

Kodály Method in a Public Elementary School and a University Laboratory School in Building Musical Creativity

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Abstract

This study explores the development of musical creativity in grade school learners using the Kodály Approach in two contextually distinct learning centers in Tacloban City, Philippines. Musical creativity—defined as the ability to create original and contextually appropriate musical expressions—is essential for a comprehensive music education. The Kodály Approach uses singing, movement, listening, and musical notation, starting with simple folk songs and traditional children’s songs, to foster learning and enhance creativity. This qualitative multiple case study gathers insights from semi-structured interviews with music teachers at a university laboratory school and a peri-urban public elementary school. The study found that, despite challenges such as limited resources and varying student skill levels, music teachers effectively enhanced musical creativity by integrating local folk songs, creating a supportive learning environment, and utilizing continuous assessments.

Introduction

Musical creativity is the ability to create original and contextually appropriate musical expressions (Kokotsaki & Newton, 2015). Scholars emphasize that nurturing creativity enables students to engage meaningfully with music through personal expression, problem-solving, and innovation (Hickey, 2012; Webster, 2002). According to Webster (2002), musical creativity involves the interaction of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, often manifesting through improvisation and composition. Burnard (2012) offers a socio-cultural perspective, viewing creativity as a dynamic and collaborative process shaped by the learner's cultural context and experiences. Meanwhile, Craft (2005) defines creativity in education as "possibility thinking" (p. 19), where learners explore multiple pathways and imaginative solutions. This highlights the importance of balancing novelty and relevance in nurturing children's creative musical development.

Musical creativity, particularly as experienced and developed through improvisation, remains underexplored among elementary school students. Kiehn (2003) highlighted a lack of reliable methods for measuring improvisation among elementary students, typically aged 6 to 12, leaving gaps in understanding how such skills develop. Limited research on this age group has constrained knowledge of early musical creativity and its influencing factors. A study by Navarro Ramón and Chacón-López (2021) found that engagement in musical improvisation may positively influence children's creative thinking, particularly by enhancing dimensions such as musical originality, syntax, and overall creative fluency in children aged eight to 11. Similarly, Kibici (2022) found that private school students and female learners in Turkey scored higher in creativity than their peers. Hallam (2010) emphasized the broader intellectual and social benefits of music, while Hargreaves et al. (2012) stressed the role of age-appropriate strategies in fostering creativity. Webster's (2002) model views musical creativity as a dynamic process, and Hickey and Lipscomb (2006) demonstrated the complexity of assessing children's creative thinking through improvisation and composition tasks. Broadening research to include a wider age range—approximately 6 to 14 years old—could identify critical periods for creativity development, guiding the design of curricula that optimize growth. This expanded understanding would support personalized, inclusive teaching strategies, enabling educators to better meet diverse learning needs and enhance music education practices.

The varied perspectives discussed above suggest that creativity is not a singular, fixed trait but a multifaceted process influenced by individual, cultural, and educational factors. It is through structured opportunities—such as composition, improvisation, and performance—that learners can refine and express their musical ideas. The Kodály approach, with its emphasis on sequential learning, vocal exploration, and active music-making, offers a pedagogical framework that supports these creative processes (Kokotsaki, 2012). However, understanding

how the Kodály approach may nurture creativity—particularly in socio-culturally diverse and resource-limited contexts, such as the Philippines—remains a significant challenge. As Burnard (2012) notes, creative musical expressions are inherently shaped by the learner’s environment, background, and interactions. This context-dependence makes it challenging to determine how the Kodály approach fosters creativity in settings that differ culturally and materially from its original context, such as the Philippines. Thus, for the purpose of this study, creativity is defined as the ability to generate original, musically meaningful ideas and expressions within contextually and culturally appropriate frameworks, fostered through opportunities for exploration, composition, and improvisation.

Access to quality music education—and the development of musical creativity—varies widely across different educational settings. Urban and university-supported schools often benefit from structured programs, trained specialists, and access to instructional materials. In contrast, public schools in resource-limited communities may struggle with inadequate funding, staffing, and infrastructure (Abril & Gault, 2006; Creech et al., 2013). These disparities influence not only the quality of music instruction but also the opportunities for learners to engage in creative expression. Although international studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the Kodály approach in enhancing musical skills and literacy (Li, 2023), few have examined how it fosters creativity—particularly in elementary-level classrooms within socioeconomically diverse contexts, such as the Philippines. Research on how teachers adapt Kodály-based instruction to local realities—including resource limitations and culturally specific musical traditions—and how these adaptations influence students’ musical creativity is still limited. This lack of contextualized studies leaves a notable gap in understanding how creativity develops through Kodály in non-Western, resource-constrained school settings.

In the Philippine context, community traditions and socio-economic conditions further shape how music is taught and experienced in schools (Tabuena et al., 2021). Hence, this study explores how musical creativity is nurtured among elementary school learners by comparing two contrasting educational environments—one university-supported and the other a peri-urban public elementary school—highlighting the ways in which context, culture, and available resources influence creative development through the Kodály approach. This study aims to explore how music teachers in these two distinct contexts nurture musical creativity using the Kodály approach. By comparing these educational settings, I aim to identify the challenges educators face, the best practices they employ, and how they adapt their teaching strategies to accommodate diverse skill levels and integrate culturally relevant materials.

Research Questions

The overarching question guiding this study is: How do music teachers foster musical creativity among grade school learners through the Kodály Approach in two contextually

distinct learning centers in Tacloban City? Specifically, I aimed to answer the following:

1. What specific challenges, if any, do music teachers encounter when fostering musical creativity among grade school learners using the Kodály Approach, comparing experiences between a university laboratory school and a public elementary school?
2. How does the Kodály Approach influence the development of musical creativity among grade school learners?
3. What are the effective practices employed by music teachers to enhance musical creativity among grade school learners through the Kodály Approach?

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of the study is to understand how musical creativity is nurtured in grade school learners through the Kodály approach. The researcher examined two distinct learning environments, identifying their instructional methods in building musical creativity and the challenges they encountered. Through this analysis, I documented the effective strategies music teachers use to address these challenges. The findings offer valuable insights that may benefit parents, music educators, educational institutions, and the broader education system.

Scope and Limitations

This study examined the challenges and strategies that music teachers used to foster musical creativity in grade school learners through the Kodály approach. A qualitative multiple-case study design was employed, and data were gathered from participants and analyzed using thematic analysis. It is important to note that the study did not assess the musical creativity of the learners in general or explore their development of musical self-concept. Instead, the findings were focused solely on answering the research questions outlined in the study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Amabile's (1996, 2012) *consensual theory of creativity*, which holds that creative ability is best assessed through expert evaluations of the quality of creative products. In a Kodály-based music education context, this framework highlights teachers' roles as domain experts who can recognize and nurture creativity based on their pedagogical experience and understanding (Kokotsaki & Newton, 2015). Aligned with this view, Hickey (2001, 2002) adapted Amabile's *consensual assessment technique* (CAT) to evaluate creative musical thinking in children's compositions, underscoring teachers' capacity to identify and foster musical creativity through their instructional practices rather than through direct assessments of learners' work.

By employing Amabile's (1996, 2012) consensual theory of creativity, the study underscores

the importance of subjective expert assessments in understanding and promoting musical creativity. The experiences and insights of music teachers, as captured in this study, provide valuable data on effective methods for fostering creativity in diverse classroom settings. This theoretical framework supports the study's aim to highlight best practices and address the challenges teachers face when using the Kodály approach, ultimately contributing to a broader understanding of creative development in music education.

Literature Review

The Kodály Approach in Elementary Music Education

The Kodály approach has been widely adopted in elementary music education, yielding positive outcomes worldwide. In Turkey, Özeke (2007) reported improvements in students' musical skills and appreciation, while Palkki (2015) noted enhanced pitch accuracy and rhythmic proficiency in the U.S. Similarly, Tan (2023) found that Kodály-based instruction in private piano lessons led to improved aural discrimination and phrasing among young learners. A key principle of Kodály's method is "musical literacy," developed through tonic sol-fa, which serves as a "mental keyboard" for children (Mason, 2012; Van As & Van Vreden, 2024). This approach builds strong aural skills and creativity through structured musical literacy (Kervin, 2025). In Hungary, sight-singing with sol-fa is foundational for learning any instrument (Burnard, 2012), and structured sequential learning supports long-term skill retention (Tesch, 2023). Using the pentatonic scale simplifies learning by avoiding difficult intervals and pitch inaccuracies. Kodály emphasized the human voice as the ideal instrument, advocating for unaccompanied singing and introducing two-part harmony by age eight (Kiehn, 2003). Creativity, according to Kodály, arises from a solid foundation in musical literacy, enabling students to compose and improvise meaningfully (Jacobi, 2012). While many studies highlight the strengths of Kodály instruction, few have examined its role in fostering creativity in under-resourced, culturally diverse classrooms, thereby revealing a gap this study seeks to address.

Unlike other general music education approaches, such as Orff Schulwerk or Dalcroze Eurhythmics, which focus on instrumental play and movement, respectively, the Kodály method emphasizes vocal development, music literacy, and sequential learning rooted in cultural materials (Tabuena, 2021). While Orff and Dalcroze approaches also value singing as a component of musical learning, the Kodály method distinguishes itself by making the voice the primary medium for developing musical literacy and internalized understanding through solfege and hand signs (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015; Mason, 2012). This vocal-based approach is particularly adaptable to low-resource environments, as it requires fewer physical materials. In this study, these contrasts highlight why Kodály was chosen as the pedagogical approach—its suitability for voice-centered, culturally responsive music education makes it uniquely

relevant in both well-supported and resource-limited Filipino classrooms.

Methodology

Design

This qualitative research employs a descriptive multiple-case study design to investigate how music teachers promote musical creativity among elementary learners through the Kodály approach. A case study enables an in-depth exploration of a bounded phenomenon, such as an individual, procedure, or social entity, using multiple data sources within real-life contexts (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). The boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are often blurred (Yin, 1994), making this approach ideal for exploring complex educational practices. A multiple case study design, which is beneficial for comparing differences and similarities, allows both within-case and cross-case analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003). The design is particularly suitable because it enables an in-depth understanding of how the same educational approach is applied and experienced in two distinct contexts. A descriptive multiple case study enables the researcher to explore not only variations across cases but also the common themes that emerge across them—making it well-suited to address the current study’s exploratory research questions.

Environment & Data Collection

This research was conducted in two contrasting educational settings in Tacloban City, Philippines: a university laboratory school (School A) and a peri-urban public elementary school (School B) in one of the city’s barangays (the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines). School A is affiliated with a teacher-training institution and offers a structured music program, supported by trained faculty with Kodály certifications or related training. School A has access to teaching materials and curricular resources that support consistent music instruction. In contrast, School B serves a community with fewer economic resources and operates in a setting with more limited access to instructional materials and infrastructure. Despite these constraints, School B remains an active center for local cultural expression and community-based musical practices. The two schools were purposefully selected to represent diverse educational and socio-cultural contexts, enabling a comparative exploration of how musical creativity is nurtured through the Kodály approach. The presence of teachers with Kodály-related experience in both schools ensured instructional comparability; however, the environmental differences highlighted the role of context in shaping pedagogical outcomes. Data were primarily gathered through semi-structured interviews using a validated interview guide. Each music teacher participant was interviewed in person, with sessions lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. Interview questions focused on teaching strategies, challenges, perceptions of creativity, and the implementation of Kodály-inspired practices. Formal permission to conduct interviews was obtained through letter requests sent to and approved by

the respective school heads.

Participants

In this study, I employed purposive sampling, a method that involves selecting individuals who meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). The selection criteria for participants in this study were as follows: (a) Participants must currently be teaching music to elementary students; (b) Participants must actively use the Kodály approach in their music instruction. This includes integrating principles and methods of the Kodály Method into their teaching practices; (c) Participants should have attended certification courses or workshops focused on Kodály teaching methods; and (d) Participants must express willingness to take part in the study. Participants were approached through coordination with the school heads, who helped identify eligible teachers based on the criteria. After formal approval from each school, I provided participants with a written explanation of the study. I obtained informed consent before any data collection began. Five participants met the selection criteria for this study. Three participants were from the university laboratory school (C1, C2, and C3¹), and two participants were from the public elementary school (C4 and C5).

The interview guide was developed based on the research questions, the theoretical framework, and key themes from the reviewed literature on musical creativity and Kodály-based instruction. Questions focused on teaching strategies, perceptions of creativity, challenges, implementation, and the adaptation of Kodály practices. To ensure clarity and relevance, the guide was reviewed and validated by three experts in music education and qualitative research, who provided feedback for refinement. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission to ensure accuracy in transcription. Follow-up questions were occasionally asked during the interview to clarify responses. Each participant was interviewed once, with short follow-up conversations when clarification was needed.

Data Analysis Procedure

I translated and analyzed the transcriptions of semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants. Thematic analysis, a method for identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), was employed to extract central ideas. Following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework—familiarizing with data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up findings—I categorized and

¹ Pseudonyms are represented by the labels C1–C5, where “C” stands for *case*. Each label corresponds to one teacher participant in the study (three from the university laboratory school and two from the public elementary school).

interpreted significant narratives of the music teachers. By examining these themes, the study identified essential concepts, challenges, and best practices for fostering musical creativity among grade school learners through the Kodály approach. This rigorous method provided a deep exploration of music teachers' diverse perspectives and effective strategies.

Ethical Considerations

The study was submitted for an internal ethical review through the university's research ethics committee, which approved the methodology and data collection procedures. Participants were fully informed of the study's objectives and methods. The consent form also clarified their voluntary participation, their right to withdraw at any time, and how confidentiality would be maintained. To protect identities, pseudonyms were used throughout reporting, and all digital files (audio recordings and transcripts) were stored securely on a password-protected drive. The researcher remained vigilant regarding unforeseen circumstances that might arise during the study. No other parties had access to the collected data, ensuring strict confidentiality and secure handling of all gathered information.

Triangulation

To ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed methodological triangulation (Yazan, 2015; Yin, 1994). In addition to the primary data collected from five music teacher participants, the researcher conducted supplementary, structured, informal interviews with four parents of grade school learners and three teaching colleagues of the music teachers. These additional interviews focused on participants' observations of how students engaged with musical activities, how creativity was expressed or encouraged in class, and their perceptions of the school's music program. These interviews were conducted in person and lasted approximately 20 minutes each. The data gathered from parents and colleagues were coded separately and used to validate or challenge emerging themes from the teacher interviews. While they were not analyzed as deeply as the core dataset, these responses provided important contextual insights and confirmed the consistency and credibility of the findings. Patterns that aligned across these perspectives were considered more robust, and any discrepancies were noted for further reflection during the thematic analysis process.

Results

Table 1

Summary of themes and their connection to musical creativity

Theme	Subtheme	Key Insight	Connection to Creativity (Amabile's Lens)
1. Challenges	Resource Limitations	Limited instruments and multimedia tools at School B	Constrains the creative environment; fewer materials to explore sound
	Diverse Skill Levels	Teachers adapted lessons to mixed-ability classrooms	Requires differentiated tasks to ensure all students can be creative
	Time Constraints	45-minute lessons are insufficient for complete Kodály activities	Limits the depth of exploration and continuity of creative processes
	Cultural Relevance	Teachers adapted folk songs to local culture	Increases student engagement and personal meaning in creative output
2. Influence on Creativity	Aural & Vocal Skill Growth	Students learned solfege, improved pitch, and created their own harmonizations	Enabled original melodic/rhythmic inventions recognizable by teachers
	Engagement & Motivation	Students enjoyed singing games and movement activities	Intrinsic motivation encouraged risk-taking and improvisation
	Creative Expression	Students improvised vocal/rhythmic patterns and varied known songs	Resulted in domain-appropriate creative products (Amabile, 1996)
3. Effective Practices	Local Folk Songs	Use of culturally familiar material increased relevance and musical confidence	Enhanced originality and meaningful expression in a cultural context
	Continuous Assessment	Teachers provided ongoing feedback	Helped shape and validate creative products
	Supportive Environment	Emphasis on safe, collaborative learning spaces	Encouraged freedom to take creative risks

Theme 1: Challenges in Implementing the Kodály Approach in Different Contexts

Resource Limitations

Teachers at school B reported a significant lack of resources, which posed a barrier to implementing the Kodály approach. According to participants, this educational method, which emphasizes musical literacy through a structured framework of singing, solfege, and rhythmic movement, relies on specific teaching materials to be effective. The shortage of these resources directly impacted the teachers' ability to deliver comprehensive Kodály-based music education, as C4 stated, "We have so many ideas and plans for our music classes, but the lack of teaching materials makes it hard to execute them well. We often resort to using makeshift instruments for pitch or simply rely on singing alone."

In the Kodály method, instruments are rarely used and are introduced only after students have developed strong aural and vocal skills, helping reinforce rhythm, pitch, and ensemble playing

by transferring vocal knowledge to other media (Nonnemaker, 2017). According to the participants, however, though instruments are not a core principle in the approach, they still stated that they needed instruments to support their instruction. While participants acknowledged limitations in their own vocal confidence, they noted that the limited number of Kodály-based workshops they had attended did not sufficiently prepare them to implement the approach without relying on musical instruments, as C4 described, “We are not good singers, so we’ll still rely on instruments, and we only attended that workshop a few times.”

The participants emphasized the use of instruments in music instruction, showing enthusiasm for incorporating percussion and other melodic instruments. However, Kodály instruction is primarily singing-based and does not rely on instruments or technology to be effective (Liu, 2024; See & Ibbotson, 2018). Therefore, it appears the teachers were not solely adopting Kodály as the primary pedagogy in teaching their lessons, as C5 explained, “Without access to instruments, even just a piano or guitar, we miss out on teaching students about different timbres. It’s a significant gap in their musical education.”

According to participants from school B, implementing the Kodály method often benefits from audio-visual aids that demonstrate musical concepts and provide examples of high-quality performances. However, both teachers in school B articulated the same concern for the limitation of resources to supplement the instruction with multimedia resources: “We have one outdated computer and a set of speakers that sometimes don’t work. It’s difficult to incorporate multimedia resources into our lessons, which would otherwise help students engage better with the material.”

The lack of access to reliable audio-visual equipment, such as speakers, projectors, and computers, limited the teachers’ ability to incorporate multimedia resources into their lessons. C4 reported:

Ready-made or standardized visual aids are crucial for teaching solfege and rhythm, but we barely have any. Sometimes, I have to draw everything by hand on the board, which is time-consuming and not as effective as having proper flashcards or charts. You have to create your own.

A core component of the Kodály method is the use of folk songs from the students’ own cultural heritage. These songs serve as the foundation for teaching various musical concepts, including pitch, rhythm, and musical form. The lack of comprehensive printed folk song collections in the Eastern Visayas region meant that the music teachers had to spend additional time sourcing appropriate materials, which detracted from instructional time and limited the diversity of musical examples available to students. This practice reflects the

implementation of the K–12 curriculum in the Philippines, which emphasizes contextualized instruction aligned with prescribed learning competencies. As a result, music teachers incorporate folk songs from various regions across the country to provide culturally relevant examples for learners, as C4 explained, “We are glad we have a collection of books donated to us, but this is not an official document endorsed by the Department of Education. Most of the time, we even use folk songs from other regions.”

C2 also expressed that sourcing culturally relatable folk songs requires significant personal effort and resources, often at the expense of valuable instructional time: “I spend a lot of my personal time and resources trying to find folk song collections that are relatable. It takes away from the actual teaching time and limits the variety of songs we can use in class.”

The physical classroom environment also plays a significant role in the effectiveness of the Kodály approach. Ideally, a music classroom should have ample space for movement activities, which are integral to the method (Cuskelly, 2021). However, C5 from school B reported constraints in classroom space, which hindered the implementation of activities that involve physical movement and interactive learning: “Our classrooms are small and so congested. There’s hardly any space for movement activities, which are a key part of the Kodály approach.”

The university laboratory school experienced minimal problems with resources due to its role as a training ground for preservice teachers. The university ensures that the school is well-equipped with teaching materials, musical instruments, and technology to support the implementation of the Kodály method, as C1 described, “Okay, because if we lack something, we can just request it; although it takes time to arrive, the school can still provide it.”

Diverse Skill Levels

Both schools faced significant challenges in addressing students' varied skill levels, a common issue in music education that was particularly pronounced in this study. Participants from school A, the laboratory school, highlighted the difficulties posed by students' diverse musical backgrounds and abilities, which required them to constantly adapt their instructional strategies. C2 described it this way:

I constantly had to adjust my lessons to meet the needs of all my students. The range of skills in one classroom was staggering. It was tough to maintain a cohesive and effective lesson plan when some students were beginners and others were quite advanced.

Students came to the classroom with a wide range of prior musical experiences. Some

students had formal music training, while others had little to no exposure to structured music education. This diversity made it challenging for teachers to design lessons that were both accessible to beginners and sufficiently challenging for advanced students. C1 stated, “One of my biggest challenges was creating lessons that could engage all students, regardless of their experience. I had students who could read music fluently sitting next to those who had never seen a sheet of music before.”

Balancing these differing levels required teachers to spend additional time differentiating instruction, which could detract from the overall flow of the lesson, as C3 stated, “I had to prepare multiple versions of each activity to cater to different skill levels.”

Teachers in school B faced similar challenges. To address the varied skill levels, teachers needed to provide individualized attention, which was challenging given the typical class sizes. In a group setting, teachers found it challenging to provide the one-on-one support some students needed without neglecting the rest of the class. This issue was especially pronounced during activities that required immediate feedback, such as singing exercises or rhythmic drills, as C5 explained, “It was almost impossible to give every student the attention they needed. During singing exercises, I often had to split my attention between several students at once, which meant some students didn’t get the feedback they needed.”

Ensuring that all students remained engaged and motivated was another significant challenge. Advanced students became bored with material that was too easy, while less experienced students felt overwhelmed and discouraged by content that was too difficult, as C4 said, “I had to be creative in my teaching methods to keep all students actively participating and motivated to learn.”

Teachers frequently had to modify their lesson plans on the spot to accommodate the diverse needs of their students. This could involve simplifying or extending certain activities, providing additional explanations, or incorporating supplemental materials. These adjustments, while necessary, disrupted the planned sequence of instruction and made it harder to achieve the lesson’s objectives within the allocated time.

For School A, group activities, a central component of the Kodály approach, could be described as C1 stated, “a mixed bag.” Mixed-ability groups may either hinder or help based on the social dynamics. While peer learning opportunities existed, there was a risk that stronger students would dominate, leaving less skilled students to become passive participants

Providing fair and constructive assessment and feedback was complicated by the varied skill levels. The music teachers needed to develop assessment methods that could accurately reflect

each student's progress relative to their starting point, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all standard.

Time Constraints

Limited instructional time emerged as a significant barrier to effectively implementing the Kodály approach in the music education of grade school learners. Teachers from both schools noted that the allocated time for music classes was insufficient to cover the Kodály curriculum comprehensively, a problem further complicated by the need to integrate music education with other academic subjects. Participants consistently reported that the typical 45-minute duration of music classes was not adequate to thoroughly engage students with the approach. The curriculum requires time-intensive activities such as singing, movement, listening, and musical notation, all crucial for developing musical literacy and creativity. C1 said, "Forty-five minutes is not enough. We need more time for singing, moving, and notation exercises. It feels like we're always rushing through the most important parts."

For school B, time constraints forced teachers to compress their lesson plans, often rushing through activities that required more time for proper understanding and practice. The Kodály approach's emphasis on gradual, sequential learning was difficult to achieve in such a rushed environment, as C4 said, "We're barely scratching the surface of what the Kodály method is supposed to teach. Students miss out on the depth of learning because we have to hurry through each activity."

The fragmented schedule often disrupted the flow of learning, making it challenging for students to build on previous lessons, as C5 stated, "It's frustrating when there's a long gap between lessons. Students forget what they learned, and we have to spend time reviewing instead of moving forward." The Kodály approach benefits from continuous and cumulative learning experiences, where each lesson reinforces and expands on the previous one. The interruptions caused by limited class time hindered this natural progression, affecting students' overall musical development.

With limited class time, students had fewer opportunities to practice and refine their skills during school hours. Regular, structured practice is essential for mastering the Kodály techniques (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015). Due to insufficient classroom time, students had to rely more on practicing at home, which varied widely depending on individual circumstances and support. The shortage of instructional time also limited the amount of personalized attention and feedback that teachers could provide to each student.

Cultural Relevance

Adapting the Kodály method to fit the cultural context of Tacloban City posed significant

challenges for music teachers in School A. The Kodály method, traditionally based on European folk songs and pedagogical practices, required considerable modification to resonate with the cultural backgrounds and experiences of students in Tacloban City. For example, as C2 stated, “The songs we used originally were not connecting with the students. We had to find local songs that carried the same educational value but were more relatable for the kids here.”

The teachers needed to supplement the Eastern Visayan folk songs—comprising pieces in Binisaya or Winaray language, native to Tacloban City—with national folk music and culturally relevant materials to ensure that students could connect with the content on a personal and cultural level. C1 said, “We found that students were much more engaged when we used songs they recognized, like Leron-leron or bahay kubo.”

Teachers had to strike a balance between maintaining the core principles of the Kodály method and respecting local musical traditions. This balancing act was crucial to preserving the educational effectiveness of the Kodály approach while making it culturally relevant. When students recognized and connected with the songs, their motivation and enthusiasm for learning increased, especially in the public elementary school, as C5 described, “It was gratifying to see students engage more deeply with the songs that are easily recognized by the learners. Their connection to the music made teaching more rewarding.”

Adapting the Kodály method to the cultural context of Tacloban City was a multifaceted and ongoing challenge for music teachers. It required modifying traditional songs and exercises, integrating local instruments, balancing pedagogical principles with cultural relevance, and engaging the community.

Theme 2: Influence of the Kodály Approach on Musical Creativity

Aural and Vocal Skills as Foundations for Creative Expression

In the context of implementing the Kodály method, students in school A demonstrated notable improvements in their aural skills, which Jacobi (2012) argued is fundamental for fostering musical creativity. C2 said, “Students quickly picked up on recognizing different rhythms and could reproduce them accurately. The Kodály method really helped in developing their rhythmic precision.”

Central to the Kodály method is the use of solfege syllables (do, re, mi, etc.) as a tool for teaching pitch and sight-singing. By starting with simple folk songs and gradually introducing more complex melodies, teachers in school A enabled students to develop their ability to identify and reproduce musical pitches accurately, as C3 described, “Students were able to grasp hard melodies more quickly. Solfege training helped them understand how different

notes relate to each other.”

This internalization enabled students to generate their own melodic phrases, improvise short vocal lines, or modify existing tunes—reflecting the ability to create original musical expressions rooted in learned structures, as C3 stated, “We saw a noticeable improvement in students’ ability to harmonize and create their own arrangements. Solfege gave them the tools they needed to explore musical creativity.” In Amabile’s (2012) terms, these behaviors illustrate creative products judged as appropriate by expert teachers familiar with student growth and classroom norms.

Even in school B, the Kodály method emphasized integrating aural and vocal skills. As students progressed from singing simple folk songs, C4 noticed, “Students’ vocal technique improved. They became more expressive singers.” This holistic approach ensured that students developed a comprehensive understanding of music rooted in active listening and vocal participation.

Improved aural skills lay the groundwork for students to engage in creative musical expression. By accurately perceiving and interpreting musical elements, students gain the confidence to experiment with different musical ideas and variations (Soykunt et al., 2023). The Kodály method encourages students to explore improvisation, leveraging their enhanced aural skills to create original musical pieces that reflect their unique artistic voices. As C5 noted, “Their enhanced listening (aural) skills gave them the confidence to be more creative.”

Beyond immediate educational benefits, the development of aural skills through the Kodály method promotes lifelong engagement with music (Jiang, 2025). Students in school B not only learned to appreciate and perform music but also developed the confidence and competence to participate in musical activities.

Intrinsic Motivation and Engagement in Creative Music-Making

Learners in both schools demonstrated heightened engagement and enthusiasm—a critical condition for creative output. According to Amabile (2012), intrinsic motivation and enjoyment are essential for creativity to flourish. Activities such as rhythmic movement, singing games, and improvisation fostered an environment where students felt free to experiment with musical ideas and take creative risks, as C1 noted, “The interactive activities in our Kodály music classes really captured students’ interest. They loved the singing games and rhythmic exercises.”

Movement is an integral component of the Kodály method, used to reinforce rhythmic understanding and musical expression. Students in both schools benefited from activities that

involved clapping, tapping, and dancing to music, which teachers stated not only enhanced students' physical coordination but also appeared to deepen their understanding of musical concepts such as beat, tempo, and phrasing. C3 said, "The activities with rhythmic exercises with movement were particularly effective. Students could feel the music physically."

Central to the Kodály method is the development of singing skills through structured vocal exercises and repertoire. Students in school B engaged in singing traditional folk songs, gradually progressing to more complex vocal arrangements. C5 noted that singing not only improved students' musical proficiency but also appeared to provide a means for emotional expression and artistic communication, and students gained confidence in their voices and developed a deep appreciation for the songs we learned together.

Students in both schools developed confidence in their musical abilities and a sense of pride in their cultural heritage through the exploration of traditional music and local musical practices. By combining movement, singing, and interactive learning activities, teachers created a dynamic learning environment that empowered students to explore, create, and connect with music on a deeper level.

Creative Expression

The Kodály approach, implemented in both schools, provided students with a structured yet flexible framework that facilitated the exploration and expression of their musical ideas. This approach emphasizes a comprehensive music education through sequential learning of musical elements such as rhythm, melody, and harmony, starting with simple folk songs and children's tunes. Further, as C4 noted, "The integration of improvisation helped a lot for our students. Through improvisation exercises, students experimented freely with musical ideas."

Collectively, these findings demonstrate how the Kodály approach cultivated musical creativity in these contexts by equipping students with foundational aural, rhythmic, and melodic skills and providing structured yet flexible opportunities for creative application. Through improvisation, vocal exploration, variation, and culturally contextualized interpretations of folk songs, students generated and refined original musical expressions that reflect meaningful, personalized musical invention.

Theme 3: Effective Practices for Enhancing Musical Creativity

Incorporating Local Folk Songs

Incorporating local folk songs and culturally relevant materials into the music curriculum in schools A and B played a pivotal role in enhancing students' engagement and connection with music. By integrating familiar melodies, rhythms, and lyrics from their own cultural heritage, teachers created a learning environment that resonated deeply with students' personal

experiences and identities. C2 noted, “Incorporating local folk songs and cultural practices enriched our curriculum,” and C3 said, “Folk songs are really what need to be used.”

Students in both schools resonated deeply with the melodies, rhythms, and lyrics of these familiar songs. As students recognized tunes, their enthusiasm for learning music increased. This connection not only boosted their engagement but also, as C4 said, “provided rich insights into our community’s culture.”

Continuous Assessment and Feedback

In implementing the Kodály approach, continuous assessment and constructive feedback played crucial roles in supporting students’ creative development and progress. Through formative assessments, teachers regularly monitored students’ musical skills, understanding, and creative abilities. As C3 stated, “You just need to tell them whether their performance is correct or not.” This often involved giving immediate, performance-based feedback to help students internalize musical accuracy and structure—skills essential for building creative expression.

Formative assessments enabled music teachers to provide timely, specific, constructive, and actionable feedback. This feedback focused on reinforcing positive achievements and guiding students towards refining their musical skills and creative expressions, as C5 stated, “They learned to embrace mistakes as opportunities for learning and growth. This positive attitude towards feedback not only enhanced their musical skills but also nurtured perseverance in pursuing creative endeavors.”

Creating a Supportive Environment

Establishing a supportive classroom environment was essential for nurturing students’ musical creativity and confidence in both schools, as C2 stated, “We just let them enjoy.” The freedom students had to explore music without fear of judgment created a relaxed, joyful atmosphere. This environment encouraged them to take creative risks, experiment with new ideas, and express themselves musically, thereby fostering an open mindset to innovation.

In the classroom environment, teachers celebrated and respected students’ diverse musical backgrounds, experiences, and preferences. They reported that recognizing the unique strengths and talents each student brought to the learning process helped promote mutual respect and collaboration among peers, as C3 stated, “Our classroom was a safe space where students felt comfortable expressing themselves through music.”

Collaborative learning activities and group projects encouraged peer support and collaboration among students, as C5 noticed, “these children are willing to participate because this is their

only time to make friends, so I make sure that some of my activities are group-based.”

This collaborative approach not only enhanced students’ social skills but also promoted a sense of collective achievement and shared responsibility for musical learning outcomes, as C1 described, “Students engaged in group projects where they exchanged ideas, offered feedback to each other, and collaborated on musical performances.”

By incorporating local folk songs, implementing continuous assessment and feedback practices, and creating a supportive classroom environment, teachers in schools A and B effectively enriched students’ musical learning experiences and fostered their creative development. These strategies not only enhanced engagement and motivation but also promoted cultural appreciation, resilience, and a positive mindset towards musical exploration and expression.

Discussion

Teachers in both School A and School B observed increased student engagement through activities involving singing, movement, and improvisation—core features of the Kodály approach—however, the ways creativity was expressed and supported varied across classroom contexts. In School A, students engaged in structured composition tasks using solfege and hand signs to create and perform melodies, often adding movements or original lyrics. In School B, students demonstrated creativity through rhythmic games, peer-led singing, and the creation of clapping patterns, highlighting a more informal but equally meaningful form of musical exploration. These differences reflected the schools’ varying levels of access to resources and teacher training, with School A benefiting from instructional materials and Kodály certification, while School B relied on oral strategies and flexible adaptation.

Across both settings, the integration of local folk songs emerged as a powerful tool for building musical confidence and cultural relevance. Familiar melodies encouraged students to experiment with musical ideas, fostering creative expression in ways aligned with Amabile’s (1996, 2012) Consensual Theory of Creativity. Teachers, drawing on their professional judgment, identified and nurtured these creative moments, demonstrating the role of expert evaluation in recognizing student originality (Kokotsaki & Newton, 2015). These findings support the idea that culturally grounded, singing-centered instruction—especially when paired with teacher adaptability—can promote creativity even in resource-limited environments. While challenges such as limited materials and varied skill levels were more prominent in School B (Kibici, 2022; Türkmen & Göncü, 2018), both schools exemplified how improvisation, group activities, and responsive teaching can cultivate creative growth. Ultimately, the study affirms that the Kodály approach, when thoughtfully applied, provides a flexible and culturally relevant framework for fostering musical creativity in elementary

education (Hallam, 2010; Houlahan & Tacka, 2015).

Conclusions

The findings suggest that the Kodály approach has the potential to nurture musical creativity among elementary learners when implemented with attention to local culture, student diversity, and classroom conditions. The positive impact of singing-based instruction and the integration of folk songs suggests that culturally grounded materials play a key role in encouraging students' creative expression and engagement. These findings highlight the importance of using familiar, voice-centered activities that do not rely on costly instruments—particularly in resource-limited schools. Teacher flexibility emerged as central to adapting the Kodály method across varied educational contexts. The ability to modify lessons using improvisation, group collaboration, and informal assessment techniques contributed to more inclusive and responsive music instruction. However, the reliance on instruments in School B suggests that a lack of confidence in unaccompanied singing may result from limited training, indicating that teacher expertise significantly influences how the Kodály approach is interpreted and applied. Furthermore, the findings highlight how supportive classroom environments encourage risk-taking and participation in creative tasks. Conversely, limited instructional time constrains the full implementation of Kodály's sequential structure, suggesting that time allocation remains a key factor influencing creative development in music education.

Recommendations

Schools should prioritize providing adequate spaces and resources, such as musical instruments and Kodály learning materials, to ensure the effective implementation of the Kodály approach. Continuous professional development for music teachers is essential, with training programs that adapt the method to cultural contexts and address diverse student needs. Allocating sufficient instructional time for music education and integrating the Kodály approach with other subjects can provide a holistic learning experience. Involving the local community through partnerships in culturally related events can deepen students' connections to their heritage. Implementing regular formative assessments and providing immediate feedback will help students refine their musical creativity and guide instructional practices. Creating a supportive, non-judgmental classroom environment that encourages experimentation and risk-taking is crucial for fostering creativity and innovation. Finally, a holistic and inclusive curriculum that balances structured methods with creative opportunities and emphasizes cultural diversity will ensure that music education remains impactful, meaningful, and relevant in today's multicultural world. Future studies could also explore how students' musical creativity develops over time under sustained Kodály-based instruction. Comparative studies examining the effectiveness of Kodály alongside other music

education approaches, such as Orff or Dalcroze, could further enrich the discourse on culturally responsive and inclusive music pedagogy.

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