



A contextual approach to music learning for grade 1 primary school students

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Abstract

This research is entitled A Contextual Approach to Music Learning for Grade 1 Primary School Students. The main focus of this study is to describe the implementation of a contextual approach in music learning and to evaluate its effects on the engagement, motivation, and basic musical understanding of first-grade students. A qualitative approach was employed using a case study design. The research was conducted at an elementary school in Bandung, with first-grade students as research subjects. These students participated in eight music learning sessions that integrated contextual strategies, such as using familiar songs, visual rhythmic aids, and body movements related to musical elements. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with the music teacher, and documentation of student activities and performances. The data were then analyzed through reduction, categorization, interpretation, and triangulation techniques. The findings indicate that the contextual approach significantly enhanced students' active participation and enjoyment during music lessons. It helped them grasp fundamental music concepts such as tempo, rhythm, melody, and dynamics more effectively by linking learning activities to their everyday experiences. Moreover, students demonstrated improvements in their creativity, motor coordination, and self-expression. The contextual approach also fostered a more interactive and student-centered learning environment. Therefore, it can be concluded that the contextual approach is both relevant and effective in music education for lower-grade elementary students, particularly in their initial stages of formal learning.

Keywords: Contextual Approach, Learning, Music Education

INTRODUCTION

Music is a part of cultural arts subject that develops students' ability to express themselves through sound, rhythm, melody, and harmony, and fosters appreciation of music. In the learning process, students are not only introduced to the basic elements of music such as rhythm, melody, and dynamics, but also encouraged to develop other abilities such as creativity, the ability to express themselves, collaboration, and aesthetic sensitivity (Kharisna & Surya Perdana, 2022; Magistra et al., 2021). Music learning in schools does not only focus on the knowledge aspect, but also involves taste, movement, and expression. (Khotimah & Agustini, 2023; Wardani, 2022) At the elementary school level, especially the lower grades, students are at an early developmental stage so they need learning that is concrete, fun, and close to their daily experiences.

Music holds a strong appeal for children, as it involves sound, movement, and rhythm elements that are closely connected to their everyday world. Nevertheless, the implementation of music education in elementary schools continues to face various challenges (Cui et al., 2024; Lestari et al., 2024). One of the main issues is the dominance of traditional, teacher-centered instructional methods. In such settings, students are often only asked to imitate or memorize songs without gaining a deep understanding of the musical content or concepts being taught. The lack of contextual teaching media and the insufficient integration of learning materials with students' daily experiences result in learning that feels abstract and disconnected.

The urgency of this research lies in the need for a more relevant, fun, and developmentally appropriate music learning

solution to encourage students' active participation, increase their interest in learning music, and support the achievement of learning objectives as a whole. Therefore, a learning approach is needed that is more in line with the characteristics and developmental needs of elementary school-age children, especially for grade 1 students, because in the formal education process, grade 1 students are just starting the introduction to art learning materials. Learning should be designed with an approach that is fun, interactive, and in accordance with their stage of cognitive development, namely the concrete operational stage as described in Piaget's developmental theory.

In learning music in elementary schools, the contextual approach can be applied through various activities that are close to the real world of children (Afriadi et al., 2023; He & Suttachitt, 2024). This approach emphasizes the importance of linking material with relevant experiences in students' daily lives, so that learning becomes more meaningful. For example, the introduction of children's songs that are familiar and appropriate to their daily contexts, such as songs about family, nature, or play activities, is an effective means to convey basic music concepts indirectly. Songs that children recognize make it easier for them to understand the melody, lyrics and emotional nuances of the song, while increasing their motivation and engagement in the learning process. In addition, the elements of tempo and dynamics can also be taught contextually through movement activities, such as slow walking for slow tempo or small running for fast tempo, as well as soft and loud clapping to differentiate sound dynamics. Such activities allow students not only to understand music through hearing, but also through concrete and fun body movement experiences.

In addition to songs and movements, the introduction of rhythmic patterns and musical structures can be provided through media and concrete props that are easily understood by elementary school students. For example, pictures of circles or simple symbols that

represent beats can be used to help students recognize rhythmic patterns in music. This approach encourages students to actively explore and build musical understanding through direct experience. Thus, students not only understand musical elements such as rhythm, tempo, melody, and dynamics, but also develop creativity, musical sensitivity, and overall thinking skills.

Previous research focused on teacher strategies in learning music in elementary schools in general and the application of contextual approaches to junior high school students (Ningrum et al., 2023; Weristi et al., 2023). However, there is no research that examines in depth the contextual approach in learning music in grade 1 elementary school students. This research brings novelty by highlighting the implementation of the approach in the early stages of formal education in music learning.

Based on this description, this research specifically aims to examine the implementation and results of the implementation of contextual approaches in music learning in elementary schools, especially for grade 1 students. This research focuses on how the contextual approach is integrated in music learning activities and its impact on students' learning process. Through observation of activities such as song introduction, rhythmic patterns, tempo, and dynamics in a contextualized manner, this research is expected to provide an overview of the effectiveness of the approach in increasing students' engagement, understanding, and enthusiasm. This research was conducted at MI Minsani Bandung. The results of this study are also expected to be a reference for teachers and schools in designing music learning that is more meaningful and in accordance with the characteristics of elementary school students.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the implementation of a contextual approach in learning music in elementary schools. (Liana, 2020; Nurrisa et al., 2025; H. Sari, 2022) A qualitative approach is a research procedure

that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and behaviors that can be observed. Qualitative is descriptive research and tends to use in-depth analysis. Process and meaning (subject perspective) are more highlighted in qualitative research. Then, (Malahati et al., 2023) Case study design emphasizes an in-depth study of one problem in a deep way. Thus, this approach allows researchers to deeply explore the process, meaning, emotional response, and development of elementary school students' musical skills in learning music.

The subjects of this study were grade 1 elementary school students, the research location was MI Minsani Bandung. This research was conducted for two months or eight meetings. The instruments used in data collection were through participatory observation during eight learning sessions, interviews, and documentation. The observation instrument focused on student engagement, understanding of rhythm, tempo, melody, and dynamics material, and student enthusiasm in participating in contextualized learning activities. Interviews aimed to find out teachers' views on the effectiveness of contextual approaches in creating interesting and meaningful music learning. Data were analyzed using data reduction techniques, thematic categorization, and triangulation to ensure the validity of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation Of A Contextual Approach to Music Learning for Grade 1 Primary School Students

The implementation in this study was conducted over eight meetings. During the eight meetings, the material provided was related to tempo/rhythm, melody, and dynamics. The implementation stages began with the first meeting, this meeting focused on introducing the concept of tempo through simple body movements. In detail, this initial meeting, grade 1 students were instructed by

the teacher to distinguish between slow and fast movements, the teacher used the appropriate song as an aid. Then, students are asked to step slowly when they listen to a song with a slow tempo, and move faster, such as running, when the song has a fast tempo. This encounter can help students physically feel the difference in tempo, so that their understanding of the material becomes more real and fun. In addition, this method also increases student participation as they actively move to the rhythm of a familiar song.

The next meeting, the second meeting, introduces rhythmic patterns using visual media in the form of paper containing pictures of circles. Students are introduced to beat patterns, where one circle represents a beat with a value of four taps, and two or three circles indicate a faster beat. The rhythmic pattern is then applied with a folk song that is already familiar to students, namely "Tokecang", where this song is given because it has 4/4 time, so that it is easy for grade 1 elementary school students to follow. Then, the song has a medium tempo and cheerful impression, so that students can be excited to practice rhythmic patterns through the song. (W. Sari et al., 2020) The characteristics of children's songs are simple musical compositions with musical rhythms that tend to be cheerful.

In the third meeting, the learning focus is on the introduction of melody with a fun and contextual approach. It begins with the teacher inviting students to listen and recognize the pitch changes in simple familiar songs, such as "Tik-tik bunyi hujan". Melody is introduced by inviting students to sing the song repeatedly, while noticing the rise and fall of notes or different sound patterns. Movement activities are also used, such as moving the hands up and down to the tune, to help children understand the concept of melody in a concrete and visual way. In this way, students can experience how melodies form an interesting and colorful song flow, without having to learn music notation. (Peter & Vindišová, 2024; W. Sari et al., 2020) Song selection should be tailored to the interests, age, and development of the child.

The fourth meeting, the material for introducing simple dynamics, namely only the difference between loud and soft sounds that give expression to music. Students are invited to listen to the song “Cicak-cicak di dinding”, then distinguish which parts are sung in a soft voice and which parts are sung in a loud voice. The teacher uses slow and loud clapping activities and body movements to express these dynamics, such as clapping softly when the voice is soft and clapping loudly when the voice is loud. With this contextual approach, students not only understand the concept of dynamics in theory, but also experience it directly through a fun and interactive experience. This helps them recognize the variety of expressions in music that are important for song appreciation.

In the fifth to sixth meetings, the previous material is repeated and reinforced with the song “Topi Saya Bundar” which invites students to perform body movements according to the rhythm and lyrics of the song. This activity not only helps students internalize the concepts of tempo, rhythm, and dynamics, but also trains motor coordination and expression skills through music and movement. In the seventh and eighth meetings, students are given the opportunity to perform the results of their practice. The performance serves as an evaluation while increasing self-confidence and group cohesiveness, as well as providing an overview for the teacher of the overall development of students' musical skills.

Overall, the implementation of contextual approach in music learning for Grade 1 students successfully improved their active participation, basic understanding of tempo, rhythm and dynamics, and their confidence in expressing music through movement and sound. Throughout the eight learning sessions, students showed positive and consistent progress. These results confirm that the contextual approach is very appropriate for use with early childhood with basic ability levels, and has great potential in supporting the music learning process in a sustainable and effective manner. In addition to the improvement in musical skills, this study also showed positive attitudinal changes in

students. Children who were initially passive became more enthusiastic and responsive to the teacher's direction, especially during singing and moving activities. This indicates that the contextual approach not only improves technical music skills, but also supports students' overall emotional and social development.

Results Of The Implementation Of A Contextual Approach to Music Learning for Grade 1 Primary School Students

The results of the implementation of the contextual approach in music learning show that grade 1 students are able to understand the basic concepts of music in a more concrete and fun way. Through direct experience involving body movements, visual media, and contextualized songs, students show an increased understanding of musical elements such as tempo, rhythm, melody, and dynamics. For example, when demonstrating slow and fast tempo through walking and running movements to the song, students can clearly distinguish the tempo changes. In the rhythmic learning session using the round picture media, most students can follow the beat pattern correctly and show rhythm consistency when using simple props. Singing while moving activities with songs that are close to children's world, such as the song “Topi Saya Bundar” also increase students' engagement and ability to adjust their movement expression to the rhythm and lyrics of the song.

In addition to the cognitive and psychomotor aspects, the implementation results also showed progress in the affective aspects of the students. The classroom atmosphere became more lively and interactive, students seemed more confident in voicing ideas and following the teacher's directions. They showed initiative to participate, even students who initially seemed shy began to be actively involved in the activities. In the final performance session, the majority of students were able to demonstrate a good understanding of the material that had been learned, including in terms of mastery of simple rhythms and the suitability of movements to the music. The

teacher also noted an improvement in coordination, courage, and the students' ability to work together in groups. These results show that the contextual approach is not only effective in achieving music learning objectives, but also has a positive impact on students' character development and social skills.

In addition to having a positive impact on students' understanding of musical concepts and affective aspects, the implementation of the contextual approach also shows its effectiveness in creating a conducive learning atmosphere that is in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood development. Learning activities that are packaged in a concrete, fun and close to the child's world such as singing while moving, playing rhythm with simple tools, and expressing music through body movements help students feel comfortable and motivated to learn. The teacher is no longer the only source of information, but rather acts as a facilitator who accompanies the students' exploration process. Thus, students become active subjects in building their own understanding through direct interaction with materials and the environment. The findings show that the contextual approach has great potential to be adapted more widely in music learning, especially at the lower grade level, in order to build strong musicality from an early age and foster positive attitudes towards art learning in general.

The results of the implementation of the contextual approach in music learning show that activities linked to children's real experiences have a positive impact on the understanding of musical concepts of grade 1 students. Learning that involves contextual songs, body movements and visual media successfully helps students understand the basic elements of music such as tempo, rhythm, melody and dynamics without having to go through a complex theoretical approach. This is in accordance with the principles of the contextual approach. (Heald et al., 2023; Muharam et al., 2023; Puastuti & Sinthiya, 2021) This is an approach that emphasizes the importance of the connection between the subject matter and the daily lives of students.

Then, grade 1 students who are still in the concrete operational stage (Piaget) need direct and meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, the use of activities such as walking slowly for slow songs or clapping loudly and softly to recognize dynamics allows children to understand musical concepts in an intuitive and fun way.

The learning is done in stages over eight sessions, providing space for students to recognize, repeat, and finally display their learning outcomes. The initial meeting focuses on introducing the concept, the next meeting on reinforcing understanding through a variety of songs and activities, and the final meeting on displaying their understanding. This cycle reflects the continuous and reflective nature of contextual learning. The teacher does not only deliver the material, but facilitates the process of exploration and active involvement of students in each session. This finding is in line with previous research (Ilyas & Liu, 2020; Yolanda & Sihotang, 2024) Contextual approach can increase students' motivation, concept understanding, and active participation. In other words, music learning designed by considering children's context directly impacts the quality of learning that is more meaningful.

Furthermore, learning music based on contextual approach also contributes to the development of students' affective and social aspects. Children not only learn to understand music, but also learn to work together, dare to perform in front of the class, and express themselves through movement and sound. These attitudes are an important part of the learning objectives of music art which not only emphasizes mastery of technical skills, but also character building and aesthetic sensitivity (Shevtsova et al., 2023; Veliyeva, 2021; Zhao, 2023). These fun and meaningful musical activities have the potential to strengthen students' emotional attachment to the lesson, which in turn can improve long-term learning success. Therefore, the contextual approach is considered relevant and effective to be applied to music learning in the lower grades, and can be an innovative

and adaptive learning approach for teachers at the primary school level.

CONCLUSION

A contextual approach to learning music in grade 1 primary school students, especially in MI Minsani Bandung, is able to improve students' understanding of basic music concepts such as tempo, rhythm, melody, and dynamics in a more fun and meaningful way. Through activities that relate the material to students' real experiences, such as the use of familiar children's songs, body movements, and simple visual media, students more easily understand and internalize the music material. In addition, this approach encourages students' active involvement in the learning process, in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood development that requires concrete and contextual learning.

Furthermore, the contextual approach also had a positive impact on students' affective and social aspects. Children become more confident, dare to perform in front of the class, and show enthusiasm in participating in every learning session. The learning process is not only a means to introduce musical concepts, but also as a medium of expression, creativity development, and character building. Therefore, the contextual approach is highly recommended to be used in learning music at the primary education level, especially in the lower grades, in order to create an active, relevant and fun learning atmosphere for students.

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