

ABSTRACT

Various cognitive learning theories have been examined for the purpose of considering music as an activity developing cognitive processes. It was felt that an exploration of these theories could offer insights into how music can be used to demonstrate cognitive development in learning and in children with learning disabilities. In an attempt to illustrate the relationship between music and cognition, concepts in the theories of Piaget, the Neo-Piagetians (Case, Pascaul-Leone, Biggs and Collis), Bruner, Ausubel, Vygotsky, Luria and Leont'ev have been discussed in association with music activities. It is argued that music can be identified as a cognitive activity and applied to learning and to learning disabilities through recognised special education approaches; these include perceptual-motor, multi-sensory, language-development related, developmental and behavioural.

The theories of Vygotsky, Luria and Leont'ev - the 'troika' - are considered in greater detail. Their theories, although focussing on concepts of language in cognitive development, appear to offer a means for the wider application of music to cognitive development. Vygotsky's developmental hierarchy, Luria's brain functional system, and Leont'ev's theory of activity have been amalgamated into a theoretical framework demonstrating the processing of information through music activity leading to cognitive development. This framework provides for an investigation into learning capacities and learning potential, relevant to cognitive development in learning and in the learning disabled child.