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***Pa'bussuk* Music as a Vehicle for Character Education: Educational Values and Learning Processes in Secondary Schools**

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ABSTRACT

The erosion of youth engagement with traditional arts and the poor integration of local wisdom into formal curricula challenge character education in Indonesian secondary schools. This study investigates the educational values embedded in *Pa'bussuk*, a Torajan bamboo percussion ensemble, and examines its pedagogical transmission mechanisms at Middle School 2 Balusu, North Toraja, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, data were generated through two cycles of participatory observation across eight structured practice sessions, semi-structured interviews with three key informants (teachers, instructors, and students), and documentation analysis. Data validity was ensured through source and methodological triangulation. Thematic analysis, guided by the Ministry of National Education's character framework, identified four interconnected value clusters within *Pa'bussuk* organology and performance: root (integrity), culm (honesty), branch (cooperation), and leaf (creativity). Results indicated that across two instructional cycles, students demonstrated progressive internalization of five core character constructs, with communicativeness and responsibility showing the most robust development. The pedagogical pathway—comprising imitation, routine rehearsal, creative variation, and public performance—effectively bridged technical musical competence with affective character formation. This study concludes that *Pa'bussuk* practice constitutes a potent, multi-dimensional pedagogical medium. It provides a replicable, culturally responsive model for integrating traditional arts-based character education into formal secondary school curricula.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education constitutes the primary mechanism through which societies transmit knowledge, values, and cultural identity across generations (Samiya, 2025). In Indonesia, this mandate is codified in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which explicitly charges formal schooling with cultivating individuals who are

faithful, noble in character, creative, independent, and socially responsible (Sakban & Sundawa, 2023). Yet the realization of this mandate in practice reveals a persistent tension between curricular idealism and implementation realities, particularly about affective and character-oriented learning outcomes.

Contemporary discourse in music education increasingly recognizes the pedagogical limitations of purely skills-based or content-transmission models (Crawford, 2017; Cuervo, 2018). Barton and Riddle (2022) argue from a praxial perspective that music learning is irreducibly social and must be rooted in the musical practices of living communities—practices that carry ethical, aesthetic, and cultural freight alongside technical knowledge. Clarke (2024) similarly contends that musicking in authentic social contexts generates what he calls 'musical knowing,' which encompasses not merely performance skill but also the values, attitudes, and critical sensibilities that define musical excellence within a given cultural tradition. These theoretical orientations converge on the proposition that traditional performing arts, when thoughtfully integrated into formal education, can function as powerful vehicles for holistic human development.

In the Indonesian context, this proposition takes on special urgency. The archipelago's extraordinary cultural diversity, encompassing hundreds of distinct ethnic musical traditions, represents an under-utilized resource for values education (Aryandari, 2024; Sularso et al., 2023). Yet the dominance of Western popular music and the structural limitations of formal curricula have progressively marginalized indigenous musical practices (Ismail, 2025; Karsono, 2024; Tambunan et al., 2025). This marginalization carries a double cost: the attrition of living cultural heritage and the loss of a contextually resonant medium for character formation. The Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*), introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in 2022, provides a policy framework for redressing this imbalance by affording schools greater autonomy to incorporate locally rooted learning materials (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2022; Zainudin et al., 2025).

Within this broader context, *Pa'bussuk* music from Toraja, North Sulawesi, presents an instructive case (Supryanto, 2023). Created by Jan Pasamboan in 1974, *Pa'bussuk* is a bamboo percussion ensemble whose construction demands acoustic precision and whose performance demands sustained collective coordination (Rappoport, 2004; Supryanto, 2023). Its playing characteristics—requiring exact rhythmic synchronization among multiple players—enact a philosophy of communal interdependence, perseverance, and shared responsibility that maps closely onto the character virtues prioritized by Indonesian national education policy. As Koentjaraningrat argues, art objects and practices function as concrete materializations of a society's value system (Fitria & Khoirunnisa, 2024; Wati et al., 2026); to engage with *Pa'bussuk* is, in this sense, to engage with the ethical philosophy of the Torajan people.

Despite this potential, the systematic application of *Pa'bussuk* music as a character education instrument in formal schooling has received limited scholarly attention. Existing studies in Indonesian arts education have addressed traditional music primarily from ethnomusicological or cultural preservation perspectives (Nuristama, 2024), with

insufficient attention to the micro-pedagogical processes through which musical practice translates into character development. This gap leaves practitioners without the evidence-based frameworks needed to design and evaluate traditional arts-based character education programs.

The present study was designed to address this gap. It pursues two complementary objectives: first, to identify and analyze the educational values embedded within *Pa'bussuk* music through an examination of its organology and performance practice; and second, to describe and evaluate the pedagogical processes through which these values are internalized by students at Middle School 2 Balusu, a junior secondary school that has actively integrated *Pa'bussuk* into its extracurricular program. In doing so, the study contributes to an emerging body of international scholarship on arts-based character education while generating contextually grounded insights relevant to curriculum development in culturally diverse educational systems.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Character Education and Values Transmission in Formal Schooling

Character education refers to the deliberate effort by educational institutions to cultivate virtuous dispositions, ethical reasoning, and prosocial behaviors in students (Martinez & Partin, 2023). Theoretically grounded in virtue ethics and social learning theory, character education programs are most effective when they embed moral learning within meaningful, experiential activities rather than relying on didactic instruction alone (Moller et al., 2025). Vygotsky's sociocultural framework further emphasizes that values are internalized through participation in culturally organized activities, within which more capable peers and teachers provide scaffolded guidance—a mechanism directly relevant to ensemble music learning (Xiaowei & Noordin, 2024).

In Indonesia, the Ministry of National Education has identified eighteen core character values to be cultivated through schooling, including religious faith, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democratic participation, curiosity, national spirit, patriotism, respect for achievement, communicativeness, peace-lovingness, social care, environmental stewardship, and responsibility (Susilo et al., 2022). The operationalization of these values through traditional arts education offers a culturally authentic alternative to decontextualized values instruction, aligning with Ki Hajar Dewantara's foundational principle that education must be rooted in students' cultural inheritance (Fajri et al., 2024).

Music Education and Character Formation: International and Indonesian Perspectives

A substantial body of international research documents the effective and social benefits of active music participation. Bussu and Mangiarulo's (2026) synthesis of empirical studies demonstrates that ensemble music-making cultivates social cohesion, disciplined practice habits, emotional regulation, and cooperative skills—all constitutive dimensions of character. Elliott and Silverman (2014) argue from a praxial standpoint that musical practices are ethical practices: they enact values of care, respect,

and responsibility toward co-performers, audiences, and the musical tradition itself. Dewey's philosophy of art as experience grounds this position philosophically, proposing that aesthetic engagement—particularly communal aesthetic engagement—is inherently value-laden and educationally transformative (Leddy, 2024).

In the Indonesian context, scholars have begun to articulate the character-educational potential of traditional performing arts. Firmansyah et al. (2025) documents how local wisdom-based learning deepens students' cultural identity formation, while Aryandari (2024) demonstrates that traditional music occupies a distinctive position in school arts programs as a carrier of philosophical and ethical content unavailable in imported popular music forms. These contributions establish the conceptual legitimacy of *Pa'bussuk* as a subject of character education research, though they do not provide the fine-grained pedagogical analysis that the present study seeks to develop.

Praxial Theory and the Pa'bussuk Ensemble

Regelski's theory of music as social praxis is the primary theoretical lens guiding this study (Saltari & Kokkidou, 2024). Regelski argues that music education achieves its fullest educational value when it positions students as active practitioners within socially meaningful musical traditions, not as passive recipients of musical knowledge (Regelski, 2022). This praxial orientation reframes the *Pa'bussuk* ensemble as more than an instructional object: it is a living social practice in which participation itself constitutes the educative experience. The values embedded in *Pa'bussuk*—responsibility for one's rhythmic role, honesty in acknowledging errors, and communicativeness in ensemble coordination—are not merely taught about but enacted through the very act of playing together.

This theoretical framing complements Bruner's emphasis on narrative and cultural context in meaning-making and Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (Mattingly et al., 2008; Ness, 2023), which predicts that the guided ensemble practice central to *Pa'bussuk* learning will generate not only musical skill but also the social and moral competencies that ensemble participation requires.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design, which is suited to the interpretive investigation of cultural practices and the meaning-making processes of participants within their natural settings. The qualitative approach was selected because the phenomenon under investigation—the transmission of character values through musical practice—is inherently social, contextual, and not reducible to quantifiable metrics. Descriptive methods allowed for systematic documentation and analysis of the processes, interactions, and experiences observed in the field.

The study was conducted at Middle School 2 Balusu, a public junior secondary school located in the Balusu sub-district of North Toraja Regency, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. The school was selected through purposive criterion sampling on the basis of two criteria: (1) the school actively integrates *Pa'bussuk* music into its extracurricular and local content program, providing a rich natural setting for

observation; and (2) the school has a documented history of *Pa'bussuk* instruction extending over multiple academic years, enabling longitudinal observation of the learning process.

Three categories of key informants participated in the study. Arts and culture teachers ($n = 1$) served as primary informants by virtue of their pedagogical expertise and their role in designing and implementing the *Pa'bussuk* learning module. A *Pa'bussuk* music instructor ($n = 1$), a practitioner with deep knowledge of the instrument's cultural context and performance tradition, provided emic perspectives on the philosophical values embedded in *Pa'bussuk* practice. Students ($n = 15$) enrolled in the *Pa'bussuk* extracurricular program constituted the primary observation subjects. The selection of these three informant categories was designed to capture institutional, cultural-practitioner, and learner perspectives, thereby maximizing the range and depth of data generated.

Data collection proceeded across two instructional cycles, each comprising four structured learning sessions of approximately 90 minutes each, for a total of eight observation sessions. Three complementary data collection methods were employed, consistent with the triangulation principle. Participant observation was conducted throughout all eight sessions. The lead researcher was physically present during all practice sessions, recording detailed field notes documenting student interactions, behavioral indicators of character value manifestation, teacher facilitation strategies, and the progression of ensemble competence. A standardized observation protocol was developed a priori, structured around the five-character value constructs derived from the Ministry of National Education's framework.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with all three informant categories at strategic points within and between instructional cycles. Interview guides were developed for each informant type and piloted prior to data collection. Interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated from Indonesian to English by the lead researcher. Additionally, documentation analysis encompassed school administrative records, the written *Pa'bussuk* teaching module, photographs and audio-visual recordings of practice sessions and performances, and publicly available video documentation of *Pa'bussuk* ensembles. Documentary sources were analyzed to corroborate and contextualize observational and interview data.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, comprising three iterative stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the reduction stage, raw field notes, interview transcripts, and documentary materials were coded inductively using NVivo (version 12), with a priori framework of five-character value constructs guiding initial code assignment. Emergent codes not captured by the priori framework were also documented and incorporated into the analysis.

In the data display stage, coded data were organized into thematic matrices and narrative summaries that mapped the progression of character value manifestations across the two instructional cycles and across the three informant perspectives. Conclusion drawing involved the identification of patterns, relationships, and

theoretical propositions across the displayed data, which were subsequently subjected to negative case analysis to test the robustness of emerging interpretations.

Trustworthiness was established through four strategies. Credibility was addressed through prolonged engagement (eight observation sessions across two cycles), source triangulation (cross-referencing teacher, instructor, and student accounts), and methodological triangulation (cross-checking interview data against observational field notes and documentary evidence). Transferability was supported through thick description of the research context and pedagogical processes. Dependability was ensured through the maintenance of an audit trail documenting all analytical decisions. Confirmability was addressed through reflexive journaling by the lead researcher, which documented and interrogated potential sources of bias arising from the researcher's insider familiarity with the Torajan cultural context.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Educational Values Embedded in *Pa'bussuk* Organology

An organological analysis of the *Pa'bussuk* reveals a sophisticated four-part philosophical architecture, wherein the material construction of the instrument corresponds directly to the structural components of the bamboo plant. Each anatomical component embodies a distinct cluster of character values explicitly articulated by practitioners and systematically transmitted through pedagogical practices. The bamboo root system, which anchors the plant within Toraja's steep, erosion-prone topography, symbolizes the values of integrity and individual responsibility. Informants conceptualize the root's ecological functions specifically soil stabilization and water retention—as a socio-musical metaphor for the player's role in maintaining ensemble cohesion. This philosophy is operationalized pedagogically through individual accountability mechanisms; as noted by instructors, students must independently demonstrate rhythmic stability under pressure before integration into the collective rehearsal, thereby ensuring that individual failure does not destabilize the ensemble's temporal framework.

Interviewer: If we examine the Pa'bussuk instrument in depth, how do Toraja practitioners and ancestors view the relationship between the bamboo material itself and the life values they teach their students? Does the instrument's physical construction have a specific philosophical meaning?

Teacher-1: Of course. The Pa'bussuk isn't simply hollowed-out bamboo or shaped into a musical instrument. Its construction follows the philosophical architecture of the bamboo tree itself—it has four essential parts, from the roots to the branches. Each part of the bamboo's anatomy carries a very specific set of character values, and that's what we pass down from generation to generation to our students through the training process.

Interviewer: Can we start with the most basic part? What about the bamboo root system in the Pa'bussuk philosophy?

Teacher-1: Consider how bamboo grows in Toraja. Our topography is steep, hilly, and highly susceptible to erosion. This is where bamboo roots come in; they grip the

soil very tightly, retain water, and prevent landslides. For us, the ecological function of these roots is a symbol of individual integrity and responsibility.

Interviewer: How is the sociological-musical metaphor of roots applied or realized when students play in an ensemble (ensemble cohesion)?

Teacher-1: Just as roots hold the soil in place even when pressured by water or heavy loads, each Pa'bussuk player must hold fast to their own rhythmic role. If one player falters in tempo due to pressure, the entire ensemble's musical formation will fall apart. So, the stability of the group depends entirely on the strength of everyone's "roots," or responsibility.

Interviewer: Pedagogically, how do you ensure that the value of individual responsibility symbolized by these roots is truly ingrained in the students before they play together?

Teacher-1: We implement a strict individual accountability mechanism before they are combined. Each student is tested independently first. They must be able to demonstrate consistent tempo stability under pressure—meaning, even if I disrupt their tempo or the class is noisy, they must not falter. Once they pass this individual test and prove they have strong "roots," they are integrated into the larger group rehearsal. This is important to ensure that the weakness of one individual will not damage the temporal framework of the ensemble as a whole.

Simultaneously, the bamboo culm (stem) and branch structures project complementary ethical and communicative frameworks crucial to the ensemble's efficacy. The culm, utilized in traditional Tongkonan architecture for its strength and lightweight elasticity, signifies honesty and steadfastness. Practitioners draw an explicit analogy between the hollow transparency of the bamboo stem and the ethical requirement for technical openness, discouraging students from concealing performance limitations. This value is reinforced through structured self-assessment activities where students critique their own accuracy prior to external feedback. Furthermore, the branch structure—defined by interconnected nodes emerging from a shared stem—reminisces about communicativeness and cooperative interdependence. Documentary analysis of ensemble performances confirms that this metaphor manifests as real-time, non-verbal coordination signals, such as sustained eye contact and dynamic shading, which regulate collective tempo and volume. This organological symbiosis is synthesized and visually conceptualized in the structural breakdown of the instrument (see Figure 1).

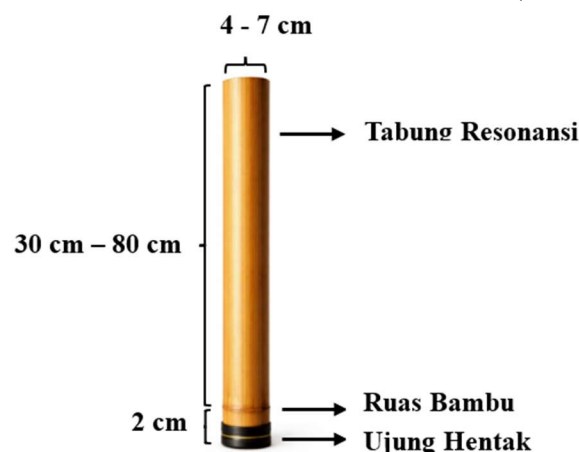


Figure 1. Organology of Pa'bussuk

Bamboo leaves, whose precise acoustic and material properties determine their suitability for use in instrument construction, embody the values of creativity and environmental stewardship. Practitioners emphasized that the selection of appropriate bamboo requires both creative judgment—the ability to assess acoustic quality through direct sensory engagement—and ecological awareness, as sustainable harvesting practices preserve the bamboo stands on which the tradition depends. In the classroom, this philosophical dimension was addressed through discussions connecting the instrument's material origins to broader themes of cultural sustainability and national heritage.

Table 1. Educational Values Embedded in *Pa'bussuk* Organology

Bamboo Component	Ecological Function	Character Values	Pedagogical Application
Root	Erosion prevention; water retention	Integrity; individual responsibility	Independent tempo maintenance; individual accountability assessment
Culm (stem)	Structural material; strong yet lightweight	Honesty; steadfastness	Structured self-assessment; peer feedback protocols
Branch	Interconnected growth; mutual reinforcement	Communicativeness; cooperative interdependence	Non-verbal coordination exercises; ensemble listening training
Leaf	Material selection; ecosystem function	Creativity; environmental stewardship	Rhythmic variation exploration; cultural sustainability discussion

Educational Values in *Pa'bussuk* Performance Practice

Beyond its organological dimensions, the empirical analysis of *Pa'bussuk* ensemble performance practices elucidates five core character value constructs that manifest distinctively within its socio-musical dynamics. While these constructs correspond to the five a priori analytical categories derived from the Ministry of National Education's framework, this study elaborates on their specific behavioral and interactional manifestations within the indigenous performance context. Responsibility is operationalized through each performer's sustained commitment to maintaining their assigned rhythmic patterns, rendering the ensemble fully self-regulating without the mediation of an external conductor. This self-regulatory demand requires players to simultaneously monitor their individual technique and attune to the collective sonic landscape, serving as a primary pedagogical mechanism that transforms musical training into a holistic locus of character development. Furthermore, honesty is instantiated through transparent self-disclosure regarding technical inadequacies, where concealing rhythmic errors is viewed as an ethical transgression that undermines collective trust. This normative expectation is reinforced both through classroom protocols—which mandate student self-correction prior to peer or instructor feedback—and by the acoustic transparency of the bamboo instrument itself, which inherently resists the masking of technical imprecision.

Parallel to these internal ethical structures, the constructs of communicativeness, creativity, and cultural identity further solidify the pedagogical efficacy of the tradition.

Communicativeness, the most prevalent construct observed, manifests as a complex, multimodal system of non-verbal coordination. This system functions across three distinct channels: auditory attunement to the collective sound, visual cues such as eye contact and head movements for temporal adjustment, and kinesthetic postural synchronization that mirrors a shared rhythmic pulse. Crucially, the development of these communicative capacities exhibits a positive transfer effect beyond the musical domain, correlating with heightened student attentiveness and responsiveness during broader classroom discussions. Concurrently, creativity emerges as students progress from tentative, imitative playing to exercising creative musical agency, introducing original rhythmic variations in accentuation, dynamics, and figuration that remain rigorously grounded within traditional aesthetic parameters. Ultimately, as technical competence matures, a profound sense of patriotism and cultural pride develops; students who initially perceived the *Pa'bussuk* tradition as alien or demanding progressively articulate a strong sense of cultural ownership and identity, demonstrating that structured engagement with heritage arts effectively cultivates localized cultural preservation alongside musical proficiency.

Instructional Cycle Findings

Cycle I: Foundation and Identification

Cycle I was operationalized through four structured learning sessions designed to transition students from initial instrument familiarization to basic rhythmic acquisition and preliminary ensemble integration. Session 1 introduced *Pa'bussuk* through a triad of instructor explanations, documentary video analysis by *Jan Pasamboan*, and group discussions; while this fostered basic cognitive comprehension regarding the instrument's cultural origins, the discussion process revealed uneven student participation and challenges in bridging technical knowledge with character value frameworks. This baseline comprehension was further tested in Session 2, which focused on fundamental instrumental techniques, including ergonomics, grip, and striking methods. Due to significant variations in students' prior rhythmic backgrounds, performance outcomes were highly inconsistent; learners with prior musical experience rapidly achieved technical stability, whereas novices required sustained, individualized guidance. Crucially, observation data during this technical phase unveiled low self-reported confidence and a tendency among struggling students to conceal their technical difficulties rather than seek assistance, underscoring a critical pedagogical need for more intensive, honesty-oriented instructional strategies in the subsequent cycle.

Interviewer: Based on your observations during the initial sessions of Cycle I, how did you observe the students' dynamics when they began learning basic instrument techniques, such as holding and striking the Pa'bussuk? Were there any significant obstacles?

Teacher-I: In Session 2, the disparity in the students' musical backgrounds was very apparent. Children with musical backgrounds were able to quickly master body positioning and stability in striking techniques. However, beginners struggled and required intensive personal guidance from me. The biggest obstacle wasn't simply physical or motor skills, but psychological factors. Many students lacked

confidence, but instead of asking for help, they tended to hide their technical difficulties during group practice. They pretended to be competent so as not to appear behind. This was a critical point for me: the technique of playing this instrument demands absolute honesty. If they cover up rhythmic errors from the start, the ensemble structure will be disrupted. This phenomenon made us aware that in the next cycle, instructional strategies should not only focus on transferring technical skills but should also intensively touch on strengthening the character value of honesty (honesty-oriented strategies) in acknowledging one's own limitations.

The latter half of the cycle shifted toward collaborative playing, shifting the pedagogical focus from individual technique to collective synchronization. Session 3 introduced small-group rhythmic pattern practice, transferring the responsibility of temporal coordination from the instructor to the student peers. This collaborative structure yielded qualitatively richer peer-to-peer interactions, fostering positive developments in creative exploration and communicative interaction, despite persistent challenges in tempo stability and sustained concentration. This progression culminated in Session 4, which constituted the first full ensemble presentation of Cycle I. Observations documented a pronounced improvement in group cohesion, characterized by extended periods of stable collective tempo and an increased frequency of active, non-verbal communication channels. Empirical character value assessment data (see Table 2) corroborated these observational findings, indicating that while the constructs of communicativeness and responsibility exhibited the most robust development during this foundational cycle, the values of creativity and honesty remained at an early-stage manifestation, requiring targeted pedagogical interventions in Cycle II.

Cycle II: Consolidation and Creative Development

Informed by critical reflections from Cycle I, the second cycle introduced three strategic pedagogical refinements: systematic peer tutoring pairings to mitigate technical skill disparities, structured provocative questioning to deepen critical reflections on character values, and independent practice initiatives facilitated by take-home guides. These interventions yielded highly consequential advancements in both musical proficiency and character development. In Session 5, student engagement was markedly more analytical, with participants demonstrating an advanced capacity to synthesize musical practice with theoretical character value frameworks. Observational data revealed that peer-tutoring architecture substantially mitigated the social anxiety typically associated with the public disclosure of technical limitations. This reduction in performance anxiety aligns precisely with Vygotskian scaffolding theory, confirming that structured peer interactions effectively facilitate cognitive and behavioral development within the zone of proximal development.

Interviewer: How do you assess the effectiveness of the changes in learning strategies in Cycle II, especially after you implemented the peer tutoring pairing system to address the students' technical skill gap?

Teacher-1: The changes have been significant, especially since Session 5. In Cycle I, struggling students tended to withdraw or hide their mistakes because they were

embarrassed to be seen by me or the rest of the class. However, once they were systematically paired with more advanced peers through this peer tutoring structure, their social anxiety collapsed. They were no longer afraid or awkward to admit, "Hey, I'm not fluent in this rhythm section, please teach me." This scaffolding process, or peer mentoring, made the practice room a safe zone for them to develop. Through this structured peer interaction, their cognitive and behavioral development accelerated naturally because they were in their zone of proximal development. As a result, they not only progressed musically more quickly but also became much more analytical when we had post-practice reflection discussions on character values.

Subsequent sessions (Sessions 6 and 7) documented an accelerated progression toward ensemble precision alongside a qualitative shift toward autonomous student agency. Learners began spontaneously initiating discourse on rhythmic variations and developing novel rhythmic figures to instruct their peers independently, reflecting a transition from passive learning to self-regulated creative and communicative agency. This pedagogical trajectory culminated in Session 8, which featured a high-stakes public *Pa'bussuk* performance before an audience of school staff, peers, and invited guests. All ensembles demonstrated exceptional temporal stability and seamlessly executed their student-developed rhythmic variations. Post-performance metacognitive reflections elucidated a sophisticated level of social self-awareness, wherein students accurately contextualized their individual roles within the broader collective success. Furthermore, a direct correlation was observed between independent practice outside formal hours and heightened performance consistency, thereby validating the substantive developmental impact of the autonomous practice initiatives.

Table 2. Character Value Development Across Instructional Cycles

Character Value	Cycle I Sess. 1–2	Cycle I Sess. 3–4	Cycle II Sess. 1–2	Cycle II Sess. 3–4
Responsibility	Emerging	Developing	Consolidating	Demonstrated
Honesty	Minimal	Emerging	Developing	Consolidating
Communicativeness	Emerging	Developing	Demonstrated	Strongly demonstrated
Creativity	Minimal	Emerging	Developing	Demonstrated
Patriotism	Minimal	Emerging	Developing	Consolidating

Discussion

Pa'bussuk as a Multi-Dimensional Pedagogical Medium

The empirical findings of this study instantiate and extend the theoretical proposition that traditional performing arts serve as potent vehicles for character education when integrated into formal curricula through systematic, reflection-oriented pedagogy. This developmental potential operates across three primary dimensions that merit critical academic discussion. First, the organological dimension of the *Pa'bussuk*—wherein the anatomical components of the bamboo plant serve as multi-layered semiotic symbols of character virtues—provides an explicit "instructional" dimension of arts learning, representing content systematically planned for transmission (Fernández Espinosa & Domingo, 2025; Zhukov et al., 2025). The four-part structural framework (root/integrity, culm/honesty, branch/communication, and leaf/creativity) constitutes a

pedagogically accessible symbolic architecture that enables educators to externalize the philosophical content of the tradition without reducing the aesthetic experience to a didactic lecture. This conceptual alignment corroborates Koentjaraningrat's anthropocentric contention that material culture objects inherently encode and transmit indigenous value systems (Septiani & Mufid, 2025). Consequently, explicit organological instruction—characterized by the critical interrogation of the cultural philosophy embedded within instrument construction—should be institutionalized as a structural component of traditional music education within the Indonesian schooling system.

Second, the performance practice dimension generates what Eisner terms "accompanying" impacts, wherein character development outcomes emerge organically from the structural contingencies of the musical activity rather than direct instruction (Kriger, 2020). The rigorous self-regulatory demands of the *Pa'bussuk* ensemble—requiring the maintenance of individual rhythmic precision amidst continuous attunement to collective coordination—forge authentic socio-musical conditions for cultivating responsibility and communicativeness that decontextualized character exercises cannot replicate. This intersectionity validates Regelski's (2022) praxial argument that the ethical and musical dimensions of performance are fundamentally indissoluble, meaning that authentic participation in *Pa'bussuk* execution inherently necessitates adherence to its constitutive social and ethical codes. Third, the longitudinal progression from mimesis to autonomous creative variation and public presentation establishes a developmental trajectory that reinforces both musical proficiency and character maturation. Moving from imitation to routine practice, student creative agency is activated, culminating in high-stakes public performances that consolidate these prior learnings into socially meaningful contexts. This progressive pedagogical arc aligns precisely with Bruner's spiral curriculum model and Dewey's pragmatist philosophy, proving that aesthetic experience achieves its maximum educational efficacy when it culminates in a collective and shared artistic act (Slater, 2022; Tan & Mo, 2026).

Communicativeness as the Dominant Development Domain

The study's quantitative observation data (Table 2) and qualitative interview data converge in identifying communicativeness as the character value showing the most robust and rapid development across the instructional program. This finding warrants theoretical interpretation. *Pa'bussuk* ensemble performance is structurally distinguished from most school-based musical activities by its reliance on autonomous, conductor-free coordination: in the absence of directing authority, players must develop genuine communicative competence as a prerequisite for musical success, not merely as a desirable accompaniment to it. The consequence is that communicativeness development in *Pa'bussuk* learning is instrumentally motivated—students develop ensemble communication skills because without them the music fails—rather than extrinsically imposed. This intrinsic motivation aligns with Self-Determination Theory's prediction that competence-motivated learning produces more robust and transferable skill development than externally regulated learning (Alamer et al., 2025).

The observed transfer of communicativeness gains beyond the musical domain—students demonstrated improved responsiveness and active listening in classroom discussion—suggests that the ensemble communication capacities developed through *Pa'bussuk* practice may function as general social-emotional skills rather than narrowly musical ones. This finding has implications for the design of character education programs: ensemble music-making may be a more efficient mechanism for communicativeness development than direct social skills instruction, precisely because it motivates communicative behavior through musical necessity rather than moral exhortation (Bussu & Mangiarulo, 2024).

The Role of Reflective Practice in Character Internalization

A consistent finding across both instructional cycles was that the depth of character value internalization was positively associated with the quality of structured reflection following practice sessions. Students who engaged actively in post-session reflection—identifying specific moments in their playing where character values were enacted or violated—demonstrated more sophisticated value-linked self-awareness in subsequent sessions than students who participated minimally in reflection activities. This finding is consistent with the broader character education literature by Lickona which emphasizes cognitive reflection as a necessary condition for affective character development (Do et al., 2026), and with Dewey's argument that experience becomes educative only when it is critically reflected upon (Lind, 2023).

The pedagogical implication is that *Pa'bussuk* music instruction, to maximize its character education potential, must not be conceived as purely practical musical training. The musical practice sessions must be systematically paired with structured reflection activities that invite students to articulate the connections between their musical behavior, and the character values it enacts. The teacher's role in these reflection activities—posing provocative questions, naming observed value manifestations, and connecting student experiences to the philosophical framework of *Pa'bussuk* tradition—emerged as a critical determinant of character education outcomes in this study.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The present findings carry several implications for Indonesian arts education policy and practice. At the curriculum level, they support the Kurikulum Merdeka's provision for locally rooted learning content by demonstrating that traditional performing arts, when pedagogically scaffolded, can deliver measurable character education outcomes alongside musical competence. The study's two-cycle teaching module provides a replicable instructional framework that can be adapted for other traditional performing arts in diverse regional contexts across the Indonesian archipelago.

At the institutional level, the findings suggest that *Pa'bussuk* music—and by extension, other ensemble-based traditional performing arts—are most effective as character education vehicles when integrated into structured extracurricular programs that allow for sufficient instructional time, expert practitioner involvement, and cross-

cycle pedagogical reflection. The involvement of a *Pa'bussuk* practitioner-instructor alongside the arts teacher was identified as a particularly valuable feature of the Middle School 2 Balusu model, as it allowed students to encounter the tradition through the living knowledge of a cultural insider rather than solely through a teacher trained primarily in formal music pedagogy. At the broader policy level, the study's findings argue for increased recognition of traditional performing arts as a strategic resource for character education, alongside their better-established role as objects of cultural preservation. Policy frameworks that support the training of traditional arts practitioners in pedagogical facilitation skills—enabling them to make the character educational dimensions of their traditions explicit and accessible to students—would amplify the educational returns on cultural heritage investment.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that *Pa'bussuk* music, a traditional Torajan bamboo percussion ensemble, constitutes a rich and systematically structured vehicle for character education in Indonesian secondary schools. Through analysis of *Pa'bussuk* organology and performance practice, and through two cycles of participatory observation at Middle School 2 Balusu, the study identified four organological value clusters (integrity, honesty, communicativeness, and creativity/stewardship) and five performance practice value constructs (responsibility, honesty, communicativeness, creativity, and patriotism) that are transmitted to students through structured ensemble learning.

The pedagogical pathway of imitation, routine practice, creative variation, and public performance was found to be effective in developing both musical competence and character virtues, with communicativeness showing the most robust developmental trajectory. The study establishes a replicable instructional model that integrates explicit organological instruction, ensemble practice, and structured reflection within a two-cycle pedagogical framework.

The study contributes to the growing international literature on arts-based character education by providing detailed empirical documentation of the pedagogical mechanisms through which traditional performing arts transmit values—documentation that has been notably absent from existing scholarship on Indonesian music education. It further demonstrates that praxial music education theory (Regelski, 2021) provides a productive theoretical framework for understanding and designing traditional arts-based character education programs. The study's limitations include its single-site design, the relatively short duration of the instructional program observed, and the absence of longitudinal data on the persistence of character development outcomes beyond the program period. Future research should employ multi-site comparative designs to examine the transferability of the *Pa'bussuk* model to other traditional performing arts and educational contexts; longitudinal designs to assess the durability of character development outcomes; and mixed-methods designs that complement the qualitative richness of the present study with quantitative measurement of character value indicators. International comparative studies examining analogous traditional music

education programs in other culturally diverse educational systems would also advance the field's understanding of the generalizability of the present findings.

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