

Bridging Tradition and Innovation: How Music Is Taught in Malaysian Primary Schools

Peter Ong¹

¹Open University Malaysia

Corresponding Authors: peterong2222@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges and opportunities in implementing music education in Malaysian primary schools from traditional and innovative teaching perspectives. Employing a qualitative research design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five music education experts selected for their extensive experience in teaching, curriculum design, and educational theory. The findings identify three primary challenges: (1) a shortage of qualified music teachers, particularly in rural areas; (2) limited budget allocation and institutional support for music programs; and (3) insufficient integration of technological tools in music instruction. The study highlights effective strategies that combine traditional and contemporary approaches, such as blending Malaysian folk music with modern styles, adopting movement-based learning techniques, and incorporating technology to enhance music education. Experts emphasize the need for comprehensive teacher training, increased funding for resources, and a curriculum that balances the preservation of cultural heritage with technological innovation. This research contributes valuable empirical insights to the discourse on music education reform in Malaysia, offering guidance for policy development and implementation.

Keywords: Music education, qualitative study, traditional and innovative methods, structured interviews

1. INTRODUCTION

The present study aims to investigate the practice of music education in Malaysian primary schools, focusing on how traditional and innovative approaches can collectively shape its future trajectory. Music education is recognized not only as a means of skill development but also as a vital carrier of cultural identity and social cohesion (Abdullah, 2021). In Malaysia, the challenge lies in integrating the rich musical heritage embodied by traditional forms with modern pedagogical principles and technological advancements (Omar & Nordin, 2023). Through qualitative insights gathered from experts in music education, this research explores strategies for achieving a balanced curriculum that respects the preservation of Malaysia's diverse musical traditions while embracing contemporary teaching methodologies. Such an approach aligns with recent calls for culturally responsive pedagogy that also leverages digital tools to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes (Ibrahim & Razak, 2022). The study's findings intend to contribute to ongoing discourse on music education reform in Malaysia by offering empirical evidence and practical recommendations for curriculum development and implementation. This dual emphasis on heritage and innovation reflects broader trends in global music education reform, which advocate for curricula that are both culturally grounded and forward-looking (Tan, 2020). Ultimately, this research supports the design of a music education system capable of nurturing vibrant, inclusive learning experiences for Malaysia's young learners.

1.1 Background Of The Study

The background of music education in the Malaysian primary school reflects a special dialectical relationship between the image of musical-cultural maintenance and the process of educational history. Traditionally, music education has been a fundamental component of the Malaysian education system, which has prominently featured music education as part of the national primary school curriculum not just as an artistic subject but also as a critical vehicle for cultural transmission, identity and cognitive development. This is not only significant for Malaysian cultural heritage, but is also recognition that music is used to develop young people.

This presents a background to the compelling need to study and to possibly reinvent the delivery of music education in Malaysian primary schools. While traditional methods have served well in terms of preservation of cultural heritage, they will now need to be assessed against the methods used in modern education in which students are provided with an education that is culturally relevant and pedagogically sound. Such history brings us to the next level of inquiry on how Malaysian music education can still develop yet remain as a means for students to discover their culture and nurture their growth.

1.2 Problem Statement

Innovative teaching techniques integrated with traditional methods in Malaysian primary school music education practices are limited and highly challenging. There are a number of music teacher grade obstructions that prevent easy instruction and engagement with students. Even so, teachers often work with constrained resources,

which limits the range of teaching methods they could use or the technology they could integrate into their classes. Also, many teachers have never been properly educated in contemporary pedagogy, limiting their range to transform standard practices to suit modern learners. These problems are exacerbated by the stiff frameworks of many existing curricula, which do not allow teachers to flex their muscles in innovating new methods of prevention while being culturally relevant. This discrepancy frequently leads to a misalignment between conventional pedagogy and adapting to the needs of new-age students, ultimately reducing the potential of music education being imparted in Malaysian primary schools.

1.3 Significance Of The Study

This study is important in considering the long-term development of music education in Malaysian primary schools. Filling the gap between tradition and innovation, the study sheds light on necessary reforms in education and how to put them into practice, based on expert viewpoints. Such knowledge will help create training courses for teachers that are specific to the gap existing between their pedagogical knowledge and skills and what is required in teaching English as a second language. In addition, this study provides valuable implications for curriculum development, thereby potentially impacting policy decisions in relation to provisions for human and technological resources in music classrooms. The balancing of tradition with innovation in music pedagogy will ensure traditional elements of Malaysian music are preserved whilst students are taught to perform and appreciate modern musical idioms. The results of the study could contribute to the development of a more interesting, effective and culturally relevant music teaching programmes to the educators and the primary school students in Malaysia.

1.4 Objectives Of The Study

1. To identify current challenges faced by music educators in Malaysian primary schools.
2. To explore effective strategies for incorporating both traditional and modern music teaching methods.
3. To assess the role of technology in enhancing music learning.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the key challenges in implementing music education in Malaysian primary schools?
2. How can traditional and innovative teaching methods be effectively integrated?
3. What role does technology play in enhancing music education?

1.6 Scope Of The Study

This study explores primary music education practices in Malaysia using an expert-based approach. The research focuses primarily on the blend of traditional and innovative pedagogies, as examined through semi-structured interviews with five purposeful experts from the field of music education. These experts all have varied

experiences and perspectives on music education, from curriculum design, teacher education, and classroom teaching. Such insights provide an opportunity to investigate existing practices and strategies, current challenges, and opportunities for optimising music education delivery. It also seeks to resolve the issues of technology integration, cultural preservation, and student engagement of the Malaysian primary school music education system through the lens of existing frameworks. This study examines curriculum planning, teaching approaches, teaching-learning resources, and demand for professional development among the music teachers in primary schools in Malaysia.

1.7 Limitations Of The Study

The first limitation of study was the small sample size, which only included five experts. Although the in-depth perspectives of the experts offered details, there was limited input, and it would have been more viable to have more voices in the cross-section of Malaysian music education. The timing for the study is also a limitation. Considerations for access to potential participants such as teachers that may have been on leave, or engaged in other academic pursuits, may give indication that it was difficult to access all of the potential participants. This timing suggests an opportunity that could provide future studies should them come at a time that authors could offer greater variety or accessibility, and if researchers planned for the schedule of returning educators or the academics leave periods. Or, they might find ways in the future to administer studies through online surveys or interviews.

A further consideration was the limited geographic scope of the study, as it was limited to urban areas and these may have neglected participants within rural settings or areas that were not readily accessible. While it is possible this constraining would present their viewpoints as a teacher or student in engaged educational contexts based on urban influences, it would not be especially credible to as indicated on cultural influences, resources or teaching context. Future research could study a further variety in urban settings but include perspective from teachers or students in less urbanized parts of Malaysia.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Convergence In Music Education As A Cultural Confluence.

Malaysian primary school music: traditional and innovation It is big foot that the Malaysian elementary music curriculum has done this by including elements of both tradition and innovation. Recent literature studies also focus on the historical and cultural factors of Malaysian music education and the liberalization of the teaching and learning of music in the classrooms. This paper undertakes a review of the existing literature to describe the context in which music education has developed parallel to music itself in Malaysia, depicting the tension in-between past and present activities for the purpose of synthesizing these ideas into a unified framework.

Rote learning has conventionally been a hallmark of music teaching and learning in Malaysia. The importance of repetition and memorization as pedagogical tools to date has been reported when teaching traditional Malay folk songs, classical music pieces, and basic music theory (Tan, 2020)). This emphasis correspond to cultural values that

value the sharing of indigenous knowledge and the social dimension of learning. Repetition has contributed significantly to the sustaining of Malaysia's musical tradition as it has enabled its students to learn, experience, and accomplish the core elements in melody, rhythm and notation (Abdullah, 2021).

Yet instrumental learning in primary schools is still largely Western-based, even though traditional Malaysian instruments, gamelan, kompaing and rebana, have been integrated into the curriculum to reflect the country's diverse polyphonic musical tradition. For instance, it is commonly acknowledged that the recorder still plays an important role in elementary music education, with students learning the basics of musical concepts and notation (Abdullah, 2021). The integration of local traditional instruments with Western methods, are indicative of two-fold commitment: the maintenance of the cultural continuity and the perpetuating of students with basic music skills that can be compared at the GLOBAL level. Although these models are sufficient to develop cultural sensitivity and musical skill, they have provided a springboard for additional curricular development.

But there are also signs of a shifting landscape in Malaysian music education driven by the advances of technology. The introduction of digital technology has resulted in more innovative pedagogical approaches such as teachers utilising digital audio workstations, music creation programs, and online learning environments (Ibrahim & Razak, 2022). These are tools that give composers, arrangers and producers options to practice creativity that was otherwise impossible with traditional music education approaches. That technology can help to raise student engagement and personalized learning (Omar & Nordin, 2023).

Alongside this trend, there has also been a shift on the pedagogic front, where recent research has placed emphasis on the necessity for the learning process to be more student-centered. Studies show there is more student creativity, personal writing or expression in education and collaborative learning than classroom teaching (Li & Brand, 2024). Active involvement in musical leaning fosters motivation and the understanding of musical ideas among the students. Typically this transition is realized through work, peer teaching, and activities designed to foster creative inquiry and reflection.

Hybrid Teaching Styles: Fresh ways to blend elements of various styles. Empirical critiques show that teachers are achieving success in cases where folk song teaching is combined with electronic recording technology, and traditional instrument practice is combined with music production programs (Cheong & Tan, 2021). One blends seamlessly into the other, and it becomes impossible to learn about traditional music-making without finding out about their heritage. Recent past tradition and trend, by being integrated into present contemporary trends, could open new doors for the development of a more rich music education in Malaysia.

While these are encouraging statistics, the literature also highlights the difficulties of this shift. While the implementation of technologies and student-centered teaching approaches is successful in some contexts, there are still evidences regarding issues such as resources inadequacy, poor development among teachers or balanced construction of a curriculum (Ibrahim & Razak, 2022). These results demonstrate the

value of purposive blending of the old and new educational technologies, so that what is useful in the traditional practices is not lost.

Overall, this body of previous research portrays Malaysian music education as a developing, liminal site. And although, traditional methods are still the principle bread and butter for students, new methods can be thrilling possibilities for the future of learning; an evolution not a substitute. It is recommended that a synergetic approach between heritage conservation and the incorporation of modern music education approaches is the best option for the music education in the Malaysian primary education.

Critical Analysis:

The development of music education in Malaysian primary schools provides a good source of the mix between continuum and change, that defines a cultural hybrid. The crossroads that meet here are very relevant in a multi-racial country such as Malaysia where education activity must not only strive to sustain a rich musical legacy but need to adopt modern methods of pedagogy at same time. The literature reviewed emphasizes the two faces of the imperative, the historical legacy of rote and repetition in the early acquisition of knowledge and its interaction with emergent, student-centered, technology-enhanced methods.

Malaysian music education has historically been based on rote learning and repetition, especially in the instruction of folk song, classical music and music theory (Tan, 2020). This approach is in accordance with cultural principles, maintaining respect for indigenous knowledge and communal learning, both of which are very important in the conservation of the Malaysian musical landscape. The practice-oriented learning, based on drilling, is conducive to the acquisition of elementary musical skills, such as melody, rhythm, and notation, in time-honoured ways (Abdullah, 2021). But, for all its emphasis on preservation, it has the potential of constraining student creativity through an insistence on the recreation of, rather than discovery within, particular settings.

The traditional model is further complicated by the influence of Western instrumental pedagogy in Malaysian music education practice in which the recorder is a common first instrument (Li & Brand, 2024). While traditional instruments such as the gamelan and kompong are included in the curriculum, representing a diverse Malaysian musical identity (Abdullah, 2021), the ongoing focus on Western approaches exposes an underlying friction between cultural preservation and global trends in pedagogy. This dichotomy begs the question if such an emphasis would have the unintended consequence of ghettoizing (down to the spectral) indigenous instruments and musical traditions, and diminishing the diversity of the nation's musical soundscape.

To address these issues, there is growing evidence in the literature regarding a trend in learning caused by technological advances. Music education is evolving into a new landscape of learning that is being facilitated by digital audio workstations, music production software, and online learning (Cheong & Tan, 2021). These features are not just shaping how learners get to interact; they are also democratizing co-creational and creative opportunities that were once unavailable in these conservative

domains (Omar & Nordin, 2023). This techno-central shift motivates students to make and compose music, skills that are becoming ever more important in the digital era. However, concerns over equitable access and the readiness of educators to meaningfully implement these tools are raised by the speed at which technology is being embraced.

In parallel to the technological development, modes of teaching and learning have evolved towards more student-centered approaches focusing on creativity, personal expression and collaborative learning. This is a significant departure from teacher centered rote learning and causes increased student motivation and understanding. However, these 'child-centred' practices herald significant shifts in teacher training, resource provision and curriculum design that is not uniform across many Malaysian schools.

Hybrid teaching approaches (introducing new and traditional practices) that involve combining elements of the old and new provides a vehicle through which progressive music made learning can take place(Cheong & Tan, 2021). For instance, the integration of folk song instruction with electronic recording technologies offers students an opportunity to interact with tradition, and to learn practices associated with contemporary music production. These are the kind integrative practices that can ensure that Malaysia's music education can draw on its pluralistic nature and address the needs of education today. However, the optimism of this integration is clouded with constraints from practice such as shortage of resources, teacher preparedness and curricular harmonisation as observed by Ibrahim and Razak (2022). These resistance factors highlight the need for thoughtful, well-supported reforms to prevent the superficial adoption of innovations that could weaken the traditional bases of strength.

In summary, the movement of Malaysian primary music education is at a crossroad of past and innovations. Traditional practices are an essential grounding in keeping culture and heritage alive, but new pedagogy and technologies present opportunities in enhancing learning and relevance. The literature reviewed calls for a measured fusion – a progression and not a substitution, in order to respect the musical heritage of Malaysia and at the same time capture the possibilities of the 21st century teaching and learning. In the ensuing years, the extent to which this convergence succeeds will depend on the resolution of structural challenges, teacher readiness, and making resources available to everyone. In the end, a balanced fusion of heritage preservation and modern educational practices seems to be the most plausible route towards nurturing dynamic, culturally rooted music education in Malaysian primary schools.

2.2 Research Gaps

Review of the literature in music education indicates that there are very few studies that examined on the convergence of traditional and contemporary pedagogies, especially at Malaysian setting. Though there are many separate studies analyzing both traditional music education methods and contemporary educational philosophies, little research has been done to investigate how these methods might come together to create effective music education approaches. Cohen then highlights an apparent

gap in the literature in the form of empirical studies to systematically assess the outcomes of blended traditional and innovative methods in primary school music teaching.

In the total scope of the literature, we observe a clear demarcation between studies examining traditional approaches versus studies examining modern approaches. Examples of traditional method studies focus on the impact of rote learning, cultural preservation, and conventional instrumental teaching. In contrast, modern approaches in research focus more on combining technology, student-centered learning, and contemporary music-making. Yet, much research is lacking that could combine the two areas, and even less so that could provide 'actionable frameworks for the pairing of the two in everyday contexts'.

There is an important gap in knowledge regarding the integration from the perspectives of Malaysian music educators. Although international studies focus on teachers' perspectives of educational innovations the uniqueness of the Malaysian context is not explored. Most often, the minimal research delves into the struggles of educators existing between a cultural tradition that must be upheld and the pedagogical innovation that must be adapted. In particular since teachers are the ones who fills the role of bringing any potential educational or methodological changes into effect.

Additionally, there are limited studies focusing on the implementation challenges and enablers of integrated approaches in Malaysian primary schools. What we do not see in the literature is a detailed case study or longitudinal type data that addresses how successful combinations of more traditional methodologies and modern technology can be achieved. This gap encompasses the resource needs, professional development, and institutional means to achieve success in integration.

Another critical gap is the lack of investigation into student outcomes in integrated music education programs. Although research has been conducted on the effectiveness of either the traditional or modern methods in isolation, little is known about the combined effect of traditional and modern methods on student learning, engagement and musical development. The widespread unawareness contributes as a challenge to educators, and policymakers alike, in understanding how to make proper decisions with respect to the curriculum design and its execution methods.

This absence of literature implies the need of more rigorous investigation in depth to address the integration of traditional and modern methods to music education at the level of Malaysia primary schools. This suggested research would contribute not just to the theoretical framework surrounding music education, but also would provide some tangible results for music educators and policy makers seeking to improve music education in the context of Malaysia's unique cultural and educational setting.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded primarily in two complementary theoretical frameworks: Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978) and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the social

nature of learning, highlighting how knowledge is constructed through interaction within cultural contexts. This perspective supports an understanding of how traditional music education practices, rooted in cultural transmission and communal learning, play a vital role in shaping students' musical development in Malaysian primary schools.

Complementing this, the TPACK framework provides a lens to examine how educators integrate technology effectively with pedagogical strategies and content knowledge. It frames the potential for blending traditional musical content with innovative teaching methods and digital tools, offering a holistic approach to curriculum design and instructional practice. By situating the study within these dual frameworks, this research critically explores the balance between maintaining cultural relevance through traditional teaching and enhancing pedagogical effectiveness with modern technological approaches.

Anchoring the study in these theories allows for a nuanced analysis of the challenges and opportunities faced by Malaysian music educators as they navigate this intersection. It also guides the development of practical recommendations aimed at fostering an educational environment that respects heritage while embracing contemporary innovations. Ultimately, this theoretical foundation supports the formulation of strategies that promote a harmonious integration of tradition and innovation in Malaysia's primary school music education.

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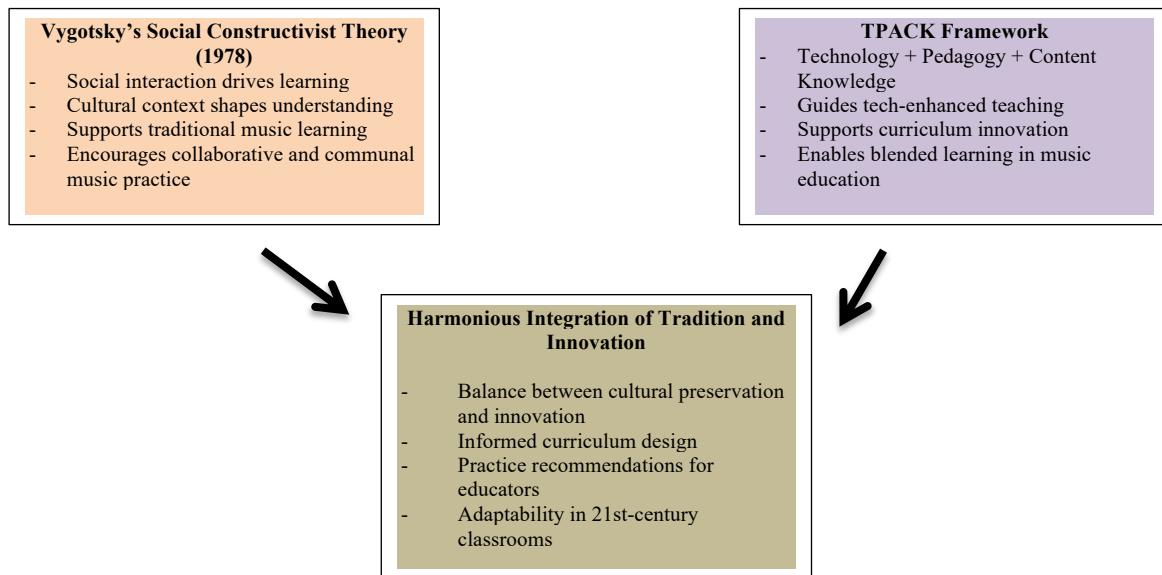


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

2.4 Music Education

Music education includes a wide range of practices and pedagogies related to encouraging musical learning and appreciation. This includes singing, instrumental, movement, creation, composition, improvisation, and infused music technology. It not only teaches technical skills; it fosters cognitive, emotional, and social development through a more holistic approach.

Movement in music education has been shown to aid in physical, cognitive, and emotional development. According to a systematic review conducted by Li and Brand (2024), music-integrated movement activities supports learning inclusivity by providing a supportive learning environment that meets diverse student needs, wellbeing as per holistic development.

Music education is not only an important means for nurturing the individual but also a conduit for cultural transmission and social continuity. When students listen to music, they have the opportunity to engage with cultural expression and thus they learn empathy and awareness of a global culture. According to Matsunobu et al. (2023), music education offers a living context, exposing students to new musical traditions and expanding their cultural horizons.

In summary, Music education is an extensive area of learning that is intended to develop knowledge and appreciation for music. It plays an important role in the overall development of individual plus the enrichment of society by different activities and integrative ways.

2.5 Qualitative Studies

Qualitative study is a common denominator recognized for its merits, of helping music education practices be recognized as lived experiences of its rich configuration of experiences or, rich qualitative accounts (Creswell, 2021). It draws attention to the context and the meanings that people bring to musical activity. Creswell (2021) also adds that qualitative research in music education is established on common understandings, common purpose, central concepts and multiple methods which seek to offer a context-sensitive and detailed view of music teaching and learning.

2.6 Traditional And Unconventional Approaches In Teaching Music

The backbone of traditional music education is a classical education, which is based on a system that is oriented toward a formalized process that produces technical skills, an understanding of music theory, and the ability to interpret and perform works from the established Western art music repertoire. This approach may include systematic practice, sight-reading, scales, arpeggios, and the studying of well-known composers including Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven. It teaches discipline, sharpens accuracy and encourages a full understanding of musical notation and structure. This is the gold standard approach to formal music education and has been for many decades, yet it remains highly prized in conservatoires and examination systems such as ABRSM and Trinity College London.

However, it has been increasingly acknowledged by educators and scholars that classical content alone has limitations for the diversity of educational environments found in the 21st Century. Traditional teaching practices may not be relevant to students who are multicultural, from low SES, or who come from a non-musical home or environment, nor do they address the changing face of music-making in the 21st century. There is a movement towards innovating new, more flexible and inclusive forms of teaching that don't follow the unusual patterns that we have adopted (Adams, 2025).

Pedagogical approaches might be non-traditional incorporating aspects such as popular music, improvisation, music technology, and group learning methods. These methods frequently focus on creativity, individual expression, and participation, rather than recitation and rote learning. For example, including genres such as jazz, hip-hop, electronic or world music may enable students to identify music that more closely aligns with their identities and experiences. Similarly, working with digital tools like music composition software, DAWs (Digital Audio Workstations), virtual instruments supports students as they explore music-making that's contemporary.

Project-based learning, peer-teaching and group improvisation also help make skills like teamwork, problem solving and critical thinking stick, competencies that are in demand now more than ever in education these days. The non-formal settings of music making including experiences in garage bands, teaching each other on YouTube and community music making provide transformative and powerful learning environments, which frequently go unrecognised within formal music education.

By incorporating a combination of old-school practices with innovative tactics, instructors can reach a wider range of learning styles and targets. For example, a lesson might start with the traditional exercises of classical technique and end up with the student exploring the chord progressions on a favourite pop tune, or writing and performing an original composition as a group effort. This blended model retains the tradition and depth of classical training while maintaining that it is adaptable, relevant, and that it serves the student (Adam, 2025).

Finally, through the incorporation of the best of both traditional and contemporary pedagogical approaches, music education can be forward-looking, flexible, and simultaneously responsive to an array of the values and requirements of learners in the twenty-first century. It connects past to present, structure to creativity, and theory to practice, while bringing the legacy of Western music to life for a new generation of musicians.

2.7 Structured Interviews

According to Creswell (2021), structured interviews are one of the key data collection methods in qualitative music education research. Here one asks the same, pre-defined questions to all insertions the questions are constant and standardized. This also allows spaces for researchers to focus on particular subjects in an interactive manner throughout the course of the interview. Structured interviews allowed researchers to compare the responses directly and helped to characterize pedagogical best practices in music education environments.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study utilised a qualitative phenomenological approach to access and capture the lived experiences and views of music education experts about the current state and future directions of music education in Malaysian Primary Schools. This research used a phenomenological design and was appropriate given that the aim of the research was to develop a deeper understanding of the complexities associated with applying traditional and contemporary methods of cultural education. The study, focusing on lived experiences, sought to capture nuanced perspectives regarding the way music education practitioners are managing and learning from these challenges and opportunities.

3.2 Participants

Participants were identified using purposive sampling, a purposeful technique used to identify those who can provide the most rich, relevant and useful data in line with the objectives of the study. We selected six music education experts through stringent criteria to make sure they had the needed expertise and contextual knowledge. For one, all participants had at least a decade of professional experience teaching music, which was deemed necessary to provide a holistic picture of past and present approaches to music instruction. Such long careers allowed them to reflect knowledgeably on the evolution of teaching practices and the challenges and innovations that come along with it.

Participants were also deeply engaged in either curriculum design or teacher training, which identified them as key decision-makers in the strategic development and implementation of music education programs. As such, their perspective brought systemic and practical aspects to the data: for example, knowledge of the curriculum needs, content delivery, assessment procedures and preparation of music educators. In addition, subjects were proficient in both conventional and progressive teaching methods, including traditional approaches, such as the use of formal notation and guided teaching, and innovative methods including technology use and active learning. Having both of these was critical to this study, as the aim was to determine how these two competing approaches could be moderated within the Malaysian context.

Given the focus of the study, another key criterion for selection was that participants had knowledge of the Malaysian primary education system, in particular the national curriculum framework, the standards for teaching, and related education policy. This context enabled the findings to be placed within the realities of the Malaysian education milieu and would be relevant to local stakeholders. Four of the participants were curriculum developers and teacher trainers, and one was a senior music educator with experience of both educational practice and policy influence. Each of the participants had previously engaged in research or policy in music education, which further qualified them to give holistic viewpoints on the systemic problems and possibilities for music education.

3.3 Data Collection

The data were collected between September and November 2024 through in-depth semi-structured interviews. Interviews ranged from 60 to 90 min and were based on 15 questions that had been pre-tested and categorized into three themes: challenges in current practices of music education, blending traditional and modern practices, and technology in music education. All interviews were conducted in English and only audio recorded with the consent of the participants. Follow-up interviews were conducted with three participants to clarify and verify their responses.

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis began with repeated readings of the interview transcripts, enabling the researcher to become deeply familiar with the data and to note preliminary patterns and impressions. The data were then systematically coded using NVivo 14 software, which facilitated the segmentation of the transcripts into meaningful units for closer examination.

Through the coding process, initial themes were generated, these represented broad patterns and key insights that emerged from the data. The themes were developed to be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible while preserving distinctiveness. They were then reviewed, refined, and re-coded to enhance clarity and ensure a clear differentiation between themes, as well as an accurate representation of participants' perspectives.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations The study was conducted with reference to ethics, which was adhered to during both the conception and its execution. informed consent of all participants The purpose of the study, including their role and rights as participants, was explained to all participants. Finally, to ensure that the privacy and confidentiality of the participants were not violated, participants' responses were anonymized. We did this to ensure that contributors could be as open as they liked - safe in the knowledge that their personal information would remain secret. **Research design and method** The study also complied with ethical considerations in terms of the fidelity of the study process and respect for the rights of participants.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Issues of Music Education in Malaysian Primary Schools in the Perceptions of Music Education Experts

Music education plays a culturally significant and pedagogically crucial role in the all-around development of students. As one expert in music education puts it, "from creativity to discipline and cognitive development... music education [is] essential" to achieving these outcomes. Music has a holistic impact, it is not just an art form or emotional intelligence but also the development of critical thinking, dexterity, memory, socialisation and self-confidence. These qualities help foster a student who is rounded, ready to engage deeply in both academic and community life.

The expansion and quality of music education in Malaysia, especially at primary school, has encountered several obstacles which are not conducive to its development. These reasons range from scarce funds, insufficient instructor training, poor emphasis in the school curriculum, and widespread de-emphasis of music in comparison with Math and Science core subjects as a result. Moreover, the pressure to get good grades and perform well in exams means that there is not enough time in the school day for constructive and meaningful music teaching.

This literature-based study, framed by the ideas of five leaders in music education, seeks to help discern an answer to such pertinent questions. What all their comments share in common are concerns about four main issues: a shortage of qualified music teachers, inadequate provision for teaching music as part of the curriculum (as evidenced by other subjects overtaking music in weekly timetables), a curriculum that is inflexible, out-of-touch, and unresponsive to the needs of children who are trying to learn about music, and an educational environment that offers few opportunities for live music-making and creativity. These two restrictions impact on student interest, understanding and long-term engagement with the topic.

The review also considers the increasing recognition of the importance of blending methods of traditional and modern pedagogy. There's nothing wrong with good old-fashioned stuff like classical training and music theory either. However, there is a pressing need for these to be counterbalanced by more student-focused, adventurous approaches which include improvisation, cultural diversity and music technology. By making this shift, we align with 21st-century learning objectives, and students' lives and musical tastes.

Technology is a driver of change in this evolution. Digital instruments including the likes of music composition software, virtual instruments, online courses, educational websites, and so on have become an essential part of the extended access and holistic education. These are the types of tools that are becoming more and more important post-pandemic in our classrooms, which are still running hybrid or all digital learning models.

Finally, the review suggests a few forward-looking guidance. This includes curricula which acknowledges local cultural diversity and global trends in music, additional funding and infrastructure support, more targeted professional development for music teachers and performance-based assessments. And, most importantly, there is a call to revalue music education as a culture work, not an optional or a luxury subject, but an integral part in the development of the child and of the nation.

It provides an overview of the current difficulties, the potential for progress, and reasons to rejuvenate and better serve music education at the primary level in Malaysia. Such devotion is crucial not so that for the nurturing of the personal development of the students, but also to keep alive and advance Malaysia's unique and diverse music heritage.

4.2 Challenges in Music Education

Red flags that all the experts we spoke with identified include the lack of qualified music teachers, particularly in rural and low-income schools. Lacking specialists in music, the subject is usually taught by general classroom teachers who have little or no formal music education. This leads to shallow instruction and missed opportunities for authentic musical interaction. In addition to that, schools are not providing enough financial support to music programs. Schools have an inclination for focusing academic electives, which include music education, somewhere in the corner of the bottom shelf. In the absence of sufficient budgets, access to instruments, teaching materials and digital tools, music programs are being scaled back, and many are being eliminated.

The experts also pointed out the systemic neglect of music education in the Malaysian syllabus. A heavy emphasis on standardized testing also means anything not directly contributing to test scores gets shunted aside, causing music to fall by the wayside as an 'extra', add-on class. As a result, thousands of students are deprived of the cognitive and emotional benefits that music education can offer, which includes improved memory, emotional expression and social skills.

4.3 Integrating Both Traditional and New Ways of Teaching

While discussing these challenges, the specialists were of the unanimous opinion that integrating both traditional and modern pedagogies contribute to the teaching-learning equation. Old school methods concentrate on discipline, technical skill, and theory – fundamentals which are necessary to achieve music literacy. In contrast, contemporary methods are based on student-centred learning, creativity and kinaesthetic activity - often in the guise of technology. By combining these approaches, educators can design a curriculum that gives balance to preserving cultural legacy and appealing to students' current musical palate.

One approach that has worked well is to fuse Malay traditional music with popular and electronic styles. Folk music links them to their heritage; contemporary styles reflect their everyday reality and preferences. Such a mix not only widens the curriculum's cultural appeal, but also touches the lives of pupils much more directly and pleasurable. Interactive, body-based methods like Dalcroze Eurhythmics and group improvisation were also identified as successful by them, contributing to the development of collaboration and students' musical maturity.

The experts also emphasized that the widespread success of blended learning depends significantly on teachers who are well-prepared. Professional development offerings in technology integration, classroom management, and innovative teaching practices are essential to help educators be prepared to successfully navigate the waters of this hybrid teaching model.

4.4 The Place Of Technology In Music Education

Music education saw technology as a game changer. The experts also highlighted how digital tools have democratized access to music learning and made it more interactive for students. Creative filing and arranging of music is taught through

software like GarageBand, Finale and Sibelius, and students use mobile apps and online resources for interactive ear training and music theory exercises.

Web resources available on websites and video channels, such as YouTube, Coursera, and Khan Academy, enable the access to “teacher-grade” expertise to everyone, thereby overcoming geographical, economic hurdles. And in addition, these virtual collaborations create a global music world, students around the world who connect with others students and mentors.

Crucially for teaching and learning, technology lends itself to cross-curricular study, connecting music with mathematics, history, and science. For example, digital resources may help in visualizing the mathematical underpinning of rhythmic structures or help in placing pieces of music in a historical context, thereby enriching the education of the students.

4.5 Suggestions for Future Research

The experts made a number of recommendations to improve the music education in Malaysian primary schools. First, policy makers need to actively encourage the concept of blended learning, the incorporation of the best of traditional teaching practice with innovation in technology. This would better engage students and provide a more effective learning process.

Second, it is still crucial to improve teacher training. Teacher training programs need to focus on pedagogical practices, technology utilization, and a well-rounded curriculum of both Western and Malaysian music. We should focus on meeting the past, present and future needs of music educators.

And third, additional financial weight should be shifted to schools, so that instruments, evidence based teaching materials and digital resources are provided in schools. Without resources the curriculum cannot be implemented effectively.

Lastly, more study is also necessary to understand students' voices in regard to music education and how to design teaching strategies. Further longitudinal research should compare the long-term effects of blended learning approach for musical development among students.

5 CONCLUSION

Conclusively, primary schools music education in Malaysian is having a hard time especially in term of inadequate training among the teachers and limited resources especially the monetary and curriculum restrictions. These are hindrances to allowing students to access music as a legitimate part of their education. However, the present study has provided evidence that combined traditional and modern teaching methods could be an effective way to combat these challenges. Foundation-based methods such as solfège and the Kodály method offer a sound preparation in music literacy, but cutting-edge techniques, in the forms of digital learning tools and student-centered pedagogies, have the potential to increase engagement and increase access.

The idea of blended learning is presented as a crucial framework to support a rich and extended musical learning environment which not only develops students' musical skill, but also encourages a life-long love of music. Through a mix of traditional teaching methods and up-to-date technology, Malaysia primary schools can offer a more rounded, dynamic and integrated music curriculum.

This research adds to theory by consolidating expert opinion in support of the value of blended learning in music. In practical terms, it underscores the need for specific teacher training and resourcing to equip teachers to implement such approaches. From a policy perspective, it calls for more spending and curriculum changes to elevate music education as a core element in the national education agenda. In the future, these findings can serve to inform teachers, leaders, and policy makers to enhance the place and role of music education in the primary school in Malaysia, to maintain and facilitate the positive impacts in the pupils' lives.

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