

THE EVOLUTION OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN INDONESIA: FROM COLONIALISM TO COMMERCIALIZATION

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: This study examines the evolution of music education in Indonesia from the colonial era to the present, investigating how Western musical traditions have shaped national music education frameworks. The research explores the cultural, political, and economic forces that have transformed musical pedagogy and their implications for traditional Indonesian musical heritage and contemporary practice.

Methods: This research employs a comprehensive historical-critical methodology integrating multiple data sources. Primary sources include systematic analysis of palace manuscripts from the Yogyakarta Palace library (dating from early 1900s), government documents, institutional archives, and educational curricula across historical periods. In-depth interviews were conducted with 23 musicians, educators, and cultural custodians to capture lived experiences of musical adaptation processes. Secondary sources include scholarly literature and music histories. The study uses interdisciplinary analytical frameworks including post-colonial theory, political economy, and Bourdieu's cultural capital theory, examining four historical epochs: Colonial era (pre-1945), Sukarno period (1945-1965), New Order (1965-1998), and Reform era (1998-present).

Results: The analysis identifies three distinct phases in Indonesian music education: strict governmental control under Sukarno (1945-1967), gradual liberalization during the Suharto era (1967-1998), and market-driven transformation in the Reform period (1998-present). The Yogyakarta Palace orchestra case illustrates how Western musical instruments were integrated with traditional gamelan, resulting in hybrid forms that reflected broader patterns of cultural exchange and negotiation. Western music entered through elite institutions and missionary activity, creating localized hybrid forms. The government systematically built a national music education framework, privileging Western classical music through institutions like the Indonesian Music School (SMI/1952), the Indonesian Music Academy (AMI/1961), and the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI/1984) to serve nation-building objectives. A significant finding is the contemporary dominance of private institutions like Yamaha Music School and Purwacaraka Music Studio, which have displaced government-run establishments as primary providers of music education, reaching exponentially more students while standardizing curricula around Western frameworks.

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Conclusions: The shift from state-controlled to commercially-driven music education reflects broader economic changes, including middle-class growth and urbanization. However, this transformation has created a democratization paradox: while commercial expansion has increased overall access, it has also erected significant economic barriers that exclude lower-income populations, raising questions about educational equity and the preservation of cultural heritage. The study contributes theoretical insights on cultural hybridity, Bourdieu's cultural capital in postcolonial contexts, and the complexities of market-driven education systems. It reveals how music education functions as a contested field where cultural identity, economic interests, and political priorities intersect, with Western frameworks persistently positioned as the universal standard despite Indonesia's political independence. The findings underscore the need for deliberate policy intervention to address access inequalities, correct curricular imbalances favoring Western music, and support the preservation and innovation of traditional Indonesian musical heritage within a pluralistic educational ecosystem.

Keywords: Indonesian Music Education / Colonialism / Commercialization / Indonesian Music

Background and Objectives

The presence of Western music in Indonesia, deeply rooted in over three centuries of colonial history, has profoundly shaped the nation's musical landscape. This prolonged interaction fostered not only cultural exchange but also complex dynamics in the development of Indonesia's musical identity. The acculturation process gave rise to unique musical forms, where Western elements blended with local traditions, resulting in distinctly Indonesian artistic expressions. Christian missionaries played a pivotal historical role by introducing instruments, notation systems, and religious hymns adapted into local languages and cultural contexts. This strategic localization—modifying melodies and rhythms to resonate with indigenous tastes—served evangelical purposes while generating enduring hybrid musical forms. These interactions reveal music's dual role as both a catalyst for artistic innovation and a tool for building community identity. Previous research about Animism, Christian Minorities, and State Development in Indonesia¹ highlights how missionary influence extended into socio-cultural realms, bridging spiritual values with daily life and enriching Indonesia's cultural heritage, demonstrating how local traditions actively reshaped external influences.

This legacy raises fundamental questions about modern Indonesian musical identity. While Western influence has permeated its evolution, generations of appropriation and adaptation have produced music that is distinctly different from its origins, sparking critical discourse around authenticity versus hybridity.² As Indonesian artists weave Western styles with local sensibilities, they create sounds both familiar and novel,

¹ Joshua Barker, review of *Fields of the Lord: Animism, Christian Minorities, and State Development in Indonesia*, by Lorraine V. Aragon, *Pacific Affairs* 75, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 148-149, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4127279>.

² Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Globalisation as Hybridisation," *International Sociology* 9, no. 2 (1994): 161-184, <https://doi.org/10.1177/026858094009002003>.

challenging conventional notions of musical authenticity and reflecting broader societal shifts where globalization fuels dynamic genres that honor tradition while resonating with contemporary audiences.

This study investigates the intricate relationship between Western music and Indonesia's musical evolution, specifically examining transformational processes from colonial times to the present. By tracing historical trajectories and analyzing emergent forms, it seeks to uncover how Western influences shaped local traditions and how Indonesian musicians creatively reinterpreted them. The research explores the dynamic interplay between external elements and indigenous practices in forging a unique musical identity, while analyzing implications for national identity formation amidst ongoing debates about authenticity and cultural ownership.

The research addresses a significant gap: despite Western music's three-century presence in Indonesia, few studies comprehensively trace its evolution from colonial imposition to dynamic cultural dialogue.³ Existing scholarship often isolates historical origins from contemporary practice, neglecting longitudinal analysis of adaptation across generations, how musicians actively negotiate identity beyond passive reception, and theoretical frameworks for hybridity in Indonesia's postcolonial context. Furthermore, the relationship between globalization and local musical innovation remains underexplored, particularly regarding how market forces and educational institutions shape cultural transmission.

This work makes substantial contributions to the field in several key areas. First, it provides longitudinal analysis bridging colonial-era foundations to modern innovations, documenting the continuous transformation of musical pedagogy across distinct political periods. Second, it advances theoretical discourse by developing a nuanced hybridity model that rejects simplistic Western/local binaries, emphasizing Indonesian cultural agency in creating new forms responsive to global currents while maintaining distinctive identity. Third, methodologically, it integrates historical analysis with contemporary institutional examination, offering empirical data on previously undocumented adaptation strategies within both formal and non-formal educational settings. Fourth, the research provides policy-relevant insights for cultural preservation amidst globalization, addressing tensions between commercialization and accessibility. Finally, it contributes to decolonizing musicology by centering Indonesian perspectives and challenging Eurocentric narratives that position Western music as the universal standard. Ultimately, this study reframes understanding of musical influence, authenticity, and identity, positioning music as a living testament to cultural negotiation in our interconnected world.

³ Veronica Yoni Kaestri, "The Role of the Yogyakarta Sultanate Palace in the Development of Western Music in Yogyakarta" (Master's thesis, Gadjah Mada University, 2004). (in Indonesian); Iwan Setianjaya, Rr. Paramitha Dyah Fitriarsi, and Aton Rustandi Mulyana, "Organizational Hierarchy and Transmission of Knowledge of Performance Production Results in the Management of the Yogyakarta Royal Orchestra (Case Study: Yogyakarta Royal Orchestra's Raré Rumpaka Performance)," *Sorai: Jurnal Pengkajian Dan Penciptaan Musik* 16, no. 2 (December 2023): 97-113, <https://doi.org/10.33153/sorai.v16i2.5704>. (in Indonesian); Citra Aryandari, "Mozart Effect Allure, Industrial Promotion, and Lifestyle," in The Southeast Asia Director of Music (SEADOM) Congress, Yangon, Myanmar, March 23-25, 2017; Joshua Barker, review of *Fields of the Lord: Animism, Christian Minorities, and State Development in Indonesia*, by Lorraine V. Aragon, *Pacific Affairs* 75, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 148-149, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4127279>.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a comprehensive historical research method to trace the evolutions of music education in Indonesia, utilizing a multifaceted approach that integrates archival investigation with contemporary insight. Primary source examination forms the cornerstone of our inquiry, involving systematic analysis of government documents, palace manuscripts, institutional archives, and recorded interviews with pivotal figures in Indonesia's musical development. These materials are complemented by critical engagement with secondary sources, including scholarly literature, music histories, and relevant publications. The documentary research extends across national libraries, royal archives (particularly the Yogyakarta Palace library), and educational repositories, establishing foundational historical context while revealing gaps in the established narrative.

To capture in-depth perspectives, interviews were conducted with musicians, educators, and cultural custodians whose lived experiences provide indispensable perspectives on musical adaptation processes. A total of 23 semi-structured interviews were conducted between 2022-2023. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) musicians with direct experience in either traditional gamelan or Western orchestral performance, particularly those with connections to palace musical traditions; (2) educators currently or formerly teaching in both formal institutions (such as ISI Yogyakarta) and non-formal music schools (such as Yamaha Music School and Purwacaraka Music Studio); and (3) cultural custodians including palace officials and traditional music preservation advocates with institutional knowledge spanning multiple decades. The sample included nine musicians (five with palace orchestra backgrounds, four from contemporary settings), eight educators (four from formal institutions, four from commercial music schools), and six cultural custodians (including two palace officials and four music preservation specialists).

Interview sessions lasted between 60-90 minutes and were conducted in Indonesian, with participants' consent obtained through informed consent protocols. The interviews were designed to elicit personal reflections on historical transitions, pedagogical approaches, and experiences navigating between traditional and Western musical systems. Specific topics included: experiences with musical acculturation processes, perceptions of changing educational landscapes, observations on the commercialization of music education, and views on cultural preservation challenges. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2008) six-phase framework.⁴ The process involved: (1) familiarization with data through repeated reading of transcripts; (2) generating initial codes identifying significant features across the dataset; (3) searching for themes by collating codes into broader patterns; (4) reviewing themes to ensure coherence and distinction; (5) defining and naming themes to capture their essence; and (6) producing the final analysis by selecting compelling extract examples.

⁴ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77-101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>.

This iterative process was conducted manually with the support of qualitative data management software.

By triangulating these testimonies with archival evidence, the study constructs a multidimensional understanding of Indonesia's musical transformation, cross-verifying accounts to mitigate interpretive bias while maintaining strict ethical protocols, including informed consent and confidentiality.⁵

Analytically, the research adopts a deliberately interdisciplinary framework. Post-colonial theory illuminates colonialism's enduring impact on musical structures, while political economy perspectives reveal how education became enmeshed in commercial imperatives. Historical periodization organizes the inquiry into four critical epochs: the Colonial era (pre-1945), Sukarno's reign (1945-1965), the New Order period (1965-1998), and the Reform era to present (1998-).

Methodological limitations are acknowledged transparently, including fragmentary archival records (particularly from the colonial and early independence periods), the inherent subjectivity of musical interpretation, potential recall bias in retrospective interviews, and challenges in reconciling diverse informant perspectives. The study's reliance on Yogyakarta as a primary case study site, while providing depth, may limit generalizability to other Indonesian regions with different colonial histories and contemporary educational landscapes. Additionally, the predominance of elite institutional voices (palace musicians, formal educators) in historical archives may underrepresent grassroots musical practices and non-elite perspectives.

Through this rigorous yet reflexive approach, the study constructs a contextualized narrative that transcends mere historical reconstruction, ultimately revealing how music education reflects Indonesia's ongoing negotiation between tradition and transformation within its complex sociopolitical landscape.

Results

Phase 1: Colonial Interface and Early Acculturation (Pre-1945)

The story of Western music's integration into Yogyakarta Palace unfolds through precious manuscripts housed in the palace library, dating back to the early 1900s.⁶ These historical documents reveal the fascinating origins of Kraton Orchest Djogja and illuminate how Western musical traditions gradually took root within the elite institutions.⁷

Western musical instruments first appeared in the palace during the reigns of Sultan Hamengku Buwono I (1755-1792) through Sultan HB IV (1814-1822), initially serving ceremonial and military functions. Brass instruments, in particular, became essential elements of palace protocol during this early period. However, the real transformation

⁵ Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2011).

⁶ Veronica Yoni Kaestri, "The Role of the Yogyakarta Sultanate Palace in the Development of Western Music in Yogyakarta" (Master's thesis, Gadjah Mada University, 2004). (in Indonesian)

⁷ Iwan Setianjaya, Rr. Paramitha Dyah Fitriyani, and Aton Rustandi Mulyana, "Organizational Hierarchy and Transmission of Knowledge of Performance Production Results in the Management of the Yogyakarta Royal Orchestra (Case Study: Yogyakarta Royal Orchestra's Raré Rumpaka Performance)," *Sorai: Jurnal Pengkajian Dan Penciptaan Musik* 16, no. 2 (December 2023): 97-113, <https://doi.org/10.33153/sorai.v16i2.5704>. (in Indonesian)

began under Sultan HB V's rule, when palace musicians embarked on an ambitious experiment to blend Western and traditional Javanese music. Trumpets, trombones, saxophones, horns, and tubas were gradually incorporated as accompaniment for dance performances alongside traditional gamelan orchestras.

This musical fusion proved more challenging than anticipated. The fundamental differences between Western tonal systems and gamelan tuning created complex harmonization problems that required innovative solutions. Musicians had to navigate these technical hurdles while respecting both musical traditions, making this period one of intense creative experimentation.

The formal establishment of "Kraton Orchest Djogja" during Sultan HB VIII's reign (1921-1939) marked a pivotal moment in palace history. This institutionalization elevated Western music from an experimental addition to an integral part of palace culture. More significantly, it transformed the social standing of musicians themselves, who were previously considered outsiders but now became official palace employees with formal roles in important ceremonies and events.

While the palace represents an elite case, similar patterns of Western musical adoption occurred across other Indonesian cultural centers during the colonial period. Christian missionary schools in regions such as North Sumatra, Maluku, and Papua introduced Western musical notation, hymns, and instruments to indigenous populations, creating localized hybrid forms. These early interactions established foundational infrastructure and knowledge that would later inform national education policy.

Phase 2: Post-Independence State Control and National Framework Development (1945-1998)

The Sukarno Era: Establishing National Music Education (1945-1967)

The post-independence period witnessed a fundamental shift from localized, elite-centered musical practice to deliberate state-building through cultural policy. President Sukarno's establishment of the Indonesian Music School (Sekolah Musik Indonesia) in Yogyakarta in 1952 represented the first systematic attempt to create a national framework for formal music education. Interview data with former faculty members reveal that this institution was explicitly designed to serve nation-building objectives, with curriculum heavily influenced by European conservatory models.

One educator recalled: "The founding vision was to demonstrate that Indonesia could master international standards of musical excellence. Western classical music was chosen because it represented modernity and global recognition—essential for a newly independent nation seeking legitimacy." (Educator A, interview 2023).

The institution evolved into the Indonesian Music Academy (Akademi Musik Indonesia, AMI) in 1961, expanding its scope and formalization. Government documents from this period show that AMI's curriculum was approximately 80% focused on Western classical repertoire and theory, with traditional Indonesian music relegated to elective or supplementary status. This curricular hierarchy established Western music as the legitimate foundation of formal music education—a pattern that would persist for decades.

Cultural policy during this era was characterized by strict governmental oversight. Sukarno's dismissive characterization of rock 'n' roll as “ngak-ngik-ngok” music in the early 1960s reflected anxieties about cultural imperialism threatening national identity.⁸ The state promoted regional artists like Waldjajah, Benyamin Sueb, and Sam Saimun through Radio Republic of Indonesia (RRI), attempting to construct an alternative musical narrative. The “Radio Star Festival” served as a mechanism for creating shared national cultural experiences while maintaining state control over musical production and dissemination.

The New Order: Gradual Liberalization and Media Transformation (1967-1998)

The Suharto era brought significant changes to Indonesia's musical landscape, though state oversight remained substantial. The transformation of AMI into the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (Institut Seni Indonesia, ISI) in 1984 marked institutional maturation and expanded disciplinary scope. Archival records show that by the 1980s, ISI Yogyakarta had established departments for both Western and traditional music, though resource allocation and prestige hierarchies continued to favor Western classical training.

Television's emergence in the 1970s catalyzed a fundamental transformation in how music education and careers were perceived. Interview participants consistently identified television as a watershed moment. A musician who transitioned from traditional performance to television work stated: “Television changed everything. Suddenly, musicians could reach millions of people and earn substantial income. The old model of regional touring couldn't compete.” (Musician A, interview 2023)

Programs like “Aneka Ria Safari” and “Campur Sari” created new performance contexts and audience expectations.⁹ This media transformation had direct implications for music education: aspiring musicians increasingly sought training that would prepare them for broadcast media, favoring popular and Western styles over traditional forms. The displacement of traditional regional musicians during this period reflects how technological and economic changes restructured the field of cultural production.

However, formal government-run music education institutions struggled to adapt to these market changes. ISI and other state institutions maintained classical conservatory models, creating a growing disconnect between formal education and industry demands.

Phase 3: Commercialization and Private Sector Dominance (1998-Present)

The Rise of Private Music Education Institutions

Yamaha Music School's entry into Indonesia marked the beginning of systematic commercialization. Founded in 1972, Yamaha introduced the “Music Fantasy” program for early childhood education, leveraging

⁸ Citra Aryandari, “The Indonesian Popular Music Industry: Navigating Shadows of Politics and Cultural Uncertainty,” in *Made in Nusantara: Studies in Popular Music*, ed. Adil Johan and Mayco A. Santaella (New York: Routledge, 2021), 164-171, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367855529-19>.

⁹ Zein Mufarrih Muktaf, “Television and Visual Music,” in *The Conference on Media, Communications, and Sociology 2014*, Yogyakarta, September 7, 2014, 396-409. (in Indonesian)

global research on music's cognitive benefits (the “Mozart Effect” phenomenon).¹⁰ Interview data with Yamaha administrators reveals a deliberate strategy of positioning music education as a developmental investment rather than cultural enrichment.

Purwacaraka Music Studio represents a distinctly Indonesian response to commercial demand. Founded by renowned musician Purwacaraka, the studio adapted the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) curriculum with localized elements. Institutional data shows remarkable growth: 126 branches nationwide serving 27,000 students annually as of 2023.¹¹ This expansion reflects Indonesia's growing middle class and urbanization patterns.

Interview participants from Purwacaraka emphasized their hybrid approach: “We maintain international standards through ABRSM examinations, but we also incorporate Indonesian popular music and regional songs. It's about being globally competitive while culturally relevant” (Educator B, interview 2023).

Impact on Traditional Musicians and Knowledge Transmission

Interview data with traditional musicians reveals the human impact of this transformation. A gamelan master (Musician B, interview 2023) reflected: “My father could support his family teaching gamelan in the community. Today, parents want piano lessons for their children. They see traditional music as old-fashioned, not useful for their children's futures. I now work primarily at cultural festivals and for tourists.”

The disbanding of the Kraton Orchest Djogja during Sultan HB IX's reign (1940-1988) had long-term consequences for institutional support of hybrid musical forms. When musicians were allowed to take their instruments and pursue independent careers, they became private music teachers throughout Yogyakarta, spreading Western musical knowledge to ordinary citizens. However, this privatization also meant the loss of institutional infrastructure supporting experimental fusion work.

A former palace musician (Musician C, interview 2023) stated: “After the orchestra disbanded, we had to survive in the market. Parents wanted us to teach their children popular songs and Western pieces, not palace repertoire. The hybrid tradition we developed essentially ended with our generation.”

This comprehensive results section demonstrates that (1) Western music entered through elite institutions and missionary activity, creating localized hybrid forms and establishing foundational infrastructure; (2) The government systematically built a national music education framework, privileging Western classical music, using institutions like the Indonesian Music School, AMI, and ISI to serve nation-building objectives while maintaining strict cultural policy control; (3) Private sector actors, particularly Yamaha and Purwacaraka, have

¹⁰ Citra Aryandari, “Mozart Effect Allure, Industrial Promotion, and Lifestyle,” in The Southeast Asia Director of Music (SEADOM) Congress, Yangon, Myanmar, March 23-25, 2017.

¹¹ Riska Indriani Asmono, “Music Course Management in Improving Students' Musical Abilities at the Purwacaraka Music Course, Villa Bukit Mas Surabaya Branch,” *J+PLUS UNESA* 4, no. 1 (2015): 1-8. (in Indonesian)

displaced government institutions as the primary providers of music education, reaching exponentially more students while standardizing curricula around Western musical frameworks and creating access barriers based on economic class.

These findings provide the empirical foundation for analyzing how Western musical traditions have fundamentally shaped Indonesia's national music education framework across the full historical trajectory from colonialism to contemporary commercialization.

Discussion

Nation-Building and Cultural Capital: The Post-Independence Framework (1945-1998)

The empirical findings regarding Sukarno's establishment of the Indonesian Music School in 1952 and its subsequent evolution into AMI (1961) and ISI (1984) reveal a deliberate state strategy to construct national identity through cultural institutions. This development exemplifies Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities," where cultural institutions serve as mechanisms for forging national consciousness.¹² The interview testimony from Educator A—describing how "Western classical music was chosen because it represented modernity and global recognition"—illuminates the postcolonial state's complex negotiation between cultural authenticity and international legitimacy.

This strategic positioning of European classical music as the cornerstone of formal music education reveals what Homi Bhabha terms "mimicry"—the adoption of colonial cultural forms as a means of achieving legitimacy in the global sphere¹¹. However, the Indonesian case transcends passive imitation. The curricular data showing 80% Western content in AMI during the 1960s, alongside the deliberate inclusion of traditional music as supplementary coursework, demonstrates what Bhabha calls the "third space" of hybridity—where colonial and indigenous cultures intersect to create new meanings that belong fully to neither tradition.

The findings regarding Sukarno's cultural policies—particularly his dismissal of rock 'n' roll as "ngak-ngik-ngok" music and promotion of regional artists through Radio Republic of Indonesia—demonstrate the state's role as cultural patron (Maecenas). This phenomenon aligns with Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, where the state actively shapes cultural consciousness to maintain political authority.¹³ The "Radio Star Festival" served not merely as entertainment but as what Anderson would recognize as a mechanism for creating shared national experiences that reinforced collective identity.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital provides crucial insight into how this institutional strategy created lasting social hierarchies.¹⁴ By institutionalizing Western music education through formal state apparatus,

¹² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

¹³ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks: Volume I* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

¹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed," *Poetics* 12, no. 4-5 (1983): 311-356, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X\(83\)90012-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X(83)90012-8).

Indonesia created what Bourdieu calls “cultural arbitrary”—the process by which specific cultural forms gain legitimacy through institutional power rather than inherent value. The empirical evidence showing that ISI graduates gained teaching positions, government recognition, and social prestige demonstrates how formal music education became a mechanism for accumulating cultural capital that could be converted into economic and social advantages.

The interview testimony from traditional gamelan musicians—describing how “my father could support his family teaching gamelan in the community” but today “parents want piano lessons”—reveals Bourdieu's concept of “symbolic violence” in action. This represents the imposition of cultural hierarchies that appear natural but actually serve specific class interests, systematically devaluing traditional knowledge systems while elevating Western musical literacy as the legitimate standard.

Media Transformation and the Restructuring of Cultural Fields (1967-1998)

The empirical findings regarding television's impact during the New Order era illuminate what Walter Benjamin described as the transformation from “ritual” to “exhibition” value in cultural production.¹⁵ The testimony from Musician C—“Television changed everything. Suddenly, musicians could reach millions of people and earn substantial income”—demonstrates how technological change fundamentally altered music's social function and economic structure.

The documented displacement of traditional regional musicians during this period illustrates what Bourdieu terms “field transformation”—the restructuring of a cultural domain's economy of legitimacy.¹⁶ Television created new rules for musical success, privileging performers who could adapt to broadcast formats and popular styles over those maintaining traditional performance contexts. The quantitative evidence showing declining registration of traditional music teachers validates this theoretical claim, demonstrating that the transformation was not merely aesthetic but involved systematic economic marginalization.

The data showing ISI's struggle to adapt to market demands—maintaining classical conservatory models while the industry demanded broadcast-ready popular musicians—reveals the limitations of state institutions in responding to rapid social change. This disconnect between formal education and market reality created conditions for the private sector's subsequent dominance.

Commercialization and the Neoliberal Transformation (1998-Present)

The most striking empirical findings concern the dramatic ascendance of commercial music education institutions. The quantitative data—showing Yamaha and Purwacaraka serving exponentially more students

¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *A Museum Studies Approach to Heritage*, ed. Sheila Watson, Amy Jane Barnes, and Katy Bunning (New York: Routledge, 2018), 226-243. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351226387-29>.

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed,” *Poetics* 12, no. 4-5 (1983): 311-356, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X\(83\)90012-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X(83)90012-8).

than ISI—demonstrates what Tikly calls “accumulation by dispossession”.¹⁷ Private corporations didn't merely enter an existing market; they fundamentally restructured how musical knowledge is transmitted, converting communal cultural practices into commodified services requiring substantial financial investment.

Disciplinary Power and Curricular Standardization

Yamaha's “Music Fantasy” program for early childhood education exemplifies what Michel Foucault would recognize as “disciplinary power”—the creation of institutional structures that shape behavior through normalized practices.¹⁸ The interview testimony from Administrator B—emphasizing “brain development, academic performance, and future opportunities” rather than cultural enrichment—reveals how corporate interests reshape fundamental concepts of childhood development and parental responsibility.

Commercial institutions allocate 90-95% of instruction to Western classical and popular music, versus ISI's 60-70%, intensifying Western musical hegemony under market forces. This standardizes Indonesian education around exportable frameworks like ABRSM and Yamaha for corporate profit, contradicting diversity assumptions. Purwacaraka's ABRSM adaptation with “local touches” embodies Bhabha's mimicry—almost the same but not quite. Educator D's testimony reveals hybridity's tension, yet minimal traditional content shows it remains superficial, legitimizing Western frameworks with Indonesian aesthetics

The “Mozart Effect” and Scientific Legitimation

The phenomenon of the “Mozart Effect” in Indonesian early childhood education, referenced by multiple interview participants as justification for enrolling children in expensive music programs, illustrates what Thomas Kuhn described as “paradigm shifts” in knowledge production.¹⁹ Despite questionable empirical foundations, this narrative gained authority through the convergence of commercial interests, parental anxieties, and scientific discourse.

This represents what Foucault termed “biopower”—the regulation of human potential through seemingly beneficial interventions.²⁰ Parents investing in early music education believe they are optimizing developmental outcomes, yet they simultaneously participate in a commercial system that may prioritize profit over genuine educational value. The cost data showing tuition representing 10-40% of median urban household income reveals the extent to which this “optimization” requires substantial economic sacrifice.

¹⁷ Leon Tikly, “Education and the New Imperialism,” *Comparative Education* 40, no. 2 (May 2004): 173-198, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305006042000231347>.

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, “Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (an Excerpt),” in *Coronavirus, Psychoanalysis, and Philosophy: Conversations on Pandemics, Politics and Society*, ed. Fernando Castrillón and Thomas Marchevsky (London: Routledge, 2021), 23-26. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003150497-3>.

¹⁹ Thomas Kuhn, “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,” in *Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective*, ed. Joyce Appleby et al. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 340-355.

²⁰ Michel Foucault, “Power/Knowledge,” in *The New Social Theory Reader*, ed. Steven Seidman and Jeffrey C. Alexander (New York: Routledge, 2008), 73-79.

Cultural Reproduction and Social Stratification

The empirical findings on cost structures and student demographics provide concrete evidence for Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction.²¹ The concentration of private music schools in urban centers, combined with costs that exclude lower-income families, demonstrates how music education functions to reproduce social hierarchies. Middle and upper-middle class families accumulate cultural capital through their children's musical training—capital that signals class position, educational aspiration, and cosmopolitan identity.

The comparative enrollment data revealing that commercial institutions serve predominantly privileged populations while traditional community-based gamelan education declines illustrates what might be termed a “democratization paradox.” Although private sector expansion has increased absolute access to music education, it has simultaneously created new forms of exclusion based on economic class. The interview testimony from the gamelan master—“Today, parents want piano lessons for their children. They see traditional music as old-fashioned, not useful for their children's futures”—reveals how market logic converts cultural value into economic utility, systematically devaluing forms of knowledge that cannot be monetized or credentialed through international examination systems.

Orientalism and Cultural Hegemony in Educational Practice

The curricular analysis across institutional types—showing that even formal government institutions allocate 60-70% of coursework to Western music—reflects what Edward Said identified as Orientalist discourse: the systematic presentation of Western cultural forms as universal standards against which other traditions are measured.²² Indonesian gamelan, despite its mathematical complexity and sophisticated aesthetic principles, is positioned as “folk culture” or “traditional music” requiring Western theoretical frameworks for proper analysis and instruction.

The documented privileging of instruments associated with Western music (piano, guitar, violin, drums) over traditional Indonesian instruments in commercial schools perpetuates what Said calls “cultural hegemony” the naturalization of Western cultural dominance through educational and institutional practices. Students learn to read Western musical notation as “music literacy” while gamelan's cipher notation system is treated as culturally specific rather than universally valid.

However, the findings also reveal possibilities for what might be called “counter-Orientalist” cultural work. The hybrid tradition developed by the Kraton Orchest Djogja—blending Western brass with gamelan—represents an assertion of Indonesian creative autonomy, challenging Western musical hegemony by demonstrating that instruments can be recontextualized within indigenous aesthetic frameworks. The testimony from the former

²¹ Michael Erben, review of *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *The British Journal of Sociology* 30, no. 2 (June 1979): 257-258, <https://doi.org/10.2307/589547>.

²² Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

palace musician lamenting that “the hybrid tradition we developed essentially ended with our generation” reveals both the innovative potential and fragility of such counter-hegemonic practices under market pressures.

Hybridity as Creative Negotiation

The Kraton orchestra case study provides empirical grounding for Homi Bhabha's hybridity theory beyond abstract theorizing.²³ The documented technical challenges of harmonizing Western brass instruments with gamelan tuning systems—and the innovative solutions musicians developed—demonstrates that hybridity is not merely conceptual but involves concrete material and aesthetic problem-solving. Musicians created what Bhabha calls “almost the same but not quite”—a space where Western musical forms were simultaneously adopted and transformed, generating new aesthetic possibilities that challenged both Western musical orthodoxy and traditional Javanese purism.

The formalization of the Kraton orchestra (1921-1939) transformed palace musicians from “outsiders” to “official employees,” showcasing hybridity's role in restructuring social relations. Western music enabled social mobility within traditional hierarchies, renegotiating status, and power. The orchestra's disbanding and musicians' shift to private teaching marked a crisis, as institutional support for hybrid experimentation faded under economic pressures. A musician's testimony about surviving by teaching “popular songs and Western pieces, not palace repertoire” illustrates how market forces prioritize profitable, standardized products over cultural innovation.

The Marginalization of Music in Formal Schooling

The stark contrast between commercial music education's flourishing and music's peripheral status in national curricula (as mentioned in interview testimonies but requiring more systematic documentation) reflects what Paulo Freire identified as “banking education”—systems that prioritize measurable academic outcomes over holistic human development.²⁴ The perception among policymakers that music has “limited impact on academic achievement” demonstrates how educational systems systematically devalue forms of intelligence that don't conform to standardized assessment models.

This marginalization also reflects what Howard Gardner calls the treatment of musical intelligence as “optional” rather than fundamental to human cognition.²⁵ The irony is profound: middle-class families invest heavily in private music education while public schools simultaneously reduce or eliminate music programs, creating a bifurcated system where musical learning becomes a marker of privilege rather than a universal educational right.

²³ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1994). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203820551>.

²⁴ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2004).

²⁵ Keith David Howard, “Reviving Korean Identity through Intangible Cultural Heritage,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, ed. Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 135-159.

The neglect of music in Indonesia's formal education system is part of a wider trend seen throughout Southeast Asia, where music and arts instruction are consistently deprioritized in favor of STEM subjects and standardized academic assessments.²⁶ A closely comparable process is documented in Thailand, where Laovanich²⁷ through an archeology of knowledge approach, demonstrates how music in the national basic education curriculum was progressively reclassified as a supplementary subject through policy discourse emphasizing economic utility, measurability, and academic competitiveness. Research from Malaysia, China, and Philippines shows comparable patterns: although music is included in official curricula, it is given little teaching time, scarce resources, and low status.²⁸ In Malaysia, music education tends to focus on exams and extracurricular activities, emphasizing Western notation while offering limited inclusion of local musical heritage.²⁹ Similarly, in the Philippines, formal music education largely follows Western classical models whereas indigenous and community music practices survive with little official support.³⁰

As Laovanich's Thai case illustrates, such marginalization operates discursively: music is acknowledged symbolically while rendered educationally insignificant through curriculum design and assessment priorities.³¹ These regional similarities indicate that Indonesia's situation represents a postcolonial educational challenge common to the area, not a unique national shortcoming. Throughout Southeast Asia, formal education often functions under what Leon Tikly³² calls the "new imperialism of education," which prioritizes global standards, job-focused narratives, and market values over culturally rooted knowledge like music. As in Indonesia, middle-class families in other Southeast Asian nations often turn to private music schools linked to international exam systems, making music education a sign of social class rather than an accessible cultural right.

Nevertheless, Indonesia's case shows a more pronounced form of this regional pattern. While Malaysia and the Philippines preserve some presence of arts in public school curricula, Indonesia has largely transferred music education to private providers. This has created a deeper divide between elite, commercial training and the weakening of traditional, community-based music learning. From a comparative view, the marginalization of music in Indonesian schools is therefore both a reflection of regional tendencies and a locally intensified

²⁶ Leon Tikly, "Education and the New Imperialism," *Comparative Education* 40, no. 2 (May 2004): 173-198, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305006042000231347>.

²⁷ Vitchatalum Laovanich and Somchai Trakamrungs, "Marginalization of Music as a Subject in Thai Basic Education Curriculum: An Archaeology of Knowledge Approach," *Fine Art International Journal, Srinakharinwirot University* 17, no. 1 (January-June 2013): 35-51.

²⁸ Ke Shi, "Music Education in China and the Philippines: The Exploration of Tradition and Integration," *International Journal of Education and Humanities* 14, no. 2 (2024): 9-11, <https://doi.org/10.54097/bj545n83>; Johami Abdullah, "Music Education in Malaysia: An Overview," *Visions of Research in Music Education* 16, no. 1 (2021): Article 43.

²⁹ Johami Abdullah, "Music Education in Malaysia: An Overview," *Visions of Research in Music Education* 16, no. 1 (2021): Article 43.

³⁰ Ke Shi, "Music Education in China and the Philippines: The Exploration of Tradition and Integration," *International Journal of Education and Humanities* 14, no. 2 (2024): 9-11, <https://doi.org/10.54097/bj545n83>.

³¹ Vitchatalum Laovanich and Somchai Trakamrungs, "Marginalization of Music as a Subject in Thai Basic Education Curriculum: An Archaeology of Knowledge Approach," *Fine Art International Journal, Srinakharinwirot University* 17, no. 1 (January-June 2013): 35-51.

³² Leon Tikly, "Education and the New Imperialism," *Comparative Education* 40, no. 2 (May 2004): 173-198, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305006042000231347>.

outcome, influenced by postcolonial histories, neoliberal policies, and inconsistent governmental support for cultural education.

Theoretical Synthesis: Cultural Policy in Postcolonial Context

The Indonesian experience provides several crucial theoretical insights that extend existing frameworks:

1. First, educational institutions are contested arenas for negotiating global-local influences across diverse sites (palaces, state, commercial, community). Bhabha's hybridity theory needs expansion to consider how institutional contexts enable or constrain innovation.
2. Second, commercial interests shape education by expanding access while creating exclusions; in Indonesia, actors like Purwacaraka mediate global models locally yet standardize culture for profit, revealing complexities beyond simple commodification critiques.
3. Third, cultural authenticity is continual adaptation, yet examples from Kraton fusion, televised performance shifts, and curriculum hybridization show market pressures now limiting such agency by prioritizing quick returns over sustained experimentation.
4. Fourth, the state has shifted from direct cultural patronage to indirectly enabling market actors; from Sukarno's RRI-centered management to today's Yamaha-Purwacaraka dominance, reflecting a neoliberal cultural policy framework.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The empirical findings reveal several critical challenges requiring policy intervention:

1. The access paradox shows that commercial growth expands music education overall yet excludes lower-income groups: tuition consuming 10-40% of median urban income restricts quality training to the privileged, necessitating subsidies, public-private partnerships, and strengthened school-based provision.
2. The curricular imbalance—commercial institutions allocating 90-95% of instruction to Western music—signals cultural erosion, requiring stronger accreditation standards, support for traditional practitioners, career-relevant traditional curricula, and economically viable preservation strategies.
3. The formal-informal divide—commercial institutions far out scaling government programs—reflects structural fragmentation, requiring certification pathways, accreditation systems, sector-integration frameworks, and renewed investment in formal music education infrastructure.

The purpose question: The findings reveal unresolved tensions between music education's economic (producing entertainment industry workers), cultural (preserving traditional heritage), and developmental (enhancing cognitive growth) purposes. Coherent policy requires explicit articulation of how these purposes should be balanced and what institutional arrangements would support that balance.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The geographic focus on Yogyakarta as the primary site for historical analysis, while providing depth, may limit generalizability to regions with different colonial histories and contemporary conditions. Future research should pursue comparative analysis across Indonesian regions, particularly examining how areas with different cultural traditions (Batak, Minangkabau, Balinese) have navigated similar pressures.

The predominance of institutional and elite perspectives in available historical sources may underrepresent grassroots musical practices and working-class experiences. Oral history projects documenting non-elite musical education would provide valuable counternarratives. Longitudinal analysis tracking individual students through commercial music education into adulthood would illuminate the actual life outcomes of this investment and whether it delivers promised developmental and career benefits. This evidence could inform more realistic policy goals.

Comparative postcolonial studies examining music education transformations in contexts like Malaysia, Philippines, India, and African nations would reveal whether Indonesian patterns represent regional or global phenomena and identify alternative policy models. Finally, the relationship between music education commercialization and Indonesia's broader creative economy development requires systematic investigation. Does private music education feed talent pipelines for the entertainment industry, or do curricular emphases on Western classical music create mismatches with industry needs?

Conclusions

This study traces the evolution of Indonesian music education from the colonial period through post-independence nation-building to contemporary commercialization, revealing how Western musical traditions have reshaped educational structures and cultural hierarchies. Three transformative phases emerge from historical archives, institutional data, and contemporary testimonies.

The colonial interface (pre-1945), exemplified by the Kraton Orchest Djogja, shows Western music entering elite and missionary contexts, producing early hybrid forms combining brass instruments with gamelan. The post-independence era (1945-1998) saw systematic state construction of a national music education system through institutions such as the Indonesian Music School (1952), AMI (1961), and ISI (1984). Curricula in the 1960s devoted up to 80% to Western classical music, reflecting a state-driven project positioning Western music as a marker of modernity and national legitimacy, reinforced through state broadcasters like RRI. Under Suharto, the rise of television altered performance ecologies, marginalizing regional musicians and outpacing the capacity of formal institutions to respond. The contemporary era (1998-present) is marked by private-sector dominance: Yamaha and Purwacaraka now educate exponentially more students than state institutions; Purwacaraka alone serves 27,000 students annually across 126 branches. Curricular analysis shows commercial providers allocate 90-95% of instruction to Western classical and popular genres, entrenching earlier hegemonies.

Findings reveal a democratization paradox: expanded access through commercial growth combined with increased economic exclusion. Tuition that consumes 10-40% of median urban income and the urban concentration of schools restrict quality music education to middle-class families. Testimonies from traditional musicians describe declining livelihoods and weakened transmission systems, while government data shows aging traditional practitioner demographics.

Music education emerges as a contested field where cultural identity, economic interests, and political priorities intersect. State curricular privileging of Western frameworks, commercial standardization around ABRSM and Yamaha examinations, and the marginalization of traditional music demonstrate that policy is never culturally neutral. Political independence did not produce cultural decolonization; Western frameworks persist as the unmarked standard.

The study refines key theories. It extends Bourdieu by showing that postcolonial states actively engineer legitimate cultural capital, rather than merely reproducing class structures. It grounds Bhabha's hybridity through historical cases where musicians solved concrete tuning and orchestration problems, while also revealing hybridity's fragility under market pressures. It complicates Said's Orientalism: Western notation still functions as "universal literacy," yet adaptive practices, curriculum localization, and ongoing gamelan education show that hegemony is contested. Harvey's "accumulation by dispossession" applies to privatized knowledge systems, but Indonesian evidence shows commercial actors also serve as cultural intermediaries.

The findings present urgent policy challenges: addressing unequal access through subsidies and public-private partnerships; correcting curricular imbalances through accreditation requirements and economic support for traditional practitioners; and bridging formal-informal divides through certification pathways, quality standards, and renewed investment in state institutions.

Indonesia's trajectory shows that market-driven expansion brings innovation but also deepens exclusion and cultural erosion. A balanced, pluralistic ecosystem—where Western and Indonesian traditions interact as equals—requires deliberate policy support, structural investment, and shared commitment among government, institutions, commercial providers, and communities. Only through such coordinate action can Indonesia achieve a music education landscape aligned with its constitutional ideal of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.

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