a social constructive evaluation.