

# Rhythm Explorers: Creative Approach in Drum Learning for Elementary Students in Private Music Education

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores a creative approach to drumming instruction for primary school students in private music education institutions, aiming to enhance rhythmic ability through improvisation and exploration of complex rhythmic patterns. A qualitative research design was employed, involving twelve purposively selected students of varying ages. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. The findings indicate that integrating games and challenges into drumming lessons improves rhythmic accuracy, creativity, and motor coordination. The approach also supports emotional and cognitive development by encouraging self-expression through music. Key outcomes include increased technical mastery, stronger self-confidence, and greater adaptability to complex rhythms. Although implementation faced challenges such as limited infrastructure and psychological barriers among students, applied solutions contributed to a more engaging and effective learning environment.

**Keywords:** Creativity Music Pedagogy; Drum Learning; Music Improvisation; Rhythm Development.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Music education has been recognized as an important element in supporting the holistic development of children, influencing their cognitive, emotional and social aspects. The role of music education in this development is receiving increasing attention, especially in the context of private music education at the primary school level (Gong & Wang, 2023; Trecroci et al., 2023). As parents become more aware of the benefits of private music education, there is a strong push to develop more specific curricula and more innovative teaching methodologies that can be tailored to students' needs. In this case, the importance of private music education includes not only improving technical skills but also serving as a means to enhance students' emotional and psychological intelligence (Bai, 2024; Cui, 2023).

This educational shift is closely tied to pedagogical advancements, particularly in curriculum design and adaptive teaching strategies that respond to the individual needs of students (Acesta, 2023; Kusnadi et al., 2023; Muhammad et al., 2023; Subroto et al., 2023). Contemporary approaches now favor holistic and student-centered learning models, integrating established methods such as Kodály to support not only cognitive but also psychomotor (Blasco-Magraner et al., 2021; Guo & Chiu, 2024). Self-assessment and peer collaboration are also gaining prominence,

replacing rigid traditional assessments and encouraging experiential learning (Zhang & Kamarudin, 2024).

Previous research has shown that early childhood music experiences have a positive impact on children's cognitive development and emotional well-being. Research by Janurik & Józsa, (2022) reveals that the perception and reproduction of rhythm contributes significantly to cognitive development, even more than traditional intelligence measurements. Involvement in rhythmic activities such as playing the drums also improves students' musical literacy skills and broadens their cognitive functions, which shows the close relationship between rhythm training and literacy skills (Ahokas et al., 2024).

In addition, drum lessons for primary school students have a number of important aspects that support children's psychological and motor development. One crucial aspect of music learning is its positive effect on fine motor skills and coordination. Research shows that through playing musical instruments such as drums, children can stimulate their cognitive development and train their ability to adapt to various rhythmic patterns that are taught (Rahmi & Maemonah, 2023; Sembiring, Maulana, et al., 2025; Sembiring, Sukmayadi, et al., 2025). Developing these skills not only improves children's musical abilities but also contributes to increasing their discipline and focus on various other learning activities (Viani & Ardipal, 2019).

Research Furthermore, involving rhythm through creative and interactive approaches, such as drumming games, offers pedagogical strategies that not only improve students' musicality, but also support their emotional and psychological resilience. Research by Wang & Wong (2022), shows that a rhythm-focused educational environment can strengthen emotional intelligence and support students' overall mental health. In the context of private music education, one-on-one teaching arrangements allow for a learning experience that is highly tailored to the cognitive style and approach of each individual student.

Although a substantial body of literature addresses the general benefits of rhythm and drumming in music education, few studies have examined the systematic implementation of creative and interactive drumming methodologies specifically tailored for primary school students in private music settings. The integration of these approaches in individualized learning environments remains underexplored, especially in relation to their pedagogical design, challenges, and holistic impact on student development.

In response to this gap, the present study aims to explore how creative and interactive drumming approaches can enhance rhythmic ability and support cognitive and emotional growth in primary-level learners. Additionally, this study seeks to analyze the practical challenges and pedagogical benefits of applying such methods within the context of private music education. Ultimately, the research intends to provide informed recommendations for curriculum innovation and effective teaching strategies to support more personalized and impactful music learning experiences for young students.

## 2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore students' learning experiences in private drum instruction, with a focus on rhythmic development and its cognitive and emotional implications. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on clearly defined criteria to ensure relevance and variation within the sample. These criteria included: (1) students actively enrolled in private drum lessons for a minimum duration of three months; (2) participants within the age range of 7 to 12 years, representing early to late elementary school levels; and (3) consistent attendance in weekly lessons at the designated

private music institution. . Data were collected using three main methods: in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation (Adriaan & Santoso, 2023; Mahmud Fauzi, 2022). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and teachers to explore the perceptions, challenges, and development experienced by students during the learning process. Classroom observations were conducted to record student interactions with teachers, as well as to observe student involvement in rhythm exercises and their motor development. Documentation in the form of lesson recordings and feedback from teachers and parents was also used to support a more comprehensive understanding of student development.

All learning sessions were held at Favore Music, located at Mekar Puspita No.46, Cibaduyut, Bojongloa Kidul District, Bandung City, West Java, with a training duration of approximately forty-five minutes per child. Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques, which began with data coding to identify elements in the process of rhythm or rhythmic exploration on the drums. The collected data is then categorised based on these elements, then analysed to understand the impact of drum lessons on student development. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study uses triangulation of methods, combining interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as cross-checking with respondents to ensure the accuracy of the findings (Cipta et al., 2024; Miles et al., 2018). With this approach, it is hoped that this study can provide in-depth insights into the effect of drum lessons on children's development in private music education, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Students attending drum lessons

Participants	Age
1	9 years
2	8 years
3	8 years
4	8 years
5	12 years
6	12 years
7	11 years
8	10 years
9	9 years
10	11 years
11	7 years
12	12 years

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Creative Approach Study in Drum Learning

Creative approaches in music education involve the application of strategies and methodologies designed to stimulate innovative thinking and artistic expression in students (Filipchuk et al., 2022). The main objective of this approach is to develop students' musical potential by equipping them with the critical and creative thinking skills that are essential for creating and interpreting music in an original way (Barrett et al., 2021; Creech et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2024). The creative approach is not only limited to improving technical skills but also facilitates the development of musical intuition and the exploration of new ideas in composition and musical interpretation (Corcoran, 2021; Yao et al., 2024).

Regarding drumming lessons at Favore, the researcher used games and challenges as the basis of this creative approach. The exploration process occurs when students are given the

opportunity to play simple drum patterns or beats, such as 4/4. In the early stages, the researcher demonstrates the beat using acoustic drums, while the students play electric drums located parallel to the teacher's position. In this scenario, the teacher not only functions as an instructor who provides examples, but also as a facilitator who encourages students to develop their creativity. The process begins with the researcher giving a demonstration of a simple 4/4 beat pattern. Students then observe carefully and try to follow the beat. After trying, the researcher gives directions with sentences such as, *"try to create this beat in your own style,"* which aims to encourage students to explore and create beyond the basic pattern that has been given. In this stage, students are given the freedom to make variations on the basic pattern, such as adding the use of double kicks, or opening and closing the hi-hat. This challenge spurs students to not only follow instructions, but also to apply their imagination in more complex rhythm modifications.

For instance, one student shared: *"I was nervous at first, but then I tried using my own fill, and the teacher said it sounded like funk. That made me want to try more styles."* This experience illustrates the power of encouragement and agency in learning. As the session progresses, students expand their rhythmic vocabulary by integrating disco, funk, and rock motifs. These adaptations represent not only technical proficiency but also cultural awareness in rhythm-based interpretation. The practice supports the idea that musical learning is enriched through creative risk-taking and experimentation.

Subsequently, students begin to feel the excitement and challenge of transforming simple beats into more creative and dynamic ones. Although the basic pattern used is still in a 4/4 framework, students begin to explore more complex variations, such as combining other musical elements such as disco, funk, and rock, which are represented through techniques such as the use of double kicks and hi-hat variations. After the students have tried various modifications, the researcher provides further explanation of how, even though the beat they are playing starts from a simple pattern, they have begun to combine various more complex elements in one rhythmic play. The researcher also explains that the process includes mixing various musical styles, which provides a more interesting and in-depth learning experience for the students.

In addition to developing students' technical skills, this approach broadens their musical horizons. Through creative exploration, students not only learn basic drumming techniques, but also understand how different musical elements can be combined to create more original and expressive works. This process emphasises the importance of creativity in music education, where students are given the freedom to interpret and create music in their own way, increasing their confidence and improvisational skills.

### 3.2 Impact of the Creative Process: Rhythmic on the Drums

Creative processes in learning rhythm on the drums focus on involving students in exploring and developing their ability to identify and play different types of beats. Starting with simple beats, students are gradually invited to build rhythmic complexity by integrating more advanced drum techniques, such as double kick and ghost note. In this context, students not only learn the basics of rhythm but are also invited to experiment with rhythmic variations through more daring fill-in techniques. This approach is in line with the theory of 'constructivism' put forward by Piaget and Vygotsky, which emphasises that knowledge is built through direct experience and social interaction (Tohari & Rahman, 2024; Utami, 2016). This exploration process enriched their understanding of musical structure and facilitated the development of creative skills in playing musical instruments. In addition, the principle of 'active learning' applied in this approach requires students to be actively involved in learning, enabling them to internalise rhythmic

concepts through direct experience, experimentation and reflection. One important aspect of this process is the use of songs and minus ones, which give students the opportunity to express their creativity in a broader musical context, allowing them to play with a personal style while maintaining the appropriate rhythm, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Student Drumming Observation Summary

Aspect evaluated	Before the creative approach	After the creative approach	Occurring changes
Timing	Difficulty maintaining a consistent tempo	Ability to keep a steady tempo	Improved tempo accuracy and stability
Rhythm Precision	Simple but sometimes off-beat	Complex and precise rhythm with ghost notes as fill-in	More accurate complex rhythms
Rhythm Creativity	Limited to the taught rhythm pattern	Exploring rhythm with improvisations and fill-in	Greater rhythmic creativity
Rhythmic Consistency	Unsteady in fast or complex rhythms	Steadier rhythm at fast, complex tempo	More consistent in fast rhythms

Due to this creative approach, students experience significant changes in their rhythmic skills. In terms of timing, they become more precise in playing the beat at a consistent tempo, which may have been difficult to achieve before. Students also show improvement in rhythmic precision, with the ability to play more rhythmic variations and more complex patterns. Mastery of techniques such as ghost notes, which are introduced gradually, further enriches their skills in expressing more refined and dynamic rhythms. This process supports the 'learning by doing' theory applied in an active learning approach, where students' rhythmic skills develop through repetitive practice and direct experience (Crowe & Woolley, 2022; Ismail et al., 2021; Kong, 2021). This change is reflected in their ability to play the drums with greater precision and consistency, enabling them to take on more difficult and varied rhythmic challenges. As a result, students not only master basic techniques, but also develop deeper creative abilities in playing rhythms and beats with richer and more complex expressions.

### 3.3 Overcoming Barriers: Challenges in Implementing Creative Drum Pedagogy

The implementation of a creative approach to drumming for elementary students faces a number of challenges, both for teachers and students. One of the main challenges faced by teachers is the limited resources and facilities available to support learning. In many private music education institutions, there is sometimes an insufficient supply of musical instruments or limited practice time for students. In addition, there is also resistance from some students who are more accustomed to traditional methods that are more structured and measurable. The use of a creative approach, such as giving freedom to improvise or explore various techniques, is sometimes difficult for students who do not fully understand the concept. Despite its benefits, applying a creative drum pedagogy in primary education presents several challenges. One primary issue involves infrastructural constraints, limited access to instruments or inadequate practice time can hinder creative implementation. Furthermore, students accustomed to traditional instruction may resist open-ended tasks, finding them ambiguous or intimidating.

To mitigate this, educators must scaffold learning effectively. Clear, incremental instructions such as: *"Try using the double kick here,"* or *"Now let's open and close the hi-hat simultaneously,"* help students navigate unfamiliar techniques with greater clarity. Equally important are



psychological factors. Younger learners may fear making mistakes or performing incorrectly. One participant stated: *"I didn't want to try new beats because I didn't know if they were right."* This hesitancy indicates the need for a psychologically safe environment. Teachers can reduce anxiety by slowing down the tempo, using positive reinforcement, and normalizing mistakes as part of the learning journey. Another challenge comes from the psychological or motivational obstacles that students often experience in the process of learning to play the drums. Some students are afraid of making mistakes or feel unsure of their abilities. This uncertainty causes them to often pause to make sure their playing is correct. In fact, some students are reluctant to try certain technical variations for fear of failure or fear of not being able to follow the rhythm taught. This condition is very common in elementary students, where they are still in the stage of exploring and developing basic skills. To overcome this problem, it is very important for teachers to create a supportive and confident environment. One strategy that can be applied is to provide constructive positive feedback and encouragement for students to keep trying even if they make mistakes. Teachers can also introduce relaxation techniques to help students overcome anxiety, such as getting them used to playing at a slower pace before moving on to a faster tempo, so that students feel more comfortable and confident.

The solution that is very effective in overcoming this challenge is to implement gradual learning tailored to the students' abilities. Drum instruction can begin by introducing basic rhythm patterns before moving on to more complex variations ([Burger & Wöllner, 2023](#); [Latreille & Azar, 2023](#); [Phillips-Silver et al., 2024](#)). This process allows students to build their skills systematically without feeling overwhelmed by technical challenges that are difficult to deal with at first. In addition, teachers can also introduce creative drumming concepts through fun and unstructured games, which invite students' curiosity and motivation to continue learning and developing. In this way, the creative approach to learning the drums is better accepted by students, and they will feel more motivated to continue their learning without being burdened by the worry of mistakes or failure. With a more in-depth and gradual approach, it is hoped that students will enjoy the process of learning to play the drums more, increase their confidence, and be better able to overcome obstacles ([Hadjikou, 2022](#); [Papageorgi & Economidou, 2023](#); [Stavrou & Papageorgi, 2021](#)).

### 3.4 Implications for Practice: Creative Drum Pedagogy for Elementary Students

Adopting creative drumming pedagogy in the primary school music curriculum is highly relevant as it provides a fun and meaningful experience for students. With an approach that prioritizes rhythm exploration and improvisation, drumming instruction focuses not only on basic technique, but also on developing students' creativity and self-expression. This allows students to more easily understand musical concepts, such as rhythm, tempo, and pattern, which are the basis for understanding music as a whole. The benefits of applying this creative approach also include increased interest in learning music, as students feel more engaged and motivated in the learning process.

To integrate this creative approach into music classes, educators need to pay attention to several important recommendations. First, music teachers must create a learning environment that supports exploration and experimentation, allowing students to feel free to create with drums without pressure. In addition, it is important for educators to design materials that combine musical elements relevant to the students' world, such as the musical genres they know and like ([Senn, 2023](#)). Teachers also need to facilitate collaboration between students in group

activities, which not only enriches their musical experience, but also improves communication and teamwork skills.

In addition, creative drumming can provide significant potential for the development of social, cognitive, and emotional skills for students (Sembiring, Narawati, et al., 2025; Sembiring, Sitanggang, et al., 2025). Socially, students learn to work in groups, share ideas, and collaborate to create music together. On the cognitive side, creative drumming sharpens critical thinking and problem-solving skills, especially when it comes to improvisation and developing musical ideas. Emotionally, musical activities, including drumming, provide space for students to express themselves, manage their feelings, and feel a sense of accomplishment when they successfully create something new (Rahmi & Maemonah, 2023).

Long-term impact of creative drumming education on musical intelligence and broader learning in primary school students is significant. An early introduction to rhythm and drumming techniques can form a strong foundation for the development of student's musical intelligence, which will later influence their ability to understand and appreciate music more deeply. In addition, the skills acquired through creative drumming, such as concentration, discipline, and creativity, can be applied to various aspects of students' academic and social lives. Thus, creative drumming education not only improves musical skills, but also supports the development of broader life skills.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that a creative, interactive drumming approach significantly enhances rhythmic precision, creativity, and motor coordination in elementary students, while also supporting their emotional and cognitive development. These findings contribute to both theoretical perspectives and practical strategies in primary music education, highlighting the value of integrating play and improvisation into rhythm instruction. Despite its promising results, the study is limited by a short implementation period and a small, context-specific sample. Future research should investigate long-term effects across diverse age groups and settings, compare this approach with traditional methods, and explore its integration with other musical elements such as melody and harmony.

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