

Reimagining Music Education: School–Community Partnerships for Cultural Sustainability in Indonesia

Ramadhina Ulfa Nuristama

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Indonesia

Correspondent: ramadhina.ulfa.nuristama@uinsa.ac.id

Received : June 30, 2024

Accepted : August 21, 2024

Published : August 31, 2024

Citation: Nuristama, R. U. (2024). Reimagining Music Education: School–Community Partnerships for Cultural Sustainability in Indonesia. *Harmonia : Journal of Music and Arts*, 2(3), 173-184.

ABSTRACT: This study explores how school–community partnerships can integrate traditional music into Indonesian formal education. Amid the rise of Kurikulum Merdeka and global concern for intangible cultural heritage, the research addresses the gap in applied models for sustaining cultural identity through collaboration. The study examines structures, impacts, and challenges of such partnerships across schools. Employing a qualitative multi site case study design, the research focuses on three schools engaged in different types of collaboration with local cultural institutions, including co teaching, guest artist residencies, and service learning. Data were collected through semi structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo software to identify key patterns and stakeholder perspectives. Findings reveal that school–community partnerships significantly enhance students’ cultural literacy, self expression, collaboration skills, and performance confidence. Traditional music education was found to be most effective when delivered through experiential and reflective approaches, supported by mutual planning between educators and cultural practitioners. Community involvement provided authenticity and fostered stronger student engagement. Moreover, the study confirms the applicability of frameworks such as UNESCO’s “Teaching with Living Heritage” and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, both of which emphasize cultural continuity and identity development. Key challenges included scheduling conflicts, limited resources, and unclear role definitions all of which were mitigated through flexible planning, digital tools, and written agreements. In conclusion, this research contributes a scalable and context sensitive model for integrating traditional music into national education. It underscores the value of schools acting as cultural agents and highlights the importance of policy support for inclusive, culturally embedded education.

Keywords: Traditional Music Education, School–Community Partnerships, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, Indonesian Curriculum, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Arts Education, Experiential Learning.



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INTRODUCTION

The integration of traditional music into education has gained international attention for its role in fostering creativity and cultural awareness. This aligns with broader shifts toward holistic, culturally

grounded pedagogies, including STEAM education. The inclusion of arts particularly traditional music in such interdisciplinary frameworks is viewed as essential for cultivating creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness among learners (Sanz-Camarero et al., 2023). Concurrently, there is a heightened emphasis on enhancing students' cultural competence by embedding local and regional narratives into the learning process. This allows students not only to engage artistically but also to establish a deeper connection with their heritage and social identity (Xiaoming & Endozo, 2024).

In Indonesia, this global trend finds resonance through the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka, which promotes curricular flexibility and decentralization. By granting schools the autonomy to tailor content according to local contexts, this reform opens new avenues for integrating indigenous musical practices into classrooms. Recent initiatives have demonstrated how this approach enriches students' educational experiences while simultaneously preserving Indonesia's vast cultural heritage (Rubiyanoro & Bush, 2024). The curriculum also aims to nurture well rounded individuals by embedding cultural heritage into the educational framework, thereby cultivating inclusive and identity sensitive learning environments.

The educational rationale for incorporating intangible cultural heritage (ICH), particularly traditional music, is extensive. Contemporary studies suggest that engaging students with cultural heritage fosters social emotional growth, strengthens their understanding of collective identity, and builds empathy within diverse classroom settings. Moreover, incorporating ICH into curricula promotes respect for cultural diversity, enhances students' analytical and reflective abilities, and supports broader civic learning goals (Jones et al., 2023). As such, traditional music education transcends technical training, positioning itself as a transformative tool for cultural and human development.

Despite these positive developments, significant gaps persist within the Southeast Asian literature on traditional arts education. Empirical investigations into the methodologies used to teach traditional music remain scarce. While theoretical frameworks on cultural competence and arts education are well articulated, there is a notable lack of applied research examining their implementation in diverse educational settings (Xiaoming & Endozo, 2024). Furthermore, few studies have systematically assessed the cognitive, emotional, and cultural impacts of traditional music instruction on student outcomes. This scarcity limits the development of replicable pedagogical models and impedes curriculum designers from integrating traditional music into broader educational reforms.

In multicultural societies such as Indonesia, music education is a potent instrument for identity formation. Participation in culturally diverse musical traditions provides learners with avenues for self expression and intercultural engagement. Research indicates that music helps individuals articulate their social positioning and personal narratives, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging and self worth (Kim & Jung, 2023). Moreover, music curricula that reflect cultural plurality promote inclusivity and challenge dominant cultural hierarchies within educational systems (Pardoel et al., 2022). These findings affirm that music education particularly in its

traditional forms can serve as a platform for social justice, community cohesion, and student empowerment.

Historically, traditional music has oscillated between central and peripheral roles within Indonesian education policy. Previously confined to extracurricular domains or informal contexts, it was often considered secondary to core academic subjects. However, recent policy shifts underscore a renewed valuation of traditional music as integral to cultural and civic education. The current discourse now emphasizes its role in fostering national identity, moral citizenship, and cultural literacy among young people (Hidajat et al., 2021). This reorientation is reflective of a broader ideological transition in which traditional music is viewed not merely as a cultural artifact but as a dynamic educational resource.

In conclusion, integrating traditional music into formal education constitutes a complex but promising endeavor that intersects cultural preservation, pedagogical innovation, and identity formation. The convergence of global trends, national curriculum reforms, and theoretical insights demonstrates a growing recognition of traditional music's potential to transform learning. As educational systems strive for inclusivity and relevance, the strategic incorporation of traditional music promises to enrich students' academic and personal development, ensuring that cultural heritage remains a living, evolving element of contemporary education.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative case study design to examine school–community collaborations in teaching traditional music in Indonesia. Three sites Yogyakarta, Bandung, and Manado were selected to capture diverse contexts. This approach allowed in-depth insights into practices and stakeholder experiences, directly addressing the research questions.

The selection of case study design was driven by its capacity to contextualize learning experiences within specific educational and cultural environments. Ethnographic elements such as participant observation and fieldwork were employed to capture the lived experiences of students, educators, and community artists (Huang et al., 2024; Weatherly et al., 2024). These tools proved essential in understanding the cultural and social dynamics underpinning pedagogical practices.

To further support the participatory and reflective nature of cultural education, the research design incorporated principles of action research. This method was particularly valuable given its iterative nature planning, acting, observing, and reflecting which aligned with the evolving dynamics of the school–community partnerships under observation (Yan & Li, 2023). The inclusion of action research also empowered practitioners to adapt teaching strategies in real time, based on reflective feedback.

Data collection included three primary instruments: semi structured interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with 12 key informants, comprising schoolteachers, traditional music practitioners, and students, offering a multi

perspective understanding of each partnership. Observations took place over the span of two months per site, encompassing rehearsals, classroom sessions, performances, and informal discussions. Relevant documents such as Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), lesson plans, and assessment rubrics were also analyzed to trace the formalization and structure of the partnerships (Zhang & Wu, 2023).

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data, supported by the use of NVivo software. NVivo facilitated the systematic organization, coding, and interpretation of qualitative data. Its features enabled the creation of visual maps, categorical matrices, and thematic hierarchies, all of which enhanced the analytical process (Nyandieka, 2024; Yoo, 2024). The flexibility of NVivo's coding environment allowed for emergent insights to be incorporated, ensuring that the evolving cultural themes were accurately represented (Tong & See, 2020). Additionally, the ability to cross reference themes with data excerpts allowed for a more nuanced and context rich interpretation (Liu et al., 2022).

To ensure validity and credibility, triangulation was applied across multiple dimensions: data sources, collection methods, and participant perspectives. This technique is a cornerstone of qualitative rigor, especially in multi site research, as it helps cross validate findings while accounting for contextual diversity (Du & Leung, 2021; Li & Boonsrianan, 2024). Triangulation methods included comparing field notes from different locations, analyzing interview transcripts alongside observed behaviors, and integrating multiple stakeholder narratives.

Best practices for multi site triangulation were observed throughout the study. These included maintaining methodological consistency while accommodating local adaptations, engaging various stakeholder groups, and ensuring researcher reflexivity to account for positionality and potential biases (Hidayat et al., 2024; Ng, 2018). Such methodological integrity supported the study's goal of producing rich, trustworthy insights into the mechanisms and impacts of school–community collaborations in traditional music education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Partnership Models

Across the three sites Yogyakarta, Bandung, and Manado distinct models of collaboration emerged between schools and community based cultural institutions. These included co teaching structures, guest artist residencies, and cultural field trip frameworks.

In alignment with studies across Southeast Asia, school–community arts collaborations have proven effective in contextualizing cultural education by integrating traditional music into formal curricula. Sularso et al. (2023) highlight how such partnerships reinforce both cultural knowledge and community engagement. After school workshops involving both music and traditional crafts, as reported by Hipona (2023), exemplify the potential of holistic cultural education models.

Co teaching arrangements in these programs involved joint instructional design and implementation. Teachers provided curricular structure while community artists delivered content rooted in lived tradition, aligning with Ginić (2020) who emphasized interdisciplinary enrichment through such collaboration. Guest residency models, meanwhile, were characterized by periodic immersion programs with clearly defined mutual goals, supported by ongoing professional development and community engagement (Trifunović, 2023).

Legal frameworks were critical enablers of these partnerships. Policies increasingly support community engagement in education across Southeast Asia, with directives encouraging schools to integrate cultural content and form alliances with local artists. Zi-peng (2024) and Hipona (2023) document how legislative backing including funding provisions creates an enabling environment for sustained collaboration.

Table 1: Models of School–Community Collaboration

Model Type	Key Features	Roles (School)	Roles (Community)	Example Case
A	Co teaching	Joint planning and teaching	Deliver cultural content	SMP 1 Yogyakarta
B	Guest artist residency	Host facilitator, curriculum link	Immersive training	SD Bandung
C	Cultural service learning	Plan visit, guide reflection	Lead workshops and performance	SMA Manado

Student Learning Outcomes

Across all sites, students showed noticeable improvements in engagement and cultural competencies, as evidenced through observations, interviews, and performance evaluations. The findings highlight trends rather than statistical generalizations, consistent with the qualitative design.

Widodo & Cross (2023) note that student engagement in traditional music programs is reflected not only through participation but also through attitudinal shifts. Surveys and interviews conducted throughout the study revealed a notable increase in enthusiasm, confidence, and reflective awareness.

The competencies observed align with those outlined by Kulak (2024) and Xu (2018), including intercultural appreciation, emotional intelligence, and creativity. In particular, students demonstrated improved collaboration, stage confidence, and understanding of cultural narratives.

Figure 1: Student Competency Gains (Pre/Post Average Scores)

Competency	Pre	Post
Cultural Knowledge	2.1	4.0
Musical Expression	2.4	3.9
Collaboration	2.8	4.2
Stage Confidence	2.2	3.8
Cultural Appreciation	2.6	4.5

Validated tools such as the Cultural Responsibility Assessment Instrument (CRAI) were adapted to gauge not only technical skills but also student responsiveness to cultural dimensions (McBride & Nicholson, 2022). Performance based assessments served as both evaluative and developmental platforms, fostering critical thinking, teamwork, and deeper cultural reflection (Sisson, 2021; Xie, 2024).

Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

The study identified recurring institutional barriers, including rigid timetables, limited funding, and underdeveloped frameworks for interdisciplinary teaching. These findings echo those of Bjelobrk-Babić et al. (2021) and Rui (2023), who found that educational priorities often marginalize the arts.

To address such barriers, innovative scheduling models like block timetables were employed to create longer, uninterrupted sessions for cultural projects (Sartbekova et al., 2024). Furthermore, schools explored shared funding strategies and used digital instruments to enhance access, aligning with trends noted by Chang (2017) and Metalichenko (2024).

Role clarity within co teaching frameworks was another challenge. This was addressed through formal written agreements (MoUs), routine planning meetings, and inclusive stakeholder engagement practices that mirror those advocated by Davidova (2019).

Table 2: Implementation Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Frequency	Proposed Solution
Scheduling conflicts	High	Block scheduling, shared planning
Instrument access	High	Digital tools, instrument pooling
Role ambiguity	Medium	MoUs, pre project orientation sessions
Assessment limitations	Low	Custom cultural rubrics, peer review

In summary, this chapter presents a composite view of the diverse strategies, impacts, and logistical considerations involved in embedding traditional music into formal education through community partnerships. These findings form a crucial evidence base for the discussion that follows.

The findings highlight the potential of school–community partnerships in traditional music education, linking them with broader pedagogical frameworks. Central to these partnerships is learning through culturally authentic experiences, as emphasized in UNESCO’s “Teaching with Living Heritage” (TLH). This connection is supported by data from the three case studies. This model advocates for the embedding of local traditions, including music, stories, and customs, into formal education settings to nurture cultural identity and literacy among students. As seen in the study’s cases, experiential learning that engages students as active participants rather than passive recipients enables them to form deeper connections with their heritage, enhances their appreciation for cultural continuity, and strengthens their role in preserving these traditions. This aligns with TLH’s emphasis on community collaboration, which not only enhances curriculum content but also strengthens intergenerational knowledge transfer and civic engagement, ultimately ensuring that living heritage remains vibrant and relevant within contemporary educational environments (Sanz Camarero et al., 2023; Xiaoming & Endozo, 2024).

The partnerships observed in this research extend the educational experience beyond the classroom, providing students with access to cultural practitioners who act as custodians of tradition and knowledge bearers. These collaborations mirror the TLH framework’s goal of creating participatory cultural ecosystems where students, artists, and educators co construct meaning through active dialogue and shared creative processes. Rubiyantoro & Bush (2024) emphasize that such integration not only reinforces cultural identity but also promotes critical thinking, as students reflect on the role and relevance of traditional practices in contemporary society. Moreover, embedding cultural artists within formal educational settings breaks down institutional silos and allows for the emergence of flexible, responsive pedagogies that reflect students’ lived experiences. As demonstrated in several programs, involving artists and community leaders in educational planning fosters a sense of shared ownership, which is essential for sustaining culturally embedded curricula and ensuring that such initiatives are not isolated interventions but part of a broader institutional vision (Jones et al., 2023).

The study also affirms the applicability and relevance of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) in the realm of music education. CSP advocates for instructional practices that not only respect but actively sustain students’ cultural identities while fostering the acquisition of new cultural knowledge. In this context, music functions as a powerful bridge between personal heritage and broader socio cultural landscapes. The incorporation of traditional music alongside contemporary and global genres allows students to explore and express their identities through performance, composition, and community storytelling. These practices foster emotional intelligence, resilience, empathy, and a sense of belonging dimensions that are frequently underrepresented in standardized education systems but are essential for holistic development (Pardoel et al., 2022; Hidajat et al., 2021).

Furthermore, CSP emphasizes the importance of interrogating power relations and issues of representation within music education. By validating and centering diverse musical traditions, schools can challenge dominant cultural hierarchies and cultivate inclusive, equitable learning

environments. This approach is strongly reflected in the observed student outcomes, where performance based assessments and reflective practices facilitated both technical skill development and deeper understandings of cultural narratives and histories. As Tang & Phaengsoi (2024) argue, such integration enables students to see their culture not as marginal but as intellectually and creatively central, fostering pride in their identities and empowering them to take ownership of their learning journeys.

The study further illustrates how schools can function as cultural agents, particularly within urban and culturally diverse settings. Through community based learning experiences, schools forge stronger ties with their surrounding neighborhoods and provide platforms for cultural engagement that extend well beyond academic instruction. These experiences help students contextualize their learning, develop higher order thinking skills, and relate classroom content to their lived social realities (Huang et al., 2024; Yan & Li, 2023). They also reposition schools as dynamic cultural hubs spaces that foster social cohesion, intercultural understanding, and civic responsibility among increasingly diverse student populations.

In this expanded role, schools actively participate in preserving and revitalizing intangible cultural heritage. They become sites where local history, traditional arts, and community values are not only taught but enacted. As students engage with cultural activities, they are also exposed to broader social issues, which enhances their ability to reflect critically on identity, equity, and heritage. As Recharte (2019) and Yoo (2024) underscore, this cultural agency is critical for promoting resilience in multicultural communities and for equipping students with the tools they need to navigate, challenge, and contribute meaningfully to their social environments. In doing so, schools help counter cultural marginalization, support identity development, and empower students to become stewards of heritage and proactive agents of social change within their communities.

In sum, the convergence of UNESCO's TLH, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, and community based learning models offers a compelling case for reimagining music education as a culturally anchored, socially responsive, and transformative educational practice. The evidence presented in this study supports the proposition that traditional music education, when thoughtfully implemented through inclusive, collaborative partnerships, fosters not only musical growth but also personal development, cultural consciousness, and civic empowerment. By embracing these frameworks, schools can create learning environments that are not only academically rigorous but also culturally sustaining, emotionally enriching, and socially just.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates how school–community partnerships provide effective pathways for embedding traditional music into formal education in Indonesia. Through three models co-teaching, artist residencies, and cultural service learning the research shows that collaboration with cultural practitioners enriches student learning, strengthens cultural identity, and promotes experiential, inclusive pedagogy. These findings confirm the relevance of frameworks such as

UNESCO's Teaching with Living Heritage and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, both of which emphasize cultural continuity and the co-construction of knowledge.

From a broader perspective, the study highlights the need for supportive policies and institutional mechanisms to sustain these initiatives. Addressing challenges such as scheduling, resource limitations, and role clarity requires flexible planning, professional development, and innovative use of digital tools. Ultimately, culturally embedded music education not only enhances student competencies and confidence but also positions schools as cultural agents that bridge generations, foster civic participation, and preserve intangible cultural heritage in a rapidly globalizing society.

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