

## The Impact of Popular Music Teaching in Music Classrooms: Perspectives of Malaysian Primary School Music Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

The music curriculum standards for Malaysian government primary schools are based on the concept of developing musical skills and providing students with the right values through music education. Malaysian Chinese National Type Primary Schools, as a type of government primary school in Malaysia, has also compiled its music curriculum in accordance with the government's standards and guidelines. With the current development of media technology, popular music has flooded every corner of life, and this situation poses new challenges to music education in schools. Malaysian Chinese community, as the second largest ethnic group in Malaysia, deserves to be noticed for its current status and outcome of music education. This study aims to understand the impact of popular music on music education in National-Type Chinese primary schools from the perspective of teachers. This study was conducted through semi-structured interviews with six teachers from different National-Type Chinese primary schools in Kuala Lumpur to explore the impact of popular music on students' learning the school music curriculum. The study's results indicated that music teachers' perspectives towards popular music and their students' preference for it were positive and accepting. However, they also express concerns about its detrimental effects on students' learning outcomes in music class. Therefore, this study argues that it is necessary to enhance teacher training, increase the number of professional teachers, and innovate teaching methods in order to meet the requirements of the curriculum standards for students' music learning, and to balance the contradiction between students' musical preferences and music education in schools.

**Contribution/Originality:** This study is one of the few studies that explores how students' music learning in Chinese National-type schools in Malaysia is impacted by popular music through the teachers' perspectives, and contributes to the existing literature on music education in Malaysia and the impact that current media developments have brought about on the students.

## 1. Introduction

Blasco-magraner et al. (2021) claimed that music has a lot of benefits for children in the development of intelligence, academic achievement, and social skills. For many years, international experts have discussed the impact of music education on children's education. Many scholars believe that the sound of school is music education, and that it is a good way of assisting academic learning, lowering study pressure, and cultivating a feeling of art (Bunt & Stige 2014). As a result, several countries around the world have made music education part of the primary school curriculum.

The Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) also recognised the importance of music as a contributor to the inner development of students and established a music curriculum for primary schools in 1983. The new primary music education curriculum was introduced by the Ministry of Education through the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) with the aim of developing students' musical skills, enhancing their aesthetic and creativity, as well as strengthening their sense of nationalism and patriotism through music education (Tan, 2008).

However, some current research suggests that students' learning of school music has been impacted a lot by popular music. Law and Ho (2015) stated that students preferred popular music, however, popular music contains some value content that conflicts with the school music education, and this result leads to a decrease in students' learning motivation of school music. Some Malaysian researchers also pointed out that Malaysian students prefer popular music from outside the school to school music (Shahanum, 2006). This situation is likely to make students' music curriculum learning outcomes unable to meet the requirements set out in the Ministry of Education's curriculum standards.

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country, and Chinese are the second largest ethnic group in Malaysia. In addition, Malaysia is the only country besides China that offers comprehensive Chinese language education from primary to tertiary level (Wan et al., 2020). There are three types of government primary schools in Malaysia, and the National-type Chinese schools are one of them. Although the teaching materials and curriculum standards of the National-Type Chinese primary Schools are determined by the Chinese community, they are generally carried out within the framework of Malaysia's national work, which means that music curriculum and music textbooks are also compiled according to the government's standards and guidelines. Therefore, it is necessary to study the school music learning of students in National-Type Chinese Primary Schools in the current social context.

### 1.1. Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore Malaysian teachers' perspectives on the impact of popular music on the current music curriculum and strategies for responding to it. The following three study objectives are proposed for this purpose:

- i. To examine the perspectives of Malaysian teachers regarding the current implementation of the primary school music curriculum.
- ii. To explore Malaysian teachers' perspectives on the impact of popular music on students learning music curriculum.
- iii. To investigate the strategies and approaches employed by Malaysian teachers in

response to the impact of popular music on the music curriculum in their teaching practices.

By investigating these concerns, this study aims to provide assistance in developing effective strategies and methods to reduce the negative impact of popular music and to improve the quality of student learning in music curricula.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Music Education in Malaysia

In 1983, music education became a compulsory subject in the new primary school curriculum (Tan, 2008). The Ministry of Education, through the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), has introduced a new primary music education programme, which aims to help students expand their musical skills and understanding of the fundamentals of music through a six-year programme from Year 1 to Year 6, in addition to fostering aesthetic and a sense of nationalism and patriotism through music education. The new curriculum provided standards that students had to achieve at every level of music instruction throughout the program. The curriculum standards can be divided into four sections: 1. Perception of aesthetics; 2. Possession of musical skills; 3. Possession of musical skills; 4. Appreciating art (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2004).

Tan (2008) examined the implementation constraints of the music curriculum and suggested that the lack of sufficient teaching time and professional teachers as well as insufficient teaching instruments were important factors affecting the implementation of the music curriculum. Mubin Md Nor (2011), who also studied the implementation of the music curriculum, agrees with the points made by Tan (2008) and further argues that the influencing factors that lead to the limited implementation of the music curriculum also include the lack of attention given to music education by the society and schools.

The main focus of current research on Malaysian music education is in the following areas: 1) Development and Challenges of Music Education in Malaysia in the Context of Globalisation (Shahanum, 2016), 2) Teaching multicultural music in Malaysia (Wong & Chiu, 2017), 3) Teaching Attitudes of Malaysian Music Teachers (Wong et al., 2015), 4) Attitudes of students' learning in music class (Ismail & Lim, 2018), 5) Music Curriculum Standards (Liu & Johan Awang, 2022).

These studies have bridged many of the gaps in Malaysian music education, however, it is important to note that music education in schools is facing new challenges in today's society with the rapid development of the Internet, therefore, research on popular music and music education in Malaysia deserves to be brought to the attention of a wider range of scholars.

### 2.2. National-type Chinese schools

Primary schools in Malaysia come in a variety of types. The national schools, national-type schools, and private schools are the three categories of primary schools. Government funds are used to support the national and national-type schools (Liew, 2007). For historical reasons, Chinese primary schools have existed in Malaysia for many years and have been a fundamental part of the Malaysian education system since

1956 (Tan, 2008). The language of teaching in the National-type Chinese school is Mandarin, while English and Malay are mandatory subjects (Wan et al., 2020).

Raman and Tan (2015) stated that the current Chinese schools in Malaysia are facing two problems, one is the insufficient number of urban schools and the other is the lack of trained young Chinese teachers. In addition, there are also studies on Malaysian National-type Chinese schools in terms of national identity, Chinese language movement in Malaysian education, and textbook analyses. The above studies have provided many insights into Chinese school education in Malaysia, however, there are still some gaps in the research on music education in National-type Chinese primary schools that need to be focused on.

### 2.3. Popular Music and Malaysia Music Education

Due to historical reasons, Malaysian popular music has been largely influenced by Western music. However, with Malaysia's independence and the gradual awakening of its national consciousness, Malaysian popular music nowadays is gradually incorporating local music styles. This result has led to a combination of traditional and popular music that has also been embraced by various ethnic groups in Malaysia (Shahanum, 2006).

Ang and Yeoh (2002) investigated the music preferences of Malaysian students and the findings revealed that the students preferred familiar and popular music over textbook music. Shahanum (2006) concurred with the findings and she further stated that Malaysian youths preferred popular music and their knowledge of music was basically formed through informal education, which was attributed to the wide dissemination of popular music and the lack of importance of music lessons in schools.

The above mentioned literature study illustrates that popular music has an impact on students' learning of school music, however, in the face of this situation, there are fewer studies on how Malaysian teachers perceive and respond to this challenge. In order to fill the research gaps mentioned in the literature review, the purpose of this study is to explore Malaysian National-type Chinese schools teachers' perspectives on the impact of popular music on the current music curriculum and strategies for responding to it.

### 3. Methodology

This study is a qualitative study and interviews were used for data collection. Interviews are one of the most popular approaches used in qualitative research, and in order to collect data, this study used semi-structured interviews to better understand participants' perspectives. Semi-structured interviews fall in the middle between a free-form converse with no set direction and a highly structured interview that depends on a number of planned questions. Additionally, by giving participants the option to go deeper into relevant issues rather than strictly adhering to the interview outline, the data gathered will be richer (Hewitt, 2018). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' thoughts, semi-structured interviews were the most ideal way to collect data for this study.

### 3.1. Sampling and Data Collection

The study was conducted in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur is not only the capital city of Malaysia, but also the educational, demographic and economic centre of Malaysia. There are currently 42 National-type Chinese schools in Kuala Lumpur with an average of 1000 students enrolled. The sample of this study was composed of music teachers from National-type Chinese schools in the Kuala Lumpur area. The six music teachers were from six different primary schools and their perspectives were basically representative of those of teachers in Kuala Lumpur and even in Malaysia. [Ginocchio \(2006\)](#) stated that students in the upper grades are more likely to prefer popular music because of the awakening of their self-musical concepts and identities as they get older. Therefore, the participants selected for this study all had Year 4-Year 6 teaching experience.

### 3.2. Interviews

The study was conducted between December 2022 and February 2023, with interviews lasting 25-40 minutes and each participant answering 20-30 interview questions. The interview questions were developed based on the 'curricular commonplaces' framework ([Elliott & Silverman, 2015](#)) combined with the research questions. The curricular commonplaces consists of aims, knowledge, teaching processes, students, teachers, and learning environments. The interview questions contained three areas: (1) participant information (participant's educational experience, major, teaching years, and weekly teaching hours). (2) participant perspectives (music curriculum implementation, popular music, and the impact of popular music on student music learning). (3) Participants used teaching strategies in response to teaching challenges.

All interviews were recorded with the knowledge of the interviewees. The data collected were presented in English, and the transcription of the data was reviewed by participant, with the participant being primarily responsible for reconfirming the transcribed text. In this study, peer review and member checking were used to test the trustworthiness of the data. Some peers were invited to listen to the recordings of the interviews and to check the transcripts to ensure that the interviews followed the standards of semi-structured interviews. Besides this, all participants were also asked to review the audio and the transcribed text via Whatsapp to ensure accuracy.

The interviews in this study were conducted in accordance with ethical standards. All participants volunteered to take part in the interviews and were informed that the recordings would only be used for academic purposes, that their names and schools would remain anonymous, and that they were assured that the results of the study would have no impact or penalty on them, and in addition to this, they were informed that they had the right to withdraw without facing any consequences at any stage of the conduct of the study.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

After data collection was conducted, six participants were represented using the numbers 1-6. The transcribed text was analysed and coded using the constant comparative method ([Glaser & Strauss, 1967](#)). The researchers were able to use this method to continually compare the data collected to find consistent key words and themes, such as teachers' perspectives. Based on this, new categories and themes were

developed and helped to identify links between these themes. Table 1 displays the participants' educational backgrounds and teaching years.

Table 1: Participant background information

Teachers	Gender	Professional qualifications	Teaching Years
1	M	BA MEd PhD	12
2	F	BA MEd	5
3	M	BA MEd	5
4	M	BEd	6
5	F	BEd	10
6	M	BEd	4

\*BA BEd refer to Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education; MEd refers to Master of Education, and PhD refers to Doctor of Philosophy.

In addition to searching for new or repeated topics that illustrated patterns, this study also systematically coded the interviews using already defined categories. The qualitative software program QSR NVivo (2014) was used in this study to graphically code, sort, file and link the interview data, and the advantage of using this software is that it is straightforward and clear to see the perspectives of the different participants and to compare and summarise them. Sinkovics et al. (2008) state that the software helps qualitative researchers to analyse and explain transcribed data.

## 4. Results and Discussion

For the objectives of the study, the results and analyses of the data were based on the following three research questions.

### 4.1. What are Malaysian Teachers' Perspectives on the Current Implementation of the Music Curriculum in Primary Schools?

#### 4.1.1. Weekly Teaching Hours and Support from Schools

All participants reported that they had one music lesson per week, with each lesson lasting approximately 30 minutes, but all participants indicated that they needed more teaching time. For example, Teacher 2 indicated that students had too many musical skills and content to learn, so he needed more teaching time. Participants indicated that they were generally satisfied with the level of support in their schools, but still felt that music was less well-supported than other subjects. Teacher 3 reported that although there was some specific funding for some musical instruments, music was still less well-supported overall than other subjects, and that was related to the school management's knowledge of music education.

#### 4.1.2. Teachers' Perspectives on Music Curriculum Standards

Participants were satisfied with the music curriculum standards, as Teacher 1 stated, "The standards now divide the music curriculum content into five sections, which accurately states what students need to achieve and provides teachers with good help in teaching." Teacher 5 indicated that the music curriculum standards are updated with the times and are very responsive to students' learning needs.

In addition, participants' agreement with the curriculum standards was also reflected in their teaching process, with everyone stating that they strictly followed the requirements of the curriculum standards in their music lessons, and that all teaching methods should be based on the fulfilment of the requirements of the curriculum standards.

#### *4.1.3. Teachers' Perspectives on Music Education*

All participants agreed that music education is very important for students, and most of them thought that music education is a good way to reduce stress. Some participants also gave their responses from another perspective. Teacher 1 believed that music education not only teaches students musical skills, but also improves students' performance in other subjects; Teacher 4 believed that music lessons stimulate creativity and improve students' intelligence, as well as other social skills. In addition, not all of the interviewees had backgrounds as music majors; some of them also taught other subjects and reported that students became more active in other subjects after taking music lessons.

#### *4.1.4. Students' Attitudes and Outcomes in Music Lessons*

All participants reported that students' attitudes to learning were positive, but they were not able to describe their students' learning outcomes as satisfactory. Teacher 1 believed that the students music learning outcomes were affected by the impact from society, and because music education was not valued, students treated the learning outcomes of their music lessons with less importance. Teacher 3 argued that the most important factor affecting students' learning outcomes is the teaching time, too much content and not enough teaching time lead to unsatisfactory learning outcomes. Teacher 6 claimed that students nowadays are more preferred to popular music, and that national music in textbooks is unfamiliar or even boring to them, so they are not able to get a better learning outcome.

#### *4.1.5. Teachers' Perspectives and Teaching Strategies for National Music*

Participants agreed that learning national music at the primary school level is very necessary as it can enhance students' cultural identity and cultural confidence, as well as allow them to understand the history of their own nationalities. However, when confronted with the importance of learning national music, some participants gave different opinions. Teachers 4 and 5 both stated that it is necessary for students to learn national music as a form of cultural transmission, but as a form of music teaching, students should learn various genres of music.

Teacher 1 claimed that he would teach students national music in conjunction with different festivals because the atmosphere of the festivals is contagious, and teaching students national music at this time can enhance their understanding of the music. Teachers 2 and 4 both chose to use You-tube videos to show students some films about national features as a basis for leading students in the study of national music. Teacher 5 is a Malay and music teacher who would introduce students to national culture in her Malay lessons and incorporate music in her lessons to increase students' knowledge of national music. [Table 2](#) shows the themes of the interview questions in research question 1 and the participants' answers.

Table 2: Teachers' perspective on the current implementation of the primary school music curriculum

Interview Questions	Answers
Length of lessons	30min
Number of lessons per week	1 per week
School support	Basically satisfied
Music curriculum standards	Very satisfied
Music education	Important for students
Student attitudes and outcomes	Positive; Not satisfied
National music learning	Necessary, but needs to be balanced
National music teaching strategies	Creating an atmosphere; Using You-tube videos; Combining with other subjects

#### 4.1.6. Discussion

The length of the Malaysian music curriculum and the frequency of weekly lessons are in line with the curriculum standards (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2004), however, the participants desired more teaching time. This result is in line with Tan's (2008) research, which suggests that one of the biggest challenges facing the current music curriculum in Malaysia is the lack of teaching time.

Even when music classes are a compulsory part of the public school curriculum, funding and time allocation remains a controversial issue. Aguilar and Richerme (2014) claimed that music education policies affect the status of music lessons in schools and school managers' opinions about music education.

Teachers were satisfied with the current music curriculum standards and their responses were in line with Liu and Johan Awang (2022) study which stated that the Malaysian music curriculum standards are clear in their objectives, enforceable, well delineated, and appropriate for the age of the students and the level of music education in the country.

Teachers' and students' attitudes towards music education and music lessons are positive, which is a good start. However, there are many other factors that affect the outcome of learning in music lessons. The participants' answers are consistent with the study of Mubin Md Nor (2011) who identified the dilemmas faced by the music curriculum in Malaysia to be the length of teaching hours, social influences, and unfamiliar textbook music to the students.

Additionally, he identified that primary schools lacked teacher with music majors, and this finding is also consistent with the present study. A total of six teachers were interviewed for this study, two of whom were music minors.

Participants recognised the necessity for students to learn national music, but at the same time they paid more attention to balancing the music genres that students learnt. As stated in the interviews, the students were not familiar with national music, so the participants utilised different strategies to increase the students' awareness and familiarity with national culture and to lead them in national music learning. Teo et al. (2008) stated that familiarity affected the students' musical preferences and choices.

## 4.2. What are Malaysian Teachers' Perspectives on the Impact of Popular Music on Students Learning Music Curriculum?

### 4.2.1. Teachers' Perspectives on Popular Music and Students' Preference for Popular Music

Participants stated that due to the accelerated development of media, popular music has become music in everyone's life. Teacher 4 said, "I often listen to popular music at home because it makes me feel relaxed." In addition, Teacher 5 stated that the students preferred popular music, so in order to understand the students' interests, she often listened to popular music as well.

All participants expressed their acceptance of students' preference for popular music. Teacher 1 stated that students' preference for popular music is normal but teachers need to be aware of the values that are contained in this music. Teacher 3 believed that students' preference and learning about popular music is a good way to develop their musical skills. Teacher 6 claimed that students' preference for popular music shows that they get pleasure from it and can learn different musical skills and genres.

### 4.2.2. How students access popular music

All of the participants agreed that students were accessing popular music through the Internet, such as You-tube and Tik-tok, as Teacher 2 explained, "Due to the previous Covid-19, students were taking online classes at home, which gave them a lot of opportunities to access popular music. In addition to the Internet, Teacher 3 mentions that communication between classmates is also a very important way, "Students share with each other what popular music they listen to and like, this is their way of socialising" (Teacher 3). With big data technology, many popular music can quickly make it to the top of the social media hit list. Although the participants in this interview came from different schools, they all reported that a Chinese pop song called "Gu Yong Zhe" had spread among all students. This phenomenon supports the teachers' belief that students access popular music mainly through Internet social media.

### 4.2.3. Teachers' Perspectives on the Impact of Popular Music

Participants' perspectives on the impact of popular music were different. Teacher 2 felt that students enjoyed singing popular music, however, the pitch and tempo of some popular music was beyond students' ability, which could easily have a negative impact on their vocal cords and music learning.

Teachers 1 and 6 felt that the lyrical content of some popular music was not suitable for students' learning, and mindless listening could affect students' values. On the other hand, Teachers 3 and 4 reported that popular music is just a genre of music which can inspire students to love music learning, in addition, popular music can help students to learn some music skills. Although the participants have different opinions on the impact of popular music, they all agreed that proper guidance from teachers is the key that students can receive a good music education. [Table 3](#) displays the interview questions regarding the second research question and the participants' answers.

Table 3: Teachers' Perspectives on the Impact of Popular Music on Students Learning

Interview Questions	Interview Answers
Perspectives on popular music	Acceptance
Perspectives on students' preference for popular music	Positive; acceptance
Students' access to popular music	Online social media; classmates
Perspectives on the impact of popular music	Positive; helping students with music skills Negative; undesirable lyrics and inappropriate music can be detrimental to students' development

#### 4.2.4. Discussion

The development of social media technology has facilitated the spread of popular music, which can be found in all corners of life scenarios in the current social context, in addition to that, according to [Shahanum \(2006\)](#), popular music is the type of music that has the greatest impact on people among all genres of music. Therefore, by considering these two points together it is possible to understand why the participants have an accepting and open to popular music.

[De Vries \(2010\)](#) states that school music is far removed from students' lives and that popular music is their "real music." There is some evidence for this finding. [Shahanum's \(2006\)](#) study shows that popular music is a real music education for students and most of the students in Malaysia obtain their music knowledge from this informal music education. [Ho \(2017\)](#) study continues this idea by stating that external popular music is what really affects the students' musical taste. Researchers have believed that the reason for this is because popular music is more frequently present in students' daily lives than school music, and this environment increases students' familiarity with popular music, and Teacher 6's answers support this opinion. [Teo et al. \(2008\)](#) state that familiarity affects students' musical preferences.

The second reason is that older students already have a need to socialise and a desire to present themselves, [Evans \(2014\)](#) states that older students will use the sharing of popular music to socialise, on one hand to show off their musical tastes and on the other hand to seek out peers with similar interests. This situation occurs inevitably as students get older.

Teachers have different perspectives on popular music, which shows that the impact of popular music on students is a double-edged sword. [Kallio \(2015\)](#) study concluded that teachers can use popular music in the classroom for teaching purposes, but it requires that the music be filtered. Teachers do not have right or wrong perspectives on the impact of popular music; the important thing is how they lead their students in music learning to meet the requirements of the curriculum standards.

### 4.3. What are the Strategies and Approaches used by Malaysian Teachers in their Teaching Practices to Respond the Impact of Popular Music on the Music Curriculum?

#### 4.3.1. Teachers' Strategies for Responding to the Impact of Popular Music

Teacher 1 says, "Music theory is challenging for students, if I use music that the students are unfamiliar with to teach them, the outcome of learning will be reduced, therefore, I choose to use popular music that they are familiar with to teach them music theory." Teacher 3 chose to have students learn the terminology of music by appreciating popular music, believing that it was a good introduction for students. Teacher 5 uses popular music to teach students about beats, and she believes that no matter what the lesson is, engaging students' interest is the biggest key. Teacher 6 claims that he gives his students a list of their favourite popular music and uses songs from it to teach them to sing and play instruments.

When asked about students' reactions to hearing popular music, participants reported that students get excited and happy. Teacher 4 said that students are excited to hear popular music, and have a desire to sing, and even ask for repetitions over and over again. But all participants also said that although students are more motivated to take music lessons because of popular music, as teachers, they should aim to meet the curriculum standards. Teacher 1 believed that as a teacher should understand what the goal of the lesson and what the students are supposed to be learning. Teacher 3 also said that popular music does bring a sense of freshness to the students but educators should understand that fulfilling the requirements of the curriculum is the key.

#### *4.3.2. Teaching Challenges Encountered with the Use of Popular Music*

Teacher 1 believed that the biggest challenge of popular music comes from the expression of the content of the lyrics, he gave a case he encountered during teaching, "Students often listen to the bravery of love in the lyrics, but the real bravery is to dare to face the life's challenges, and this kind of partial expression affects the understanding of the students and their values. " Other participants agreed that the themes of popular music are mostly related to love and are not very suitable for students' current age. Teachers 2 and 4 also gave their opinion from another technical aspect, they believed that students' vocal cords are still developing, and that the range of many popular music songs is beyond students' current ability, but the enthusiasm for popular music will make them to imitate blindly. " I can't discourage students, but they don't realise that it's a risk to their voices, so how to guide that is the challenge to me" (Teacher 4). There were also some participants such as Teachers 3 and 5 who stated that there were no challenges in using popular music for teaching and they believed that it was just one of the teaching methods.

#### *4.3.3. Teachers' Thinking on the Integration of Popular Music into the Music Curriculum and Use as a Key Teaching Strategy*

Participants believed that the use of popular music should be limited and purposeful, and they did not agree with the use of popular music to replace textbook music. Teacher 1 believed that the use of popular music is to fulfil the purpose of teaching and not just to serve the interests of the students. Furthermore, the music in the current textbooks is logical and developmentally appropriate for the students, and it is a good help for the teachers. Moreover, at primary level, students should be taught the basics of music, and it is important to introduce students to a wider range of genres. Teachers 3 and 5 suggested that popular music could be added as a genre, but balance is the key. In addition, participants commented that popular music is updated quickly and that teachers can include it in moderation and adapt it to students' interests in lessons, so there is no need to include a lot of textbooks.

Participants gave their own criteria for selecting popular music to be used. Those that are in accordance with the students' values, suitable for their musical abilities and those with positive and healthy lyrical content can be added to the lesson. [Table 4](#) shows the answers given by the participants when faced with the third research question.

Table 4: Strategies used by Teachers to Respond the Impact of Popular Music

Interview Questions	Interview Answers
Teaching strategies for the impact of popular music.	Using popular music to guide students in music skills
Students reaction	Exciting, happy
Teaching challenge using popular music	Partial and inappropriate lyrical content; beyond the student's musical ability
Replacement of textbook music	Disagree, textbook music is more appropriate for students to learn
As primary teaching methods	Disagree, students need to learn different genres of music
Criteria for selecting music	Accordance with the students' values; suitable for students musical abilities; positive and healthy lyrical content

#### 4.3.4. Discussion

The results indicated that the participants preferred to use the students' preference for popular music to lead students to learn music skills. [Smith \(2016\)](#) noted that popular music seems to be more successful in engaging students compared to classical and national music. [Hall \(2015\)](#) stated that teaching with popular music can lead to better outcomes in terms of developing students' music skills and creativity. The results of these previous studies indicate that the teaching strategies used by the participants can increase the effectiveness of students' music skill acquisition.

The students' reactions to the participants' adding popular music to the classroom showed that they were in a very happy state and were more motivated for the music class, and in this aspect, the teachers were successful in their strategy to reduce the impact of popular music on the students. [Davis and Blair \(2011\)](#) study states that students see their teachers as role models and they want their preferred music to be valued by their teachers because this is a form of identification, therefore, they will behave more positively when they hear music that they are familiar with.

However, participants also suggested that use of popular music should be based on teaching objectives and be selected. [Kallio \(2015\)](#) stated that popular music used in the classroom should be screened. In addition, participants did not agree that popular music could be used as a primary teaching method, because that students need to balance the learning of various genres of music. This result was consistent with [Forbes \(2001\)](#) study, who reported that many teachers felt that using popular music in the classroom would take up students' time to learn about other genres of music.

In addition, while using popular music to introduce students to music skills, teachers need to be careful not to fall into the trap of the "bait-and-switch tactic" ([Green, 2006](#)). This tactic refers to the use of popular music by teachers to attract students to school

music, and students are likely to have high expectations of popular music that will lead to great boredom when they actually learn school music.

## 5. Conclusion

This study explored the perspectives of Malaysian National-type Chinese primary schools' teachers on the impact of popular music on students' learning in music curriculum and the teaching strategies they employed to respond to these impacts. Participants commented on the current curriculum standards, the current state of music class implementation through their teaching experiences. The results of the study showed that all the participants had positive understanding of music education and they believed that there is a all-round development of students through music learning. Participants offered positive comments about the current music curriculum standards, believing that it provides clear guidance and assistance to both students and teachers. Participants rated the implementation of the current music curriculum as basically satisfactory, but they desired more teaching time and school support. In terms of popular music, the study revealed that teachers were accepting of popular music and students' preferences for it, and that the internet was the most important way for students to access popular music. Participants believed that the impact of popular music on students is a double-edged sword that needs to be limited and properly guided by teachers. The findings further showed that participants chose to utilise students' familiarity with popular music to teach them music skills, however, it is worth noting that the use of this strategy may fall into the trap of the 'bait-and-switch tactic', and therefore it is worth thinking about how to guide students to better learn school music in the current context.

At the end of the interviews, participants offered their suggestions for current music education; they hoped that society would increase knowledge about music education, more teaching time and funding. Therefore, combining the data from the study, this study made some recommendations. Firstly, the management should recognise the importance of music in primary education, increasing the length and frequency of music lessons as well as funding support. Secondly, teachers should participate in more training programmes and enhance peer-to-peer communication. Third, increase the number of professional music teachers and provide better pre-service training. This study only examines the current situation of music education in one type of Malaysian public primary school, which has some limitations. Therefore, future research could focus on more music education in other types of schools in Malaysia and research on students' musical self-concept.

## Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Malaya (RECUM). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants according to the Declaration of Helsinki.

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