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## Strengthening tolerance character and patriotism in elementary school music art learning

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### Abstract

*Tolerance and nationalism are essential components of character education that require focused development during the elementary school years. These values can be effectively cultivated through music education, particularly when aligned with the principles of the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) curriculum. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach utilizing a case study method to explore the integration of character education within the context of music instruction. The findings provide a comprehensive account of the independent learning framework in elementary education and its correlation with music arts pedagogy. Specifically, the study identifies strategies for enhancing students' tolerance and nationalistic attitudes through music education, as well as the challenges encountered and proposed solutions within this instructional context. The results demonstrate that music education serves as a powerful medium for fostering a sense of tolerance and nationalism among students, thereby reinforcing the development of these core character traits in alignment with the goals of holistic and independent learning.*



## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Education is a systematic conscious effort carried out responsibly by educators in an effort to influence traits and character in accordance with the ideals of education to students. Education can be implemented in a structured and systematic manner through schools. Schools are useful in the self-adjustment and stabilization of students in personality formation, cultural transmission, social integration, innovation, pre-selection and pre-allocation of labor.

Character formation is one of the goals of National Education. Education can be said to be successful not only when it can achieve technical skills, but character skills (soft skills) play an important role in improving the quality of character education in achieving national education goals. It can be concluded that education plays an important role in shaping individuals with good character. Having a good character in this case is loving goodness, and doing good.

Good character is a substantial thing in life, person's life success is influenced by hard skills as well as soft skills in the form of self-character cultivation. However, looking at the recent situation, it takes more care to form character in students, especially elementary school students, one of which is the development of the times that is so dynamic.

The Indonesian nation is faced with a challenge in the form of a revolution in technology, transportation, information and communication that has no limits. The existence of technology in society provides new challenges for teachers (Onde et al., [2020](#)). This makes the public aware of improving the quality of Human Resources (HR) in mastering science and technology. In addition to having a positive impact, the current rapid flow of globalization also has a negative impact on influencing student behavior. The lack of supervision in receiving information will have a bad impact on students, for example the sophistication of technology in the era of the industrial and social revolution or 5.0 (Five point Zero), all information seems to be easily accessible. Almost 60% of children have mobile phones, where through social media accounts they actually make them see and listen to things that are less educational, thus making children unethical and do not have good character.

ESQ also assesses that moral crises have occurred in the midst of Indonesian society, including the crisis of honesty, the crisis of responsibility, the crisis of discipline, the crisis of justice, the crisis of environmental care and so on. The following study data from KPAI recorded that within 9 years, from 2011 to 2019,

there were 37,381 cases of children receiving bullying treatment through social media, reaching 2,473 reports and continuing to increase (Republika.co.id). Not to forget the news that recently went viral about students who danced "TikTok" by showing their erotic bodies. (News Liputan6.com).

Strengthening through the youtube channel with challenges and opportunities to face the "New Normal" era towards Human Character Building regarding the Data of the Internet Service Users Association 64% of Indonesian citizens are internet users. Where perpetrators other than 64% are toddlers, it can be concluded that very small percentage do not use the internet. Meanwhile, according to international data, Indonesia is ranked third, the most social media users. If you are not wise in the use of social media, the problem will become a big scourge that can cause a crisis of morality and criminality.

### **The Problem of The Study**

In addition, lately we often encounter various social phenomena in the world of education in Indonesia. We often encounter students, education graduates, and people with public positions who show less commendable attitudes such as behaving rudely, being disrespectful, lying, disrespecting elders, self-defeating, irresponsible, unwilling to admit mistakes, and so on. This phenomenon reflects the lack of character formation in a person, this is what encourages the Indonesian government to reorganize all aspects of education in Indonesia. Character education has indeed been implemented in schools, but in its implementation, there are no learning tools such as syllabus, innovative lesson plans, learning media, and assessment instruments that support and adequately form character education. If the learning tool has been fulfilled, it is expected to instill value and foster good attitudes and behaviors to shape the character of students. Pelaksanaan Pendidikan karakter di sekolah tentunya membutuhkan dukungan penuh dari seluruh warga sekolah, keluarga, serta Masyarakat (Pratiwi, et al., [2020](#)).

The rise in crime and the current morality crisis are a great warning in society. The crisis is in the form of an increase in the number of violence against children and adolescents, crimes against friends, cheating habits, destruction of other people's property, dishonesty, lack of discipline, lack of responsibility for the tasks given, and so on. Therefore, the government must improve itself so that the problem does not drag on. One of the ways proclaimed by the government in minimizing this problem is by having character education at every level of education.

## Research's State of the Art

Character education is considered to be the most effective effort in dealing with the problems that occur, and character education should become an icon of education in Indonesia Kholillah (2022) Character education can be instilled through the curriculum, the implementation of learning in the classroom, and school culture. Character education is defined as a skill that is able to develop good character to students by practicing in daily life (Samani, 2020).

Instilling character values in students as stated in the independent curriculum is the first step to improve the goals of education in Indonesia. Likewise, the cultivation of character education is able to educate students who excel in various aspects, both knowledge, emotional, and personality. Therefore, the government supports the realization of the implementation of this character education in schools. Elementary school is the basic foundation that plays a role in shaping the character of students. Through cognitive cultivation and character education, it is hoped that it can be useful and become a provision for students to compete in the global realm. If character values are really instilled in elementary school (SD). Because basically elementary schools have an important role in running the PPK (Strengthening Character Education) program. Teachers are important pioneers in developing students' character, teachers play a big role in character development. Therefore, teachers must be able to implement it in various activities in the classroom.

Law No. 20 of 2003 describes the principles of character education in Indonesia in order to balance morality with intellectual ability. In the Independent Curriculum, efforts are being made to realize several characters contained in the Pancasila student profile. The Ministry of Education and Culture emphasized that the Pancasila Student Profile is an effort to form student character in accordance with the values in Pancasila.

Strengthening character education is expected to shape and equip students to become Indonesia's golden generation in 2045 with the spirit of Pancasila and character education so that they can compete in the global realm. It is also explained in article 3 of Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 that the character education program is carried out by applying Pancasila values in character education, which includes religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, hardworking, creative, independent, democratic, curious, national, patriotic spirit, love of the homeland, respect for achievements, communicative, love of peace, love of reading, caring for the environment, social care, and responsible. These values are important to instill in

students as the younger generation who have an obligation to apply a noble life, have noble values, wisdom, and ethics to realize a cultured Indonesian nation. The effectiveness of character education programs can be key in fostering a young generation that can overcome conflict, think critically, care for others and compete globally.

Education with nuances of tolerance has been described in the National Education System Law no. 20 article 4 of 2003 where education should be based on respect for human dignity, conscience and beliefs and sincerity regardless of religion, ethnicity, class, ideology, or outlook on life. Students with a tolerant character should be able to dialogue with an open attitude in accepting differences of opinion without degrading their own principles. In this case, teachers play an important role in the success of the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 as cultured and civilized educators.

Tolerance is a way of respecting the views of others without sacrificing one's own life principles. The application of tolerance in school can be realized such as listening attentively to what the teacher commands, respecting anyone, being polite and greeting each other, making friends without looking down on others, not disturbing others, being able to hold back emotions, adapting to the school environment, doing good to others, and not being selfish.

Through the character of tolerance, it is hoped that it can foster and increase the love of the homeland (nationalism) in students, through mutual respect, respect, and acceptance of differences between others. Love for the homeland has an important role in maintaining the integrity and unity of the nation as stated in the 1945 Constitution article 1 paragraph 1 which reads "The State of Indonesia is a Unitary State in the form of a Republic so that the values that are built are carried out in the name of unity, togetherness in the nation and state (Rahman, [2020](#)).

Love for the homeland is a sense of pride, appreciation, belonging, respect and loyalty to the country where one lives and shows a way of thinking, behaving and acting that shows loyalty, care, and high appreciation for the nation's language, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political environment. In the current era of globalization, the role of the character of love for the homeland is very large, the character of love for the homeland is seen as able to counteract the bad impact given by globalization, besides that with the many differences in customs and culture in Indonesia in preventing divisions, a unifying is needed, in this case the attitude of love for the homeland.

## **Novelty, Research Gap, & Objective**

One of the education that is able to develop the character of tolerance and love for the homeland is through learning the art of music. Learning music art plays an important role in the development of students' intelligence.

Music art learning is a type of art education that can develop developmental aspects that function as a builder of self-aesthetic qualities in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor forms. Music art learning also includes learning that seeks to explore and develop students' aesthetic potential that can refine ethics. Furthermore, the purpose of learning music in elementary school is to shape and nurture students' personalities. This means that during elementary school, students are not only equipped with theories about musical arts but also form characters in learning the musical arts, in this case mainly the character of tolerance and love for the homeland.

The character of student tolerance before and after music learning has significant differences. The cultivation of the character value of love for the homeland can be done through learning the art of music. The results of the research can be used as a reference in research that in learning music art can foster the character of tolerance and love for the homeland.

Through the problems that have been described above, this makes the novelty in this research that an improvement strategy is needed for teachers in creating music learning that is effective, innovative, and able to increase character values in the form of tolerance and love for the homeland, where elementary school students are likened to a seed that will grow and need special treatment in their growth and development.

## **METHOD**

### **Type and Design**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to understand phenomena in depth in a natural setting, qualitative research focuses on meaning, subject experience, and social processes that occur contextually.

### **Data and Data Sources**

Data is collected in the form of primary data and secondary data. The subjects of the study are the principal, homeroom teachers or teachers, and students. Students are the main target of teachers in the process of internalizing the character of tolerance and love for the homeland. Therefore, the researcher dug into the data in depth to see the development of strategies to strengthen the character of tolerance and love for the homeland in the Merdeka curriculum through learning music art at

SDN Wangandawa 02 Tegal Regency. The author also studied secondary data in the form of the school's vision and mission, the state of facilities and infrastructure, organizational structure, the state of teachers and students, the Art and Culture Learning RPP of music arts materials, and the teaching module of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project.



**Figure 1.** Interview with Teachers of SDN Wangandawa 02

### Data Collection Technique

Data collection is carried out by three main techniques, namely:

1. Participatory Observation

Peneliti mengamati langsung proses pembelajaran seni musik di kelas, termasuk interaksi guru dan siswa, kegiatan menyanyi, bermain musik, serta refleksi siswa. Observasi ini mengikuti panduan Spradley (1980), yang mengklasifikasikan observasi ke dalam domain, taksonomi, dan komponen budaya.

2. In-depth Interview

Interviews were conducted with cultural arts teachers to explore their strategies in integrating the values of tolerance and love of the homeland in music learning. This interview approach refers to Patton's (2002) technique, which is an open and flexible interview to explore deep meaning.

3. Documentation

Data was also obtained from the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) document, the list of songs taught, the work of students (song lyrics, pictures, recordings), and documentation of art performance activities.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis uses the model of Miles and Huberman (2014), namely:

1. Data reduction: filtering important information from observations, interviews, and documentation.



2. Data presentation: compile data in the form of narratives, tables, and thematic matrices.
3. Conclusion: finding strategic patterns in music learning that lead to the growth of the value of tolerance and love for the homeland.

To ensure the reliability of the data, the triangulation technique of sources and methods is used as well as member checking of teachers as key participants.

## RESULTS

This research produced three main findings that show how the concept of Freedom of Learning in music arts learning in elementary schools can increase the value of tolerance and love for the homeland, namely:

### **Strengthening the Value of Love for the Homeland through Regional Songs and National Songs**

The results of observations at SDN Wangandawa 02 show that teachers actively use regional songs and national songs as part of learning music arts. Songs such as Gundul-Gundul Pacul (Central Java), Tokecang (West Java), Ampar-Ampar Pisang (Kalimantan), and Tanah Airku and Bagimu Negeri are used in singing together. The use of regional songs has been proven to increase students' appreciation of Indonesia's cultural diversity. Most of the students admitted that they had never heard a song from outside their area. Once taught, they show curiosity about the region of origin of the song, traditional clothing, and the musical instruments used.

The results of the interviews with the teachers showed that this learning was directed at understanding that despite the different languages and cultures, all regional songs are part of Indonesian identity. "I deliberately inserted songs from various provinces so that they know that Indonesia is rich. The goal is not only to be able to sing, but to love this country." – (Teacher of Class V, SDN Wangandawa 02) The reflection of students shows the internalization of the value of love for the homeland. For example, a student wrote in a study journal: "I am proud that Indonesia has many unique songs." And "I want to learn Papuan songs too because it's exciting."

### **Growing Tolerance Through Collaborative Music Activities**

In the Merdeka Learning approach, teachers give students the flexibility to choose the form of musical collaboration they like, such as making simple arrangements, ensemble performances, choirs, or creating song lyrics together. The projects are carried out in heterogeneous groups, which combine students with different religious, ethnic, and character backgrounds. In groups, they have to



compromise in choosing songs, determining who plays a particular instrument, and drawing up a rehearsal schedule.



**Figure 2. Activities with SDN Wangandawa 02 Students**

Observations show that there is an increase in tolerance in the cooperation process. For example, students who were originally dominant learned to listen to more reserved friends, students from minority backgrounds felt appreciated when their regional songs were used. There are no significant conflicts during the process because the teacher guides with a facilitative approach.

### **Teachers' Strategies in Integrating Character Values**

Cultural arts teachers in the three schools use various strategies to instill the values of tolerance and love for the homeland in music learning, including:

1. Cultural narrative before singing  
The teacher explains the meaning of the song and its origins narratively before singing together.
2. Reflective discussion after music practice  
Students are asked to write down or express how they feel after singing a song from another culture.
3. Cross-subject activities (thematic)  
Some teachers associate songs with social studies (map of the area of origin of songs) and PPKn (values of unity, diversity).
4. Multicultural arts performances  
The school held an art performance at the end of the semester, with the theme "Indonesia in Tone". Students performed songs from different regions with distinctive costumes.

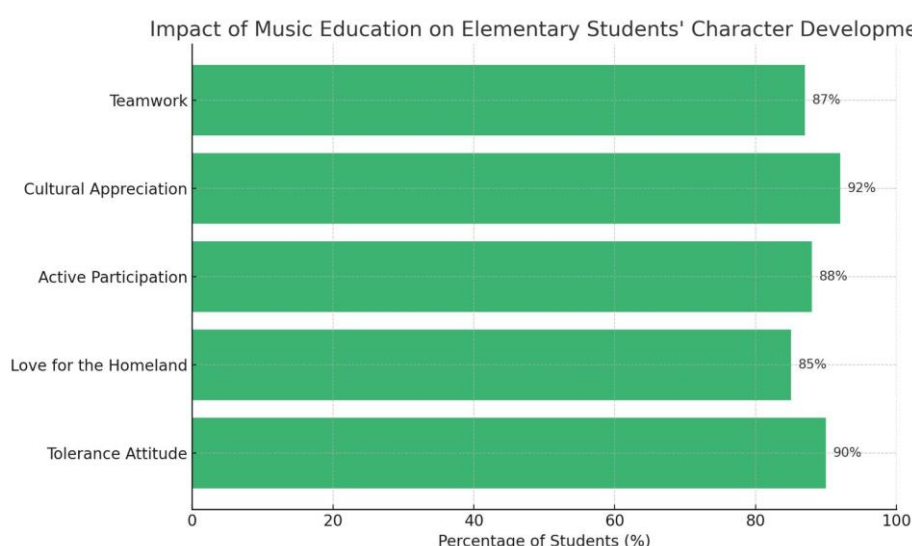
## Field Implementation Challenges and Solutions

Although this strategy works quite effectively, several challenges are encountered:

**Table 1.** Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Solutions from Schools
Limitations of musical instruments	Using alternative objects instead of musical instruments
Limitations of teacher competence	Participating in online training and various bai kantar teacher practices
Limited study time	Integrating art in cross-subject thematic projects

Participating in online training and various bai kantar teacher practicesFrom the results of student reflection, interviews and observations, the impacts of learning music arts based on Freedom of Learning include: (1) Tolerance increases, students are able to appreciate differences and feel comfortable interacting in cross-background groups; (2) Love for the homeland grows naturally, students show a sense of pride in Indonesian culture without coercion; (3) Active participation: students who were originally passive become more active in rehearsals and art performances. "I came to know that songs from Kalimantan are also delicious. I used to think that all good songs were only from Java." (interview with Grade V students)



**Graphic 1.** The Impact of Music Arts Learning on Students

## DISCUSSIONS

### Freedom of Learning and Learning of Cultural Contextual Music

The results of the study show that Merdeka Belajar gives teachers the freedom to design music learning that is relevant to the cultural context of students. The local materials used strengthen national awareness and cultural identity (Maspupah et al., 2024). This is in line with Freire's view of liberating and participatory education (Freire, 1976).

Research by Pramitasari (2021) in Central Java shows that the integration of karawitan in SBDP subjects is effective in improving the character of student cooperation through gamelan ensemble training and team interaction. Similar experiences in this study show that collaboration in heterogeneous groups helps foster tolerance and deep cultural awareness.

Merdeka Belajar encourages a thematic and holistic approach, where music art lessons do not stand alone, but are integrated with the values in PPKn, Social Studies, and Indonesian (Laksmi et al., 2024). This is also in line with the principles of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes the profile of Pancasila students, especially in the dimension of global diversity and love for the homeland.

### Music as a Medium of Multiculturalism and Tolerance

Music is a universal and cross-border form of cultural expression. The results of this study show that through collaborative music activities, students learn not only about tone and rhythm, but also about cooperation across differences, mutual respect, and intercultural dialogue. Collaborative music learning builds real empathy and tolerance because students hear each other, appreciate and accommodate differences.

A study by Fu'adi (2023) shows that children's music activities cultivate characters such as solidarity, tolerance, communication, and discipline, even in online learning situations during the pandemic. Similar characters were found in the students in this study, emphasizing the importance of music as a medium of social value. This strengthens Banks' theory about the role of multicultural education in forming inclusive citizens. In ensemble and performance activities, students from various backgrounds learn to negotiate roles, choose songs, and perform works together. This process fosters a concrete and non-theoretical attitude of tolerance. Music is not only an aesthetic object, but also a tool for building empathy and social cohesion. Music creates a safe space where differences become strengths, not sources of conflict.

### **Music and Positive Nationalism**

The findings of the study show that singing regional and national songs is able to foster a natural sense of love for the homeland in students. Songs like Tanah Airku and Bagimu Negeri have an emotional power that forms students' symbolic attachment to the nation and state. Regional songs also provide a first-hand experience of Indonesia's diversity. In this context, learning music arts is a strategic tool to build inclusive nationalism, which is nationalism that grows from respect for diversity, not from cultural homogeneity.

Regional anthems and national anthems have symbolic power to form a sense of togetherness. Music education is able to instill values such as discipline, responsibility, and leadership through creative activities in groups and solo (Prananda et al., [2020](#)). This kind of effect is in line with the findings of this study which saw the growth of inclusive nationalism in students after singing and performing regional/national songs.

### **The Role of Teachers as Facilitators of Values & Culture**

The teachers involved in this study showed their capacity as value facilitators, not just technical teachers of music arts. Teachers not only teach how to sing or play musical instruments, but also invite students to understand the cultural meaning and moral values behind the songs being sung.

This role also supports a constructivist learning approach in which knowledge is built through social interaction and meaningful experiences. Teachers act as mediators who help students build meaning through musical activities that are nuanced in value. The teacher in this study acts as a value facilitator, inviting students to understand the cultural meaning behind music, not just musical techniques. This is in line with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's philosophy that art education fosters feeling, creation, and karsa.

Non-music teacher training in Indonesia is stated to be able to improve competence in creating thematic music learning media based on local culture. This strengthens the importance of teacher training so that they are more creative and effective in applying character values through music.

### **Implementation Challenges and Adaptive Strategies**

Although the implementation of music learning within the framework of Merdeka Belajar provides many opportunities, the study also noted some challenges, such as the limitations of traditional musical instruments, limited learning time, and the lack of teacher training in value-based learning. However, the creative strategies

carried out by schools such as the use of alternative musical instruments (plastic bottles, buckets), cross-mapping collaboration, and teacher self-training show that the spirit of Freedom of Learning can be realized even with limited resources. This strengthens the adaptive concept of pedagogy, namely teachers are able to adapt strategies to the context and needs of students, as emphasized in the Independent Curriculum (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021).

### **Relevance to the Goals of National Character Education**

The findings of this study are consistent with national efforts to strengthen Pancasila-based character education (Law No. 20/2003 and the vision of a Golden Indonesia 2045). Music is not only an art medium, but also a strategic tool for character education. In line with Perwitasari (2024) research which shows an increase in the character of student cooperation through traditional music education. Sritanto (2023) Formation of Tolerance, Communication, and Discipline Through Children's Music Learning. Pratiwi (2022) music shapes creativity, social responsibility, and leadership. The combination of theory and study makes learning music art based on Freedom of Learning a promising strategy for character education. With fun, contextual, and value-based learning, music art in elementary schools has proven to be a strategic tool to produce a young generation who are tolerant, love the homeland, and proud of the diversity of their nation.

### **Global & National Education Theory Review**

The concept of cosmopolitan nationalism states that education must maintain local relevance while opening up a global view (Wright et al., 2025). The music learning model that is open to various Indonesian cultures, but integrated with the values of nationalism, reflects this balance.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicate that music education, when implemented in alignment with the *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) philosophy, can serve as an effective strategy for fostering the values of tolerance and patriotism among elementary school students. The integration of regional and national songs, cross-cultural collaborative activities, and reflective teaching approaches provides a meaningful and engaging pathway for internalizing national character values. In this context, teachers assume a dual role—not only as instructors of musical competencies but also as facilitators of character development—guiding students to appreciate Indonesia's cultural diversity as a unifying strength rather than a source of division.

Within the framework of the Independent Curriculum, music education has demonstrated its relevance in supporting the development of the Pancasila Student Profile, particularly in the dimensions of global diversity, mutual cooperation, and love for the homeland. With adequate teacher training, curricular flexibility, and creative use of available resources, music instruction can continue to evolve as a vital platform for nurturing national character from an early age.

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