

ANALYSIS OF RHYTHMIC LEARNING IN FOURTH GRADE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze rhythmic learning in fourth-grade elementary school classes, including its implementation, the obstacles encountered, and alternative solutions to improve its effectiveness. The background of this research is based on the fact that rhythm is a fundamental aspect of music education, playing a vital role in developing students' concentration, motor coordination, discipline, and collaborative skills. Nevertheless, rhythmic learning practices in elementary schools still face various challenges, including teachers' limited competence in music, a lack of diverse teaching methods, and insufficient supporting learning media. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation studies involving teachers and fourth-grade elementary students. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that rhythmic learning in fourth grade is largely implemented through lectures and repetitive drills, with little engaging variation. The main obstacles identified include teachers' difficulties in explaining rhythmic notation concepts, the limited availability of simple musical instruments, and students' low motivation to participate actively. Based on these findings, alternative solutions are required, such as the application of more contextual and enjoyable learning methods for example, game-based approaches, body percussion, or the Orff method, which integrates music, movement, and collaborative activities. Such approaches are considered effective in enhancing students' engagement, rhythmic concept comprehension, and interest in music learning. In conclusion, this analysis provides an important contribution to the development of rhythmic learning strategies in elementary schools, making them more effective, creative, and meaningful.

Keywords: rhythmic learning, elementary school, music

A. Introduction

Art education plays an important role in shaping students' holistic development, covering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Through art education, students not only acquire knowledge and skills but also gain opportunities to

express themselves, develop creativity, and build critical and appreciative attitudes toward works of art (Wizari, 2022). Music education is not merely about instilling musical skills but also about fostering positive attitudes and character in children's daily lives (Respati, 2015). In line with this, Madina et al. (2021) reveal that

music, as a branch of art education, makes a significant contribution to children's development because it provides aesthetic experiences while also cultivating intellectual, emotional, and social skills.

One of the fundamental aspects of music learning in elementary school is rhythm. Rhythm serves as the foundation for understanding musical structures, training concentration, and developing collaborative skills. Furthermore, according to Gutama (2020), rhythm also helps students develop motor coordination and discipline through structured rhythmic patterns. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* underscores the importance of this aspect by designing learning outcomes for Phase B (grades III–IV), which emphasize skills in analyzing rhythmic patterns, tempo, and nurturing musical sensitivity through creative practice (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

Nevertheless, the practice of rhythmic learning in elementary schools still faces a number of challenges. Some teachers do not yet possess specific competencies in the field of music, making it difficult for them to deliver rhythmic concepts, particularly staff notation and rhythmic patterns. In addition, teachers tend to use learning media with little variation, which results in low student motivation during learning activities and consequently makes the learning process less meaningful for students (Wahyuni, 2023). This condition affects students' low understanding of rhythmic concepts, lack of interest, and minimal active participation in the learning process.

To address these challenges, it is necessary to conduct a more in depth analysis of rhythmic learning conditions in elementary schools, particularly in grade IV. Such analysis

is important in order to identify real problems occurring in practice and to formulate alternative solutions that align with students' needs and the demands of the curriculum.

B. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at providing an in-depth depiction of the implementation of rhythmic learning in fourth-grade elementary school, the obstacles encountered, and the alternative solutions that may be applied. This approach was chosen because it is capable of offering a comprehensive understanding of rhythmic learning phenomena within the real context of classroom practice. The research subjects consisted of teachers and fourth-grade students in one public elementary school in Tasikmalaya Regency, selected on the basis that this class had already implemented music education in accordance with the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, particularly in the rhythmic aspect.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, documentation, and literature review. Observation was conducted to directly examine the process of rhythmic learning in the classroom, including teachers' strategies, student engagement, and the use of learning media. Interviews were carried out with the fourth-grade teacher to explore more deeply their experiences, challenges, and needs in rhythmic instruction. Documentation study was used to review learning tools such as lesson plans, instructional instruments, and relevant curriculum documents. Meanwhile, the literature review was conducted by examining various sources such as books, scholarly articles, and previous research related to music education, particularly rhythmic aspects and instructional approaches suitable for elementary school students. This literature study served to strengthen

the theoretical framework, compare previous research findings, and provide a solid conceptual foundation for analyzing the problems in rhythmic learning.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which encompasses three key stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and condensing information that was most relevant to the research focus. Subsequently, the data were presented in descriptive narrative form to enhance clarity and comprehension. Conclusions were then drawn and systematically verified to ensure the validity of the research findings. To establish the trustworthiness of the data, both source and method triangulation were employed, involving the comparison of observations, interviews, document analysis, and relevant literature, thereby yielding consistent and credible results.

C.Result and Discussion

a.Research Result

The findings of this study on rhythmic learning in fourth-grade elementary classrooms reveal a significant gap between the intended curriculum objectives and the actual practices observed in the classroom. Data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis provide a comprehensive overview showing that rhythmic learning largely remains confined to imitation activities, such as hand clapping, and has not yet progressed to stages of exploration, improvisation, or the creation of original rhythmic patterns as prescribed by the Merdeka Curriculum.

From a curricular perspective, the goals of rhythmic learning

emphasize a holistic musical experience, encompassing listening, imitation, exploration, and the creative generation of sound patterns. However, in practice, teachers predominantly employ demonstration and simple imitation methods, limiting students' active engagement and constraining the development of their creativity. These findings suggest the need for instructional strategies that encourage higher-order musical engagement, enabling students to progress beyond rote imitation toward independent rhythmic exploration and creation.

Regarding instructional media, rhythmic learning still heavily relies on hand clapping without incorporating variations of simple rhythmic instruments. This approach results in monotonous activities and provides limited multisensory experiences. The use of simple musical instruments, such as tambourines, maracas, or everyday objects, could enhance students' understanding and stimulate their musical creativity. Supporting this, Liana (2022) found that elementary students' rhythmic sensitivity remains underdeveloped, highlighting the need for alternative media, such as percussion instruments, to cultivate and enhance their rhythmic skills.

In terms of learning strategies, classroom instruction predominantly relied on lectures and frontal demonstrations, which rendered the learning process less interactive. The absence of group work limited students' opportunities to develop social skills, coordination, and collaborative abilities. In contrast, game-based and collaborative strategies are better aligned with the characteristics and learning needs of elementary students.

Regarding evaluation, teachers did not yet employ systematic assessment instruments. Assessment was largely limited to practical tests without documenting students' developmental progress. Such evaluation methods are insufficient to measure the learning process, creativity, and active participation of students in rhythmic activities.

Overall, the study indicates that while rhythmic learning positively impacts students' motor coordination, concentration, and collaborative skills, its effectiveness is constrained by limited instructional media, reliance on imitation-based methods, non-interactive strategies, and insufficient assessment practices. Addressing these challenges through diversified media, interactive and collaborative strategies, and systematic evaluation methods could significantly improve the quality of rhythmic learning and support the development of students' musical competence, creativity, and active participation.

b. Discussion

Thus, based on the analysis of qualitative data, an overview of the implementation of rhythmic learning and the obstacles encountered will be presented, allowing for the formulation of appropriate solutions to address these issues. Needs analysis constitutes an essential initial step in designing targeted learning interventions or solutions. In the context of this study, the needs analysis was conducted to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the actual conditions of rhythmic learning in fourth-grade elementary classrooms. This analysis encompassed several key aspects, including the teacher's role in managing learning, students'

characteristics and needs, the intended learning objectives, the media and instruments used, the strategies or methods applied, the learning materials, and the evaluation system employed.

According to Dick, Carey, and Carey (2015), needs analysis is a crucial stage in instructional design because it enables designers to comprehensively understand core problems and develop solutions that are relevant to actual needs in the field. In rhythmic learning, needs analysis becomes even more critical, as music education particularly rhythm instruction requires a creative, contextualized approach that aligns with students' cognitive and affective development.

Based on interviews, direct observations, and document studies conducted, a significant gap was identified between the actual conditions of rhythmic learning in fourth-grade classrooms and the ideal principles of music education.

1. Actual Conditions : Teachers, Students, and Rhythmic Learning

From the teacher's perspective, it was found that although some teachers understand the importance of rhythmic learning for children's musical development, its implementation remains very limited. Rhythmic activities are generally confined to simple hand clapping and vocal exercises, without variations in instruments or other creative approaches. The methods employed tend to be conventional, such as brief lectures accompanied by simple demonstrations, which are insufficient to stimulate active student engagement. As a result, the learning environment becomes monotonous

and fails to encourage curiosity or musical exploration.

According to Arends (2012), teachers should design learning experiences that are varied, creative, and contextualized so that students can learn actively, critically, and collaboratively. In other words, rhythmic learning approaches need to be updated with strategies that facilitate enjoyable, challenging, and meaningful learning experiences for elementary students. From the students' perspective, most displayed high enthusiasm for kinesthetic activities, such as imitating hand claps demonstrated by the teacher or performing simple rhythmic movements. This aligns with Piaget's (1972) cognitive development theory, which posits that elementary-aged children are in the concrete operational stage, making them more capable of understanding concepts through direct experiences and physical activities.

However, several challenges were also identified, such as differences in rhythmic interests and abilities among students, lack of focus, and difficulties in collaborative work. These findings are consistent with Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences, which suggests that each child possesses different potentials, including musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. Therefore, effective rhythmic learning should accommodate these diverse intelligences. The Orff Schulwerk approach, which integrates music, movement, language, and play, can serve as a solution to bridge differences in learning styles and provide equal opportunities for each student to develop according to their individual potential.

2. Limitations of Learning Media and Instruments

One of the main challenges identified is the limited availability of media and musical instruments in rhythmic learning. Many elementary schools lack adequate resources for rhythmic instruction. Learning activities often rely solely on textbooks or conventional modules, without support from visual or audio media, or simple musical instruments. Consequently, students' opportunities to explore rhythmic patterns are restricted, and the learning process loses its appeal.

According to Heinich et al. (2002), well-designed instructional media can enhance learning motivation, clarify abstract concepts, and reinforce students' understanding. In this context, the scarcity of media constitutes a significant obstacle that must be addressed. Therefore, innovation is needed in developing simple, cost-effective, and easy-to-use rhythmic learning media for classroom use, such as body percussion, non-conventional instruments, or interactive visual media.

The Orff and Dalcroze approaches are particularly relevant, as they allow teachers to utilize various simple media, including body movements, clapping, homemade instruments, or rhythm-based group games. This approach enables teachers to conduct effective rhythmic learning without relying on expensive or hard to obtain formal instruments.

3. Learning Materials and Strategies

The learning materials used for rhythmic instruction in elementary schools are still general, non-contextual, and insufficiently tailored to students' characteristics. According

to Sudjana (2010), instructional materials should be designed based on students' needs, interests, and developmental levels. In practice, rhythmic learning materials should be developed creatively and interactively to enhance student motivation and active engagement.

Currently, the materials often consist of predetermined patterns or exercises that do not reflect students' everyday experiences or allow for exploration and improvisation. This limitation restricts opportunities for students to express themselves musically and develop a deeper understanding of rhythm. Effective rhythmic learning materials should incorporate a variety of sensory modalities, such as visual cues, body movements, and manipulable instruments, to cater to diverse learning styles.

In terms of instructional strategies, teachers predominantly use lecture-based explanations and frontal demonstrations, which tend to limit student participation. Research suggests that game-based learning, cooperative group activities, and experiential approaches, such as the Orff Schulwerk and Dalcroze methods, are more suitable for elementary students. These approaches integrate movement, music, and play, enabling learners to internalize rhythmic concepts through active experimentation, collaboration, and creative exploration. By aligning learning materials and strategies with students' developmental stages and interests, rhythmic learning can become more meaningful, engaging, and effective, fostering not only musical skills but also social, cognitive, and emotional development.

The evaluation aspect in rhythmic learning also constitutes a critical concern. Teachers tend to assess only the final performance of students, without adequately considering the learning process they undergo. According to Arikunto (2013), an ideal evaluation should balance the assessment of both the learning process and the outcomes. Through observation of group activities, teachers can provide scaffolding or temporary support to students experiencing difficulties, in accordance with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) principle. Such evaluation offers a more authentic depiction of students' rhythmic development over time and in a comprehensive manner.

Based on the discussion above, the challenges in rhythmic learning in elementary schools often dominated by lecture-based methods, limited media variety, and low student engagement can be addressed by implementing an integrative approach combining Orff and Dalcroze methods. The Orff approach provides learning experiences through singing, playing simple percussion instruments, movement, and improvisation, enabling students to engage actively and learn concretely according to their developmental stage (Frazee & Kreuter, 1987). Meanwhile, the Dalcroze approach emphasizes the use of body movement to internalize rhythm, where activities such as walking, jumping, or clapping in time with music help students understand rhythm kinesthetically and improve motor coordination (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1921). By combining both approaches, rhythmic learning becomes more creative, interactive, and enjoyable, while simultaneously fostering students' cognitive, affective,

4. Evaluation of Learning

and psychomotor development in a balanced manner.

E. Conclusion

The needs analysis indicates that rhythmic learning in fourth-grade elementary classrooms still faces several challenges, including issues related to teachers, students, instructional media, strategies, learning materials, and evaluation. Therefore, there is a need for more contextualized, participatory, and engaging approaches to rhythmic learning. The Orff and Dalcroze methods offer strategic alternatives, as they can accommodate diverse learning styles, utilize simple media, and promote active participation in music education.

With a better understanding of the actual conditions and needs in the classroom, teachers and schools can design rhythmic learning experiences that are more meaningful, effective, and aligned with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, which aims to cultivate enjoyable musical experiences while simultaneously fostering multiple intelligences in children from an early age.

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