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The 10th Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts National Academic Research Conference and the 9th Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts International Academic Research Conference, under the theme "Creating Innovations from Cultural Capital," aims to develop a new generation of researchers capable of producing creative works and innovations in the field of arts and culture. It also seeks to increase opportunities for researchers to obtain funding support for creative projects from various funding sources and to enable them to fully develop creative works in their areas of expertise. In addition, the conference aims to promote knowledge and understanding of how to prepare high-quality research proposals for creative projects.

This academic conference was organized by the Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts, Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with a total of 16 organizations and institutions, as follows:

1. Secretariat Office of the Teachers' Council of Thailand
2. Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music (PGVIM)
3. Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University
4. Silpakorn University
5. ICPED-Thailand
6. College of Music, Mahasarakham University
7. Mahamakut Buddhist University (MBU)
8. National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT)
9. Thailand National Sports University
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11. Faculty of Humanities, Naresuan University
12. Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University
13. Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University
14. Khon Kaen University
15. Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University
16. Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin

This National and International Academic Research Conference featured a total of 74 papers, consisting of 60 national-level research and creative works and 14 international papers. These papers were contributed by faculty members, researchers, and students from both within and outside Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts, as well as researchers from foreign countries, namely the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Republic of India, the People's Republic of China, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, and the French Republic. All papers underwent a rigorous evaluation process and were revised in accordance with the recommendations of qualified reviewers with knowledge and specialized expertise in their respective fields.

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DANCE

DIGITAL TWINS IN THE PERFORMING ARTS HERITAGE: PRESERVING KHON DANCE THROUGH AI-ENHANCED MOTION CAPTURE AND IMMERSIVE VR CLASSROOMS

ANWESHA KASHYAP*

Abstract

Khon, Thailand's UNESCO-inscribed masked dance drama, faces an acute transmission crisis as its senescing master performers retire without adequate mechanisms to pass on their embodied expertise to new generations. Existing preservation efforts, from two-dimensional video archives to marker-based motion capture projects, have each failed to capture the spatial depth, textile interaction, and internal joint trajectories that define Khon's four codified archetypes. This paper proposes a five-stage digital twin pipeline that combines markerless AI motion capture, skeletal purification, and cloth simulation of royal vestments to produce biomechanically faithful digital replicas of master performers, deployed within closed-loop virtual reality classrooms. Grounded in Bourdieu's theory of embodied cultural capital and Throsby's economic model of cultural capital depreciation, the framework treats digital twinning as a means of converting fragile, biologically bound expertise into stable, transmissible digital capital. Preliminary biomechanical evaluation indicates that skeletal purification reduces positional tracking error from an average of 14.5 centimetres to under 1.2 centimetres, while real-time posturographic overlays operate at latencies below 18 milliseconds, sufficient for live feedback in a VR classroom. The paper argues that such a system not only safeguards a vanishing royal art but also opens new creative economies in gaming, interactive museums, and institutional education.

Keywords: Digital twin; Khon dance; motion capture; virtual reality; cultural heritage

Introduction

Khon was synthesised in the Ayutthaya Kingdom as a royal performing art that fused sacred ritual, martial choreography, and episodes from the Ramakien epic. Its performers embody four codified archetypes Phra (heroes), Nang (heroines), Yak (demons), and Ling (monkeys) each governed by a distinct kinetic vocabulary of hyper-extended joints,

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low-centre-of-gravity stances, and precise angular geometry that has traditionally been transmitted through years of direct oral and mimetic instruction under a master.



Figure 1 A Khon Yak (demon) mask, showing the ornate crown, angular teeth, and painted facial geometry that define the archetype.

This mode of transmission is now under existential threat. As the generation of master performers ages and retires, the tacit, muscle-level knowledge that constitutes Khon's kinetic syntax is being lost at a rate that formal institutions cannot offset. Passive two-dimensional video archives, long relied upon as a fallback, cannot capture the spatial depth, textile interaction, or internal joint trajectories that are essential to correct execution of the form. This paper proposes that high-fidelity digital twins of master performers built from markerless AI motion capture and deployed in immersive virtual reality (VR) classrooms offer a more adequate response to this crisis than existing documentation methods.

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to propose and evaluate a five-stage digital twin pipeline combining markerless AI motion capture, skeletal purification, and cloth simulation of royal vestments capable of producing biomechanically faithful digital replicas of Khon master performers for deployment within closed-loop virtual reality classrooms. The study aims to demonstrate that such a system can convert fragile, biologically bound embodied expertise into stable, transmissible digital capital, thereby safeguarding Khon's kinetic syntax against the retirement and mortality of its master performers.

Scope of Research

This study is concerned with Khon, Thailand's UNESCO-inscribed masked dance drama, and its four codified archetypes - Phra, Nang, Yak, and Ling. It reviews three prior heritage-digitisation precedents (i-Treasures, WhoLoDancE, and a domestic Thai video-documentation initiative) to identify unresolved gaps in kinetic accuracy, archival retrofitting, material-biomechanical fidelity, and closed-loop feedback. The scope covers the design of a five-stage digital twin pipeline - motion ingestion, skeletal purification, textile simulation, asset assembly, and VR deployment-together with a preliminary biomechanical evaluation of tracking precision, costume-imposed physical resistance, and posturographic overlay latency. The study does not extend to a full field trial of the VR classroom with student learners, which is proposed as a direction for future research.

Research Methodology

The proposed pipeline comprises five sequential stages. In the motion ingestion stage, markerless AI tools — MediaPipe, Move.ai, and Radical — extract three-dimensional spatial coordinates from both legacy footage and live capture sessions. In the skeletal purification stage, Autodesk MotionBuilder combined with LSTM-based filtering removes tracking jitter while remaining within HumanIK anatomical bounds, and while explicitly preserving the fine finger mudras that carry narrative meaning. In the textile simulation stage, Marvelous Designer models the weight, friction, and collision behaviour of the multi-layered, embroidered royal vestments worn by performers. In the asset assembly stage, avatars are sculpted in Maya or Blender and textured in Substance 3D Painter using physically based materials. Finally, in the VR deployment stage, the assembled digital twin is deployed on Unreal Engine 5 or Unity, running on Meta Horizon OS, which drives real-time posturographic overlays for learners.



Figure 2 A Yak performer in full costume, illustrating the layered, embroidered vestments modelled in the textile-simulation stage of the pipeline.

1. Cultural Capital and the Case for Digitisation

The urgency of this work is grounded in two complementary strands of cultural theory.

1.1 Embodied Capital and Economic Depreciation

Following Bourdieu, Khon's kinetic syntax and postural geometry exist only as embodied capital, held in the muscles and neural pathways of individual masters; this is capital tied irreducibly to a living body, and is lost irreversibly at that body's death. Following Throsby's account of cultural capital, such capital yields value over time but depreciates rapidly in the absence of active transmission. Read together, these two frameworks suggest that AI-assisted motion capture performs a specific conversion: it takes fragile, biologically bound embodied capital and renders it as stable, insulated digital capital, decoupled from the mortality of any single performer.

1.2 Reframing the Object of Preservation

This theoretical move also reframes the object of preservation. Rather than archiving performances as finished artefacts, the digital twin approach treats the performer's underlying skeletal and biomechanical structure as the primary asset to be preserved the substrate from which any number of pedagogical or creative outputs can subsequently be generated.

2. From Passive Archives to Living Digital Repositories

The trajectory of heritage digitisation over the past decade has moved from passive documentation toward increasingly active, queryable repositories of movement. Two-dimensional video archives, still the dominant method for many intangible heritage projects, are widely

reported to fail at capturing spatial depth or fine-grained joint trajectories. Sensor-based projects such as i-Treasures and WhoLoDancE demonstrated that movement could be indexed into searchable choreographic units, while studies of Asian kinetic traditions have argued that meaningful safeguarding requires capturing structural body geometry rather than surface appearance alone. Advances in AI-based pose estimation - including tools such as MediaPipe, Move.ai, and Radical - have since made it possible to extract three-dimensional movement trajectories from ordinary video sources without physical markers, substantially lowering the barrier to large-scale kinetic documentation.



Figure 3 Khon performers enacting a Phra–Yak exchange, illustrating the stylised stances and hand articulation that motion-capture systems must resolve.

2.1 Three Prior Initiatives and Their Limits

Three precedents inform, and expose the limitations of, the present approach. The EU-funded i-Treasures project (2013–2017) used a multimodal sensor array - EEG caps, acoustic sensors, depth cameras, and inertial measurement units - to capture rare vocal and kinetic traditions, but its intrusive hardware confined data collection to indoor laboratories, and its depth cameras struggled with fast, high-frequency joint rotations of the kind central to Khon. The EU's WhoLoDancE project (2016–2019) used marker-based optical and inertial systems to map ballet, contemporary, flamenco, and Greek folk dance into a searchable kinetic syntax, but required dancers to wear skin-tight capture attire, effectively erasing the way traditional costume physically restricts and shapes movement. Within Thailand itself, a domestic initiative running from 2018 to 2024 pursued a more accessible strategy of high-definition two-dimensional video documentation, web-based multimedia museums, and static three-dimensional scans of Khon masks; however, its passive, open-loop design

meant that remote learners could only watch, with no posturographic feedback to guide or correct their own practice.

2.2 Four Interconnected Research Gaps

Taken together, these precedents leave four interconnected deficits unaddressed. First, a kinetic accuracy gap: generalist markerless pose-estimation models are not tuned to Khon's extreme, non-standard joint geometry, producing self-occlusion and bone-flipping errors during rapid limb crossing. Second, an archival retrofitting gap: no established methodology exists for extracting reliable three-dimensional trajectories from the low-resolution, uncalibrated legacy footage that constitutes the only surviving record of many deceased masters. Third, a material-biomechanical disconnect: existing digital twins tend to treat costumes as rigid, weightless skins, ignoring the extent to which heavily embroidered royal vestments physically restrict the performer's true range of motion. Fourth, an absence of closed-loop feedback: existing VR heritage tools remain passive viewing platforms, offering no real-time, biometric correction to learners as they attempt to reproduce a master's movement.

3. Educational and Cultural Aims

The proposed framework pursues three educational aims and three cultural aims in parallel. Educationally, it seeks to democratise elite pedagogy by dismantling the geographic concentration of institutions such as the Bunditpatanasilpa Institute through cloud-based VR access; to replace passive mimicry with closed-loop kinetic learning, in which real-time posturographic overlays compare a student's pose directly against the master's digital twin; and to support spatial literacy, using 360-degree rotation and slow-motion playback to reveal subtle weight shifts that remain invisible on a flat screen. Culturally, the framework aims to mitigate existential loss by translating vulnerable embodied mastery into permanent, mortality-proof three-dimensional skeletal data; to restore material context by using fabric

simulation to preserve the true physical weight and restriction of royal vestments; and to safeguard stylistic lineages by cataloguing distinct historical variations in performance rather than flattening Khon into a single standardised style.

Table 1 ***Biomechanical Evaluation Results***

Metric	Baseline	After Pipeline Correction
Positional tracking error (Nam Ning stances)	14.5 cm (average)	< 1.2 cm
Real-time posturographic overlay latency	-	< 18 ms
Costume-imposed resistance on lower-limb/torso articulation (vs. unclothed body)	-	≈ 18%

Note. Figures reflect the preliminary biomechanical evaluation of the five-stage digital twin pipeline reported in this study.

Result

Biomechanical evaluation of the pipeline indicates substantial gains in tracking precision. Baseline markerless tracking, applied without downstream correction, exhibited an average positional error of 14.5 centimetres during the deep, low-centre-of-gravity Nam Ning stances characteristic of Khon. Following MotionBuilder and LSTM-based skeletal purification within HumanIK anatomical bounds, this residual spatial error fell to under 1.2 centimetres. Separately, biomechanical modelling of costume interaction found that royal vestments impose approximately 18 percent physical resistance on lower-limb and torso articulation relative to an unclothed body a constraint entirely invisible to rigid-skin avatar workflows. The real-time posturographic overlay used to compare a student's pose against the master's digital twin operated at a latency of under 18 milliseconds, within the threshold generally considered necessary for live, embodied feedback.

Three findings follow from this evaluation. Self-occlusion during rapid limb crossing, most pronounced in the Ling and Yak archetypes, emerges as the primary driver of baseline tracking failure, underscoring the need for archetype-specific correction rather than a single generic model. LSTM filtering is capable of removing high-frequency jitter without flattening the finger mudras that carry narrative meaning, suggesting that noise reduction and gestural fidelity need not be in tension if filtering parameters are tuned appropriately. Finally, cloth simulation reveals real-world costume compression that rigid-skin workflows misrepresent entirely, indicating that biomechanical fidelity in Khon digital twins cannot be achieved through skeletal capture alone.

Discussion and Conclusions

The pipeline yields four principal outcomes. A digital twin library salvages the unique stylistic nuances of deceased masters, even where the only surviving source is low-resolution archival footage, rendering that knowledge permanently accessible. Biomechanical fidelity, achieved through costume simulation, ensures that digital twins mirror the real joint thresholds performers face when dancing in authentic attire, rather than an idealised unencumbered body. A closed-loop VR platform uses colour-coded overlays - green for alignment, red for deviation - to let students self-correct in real time rather than relying solely on delayed instructor feedback. Global decentralisation, enabled by 360-degree rotation and temporal control, allows remote learners to study complex choreography from any angle and from any location, loosening the geographic concentration that has historically limited access to elite Khon instruction.

The framework outlined here is designed to preserve Khon's biometric precision while also unlocking creative economies beyond the classroom. Pre-authenticated Phra, Nang, Yak, and Ling assets could power culturally respectful games, visual effects, and virtual production; interactive museums could let visitors match poses against digital-twin virtuosos, scored live, turning cultural tourism into a form of gamified learning; and institutional expansion could extend the Bunditpatanasilpa Institute's elite curriculum across both geographic and generational boundaries. Read against Bourdieu and Throsby, the project's underlying claim is that digital twinning does not merely archive a vanishing royal art but actively reconstitutes its embodied capital in a stable, transmissible form -ensuring that Khon survives, and continues to thrive, as a living practice in the digital age.

Suggestions

Future work should pilot archetype-specific correction models, particularly for the Ling and Yak archetypes where self-occlusion during rapid limb crossing is most pronounced. The textile-simulation stage would benefit from validation against a wider range of royal vestment types beyond the single costume class modelled here. A field trial of the closed-loop VR classroom with student learners at an institution such as the Bunditpatanasilpa Institute is recommended to test the posturographic overlay under real pedagogical conditions. Finally, the same five-stage pipeline could be extended to other endangered performing-arts traditions that combine complex costume interaction with codified kinetic vocabularies.

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RAM THAWAI PRA PHON: ROYAL TRIBUTE DANCE IN THE COLLEGE OF DRAMATIC ARTS TRADITIONT

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Abstract

This academic article aims to examine *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* (Thai classical dance performed in royal homage) in the tradition of the College of Dramatic Arts. The study employs documentary research, interviews, and observation to analyze its underlying concepts, performative forms, compositional processes, and distinctive identity. The scope of the study is limited to *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* works created by the College of Dramatic Arts, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute.

The study finds that Ram Thawai Pra Phon is a form of ens[1]emble dance newly choreographed to honour the monarchy, classified into five styles: the Divine Deity Bestowing Blessings style, the Celestial Beings style (Thewada and Nang Fa), the Brahmin Couple style, the Royal Court Ladies style (Nang Nai), and the Miscellaneous Occasions style. Its creation process unfolds across three phases: preparation, aligning the conceptual framework with the occasion's objectives; creation and production, encompassing lyrical composition, musical arrangement, performer selection, choreography, formation design, costuming, rehearsal, and staging; and expert evaluation, in which specialist observations inform quality refinement and the consolidation of institutional knowledge.

The genre's defining identity lies in its refinement, composure, and strict adherence to classical convention, distinguished by the *Wai* gesture of respect, the *Thawai Bangkhom* gesture of royal obeisance, and movement sequences inherited from master teachers (*Borom Khru*). *Thawai Bangkhom* represents the highest form of royal obeisance, reserved for the monarch and senior royal family members. Distinct from standard prostration, it is performed kneeling, with joined palms raised, torso inclined, and forehead lowered to the ground a modification of the traditional *Benjangkhapradit* gesture. These elements reflect the preservation of decorum, reverence, and loyalty befitting the monarchy's dignity.

Keywords: Ram Thawai Pra Phon, Choreographic Creation, Dance Tradition

Introduction

Thai classical dance (*Nat-dta-sin*) constitutes an enduring cultural heritage reflecting the identity, beliefs, social values, and aesthetic sensibilities of Thai society. It occupies a significant role as a living tradition through which meaning, artistic values, and the relationship

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between art and its social context are continuously transmitted. Among its most ceremonially significant forms is *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* a genre that integrates the artistic and ceremonial dimensions of Thai performance through the synthesis of dance, music, literary composition, and visual art into a unified, contextually appropriate whole.

Ram Thawai Pra Phon appears prominently on occasions associated with the monarchy, including royal birthday celebrations, state welcoming ceremonies for royal guests, various royal ceremonies, and tribute events at the national and institutional levels. Its defining characteristics lie in the refinement of its movement vocabulary, its capacity for symbolic communication, and its expression of reverence and loyalty through forms appropriate to each occasion. Its creation therefore demands comprehensive knowledge spanning performance conventions, musical composition, costuming, and the organization of theatrical elements, so that the work achieves both semantic completeness and artistic beauty.

The College of Dramatic Arts, under the Bunditpatanasilpa Institute, Ministry of Culture, serves as a principal institution in the conservation, transmission, and development of Thai performing arts encompassing both dance and music. As a leading producer of cultural practitioners for the nation, the College has continuously contributed to performances for significant national occasions, most notably *Ram Thawai Pra Phon*. These works illustrate distinctive characteristics reflecting the College's institutional identity, demonstrating its capacity to integrate knowledge across disciplines through the collaborative efforts of instructors, specialists, musicians, and performers, all essential to developing works of artistic and scholarly merit.

Despite its continuous presence in Thai society, systematic academic study of its choreographic creation process within the College of Dramatic Arts tradition remains limited. This investigation is therefore important for consolidating knowledge in Thai classical dance, both for heritage conservation and the systematic transmission of choreographic practice. It further holds value for advancing choreographic approaches responsive to contemporary contexts, while preserving the beauty and dignity befitting the monarchy.

This article accordingly examines *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* in the College of Dramatic Arts tradition, considering its concepts, forms, compositional processes, and distinctive identities. The findings are intended to benefit Thai classical dance, serving as a reference for choreographic creation, teaching, research, and transmission across ceremonial contexts, while disseminating an understanding of the College as a pivotal institution preserving this enduring expression of national cultural heritage.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate Ram Thawai Pra Phon in the College of Dramatic Arts tradition. Data were collected through documentary research, including books, performance programs, photographs, theses, research reports, and scholarly articles. Formal interviews were conducted with seven experts who had extensive experience in Thai classical dance performance, transmission, and choreography within the College of Dramatic Arts tradition. Additional data were obtained through participant observation during creative and performance processes, as well as non-participant observation of archived video recordings and photographs. The collected data were subsequently analyzed, verified, synthesized, and interpreted in accordance with the research objectives.

The meaning of Ram Thawai Pra Phon

The College defines Ram Thawai Pra Phon as a newly choreographed performance in the form of Thai ensemble dance, accompanied by instrumental pieces, vocal songs, and Nah-Paht ceremonial music (used to accompany the actions of characters in Khon, Thai masked dance-drama). The lyrics are composed to offer auspicious blessings to the monarch and royal family on significant occasions (College of Dramatic Arts, 2025).

Nantha Noinit states that the dance is created to honour the monarchy on significant royal occasions, typically employing *Ti Bot* (narrative, text-illustrative movement) and *Nah-Paht* dance, with a duration of approximately 8–10 minutes (Nantha Noinit, Personal Communication, August 12, 2025).

Amphaiwan Dechachat explains that it is newly devised for occasions involving the monarch and royal family, with lyrical content centered on offering auspicious blessings and expressing reverence. Although classified performatively within the *Ra-bam* (group performance) category, it is designated by the term "*Ram*" (solo or duet) rather than "*Ra-bam*" (Amphaiwan Dechachat, 2012, p. 20).

Synthesizing these definitions, *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* may be understood as a newly created form of Thai classical dance composed to honour or offer blessings on significant royal occasions. Though classified as ensemble dance within the *Ra-bam* category, the term "*Ram*" is conventionally used as its designation, with newly composed lyrics centred on auspicious blessing and reverence, and a genre characterized by beauty and refinement across all its performative elements.

Forms of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* in the College of Dramatic Arts Tradition

Based on documentary research, photographic records, performance programmes, interviews, and direct observation, the College of Dramatic Arts has continuously staged *Ram Thawai Pra Phon*

on numerous occasions since its founding. This research identifies two principal categories, consistent with the classification proposed by Amphaiwan Dechachat (2012, p. 20), who divides the genre as follows:

1. Performances not explicitly designated as "*Ram Thawai Pra Phon*"

This category comprises performances that resemble *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* in function created to honour the monarchy or to praise and offer blessings to the king or royal family without being explicitly named as such. Examples include *Ram Ging Mai Ngern Thong* (opening dance with silver and golden branches), *Ra-bam Phat-tha-wisai* (classical Thai royal blessing dance), *Ram Khom* (lantern dance), and *Ra-bam U Thong* (*U Thong archaeological dance*), typically classified within the broader category of miscellaneous dance and identifiable by lyrical content praising or referencing the monarchy. When such repertoire is selected for performance as *Ram Thawai Pra Phon*, careful consideration must be given to its appropriateness and adherence to relevant performance conventions.

2. Performances explicitly designated as "*Ram Thawai Pra Phon*"

This category comprises performances explicitly titled *"Ram Thawai Pra Phon"* or designated with other terms conveying the purpose of offering royal blessings, such as Ram A-Si-Ra-Wat (royal benediction dance) or Ram Tert-Pra-Kiat (royal tribute dance), with the specific occasion appended to or incorporated within the title. Examples include dance performances offering blessings to His Majesty the King, to Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, and the Royal Dance of Homage and Blessings. Within this category, the configuration of performers may be further organized according to the following classifications.

2.1 *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* in the Divine Deity Bestowing and Offering Blessings Style

The College of Dramatic Arts frequently deploys this specific style of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* for high-profile state functions and royal audiences, including grand receptions at Government House and performances presented before His Majesty the King or members of the royal family. Performers assume the roles of deities drawn from Brahmanic-Hindu cosmology, such as Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, or other deities as appropriate to the occasion. The mode of presentation may be adapted flexibly according to the context of the performance. On certain occasions, a deity appears accompanied by his consort; alternatively, the performance may feature a single divine couple, with the possible inclusion of celestial beings, Brahmin figures, or performers of lantern dance, depending on the requirements of the occasion.



Figure 1 Dance of the Great Deity Bestowing Blessings, performed at The Grand Reception in honour of His Majesty the King, Santi Maitri Building, Government House
Source: College of Dramatic Arts

2.2 *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* in the Celestial Beings Style

This style of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* is frequently staged by the College on significant occasions, such as the Ceremony of Offering Auspicious Royal Blessings held at Sanam Luang (the Royal Field), with its conceptual foundation rooted in Brahmanic-Hindu beliefs concerning celestial deities, as adapted into the Thai cultural context. Performers assume the roles of *Thewada* (celestial gods) and *Nang Fa* (celestial maidens), symbolically conveying auspiciousness and the bestowal of sublime blessings from the heavenly realm upon the king or members of the royal family. Performance props such as silver and gold branches, crystal or lotus lanterns, and small hand fans are sometimes incorporated to reinforce connotations of prosperity, radiance, and auspiciousness, enriching the performance's symbolic and visual elegance.



Figure 2 Ram Thawai Pra Phon in the Celestial Beings Style, The Four-Fold Offering of Blessings by Divine Manifestations.
Source: College of Dramatic Arts

2.3 *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* in the Brahmin Couple Style

This style of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* is frequently presented by the College of Dramatic Arts on significant occasions, drawing its conceptual foundation from Brahmanic-Hindu belief systems deeply interwoven with the cosmology of ancient Thai society. Within this tradition, the Brahmin priest *(Phram)* is accorded the esteemed role of officiant in sacred ritual, serving as an intermediary between humankind and the divine, and as the speaker of auspicious incantations to invoke the highest blessings particularly within royal ceremonies and state rites associated with the monarchy. This performative

style therefore reflects significant dimensions of belief, ritual practice, and reverence for the monarchy. In staging this dance,the performance may feature Brahmin priests exclusively, or may present a joint performance combining both Brahmin priests and their female counterparts (*Phramani*), depending on the conceptual framework and contextual requirements of the occasion.



Figure 3 Ram Thawai Pra Phon in the Brahmin Couple Style, performed at the Celebration in Honour of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
Source: College of Dramatic Arts

2.4 *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* in the Royal Court Ladies style (*Nang Nai*)

This style of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* is the most frequently presented form within the College of Dramatic Arts' repertoire, as it conveys meaning through the symbolic representation of human subjects expressing loyalty and reverent gratitude for royal benevolence. This devotion is expressed through the offering of blessings to the monarch with grace, elegance, and propriety in accordance with the conventions of Thai classical dance. Performances of this style are typically staged at major public occasions accessible to a broad general audience, and thus serve a significant dual role both aesthetically and as a cultural

medium that conveys the loyalty of the populace toward the monarchy, while fostering public awareness and deep appreciation of the monarch's benevolence toward the nation and its people.



Figure 4-5 Ram Thawai Pra Phon in the Royal Court Ladies style at The Grand Reception on the Occasion of Her Majesty Queen Suthida Bajrasudha Bimalalakshana's Birthday Anniversary
Source: College of Dramatic Arts



Figure 6 Ram Thawai Pra Phon in the Royal Court Ladies style, performed on the Occasion of the Royal Birthday Celebration of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great (Rama IX), The Ubosot of Bovorn Sathan Sutthawas (Wang Na)
Source: College of Dramatic Arts, 1997

2.5 *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* in the Miscellaneous Occasions style for Special Ceremonial Events

This style of Ram Thawai Pra Phon is staged by the College of Dramatic Arts exclusively for occasions of particular ceremonial significance, such as the performance offered in honour of Her Majesty Queen Suthida, in which the conceptual design drew upon the eight royal-style Thai national costumes (Chud Thai) as a defining element. Notably, in 2026 Thai national dress and its associated conventions are slated for UNESCO evaluation as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, lending this integration both cultural resonance and contemporary relevance. The approach further connects to Her Majesty's wearing of royal-style Thai national dress on state visits abroad, which has played a notable role in projecting Thai national identity to an international audience.

In staging *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* within this miscellaneous category, primary consideration should be given to events of national significance or occasions bearing particular weight in honouring the monarchy or expressing reverent gratitude for royal benevolence. The performance's appropriateness must be thoroughly evaluated across context, creative concept, choreographic elements, and cultural convention, so that the resulting work maintains dignity befitting the monarchy and suitability to the occasion.



Figure 7-8 Ram Thawai Pra Phon in the Miscellaneous Occasions Style for Special Ceremonial Events, performed on the Occasion of the Royal Birthday Celebration of Her Majesty Queen Suthida, at the College of Dramatic Arts
Source: College of Dramatic Arts

The Process and Methodology of Creating *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* in the College of Dramatic Arts Tradition

Based on documentary research, interviews, and direct observation, the process of creating Ram Thawai Pra Phon within the College of Dramatic Arts tradition derives its foundational concepts from Lamul Yamakup and Chaloey Sukhavanich, two master teachers of exceptional creative genius in Thai classical dance, whose choreographic principles remain applicable to the present day. This process is divided into three stages, as follows:

1. Preparation for the Creation of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon*

This initial stage involves the preparatory groundwork necessary to produce a work aligned with the occasion's objectives. Essential details to establish at the outset include which member of the royal family is to be honoured, the venue and timing of the performance, and the specific focus underlying that act of offering blessings. Once established, the process proceeds to formulating the conceptual framework and performative form of the *Ram Thawai Pra Phon*.

Formulating the conceptual framework and performative form requires careful consideration of these details together with the intended audience, after which the creative concept is established and the specific style of dance is clearly determined.

2. Choreographic Creation and Staging of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon*

In the creative process of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon*, the College of Dramatic Arts organizes its methodology according to the constituent elements of the performance, with the following detailed stages.

2.1 Composition of the Lyrical Text

The composition of lyrics for *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* may employ a variety of poetic forms, the most common being Glon Su-Paap (standard Thai rhyming poem), owing to its rhythmic flexibility in accommodating melodic setting, tonal emphasis, and phrasing aligned with vocal and instrumental delivery. Once the conceptual framework and objective are established, the creator must begin with the text, even before a specific musical setting is determined. Glon Su-Paap is therefore practically suitable, enabling the poet to arrange language with beauty, concision, and appropriate honorific meaning, while facilitating the musician's arrangement and the singer's clear, melodious, emotionally consistent delivery.

The lyrical composition serves as the central axis determining the framework of meaning, emotional tone, and direction for all other elements of the creative process, oriented toward honouring the monarchy on significant occasions. Effective composition requires attention to language appropriate to royal convention, literary beauty, and the interrelationship between language, music, and choreography, so the text may be conveyed with full, dignified completeness. The composer should therefore possess comprehensive knowledge across literary art, dance, and music.

2.2 Musical Arrangement and Accompanying Ensemble

Musical arrangement refers to setting musical compositions to correspond with the lyrical text - a critical element contributing to the completeness of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon.* The arranger must possess thorough knowledge of both the lyrical composition and Thai classical music, first understanding the work's underlying concept and form so that instrumental and vocal music align with its central meaning, before considering the text's poetic meter and selecting music accordingly. The College of Dramatic Arts typically opens with music in the *Nha-Tub-Probkai* pattern for its slow, gentle tempo, followed by the more measured *Nha-Tub-Song-Mai* pattern, concluding with *Nah-Paht* ceremonial music to convey the sanctity of offering auspicious blessings. The titles and meanings of selected music should carry auspicious connotations appropriate to the occasion and consistent with the performance's purpose.

Regarding the musical ensemble accompanying *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* at the College, the *Pi-phat Mai Nuam* (soft-mallet ensemble) is generally preferred, often supplemented with the *Saw-U* (low-pitched bowed string instrument) for greater melodiousness and refinement in the vocal line. In certain instances, the *Pi-phat Mai Kang* (hard-mallet ensemble) may instead be selected, depending on the melodic character, venue, and context of each occasion, so the accompaniment best supports the performance's atmosphere and meaning.

2.3 Selection of Performers

The selection of performers for *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* at the College of Dramatic Arts involves qualifications encompassing both physical attributes and performative capability. Performers should possess well-proportioned physiques, a solid foundation in Thai classical dance technique, and substantial performance experience, together with strong memory retention and the ability to respond appropriately to unforeseen circumstances. The number of performers is determined according to the occasion, central concept, and performative form: performances honouring King Rama IX typically employ nine performers or pairs, those honouring King Rama X employ ten, and those honouring other royal family members employ nine performers or three or more pairs, depending on context and venue. Performer selection further aligns with the specific characteristics of each style of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon*, as detailed below.

2.3.1 Divine Deity Bestowing and Offering Blessings Style: performers are selected for suitability to their roles, with males trained in *Khon Phra* (masked dance-drama, male roles) and females in *La-Korn Nang* (dance-drama, female roles), final selection depending on the concept and performative elements.

2.3.2 Celestial Beings Style: Female performers are selected with a foundation in *La-Korn Phra Nang* (dance-drama, male and female roles) technique.

2.3.3 Brahmin Couple Style: Female performers are selected with a foundation in *La-Korn Phra Nang* technique.

2.3.4 Royal Court Ladies Style: Female performers are selected with a foundation in *La-Korn Nang* technique, with the capacity to convey the choreographic style exclusively associated with court ladies with grace and refinement.

2.4 Choreographic Creation

The choreographic vocabulary employed in *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* at the College falls into two principal categories: movements derived from textual illustration (*Ti-Bot*, narrative gesture), and movements developed from the foundational repertoire of Thai classical dance, such as slow and fast movement songs, Canonical Thai Dance Songs, and standard *Ra-bam* forms. Such choreography requires specialized expertise and accumulated dance experience, with the choreographer needing deep understanding of classical convention, gestural meaning, and contextual appropriateness to design movements with refinement, accuracy, and dignity befitting the monarchy. Choreography serves as a critical symbolic vehicle for conveying humility, loyalty, and devotion, distinguished chiefly by the *Wai* gesture of respect and the *Thawai Bangkhom* gesture of royal obeisance as core elements.

The research finds that performers typically assume a seated preparatory position before the vocal line begins, with the first verse customarily opening with the *Thawai Bangkhom* gesture-performed three times when honouring the King and Queen, and once for other members of the royal family (Nantha Noinit, Personal Communication, August 12, 2025).

In terms of overall choreographic character, the College emphasizes stillness, smoothness, and restrained movement, with particular attention to seamless continuity between transitions, achieved through subtle shifts blending standard movement vocabulary, gestural language, and textual illustration cohesively. Repetition of identical movements is avoided to preserve continuity, unison, and delicacy, with responsive movements typically following textual illustration in the lyrics and sequenced systematically from smaller to larger gestures, or vice versa (Narumon Na Nakhon, Personal Communication, August 12, 2025). Choreographic design further requires careful avoidance of foot-flexing gestures directed toward royal portraits, alongside consistent incorporation of the *Loh Kaeo* hand gesture (crystal-gesturing thumb-to-middle-finger movement) within the vocabulary (Paphawarin Saengcharoen, Personal Communication, August 12, 2025). Movements set to *Nah-Paht* ceremonial music typically manifest through textual illustration closely synchronized with the accompanying rhythmic pattern (*Nah-Thap*).

A movement of particular significance to the College's institutional identity is the *Yiap-Meu-Yiap-Tao* (hand-and-foot pressing gesture), adapted by Lamul Yamakup and Chaloey Sukhavanich from the dance-drama *Suphalak Um Som* (Kanchanaphat Sutthiprapha, Personal Communication, August 12, 2025) and developed into a sequence distinctive to the College. The gesture carries the symbolic connotation of pledging oneself as a devoted servant of the monarchy, expressed with utmost humility.

2.5 Formation Design

In creating the choreography for *Ram Thawai Pra Phon*, the choreographer must design formation patterns in coordinated correspondence with the movement sequences, ensuring that the performers' movement and use of stage space proceed with unity. *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* in the College of Dramatic Arts tradition exhibits a variety of formation patterns, which may be classified as follows.

2.5.1 Geometric Formations apply visual art principles to formation design, drawing on fundamental elements such as points, lines, and curves, as well as shapes including squares, triangles, and circles, to guide the arrangement of performer lines. This type of formation facilitates choreographic design for larger numbers of performers and results in a balanced, visually beautiful distribution of stage space.

2.5.2 Specialized Formations (Tableau Arrangements) refer to formations arranged as tableaux (*Soom*), clearly demonstrating the choreographer's skill, with varied movement sequences and staggered height arrangements creating dimensional visual beauty. In the College's tradition, such tableaux consistently appear toward the piece's conclusion, immediately preceding the transition into *Nah-Paht* ceremonial music (Kanchanaphat Sutthiprapha, Personal Communication, August 12, 2025), with their scale varying by lyrical context and performer count to further enhance visual interest. Formation changes are executed seamlessly through small shuffling, gliding, or walking steps, producing visual beauty and ease of viewing. Individual, paired, and group patterns are employed in unified coordination, together with adjustments between seated and standing positions, to create focal points and balanced use of stage space.

2.6 Costume Design

Costume design for *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* constitutes a significant element requiring consideration from the earliest stage of the creative process, as costume specifications inform the lyrics, musical arrangement, and choreography in accordance with the performance's underlying concept. Costume colour is determined by the birthday colour associated with the royal family member being honoured for instance, yellow and gold for His Majesty King Rama X, and purple and gold for Her Majesty the Queen with further characteristics varying by style and context, as follows.

2.6.1 Divine Deity Bestowing and Offering Blessings Style: Performers wear full classical court costume (*Yuen Khrueang*) in male and female styles, with colours selected to correspond with the character and status of each role according to the performance's concept and form.

2.6.2 Celestial Beings Style: Performers wear full classical court costume in male and female styles, with crowns (*Mong-kut*) and tiered headdresses (*Cha-da*), with costume colours either paired or rendered in a single uniform colour throughout.

2.6.3 Brahmin Couple Style: Performers wear full Brahmin priest costume (*Phram–Phramani*), specified in white.

2.6.4 Royal Court Ladies Style: Performers may wear one of two costume styles full female court costume with a peaked headdress (*Rat Klao Yot*), or court-lady attire combining a draped sash (*Sa-bai*) with a netted overlay sash (*Sabai-krong*), optionally worn over a long-sleeved, high-collared inner blouse as appropriate. The College of Dramatic Arts typically specifies a single uniform colour throughout to achieve visual unity.

2.7 Performance Props

Performance props for *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* at the College of Dramatic Arts constitute an important element enhancing the performance's symbolic completeness,

with commonly used props silver and gold branches, pink lotus lanterns, crystal lanterns, and small hand fans each carrying connotations of auspiciousness, prosperity, purity, and beauty in accordance with classical convention. Their selection must therefore align with the occasion's purpose, the performative style, the lyrical text, the choreography, the costuming, and the venue's spatial characteristics.

2.8 Rehearsal

The rehearsal process constitutes a critical conduit connecting the creative concept with its scenographic realization, given the genre's demands for unison, refinement, and strict accuracy. Rehearsal serves as the process through which performance quality is refined, divided into the following sequential stages.

2.8.1 Consultation among Specialists, Teachers, and Choreographers: this initial stage is critical in establishing the direction of rehearsal and staging, involving collective consideration of the performance's purpose, occasion, central concept, form, performer count, venue, timeframe, and other related elements, in order to plan the choreography and formation design accordingly.

2.8.2 Structural Choreographic Planning by Specialists: this stage establishes the performance's primary movement framework in relation to the lyrical text, vocal delivery, melody, and rhythm. Specialists consider the meaning of each lyrical phrase to determine appropriate movements, sequencing them for continuity and conformity with classical convention encompassing entrance and exit points, directional movement, vertical positioning, and key positions within formation changes.

2.8.3 Transmission of Choreography to Performers: during this stage, specialists and supervising teachers transmit detailed movements and stylistic nuances to performers, ensuring accurate execution according to convention, while formation changes and positioning are tested and adjusted with attention to visual balance, sightlines, and unison.

2.8.4 Rehearsal for Refinement of the Performance: this stage develops the dance toward greater refinement, beauty, and unity, with the supervising teacher continuously evaluating choreographic detail, rhythmic unison, emotional expression, and movement direction, correcting deficiencies as identified so performers may convey the lyrical and musical meaning with beauty and appropriateness.

2.8.5 Full Dress Rehearsal: this stage involves an overall assessment of performance readiness, potentially including a partial costume trial with one or two principal performers to assess costumes, ornaments, props, and ease of movement. It further verifies the relationship between performers, music, lighting, sound, stage space, the positioning of royal

portraits, and the sequence of entrances and exits, playing a critical role in confirming the performance's completeness and appropriateness prior to the actual occasion.

2.9 Staging of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon*

The staging of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* represents the culminating stage demonstrating the achievement of the entire creative process from conceptual formulation, lyrical composition, and musical arrangement, through choreography, formation planning, costuming, and props, to systematic rehearsal. Staging is the process through which the values of Thai classical dance, loyalty, and reverent gratitude for royal benevolence are conveyed with refinement through movement, music, and lyrics. Prior to staging, careful verification of readiness is essential across all elements performance sequence, performer readiness, costumes, props, and the coordination of music, lighting, sound, and stage space particularly given the genre's frequent involvement of significant ceremonial occasions and royal portraits. A successful staging must achieve aesthetic beauty, conformity with convention, and appropriateness to its purpose, sustaining the performance's artistic and cultural value while conveying its meaning of honouring the monarchy.

3. Evaluation of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon*

Following the execution, the College convenes a post-performance appraisal comprising specialists, faculty, and key institutional stakeholders, evaluating the holistic integration and structural fidelity of all elements relative to the ceremonial context. The resulting insights are leveraged to optimize future iterations, serving as a mechanism for the intergenerational transfer of expertise and the consolidation of knowledge in Thai classical dance. This process reflects a core institutional identity of the College its steadfast commitment to refinement, established convention, cultural transmission, and the continuous development of creative work in a manner dignified and appropriate to each occasion.

Conclusion

Ram Thawai Pra Phon constitutes a newly created form of Thai classical dance, composed to honour or offer blessings on significant occasions associated with the monarchy, characterised by beauty and refinement across all its constituent elements. The College of Dramatic Arts has been entrusted by the Thai government to continuously stage this dance at significant national occasions, giving rise to a distinctive, crystallized body of knowledge specific to the College's tradition.

This article has aimed to systematically investigate this knowledge, presenting the forms and guiding principles underlying its creation within the College's tradition.

Although performatively classified within the *Ra-bam* (group dance) category, *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* is conventionally designated by the term "*Ram*." The College of Dramatic Arts stages this genre in five distinct styles: the Divine Deity Bestowing and Offering

Blessings style, the Celestial Beings style, the Brahmin Couple style, the Royal Court Ladies style, and the Miscellaneous Occasions style, with selection determined by the context and constraints of each state ceremony.

The process of creating comprises three stages:

1. Preparation for Creation: this stage involves the preparatory groundwork necessary to produce a work aligned with the occasion's objectives, establishing which royal family member is to be honoured, the venue, timing, and specific focus of the act of offering blessings, before formulating the conceptual framework and performative form.

2. Choreographic Creation and Staging: the College organizes its methodology according to the performance's constituent elements, comprising composition of the lyrical text, musical arrangement and ensemble, performer selection, choreographic creation, formation design, costume design, performance props, rehearsal, and staging.

3. Evaluation: the College conducts an evaluation involving specialists, teachers, and other stakeholders to assess the overall completeness of all elements relative to the ceremonial context. The findings inform the improvement of future performances and transmit experience to emerging practitioners, contributing to the continued consolidation of knowledge in Thai classical dance at the College.

The defining identity of *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* in the College of Dramatic Arts tradition is manifested in its refinement, composure, and strict adherence to convention through standard movement vocabulary, gestural language, textual illustration, the *Wai* gesture of respect, the *Thawai Bangkhom* gesture of royal obeisance, and unified formation changes, together with specialized sequences transmitted from master teachers and developed into distinguishing features of the College's tradition. The performance's beauty lies in conveying profound meaning through reverence, humility, and dignity befitting the monarchy, reflecting the College's pivotal mandate as a primary vanguard for the preservation and evolutionary development of Thai classical dance.

The academic contribution of this study lies in its systematic documentation, analysis, and organization of knowledge concerning *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* in the College of Dramatic Arts tradition. The findings contribute to the study of Thai classical dance from both aesthetic and creative perspectives by clarifying the underlying concepts, performance practices, and criteria for appropriateness that are grounded in expert knowledge and professional experience. The knowledge presented in this study may serve as a practical reference for choreographers and practitioners involved in creating *Ram Thawai Pra Phon* and other ceremonial Thai classical dance performances. Its application should emphasize adherence

to the conventions of Thai classical dance, appropriateness to the occasion, and the preservation of royal dignity, while allowing for creative adaptation to contemporary social contexts. Such an approach supports the preservation, transmission, and sustainable development of Thai classical dance.

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KNOWLEDGE SYNTHESIS FROM THE CREATION OF THE THAI CLASSICAL DANCE PERFORMANCE "RAM CHOM SIN"

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Abstract

This research aimed to synthesize the knowledge gained from the creation of the Thai classical dance performance Ram Chom Sin. A qualitative research approach was employed. Data were collected through a review of academic literature on Thai literature and dance, unstructured interviews with two experts and master artists, and participant observation during the documentation of dance movements taught by the master artists. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis.The findings showed that Ram Chom Sin is a new form of nature-admiration dance that presents the underwater world as the main theme while preserving the conventions of traditional Thai classical dance. The creative process followed a systematic choreographic approach. The major knowledge findings include creating dance based on Thai literary heritage, transferring tacit knowledge from master artists, using performing arts to communicate marine conservation, and integrating aesthetic, cultural, and educational values.

The knowledge synthesis identified 13 key themes: (1) new aesthetic dance creation, (2) creation based on Thai literature, (3) a systematic creative process, (4) knowledge transfer from master artists, (5) choreography design, (6) costume and scenic design, (7) dance as a medium for environmental communication, (8) the relationship between humans and nature, (9) aesthetic values, (10) educational and cultural values, (11) evaluation of creative work, (12) dissemination and extension of knowledge, and (13) knowledge creation in Thai classical dance. These findings demonstrate that Ram Chom Sin has expanded the concept of nature-admiration dance and generated new knowledge with aesthetic, academic, cultural, and environmental value. The synthesized knowledge can serve as a practical framework for future creative dance production and practice-based research in contemporary Thai classical dance.

Keywords: knowledge synthesis, creative dance, Ram Chom Sin, choreography, Thai classical dance

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Introduction

Nature-admiration dance (Ram Chom Thammachat) is a traditional form of Thai classical dance that portrays and celebrates the beauty of nature. It depicts the appreciation of flowers, trees, animals, and celestial objects, such as the stars in the night sky. In addition to describing natural scenery, this dance tradition employs metaphor and symbolism to express the performers' affection, admiration, or emotional connection toward a loved one. Nature-admiration dance appears in several forms of Thai classical theatre, including Khon and Lakhon Ram, such as Inao Chom Dong (Inao Admiring the Forest), Phra Lo Chom Suan (Phra Lo Admiring the Garden), Inao Chom Pa (Inao Admiring the Woodland), and Phra Samut Chom Dao (Phra Samut Admiring the Stars).

The performance is characterized by interpretive dance movements that closely correspond to the lyrics while integrating extended and transitional movements to achieve choreographic continuity and aesthetic refinement. The interpretation of each movement must accurately reflect the characteristics of the natural elements being portrayed, including the relative height and form of trees, flowers, and other features of the landscape. At the same time, the choreography conveys the beauty, emotions, and symbolic expressions of the character, allowing the audience to engage with the dramatic narrative. Throughout the performance, dancers move through different scenic locations as the character encounters various elements of nature, such as flowers, trees, lotus ponds, and birds. Consequently, performers require a high level of technical skill in Thai classical dance to communicate these scenes convincingly and to create a complete theatrical atmosphere.

For an international research article, this passage can be written in a more formal academic style as follows:

According to Rattiya Wiksitphong (2024), Chom Sin presents an innovative concept by drawing upon the character Sin Samut, an important figure from Sunthorn Phu's literary masterpiece Phra Aphai Mani. The integration of marine conservation concepts further enhances the significance and contemporary relevance of the performance.

Ratchana Phuangprayong (2024) observed that the performance successfully combines the essential themes of Phra Aphai Mani with the creator's imagination, resulting in a new artistic work that effectively communicates the narrative through the character of Sin Samut. The performance is suitable for public dissemination, particularly among young audiences, who can learn about Thai classical literature through an engaging performing arts medium.

Supachai Chansuwan (2024) noted that no previous dance performance has focused specifically on the appreciation of underwater nature. Therefore, Chom Sin may be regarded

as a new creative contribution to Thai dance. The work integrates literary narratives from Phra Aphai Mani with imaginative interpretations of marine environments, aquatic plants, and marine life. Through metaphorical representation, the performance associates these observations with the love and emotional bonds between Sin Samut and his parents, Phra Aphai Mani and Nang Phisuea Samut. The dramatic pursuit and battle between Sin Samut and a whale shark further enrich the narrative structure and enhance audience engagement.

Patchara Buathong (2024) similarly emphasized that underwater nature-admiration dance has not previously appeared in the form of a solo dance performance. Existing portrayals generally focus on journeys across the sea surface undertaken by characters such as Phra Aphai Mani and Sin Samut. Consequently, Chom Sin represents a novel creative work that highlights the innocence, curiosity, and wonder of a child exploring unfamiliar marine environments and coastal landscapes.

This gap inspired the creation of the Thai classical dance performance Ram Chom Sin. The creative work was intentionally developed within the framework of the Thai nature-admiration dance tradition (Ram Chom Thammachat), while extending its thematic scope to the underwater world. The creative boundaries of the project were therefore defined by the aesthetic principles and conventions of Thai classical dance, with the objective of developing a new form of nature-admiration dance.

The creative dance performance Chom Sin is structured as a dance portraying the admiration of nature through the perspective of a dramatic character. The work emphasizes aesthetic dimensions of dance, music, and literary arts while incorporating technological knowledge and innovative approaches into the creative process. The performance employs metaphorical and imaginative representations of the character's observations of the natural world, associating them with the parental love and affection experienced by Sin Samut. In addition, the production aims to disseminate performing arts knowledge and promote public awareness of marine conservation. It is anticipated that Chom Sin will contribute to the body of knowledge concerning creative dance production and enhance appreciation of dance and musical arts among scholars, practitioners, and audiences interested in the performing arts.

The performance is organized into three sections. The first section, The Birth of the Child, introduces the principal character, background information, and the narrative connections that establish the storyline. The second section, Sin Samut Admiring the Ocean, depicts swimming, diving, and observing marine life and aquatic plants beneath the sea. Through poetic imagery and metaphorical expression, the character reflects upon the love and care of his parents. The third section, The Battle of the Sea Giant, portrays the physical strength and bravery of Sin Samut as he pursues,

confronts, and battles a giant shark. This section emphasizes choreographic combat techniques between human and aquatic creatures through the integration of puppetry, martial movement vocabulary, and aerial techniques derived from Khon performance traditions.

Studies that synthesize knowledge from creative works have received increasing attention within the field of fine and performing arts. Research focusing on dance creation within cultural contexts has demonstrated that the analysis and synthesis of practical experiences can generate new knowledge and contribute systematically to the development of creative principles in dance practice (Thiraphatchai, 2024). Therefore, the article entitled "Ram Chom Sin: Knowledge Synthesis from the Creation of a Creative Dance Performance" aims to present the knowledge derived from the creative process of the work, encompassing conceptual foundations, creative methodologies, and artistic outcomes. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for future creative productions, practice-based arts research, and the advancement of knowledge in Thai dance and performing arts.

Purpose of study

To Synthesize Knowledge Derived from the Creation of the Creative Dance Performance *Ram Chom Sin*.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach. Data were collected through document review, interviews, participant and non-participant observation, and focus group discussion. The collected data were analyzed and synthesized using descriptive analysis. The procedures were as follows:

1. Document Analysis

Academic sources, including books, textbooks, scholarly articles, research reports, and theses related to Thai classical dance, choreography, literature, and Ram Chom Thammachat (Nature Appreciation Dance), were reviewed. The information was classified according to the research objectives and analyzed to establish the conceptual framework for knowledge synthesis.

2. Observation

Two observation methods were employed:

Participant observation: The researcher received direct transmission of dance movements for the role of Sinsamut from two master artists who had previously performed the role in the Lakhon Nok production of Phra Aphai Mani:

(1) Associate Professor Dr. Supachai Chansuwan, National Artist in Performing Arts (Thai Dance), B.E. 2548 (2005); and

(2) Mrs.Patchara Buathong, retired Thai classical dancer from the Office of Performing Arts, Fine Arts Department.

Non-participant observation: The researcher observed video recordings of the creative dance performance Ram Chom Sin to examine its choreography, performance structure, and artistic elements.

3. Interviews

Informal, unstructured interviews were conducted with experts in Thai classical dance to obtain insights into the meanings, performance forms, and choreographic principles of Ram Chom Thammachat. The interview data were used to support the interpretation and synthesis of knowledge.

4. Focus Group Discussion

A focus group was conducted with seven distinguished experts in Thai dance, Thai music, and Thai vocal arts to validate the research findings and synthesized knowledge. The panel consisted of National Artists and specialists from the Bunditpatanasilpa Institute and the Fine Arts Department, whose professional expertise contributed to the credibility and refinement of the synthesized knowledge.

5. Data Analysis and Knowledge Synthesis

Data obtained from documents, observations, interviews, and the focus group discussion were systematically classified and categorized according to the research objectives. Content analysis was then conducted to identify key concepts, recurring themes, and relationships among the data. The findings from all sources were integrated through qualitative knowledge synthesis to generate new knowledge derived from the creative process of Ram Chom Sin. The results are presented using descriptive analytical methods.

Research Instruments

The instruments used for data collection consisted of: (1) unstructured interview forms, (2) focus group discussion recording forms, (3) satisfaction assessment forms, and (4) observation forms.

Result

1. Creation of a New Aesthetic Dance Performance

The creative work Chom Sin demonstrates the development of a new aesthetic dance performance through a systematic process involving creativity, artistic understanding, and structured artistic practice. The objective was to create a performance that possesses artistic excellence while contributing to both the professional field of performing arts and society.

During the creative process, the creator examined existing Thai dance performances within the tradition of Ram Chom (admiration dance), including Ram Chom Dao (Admiring the Stars), Ram Chom Dong (Admiring the Forest), and Ram Chom Suan (Admiring the Garden). The study revealed that no

existing performance specifically portrayed the admiration of underwater landscapes, marine plants, or aquatic life. This identified gap became the principal inspiration for developing a new creative dance work entitled Chom Sin.

These findings correspond with the concept proposed by Virulrak (2004), who suggested that creative production requires both factual information and inspirational sources. Factual information provides the foundation for conceptual development, whereas inspiration derived from dance, visual arts, music, and literature stimulates imagination and facilitates artistic innovation. Likewise, Kitchakhan et al. (2021) argued that creative dance performances should present distinctive content and avoid repetition or imitation of previous works. New performances may emerge from unexplored actions, events, or characters found in literary sources.

In summary, Chom Sin is an original aesthetic dance creation developed from the foundations of Thai dance traditions, particularly the genre of nature-admiration dance. The performance reinterprets narratives derived from Sunthorn Phu's poetic literature and the Fine Arts Department's dramatic adaptation of Phra Aphai Mani. The choreography, narrative structure, and character development were designed to align with the characters' backgrounds and dramatic circumstances while maintaining the traditional principles of nature-admiration dance. As a result, Chom Sin represents a new aesthetic performance that expands the artistic dimensions of nature-admiration dance within Thai performing arts and contributes a new creative perspective to contemporary Thai dance practice.



Figure 1 Study of the Prototype Dance Movements for the Character of Sin Samut from a Master Artist

From: Researcher



Figure 2 Study of the Prototype Dance Movements for the Character of Sin Samut from a Master Artist

From: Researcher

Ram Chom Dao (Admiring the Stars)

Ram Chom Dong (Admiring the Forest), and Ram Chom Suan (Admiring the Garden).

Ram Chom Sin (Admiring the Underwater dance)



Figure 3 Chom Sin: A creative dance performance representing a new aesthetic creation based on the foundations of traditional Thai dance. The work introduces a new dimension of nature-admiration dance within Thai performing arts through the portrayal of the underwater world and marine environments.

From: Researcher

1. Systematic Creative Skills in Dance Production

The creative dance performance Chom Sin demonstrates systematic creative skills in dance production. Such skills refer to the ability to develop dance works through structured concepts and methodologies governed by clear principles and controllable processes. This process involves research, experimentation, practice, and continuous refinement to create artistic works that possess aesthetic value and effectively reflect creative thinking.

The systematic creative process employed in Chom Sin corresponds with the concept of choreography proposed by Virulrak (2004, p. 225), who defines choreography as the principles and methods of bodily movement for dance performance. Choreography encompasses information gathering, inspiration, innovative design and construction, conceptualization of content and form, movement development, musical analysis, and the integration of performance elements such as scenery, costumes, lighting, sound, stage properties, performer selection, and rehearsal processes. The systematic creative skills demonstrated in Chom Sin may be summarized as follows:

1.1 Development of the Performance Concept

The development of the performance concept constitutes a fundamental stage in determining the direction and content of the entire production. A well-defined concept provides clarity, artistic coherence, and effective communication with audiences.

1.2 Determination of the Performance Format

The establishment of the performance format is another essential stage in designing and planning a production. A clearly defined format provides structural organization and ensures consistency with the conceptual framework. It also contributes to the distinctive identity of the work and enhances its communicative effectiveness.

1.3 Design and Creation of Performance Elements

The design and creation of performance elements are crucial processes that bring vitality to the performance and facilitate the communication of ideas and emotions. These elements include the following:

1) Lyric Composition and Musical Arrangement

The composition of lyrics and the arrangement of music constitute important processes in creating meaningful musical works that convey emotions and correspond to the conceptual framework of the performance. These processes require linguistic proficiency, musical knowledge, and creative imagination.

2) Music Composition

The musical score for Chom Sin was created through the integration of traditional Thai music and synthesized electronic sounds. This creative process combined artistic expression and technical expertise to produce a distinctive musical identity capable of effectively communicating emotions and conceptual meanings. The creation of new lyrics, musical arrangements, and contemporary melodic structures required both creative imagination and advanced musical skills working in harmony.

3) Choreographic Design

The choreographic design of Chom Sin involved the integration of movement aesthetics, emotional expression, and symbolic communication. The choreographic development process began with the study of movement models associated with the character Sin Samut under the guidance of Associate Professor Dr. Supachai Chansuwan, National Artist, and Patchara Buathong, former dancer of the Office of Performing Arts, Fine Arts Department. These movement models served as the foundation for developing the choreography of the performance.

4) Performer Selection

Performer selection represents a critical stage in achieving a successful dance production. Selection criteria included technical dance proficiency, physical suitability, expressive capability, and overall appropriateness for the performance requirements. The performers in Chom Sin were selected according to predetermined qualifications.

5) Costume Design

Costume design is a creative discipline that integrates artistic imagination, traditional conventions, and practical functionality. Costumes were designed to align with the conceptual framework and artistic style of the performance while supporting character representation and visual aesthetics.

6) Scenic Design and Special Effects

Scenic design and special effects constitute significant components of theatrical production. These elements contribute to the creation of atmosphere, emotional expression, and narrative realism. In Chom Sin, stage design and special effects were employed to enhance the visual representation of the underwater environment and to strengthen audience engagement with the performance narrative.

2. Transmission of Dance Movements from Expert Knowledge and Master Artists

The creative dance performance Chom Sin was developed through the integration of knowledge acquired from experts, distinguished scholars, and academic sources, resulting

in a new creative dance production. The creative process was particularly informed by two master artists: Associate Professor Dr. Supachai Chansuwan, National Artist, and Mr. Patchara Buathong, former dancer of the Office of Performing Arts, Fine Arts Department. Their specialized expertise and methods of knowledge transmission represent Tacit Knowledge, which refers to knowledge embedded within individuals through accumulated experience and professional practice. Such knowledge is often intangible and derived from personal experience, talent, intuition, and artistic insight. It is transmitted primarily through practical demonstration rather than written documentation. Consequently, the artistic and pedagogical experiences of these master artists constitute a valuable repository of knowledge embodied in their professional practice.

The creation of Chom Sin involved the transmission of dance movements from these master artists, particularly movements associated with the character Sin Samut in the traditional Lakhon Nok performance of Phra Aphai Mani. These movements served as the primary choreographic foundation for the new production. The movement vocabulary studied and inherited from the master artists represents Tacit Knowledge accumulated through many years of performing the role of Sin Samut. As a result, the choreographic materials incorporated into the performance embody the distinctive identity and characteristics of the character and preserve important aspects of traditional performance knowledge.

3. Dance Drama as a Medium for Promoting Awareness of Marine and Fish Conservation

Dance drama is an effective medium for communicating issues related to marine and fish conservation because it conveys emotions, ideas, and values through movement, music, lyrics, and visual staging. These artistic elements enable audiences to develop a deeper understanding of environmental concerns and foster emotional engagement with conservation issues.

Dance drama is particularly suitable as a conservation medium because it reaches audiences on an emotional level. Performances enable viewers to connect with environmental narratives more readily than scientific information alone. Furthermore, artistic presentations contribute to long-term memory retention, allowing important messages to remain with audiences beyond the performance itself. Dance drama is also accessible to audiences of all ages, including children, adults, and local communities, thereby encouraging broad participation and understanding.

In addition, dance drama promotes cultural values while simultaneously fostering environmental awareness. The creative dance performance Chom Sin integrates traditional

Thai dance aesthetics with concepts of marine conservation, creating opportunities for audiences to learn about both cultural heritage and environmental responsibility.

This finding is consistent with the view of Krungkaew (2020, p. 3), who argued that dance drama can serve as an effective instrument for cultivating environmental awareness among youth and the general public. Through artistic representation, audiences can gain a better understanding of issues such as waste disposal, marine environmental degradation, impacts on human health, and the sustainability of marine tourism. Moreover, the ethical and moral lessons embedded within dance drama can be applied to everyday life and contribute to broader social and national development.

4. Aesthetic Values of the Creative Work

Aesthetic creativity possesses value across multiple dimensions, including emotional, intellectual, cultural, social, and economic domains. The principal values identified in the creative work may be summarized as follows:

1) Emotional and Psychological Value

Creative works generate enjoyment, satisfaction, and emotional fulfillment. Artistic expressions such as dance, music, literature, and film can evoke appreciation, happiness, and emotional engagement. They also contribute to psychological well-being by alleviating stress, sadness, and emotional distress while stimulating imagination and inspiration.

2) Intellectual and Educational Value

Aesthetic works encourage creativity and innovative thinking by inspiring new perspectives and ideas. They also enhance analytical and interpretive skills, enabling audiences to engage critically with artistic content. Furthermore, creative works communicate philosophical concepts, ethical principles, and broader perspectives on life in meaningful and accessible ways.

3) Cultural and Social Value

Artistic creations preserve and communicate cultural heritage. They function as cultural records that maintain national identity and transmit traditions across generations. In addition, the arts foster intercultural understanding by serving as a medium through which people from different cultural backgrounds can communicate and appreciate one another. Artistic works may also contribute to social awareness and social transformation.

4) Economic Value

Creative works support the development of cultural and creative industries. Dance, music, film, and design contribute to economic growth through employment generation and

income creation. Cultural performances and artistic activities can stimulate tourism and strengthen local economies by attracting visitors and creating opportunities for artists, designers, performers, and cultural entrepreneurs.

5) Social Value

Aesthetic creativity contributes significantly to human life and social development. Beyond providing beauty and entertainment, creative works promote environmental awareness, encourage civic responsibility, strengthen cultural networks, and foster collaboration among individuals and communities engaged in arts and cultural activities. In the case of Chom Sin, the performance demonstrates how creative dance can simultaneously advance artistic appreciation and environmental consciousness.

5. The Relationship Between Humans and Natural Resources and the Environment

The creative dance performance Chom Sin reflects the long-standing relationship between humans and natural resources. Human existence is closely connected to the natural environment, as natural resources provide essential necessities for life, including food, water, air, and energy. At the same time, human beings play a crucial role in either preserving or disrupting environmental balance. Through its portrayal of the marine ecosystem, Chom Sin emphasizes the interdependence between humans and nature and highlights the importance of environmental stewardship and sustainable resource conservation.

6. Reflection on Quality Evaluation and Recommendations from Experts and Audiences

In the creation and presentation of artistic works, including dance productions, performances, and socially oriented projects, quality evaluation and feedback from experts and audiences play a significant role in the refinement, improvement, and further development of creative concepts. Constructive feedback serves as an important mechanism for enhancing the quality and impact of creative works. Openness to evaluation and the incorporation of recommendations enable artistic productions to reach their target audiences more effectively and generate meaningful value for society.

The quality assessment of the creative dance performance Chom Sin was conducted by seven experts. The results indicated the highest level of satisfaction in five areas:

The creative concept was comprehensive, engaging, and well aligned with the performance, with a mean score of 4.86.

The performance format demonstrated aesthetic beauty, originality, and artistic appeal, with a mean score of 4.71.

Costumes and makeup were aesthetically pleasing and appropriately aligned with the performance concept and style, with a mean score of 5.00.

The performance promoted awareness of marine and fish conservation and contributed to tourism promotion, with a mean score of 4.57.

The creative work contributed significantly to the field of Thai dance studies, with a mean score of 4.86.

The experts reported a high level of satisfaction in five additional areas:

The music and lyrics were melodious and creatively aligned with the performance concept, with a mean score of 4.14.

The stage properties and performance equipment were aesthetically appropriate and consistent with the artistic concept, with a mean score of 4.29.

The performers effectively conveyed emotions in accordance with the performance concept, with a mean score of 4.29.

The choreography was aesthetically refined, clearly reflected the identity of the character Sin Samut, and was well integrated with the musical composition, with a mean score of 4.43.

The performance demonstrated unity and coherence throughout its structure, with a mean score of 4.43.

The overall evaluation across all assessment criteria yielded a mean score of 4.54, indicating the highest level of overall satisfaction.

7. Knowledge Extension and the Creation of Academic Exchange Platforms at the National Level

The extension of knowledge and the establishment of academic exchange platforms are essential factors in the development of a knowledge-based society and the generation of innovation across disciplines. Appropriate academic forums facilitate the dissemination of knowledge, encourage creative thinking, and promote the practical application of research outcomes.

The significance of knowledge extension and academic exchange includes the following:

1) Knowledge Dissemination – Knowledge generated from various sources can be transferred to students, researchers, and the general public.

2) Research and Innovation Development – Academic exchange stimulates new ideas and supports the development of knowledge that can be applied in practical contexts.

3) Academic Networking – It promotes collaboration among researchers, organizations, and educational institutions.

4) Interdisciplinary Learning – It creates opportunities for scholars from diverse disciplines to exchange perspectives, methodologies, and experiences.

The creative dance performance Chom Sin contributed to academic knowledge extension through the presentation of the research paper entitled "The Development of Concepts and Performance Structure in the Creative Dance Production Chom Sin." The paper was presented at the 8th National Research Conference and the 7th International Research Conference of Bunditpatanasilpa Institute under the theme "Multidisciplinary Arts in the Dimension of Soft Power," held on 20–21 August 2024 at the Faculty of Art Education, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts.

The presentation received the Outstanding Research Presentation Award in Dance, demonstrating the value of disseminating creative and scholarly knowledge through academic forums. Such activities contribute to the advancement, application, and sustainability of knowledge while fostering continuous development within society and the performing arts discipline.



Figure 4 Certificate of Outstanding Research Presentation Award in Dance.
From: Researcher



Figure 5 Copyright Notification Certificate for the Creative Dance Performance Chom Sin, Registered as an Audiovisual Work, Registration No. S.019625.
From: Researcher

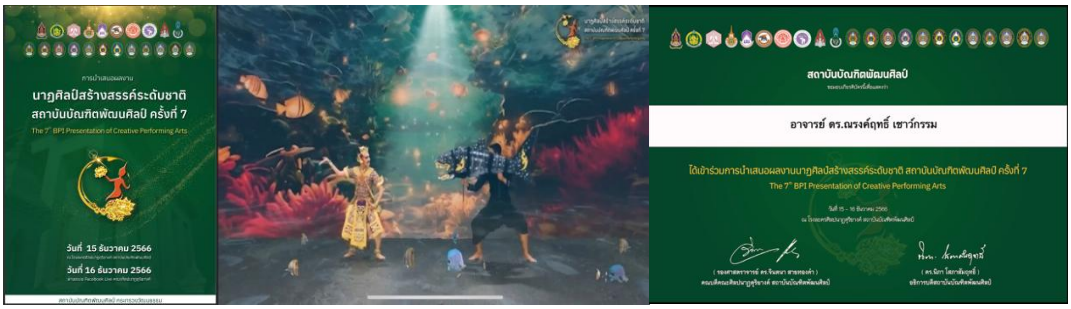


Figure 6 The 7th BPI Presentation of Creative Performing Arts
From: Researcher

Table 1 Knowledge Synthesis from the Creation of the Thai Classical Dance Performance "Ram Chom Sin"

No.	Knowledge Synthesis Themes	Key Knowledge Findings	Outcomes
1	Creation of a New Aesthetic Dance Performance	Development of the traditional nature-admiration dance genre into an underwater nature-admiration dance performance, using the character Sin Samut as the central narrative figure.	Creation of a new creative dance performance that expands the scope and artistic possibilities of nature-admiration dance within the tradition of Thai classical dance.
2	Creation Based on Thai Classical Literature	The narrative of *Phra Aphai Mani* was analyzed, interpreted, and transformed into a creative dance performance.	Extension of Thailand's literary heritage into a contemporary dance production.
3	Systematic Creative Process	The creative process incorporated data collection, concept development, performance design, component creation, and evaluation procedures.	Development of a structured creative framework for dance production that can be adapted and applied in future creative works
4	Transmission of Knowledge from Master Artists	Knowledge was transmitted through direct practical instruction from experts and National Artists.	Preservation and continuation of Tacit Knowledge within the field of Thai performing arts.

No.	Knowledge Synthesis Themes	Key Knowledge Findings	Outcomes
5	Choreographic Design	Dance movements were developed from the original movement vocabulary associated with the character Sin Samut, integrating traditional Thai dance conventions with contemporary imagination.	Creation of new choreographic sequences that maintain the distinctive identity of the character while expanding artistic expression.
6	Costume and Scenic Design	Costumes and stage settings were designed to correspond with the underwater environment and the characteristics of the characters.	Enhanced the unity of the performance and enriched the audience's imaginative experience.
7	Dance and Environmental Communication	Dance drama was employed as a medium to promote awareness of marine conservation and the protection of aquatic species.	Audiences gained environmental knowledge and awareness through an artistic communication process.
8	The Relationship Between Humans and Nature	The performance presented the value and significance of marine resources through the narrative of Sin Samut.	Fostered awareness and understanding of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.
9	Aesthetic Values	The creative work generated beauty, enjoyment, and emotional experiences for audiences.	Promoted artistic appreciation and enhanced aesthetic awareness.

No.	Knowledge Synthesis Themes	Key Knowledge Findings	Outcomes
10	Educational and Cultural Values	The performance transmitted knowledge of Thai literature, Thai dance traditions, and social values.	Supported learning processes and contributed to the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage.
11	Evaluation of Creative Work Quality	The performance underwent evaluation by distinguished experts and received ratings at the highest level of satisfaction.	Confirmed the quality, effectiveness, and credibility of the creative work.
12	Dissemination and Extension of Knowledge	The creative work was presented at national and international academic conferences.	Facilitated academic exchange and expanded knowledge dissemination to wider audiences.
13	Knowledge Creation in Thai Dance	Thai literature, traditional dance conventions, performing arts practices, and contemporary issues were integrated into a unified creative framework.	Generated new knowledge for the development of contemporary Thai dance and creative performance practices.

From: Researcher

The knowledge synthesis revealed that Chom Sin is a newly developed nature-admiration dance performance that transforms the underwater world into a creative performance narrative while maintaining the foundations of traditional Thai dance conventions. The creative work was developed through a systematic choreographic process, beginning with conceptual research and continuing through the design of all performance components.

The production incorporated knowledge transmitted from master artists and experts, which was subsequently developed into original choreographic movements reflecting the distinctive identity of the character Sin Samut. The performance also demonstrates the potential of dance as a medium for communicating issues related to marine resource conservation and promoting environmental awareness among audiences. Consequently, Chom Sin generates aesthetic, academic, and cultural value while contributing new knowledge that can serve as a foundation for future developments in creative Thai dance and performing arts.

Conclusions

Traditional Thai Nature Appreciation Dance (Ram Chom Thammachat) has long appeared in forms such as Ram Chom Dao (admiring the stars), Ram Chom Suan (admiring the garden), and Ram Chom Dong (admiring the forest). However, no performance depicting the appreciation of the underwater world has been identified. This gap inspired the creation of the creative Thai classical dance performance Ram Chom Sin, which was developed within the tradition of Thai Nature Appreciation Dance while extending its scope to the marine environment.

Ram Chom Sin is a creative dance performance that expands the concept of traditional nature appreciation by presenting the beauty of the underwater world through the character Sinsamut from the Thai literary masterpiece Phra Aphai Mani. The creative process followed a systematic choreographic methodology, including concept development, performance design, choreography, musical composition, costume design, stage design, and the integration of special theatrical techniques.

The performance was developed from four principal concepts.

1. A new form of Nature Appreciation Dance. Existing Thai performances include appreciation of forests, gardens, stars, and landscapes, but no underwater nature appreciation dance has previously been documented. Although Phra Aphai Mani contains scenes describing marine life, these scenes depict fish appearing on the sea surface through the characters Phra Aphai Mani and the Mermaid, rather than an exploration of the underwater world.

2. The literary character Sinsamut. Sinsamut, the son of Phra Aphai Mani and Nang Phisuea Samut, is a half-human, half-giant prince whose background provides a meaningful narrative for portraying the underwater environment.

3. Marine conservation. The performance draws inspiration from the strong connection between Phra Aphai Mani and the sea, using the literary narrative to communicate awareness of marine resource conservation.

4. The beauty of Thailand's marine environment. The creative concept was further inspired by the international recognition of Thai beaches. According to the **World Beach Guide ranking, Top 100 Beaches on Earth 2023, five beaches in Thailand were listed among the world's best, reflecting the outstanding beauty of the country's coastal resources.

The performance emphasizes the aesthetic integration of Thai classical dance, Thai music, and Thai literary arts, while incorporating technology and innovative stage production. Through poetic symbolism and metaphor, the underwater scenery is associated with the love and affection of Sinsamut's parents, creating both emotional depth and environmental awareness. The work aims to disseminate Thai performing arts while promoting public awareness of marine conservation.

The performance consists of three scenes:

Scene 1: The Birth of the Prince introduces the principal characters, their backgrounds, and the literary context.

Scene 2: Sinsamut's Underwater Journey presents swimming, diving, and the appreciation of marine life and underwater plants, while expressing metaphorical reflections on parental love.

Scene 3: The Battle of the Sea Giant portrays Sinsamut's strength as he pursues and battles a giant whale shark through a combination of Thai classical dance, puppet manipulation, traditional battle choreography, and aerial techniques adapted from Khon performance.

The production features one male dancer portraying Sinsamut and one puppeteer operating the whale shark puppet. Sinsamut's costume follows the traditional Phra Kumar style, featuring a short-sleeved royal costume in blue with gold trim, a princely crown with a topknot, and facial makeup based on the conventional giant character of Thai dance drama. The puppeteer wears a black costume to minimize visual distraction.

The musical accompaniment combines a Piphat Khrueang Ha ensemble with electronic instruments and synthesized sounds. Traditional Thai songs, narrative melodies, and battle music were selected to match the character's age, the underwater setting, and the dramatic progression of the performance.

The stage employs chroma key technology to create realistic beach and underwater scenery, while a whale shark puppet serves as the principal stage prop during the final battle sequence.

The performance possesses five distinctive characteristics: (1) the creation of a new underwater Nature Appreciation Dance within Thai classical dance; (2) the use of X-shaped spatial movement patterns; (3) the integration of Thai dance and puppetry; (4) the use of performing arts to

promote environmental and marine conservation awareness; and (5) the use of literary metaphor and symbolism throughout the performance.

The knowledge synthesis identified thirteen key themes: (1) the creation of a new aesthetic dance performance, (2) the adaptation of Thai literature as a creative foundation, (3) a systematic creative process, (4) the transmission of knowledge from master artists, (5) choreographic design, (6) costume and stage design, (7) the use of dance to communicate environmental issues, (8) the representation of the relationship between humans and nature, (9) aesthetic values, (10) educational and cultural values, (11) quality evaluation of the creative work, (12) academic dissemination and knowledge extension, and (13) the development of new knowledge in Thai classical dance.

The findings demonstrate that Thai classical dance can function as an effective medium for communicating marine conservation, promoting environmental awareness, and integrating artistic, cultural, educational, and social values. Furthermore, Ram Chom Sin serves as a model of practice-based creative research that contributes new knowledge to Thai performing arts and provides a framework for the future development of contemporary Thai classical dance.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Ram Chom Sin contributes new knowledge to Thai classical dance by extending the traditional concept of Ram Chom Thammachat (Nature Appreciation Dance). Traditional performances generally portray the beauty of forests, gardens, and the night sky, such as Ram Chom Dong, Ram Chom Suan, and Ram Chom Dao. This study expands the concept to the underwater world while maintaining the conventions and aesthetic principles of Thai classical dance. The creative work illustrates that traditional performance can evolve through systematic reinterpretation without losing its cultural identity. This finding is consistent with Makpa (2013), who argued that new Thai dance creations should be developed through the application of existing knowledge, documentary research, and interdisciplinary integration.

The creative process followed a systematic choreography framework, including documentary research, concept development, choreography, music composition, costume and stage design, rehearsal, and expert evaluation. The findings indicate that the success of a creative performance depends on the integration of all artistic elements rather than choreography alone. The unity among movement, music, costume, visual design, and dramatic structure strengthens both artistic quality and audience understanding. This finding supports the choreography principles proposed by Virulrak (2004), who explained that choreography should follow a systematic creative process from conceptual development to artistic realization.

Another significant finding concerns the transmission of Tacit Knowledge through direct learning from National Artists and master performers. The choreography of the character Sin Samut was inherited through practical training rather than written documentation. The creator synthesized this embodied knowledge into a contemporary creative performance while preserving the character's traditional identity. This finding supports the concept of Tacit Knowledge proposed by Panich (2005), who explained that experiential knowledge is accumulated through practice and is most effectively transferred through direct participation and observation.

The study also demonstrates the potential of Thai classical dance as a medium for environmental communication. Through movement, music, literature, costumes, stage design, and multimedia techniques, the performance communicates the beauty and ecological importance of marine ecosystems while encouraging audiences to recognize the value of marine conservation. The integration of environmental themes expands the educational role of Thai performing arts beyond cultural preservation. This finding is consistent with Krungkaew (2020), who found that creative dance drama can effectively cultivate environmental awareness and encourage social responsibility among young people.

Furthermore, the interdisciplinary integration of Thai literature, choreography, music, visual arts, and technology contributes to the creation of new knowledge in Thai performing arts. The adaptation of Phra Aphai Mani into an underwater nature appreciation dance demonstrates that classical literature remains an important cultural resource for contemporary artistic creation. This finding is consistent with Thirapattarachai and Charassri (2024), who reported that creative dance based on traditional cultural heritage can generate new artistic knowledge while preserving cultural identity.

The synthesis identified 13 key knowledge themes, including aesthetic innovation, literature-based creativity, systematic creative processes, transmission of Tacit Knowledge, choreography design, costume and stage design, environmental communication, human–nature relationships, aesthetic values, educational and cultural values, quality assessment, academic dissemination, and new knowledge creation in Thai classical dance. Together, these findings demonstrate that Ram Chom Sin serves as a model of creative research that integrates artistic practice, cultural heritage, and environmental awareness. The knowledge generated from this study provides a practical framework for future creative choreography and interdisciplinary research in contemporary Thai classical dance.

Suggestions

1. The knowledge derived from the creative dance performance Chom Sin should be applied to the development of choreographic works related to nature and environmental themes in order to broaden creative approaches within Thai dance and expand the diversity of contemporary Thai performing arts.

2. Further studies should build upon the knowledge generated from the creative process, choreographic design, and the use of dance symbolism evident in Chom Sin. Such investigations should integrate related disciplines, including music, visual arts, literature, and digital technology, to advance both knowledge development and innovative forms of creative dance performance within contemporary contexts.

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CREATIVE INNOVATION THROUGH INDIAN PERFORMING ARTS: THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020

ARKAJA BHARADWAJ*

Abstract

This study investigates how India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 transforms performing arts education into a catalyst for creative innovation. Drawing upon policy documents, academic research, and institutional case studies, the paper synthesizes insights to evaluate opportunities, challenges, and strategies for integrating performing arts into mainstream education. The research objectives are fivefold: (1) to examine NEP 2020 provisions related to performing arts, (2) to analyze the role of creative innovation in arts learning, (3) to identify opportunities created by the policy, (4) to explore implementation challenges, and (5) to propose strategies for strengthening creative innovation. A qualitative documentary analysis was conducted using thematic and content analysis of NEP 2020, NCF 2023, UGC guidelines, and university curricula, complemented by a case study of Sattriya dance in Assam. Findings reveal that NEP 2020 redefines performing arts as integral to holistic education, fostering creativity, cultural identity, and interdisciplinary learning. However, infrastructural limitations, uneven teacher training, and funding disparities hinder full realization. The study concludes with actionable recommendations for policymakers, educators, and institutions to enhance creative innovation through performing arts.

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020, Performing Arts Education, Creative Innovation, Arts Integration, Cultural Capital

Introduction

India's performing arts music, dance, theatre, and folk traditions represent living repositories of cultural knowledge. Historically marginalized within formal education, these art forms were often treated as extracurricular rather than academic disciplines. The National Education Policy 2020 marks a paradigm shift by embedding arts integration into the national curriculum, emphasizing holistic, experiential, and multidisciplinary learning.

The NEP 2020 is a wide-ranging document, that promotes a direction on arts-integrated education, should be embedded across subjects. Also the Indian knowledge system deserves

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a formal academic space, and students should experience learning that is holistic and experiential rather than narrow and examination-driven.

The literature situates NEP 2020 within both Indian and global educational frameworks.

1. Gardner's (1983) *Multiple Intelligences* theory validates the inclusion of musical, bodily-kinesthetic, and spatial intelligences in education.

2. Eisner (2002) argues that the arts cultivate unique cognitive capacities—sensitivity, imagination, and tolerance for ambiguity—essential for innovation.

3. Bourdieu (1986) introduces the concept of cultural capital, highlighting how legitimizing indigenous art forms democratizes access to cultural knowledge.

4. UNESCO's Road Map for Arts Education (2006) and subsequent frameworks (2022, 2024) emphasize arts education as a global equity imperative.

Indian scholars such as Kumar & Sharma (2023) and Mishra (2023) demonstrate how NEP 2020 operationalizes the multidisciplinary learning and integrates Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into formal curricula. Yet, empirical studies remain limited, particularly regarding regional traditions like Sattriya, popular in Northeastern state- Assam which embodies the intersection of art, philosophy, and pedagogy.

The Ministry of Culture's report on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Performing Arts has provided a valuable empirical grounding for this argument. These documents have recorded the range and vitality of India's performing traditions while also flagging the forms that are at risk. For a study focused on NEP 2020's impact on performing arts education, these reports are essential context that has illustrated what was at stake when policy decisions have been made effectively or poorly.

In the international context, this study draws on UNESCO's Road Map for Art Education (2006), which remains a key global statement on the role of arts in education. It emphasizes that arts education develops creative and cultural capacities essential for navigating a complex world and frames access to creative learning as an equity issue, not a privilege of elite institutions. These principles resonate strongly in NEP 2020, reflecting Indian policymakers' engagement with global discourse on arts integration.

The UNESCO 2022 report reframes arts and cultural heritage in the post-pandemic era, emphasizing that traditions including performing arts are integral forms of knowledge and resources for learning. This perspective is especially relevant to India, where classical and folk practices embody deep repositories of cultural capital that formal education has historically overlooked.

The UNESCO Culture and Arts Education Framework (2024) provides updated guidance on integrating arts and cultural education into national curricula in ways that remain locally grounded while globally connected. It offers benchmarks against which NEP 2020's provisions can be evaluated, positioning India's policy choices within an international comparative context.

Howard Gardner's Frames of Mind (1983) had introduced the theory of multiple intelligences and permanently changed how educators think about human ability. Gardner's has argued that intelligence is not one thing but many, including musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, and interpersonal forms. He had provided the theoretical foundation for why performing arts education matters to all the students, not just those who are "good at arts."

The NEP 2020 implicitly has drawn on this logic when it has insisted that holistic education must develop on students across multiple dimensions.

Elliot Eisner's The Arts and the Creation of Mind (2002), perhaps the most direct theoretical support for this study. Eisner has argued that the arts are not supplementary to the serious education, but they are a distinct and irreplaceable form of thinking. Making art, Eisner said, developed forms of understanding that no other subject could provide: sensitivity to nuance, tolerance for ambiguity, the ability to imagine alternatives.

These are precisely the capacities that NEP 2020 claims to want to develop. Eisner's work gives intellectual weight to the policy's commitment.

Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural capital (1986) had added a sociological dimension that was easy to overlook but important. Bourdieu had showed that cultural knowledge was not neutral, it shaped what opportunities were available to people and how they could be perceived by the institutions.

For India, this means that giving students formal access to classical and folk performing art traditions is not just a curricular decision. It is a decision about whose culture gets legitimized, and who gets to build cultural capital through education.

Reading across these sources, a clear picture has emerged that internationally, the case for performing arts education has been building for decades — through UNESCO frameworks, educational theorists like Gardner and Eisner, and social thinkers like Bourdieu. But in India, scholars have been making parallel arguments in a specifically Indian context. The NEP 2020 and NCF 2023 has represented the policy moment when these arguments found institutional expression.

This study bridges that gap by synthesizing theoretical, policy, and practical dimensions to reveal how NEP 2020 fosters creative innovation through performing arts.

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) demonstrates a substantive commitment to Indian knowledge system. Rather than treating the arts as abstract or

peripheral, the policy calls for the inclusion of classical traditions, folk forms, and indigenous practices as integral components of student learning. This recognition affirms the arts as vital carriers of cultural capital and positions them as pedagogical resources that can enrich creativity and innovation. For performing arts educators across the country, such emphasis generates meaningful opportunities to embed these practices within formal curricula. This recognition affirms the arts as vital carriers of cultural capital and positions them as pedagogical resources that can enrich creativity and innovation. For performing arts educators across the country, such emphasis generates meaningful opportunities to embed these practices within formal curricula. Significantly, the Ministry of Education underscores this approach through its directive that "art-integrated education will be embedded in classroom transactions," thereby institutionalizing the arts as a central dimension of holistic and multidisciplinary learning.

In this way, NEP-2020 reframes performing arts education as a catalyst for cultivating critical thinking, cultural identity, and creative innovation in contemporary India.

1. Objectives of the Study:

1.1 To examine the provisions of NEP 2020 related to performing arts education.

1.2 To analyze the role of creative innovation in performing arts learning.

1.3 To investigate opportunities created by NEP 2020 for performing arts education.

1.4 To identify challenges in implementing the policy.

1.5 To suggest strategies for strengthening creative innovation through performing arts education.

2. Conceptual Framework:

2.1 Constructivist Learning:

Bruner and Piaget have shown us that people learn the best by doing. Performing arts where we can rehearse, perform, reflect, and try again. Therefore it is constructivist learning in its purest form.

2.2 Multiple Intelligences:

Howard Gardner's framework has reminded us that intelligence isn't one thing, but musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic ability, spatial thinking are also very important. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 acknowledges all of these intelligences, and performing arts develop them directly.

3.3 Bourdieu's Cultural Capital:

Pierre Bourdieu has argued that culture is a form of capital which shapes identity, community, and opportunity. Performing Arts education isn't just about skills; it's about giving students a deeper relationship with their own cultural inheritance. These frameworks converge under NEP 2020 to position performing arts as a bridge between policy intent and creative innovation.

3. Research Methodology:

A qualitative research design was employed to capture nuanced perspectives from policy documents and institutional practices.

3.1 Research Design:

The study adopts a qualitative research design to explore how NEP 2020 redefines performing arts education in India and encourages creative innovation through cultural capital. This design is chosen to capture the nuanced perspectives of educators, policymakers, and institutions, and to analyze policy frameworks in relation to lived experiences within performing arts departments.

3.2 Data Sources

The research will draw upon multiple sources to ensure triangulation and depth:

1) NEP 2020: Policy document outlining reforms in education, with emphasis on arts integration.

2) NCF 2023: Framework for curriculum development aligned with NEP 2020.

3) UGC Guidelines: Higher education directives shaping performing arts pedagogy.

4) University curricula: Review of syllabi and course structures to assess alignment with NEP 2020 and NCF 2023.

5) Case studies of departments: In-depth analysis of selected performing arts departments, specifically in the context of Sattriya dance of Assam (a north-eastern region of India) to illustrate practical implementation and challenges.

3.3 Data Collection

1) Document Analysis: Systematic review of NEP 2020, NCF 2023, and UGC guidelines to identify policy directions for performing arts.

2) Curriculum Review: Comparative analysis of university syllabi to evaluate integration of multidisciplinary and holistic approaches.

3) Case Studies: Contextual exploration of institutional practices, highlighting innovations and barriers.

3.4 Data Analysis

The study employs a multi-layered analytical approach:

1) Thematic Analysis: To identify recurring themes in interviews and case studies, such as innovation, cultural capital, and holistic education.

2) Content Analysis: Applied to policy documents and curricula to examine language, priorities, and representation of performing arts.

3) Policy Analysis: To critically assess the coherence between NEP 2020, NCF 2023, and UGC guidelines, and their practical implications for performing arts education.

3.5 Expected Contribution

This methodology will enable the study to:

1) Illuminate how NEP 2020 fosters creative innovation through performing arts.

2) Demonstrate the role of cultural capital in shaping holistic and multidisciplinary education.

3) Identify systemic challenges in implementation, offering recommendations for policy and practice.

4. Findings and Discussion:

4.1 NEP 2020 Provisions:

NEP 2020 mandates arts integration across subjects, promoting multidisciplinary learning and experiential pedagogy. It legitimizes performing arts as academic disciplines, aligning them with Indian Knowledge Systems and vocational pathways.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the integration of arts into mainstream pedagogy, rejecting the notion of arts as an isolated or peripheral discipline. It advocates for an arts-integrated approach to education, wherein subjects such as history, science, and language are enriched through the inclusion of music, theatre, dance, and other creative practices. This represents a significant departure from earlier models, in which arts education was confined to the margins of the curriculum and treated as supplementary rather than foundational.

4.2 Creative Innovation in Practice:

The Innovation manifests through digital performance, technology integration, collaborative learning, and cultural entrepreneurship. Students now engage in hybrid performances, AI-assisted composition, and heritage-based startups, redefining the boundaries of creative education.

1) Digital Performance:

The emergence of digital platforms has transformed the modes of production and dissemination within the performing arts. Online concerts, virtual theatre, virtual choir and hybrid performances have enabled students and practitioners to engage audiences far beyond the reach of traditional venues. This transition, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has established new paradigms of artistic practice and audience interaction that continue to shape the landscape of Indian performing arts. Rather than functioning as temporary adaptations, these digital and hybrid formats are increasingly recognized as enduring components of contemporary performance culture.

2) Technology Integration:

Advancements in digital technologies are increasingly reshaping both the creation and preservation of Indian performing arts. Tools such as AI-assisted music composition, virtual reality performance environments, and digital archiving of endangered traditions are redefining artistic practice while simultaneously safeguarding cultural heritage. Technology thus functions not only as a medium of innovation in performance but also as a critical instrument for sustaining and transmitting India's diverse artistic legacies to future generations.

3) Collaborative Learning:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 highlights the pedagogical value of interdisciplinary engagement, wherein the performing arts intersect with diverse fields of study. Theatre can be integrated with literature, dance with historical inquiry, and music with environmental education, thereby fostering multidimensional learning experiences. Such cross-disciplinary approaches enable students to establish deeper cognitive and affective connections, ensuring that knowledge is retained and applied in meaningful ways. By positioning the arts as a conduit for integrative education, the policy affirms their role in cultivating creativity, critical thinking, and holistic understanding across academic domains.

4) Cultural Entrepreneurship:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 establishes an enabling framework for creative enterprise by positioning the performing arts within the larger ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship. Students are increasingly engaged in building cultural startups, launching online teaching platforms, and developing heritage tourism initiatives that draw upon India's rich artistic traditions. By legitimizing such endeavors within formal education, the policy underscores the performing arts not only as cultural practices but also

as dynamic drivers of economic activity, professional opportunity, and sustainable development.

4.3 Opportunities

The policy creates space for interdisciplinary engagement, enabling students to combine performing arts with history, literature, or environmental studies. It also opens professional pathways in cultural management, pedagogy, and digital arts.

At the level of higher education, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduces remarkable curricular flexibility, enabling students to pursue interdisciplinary combinations that were previously unattainable. Learners may now elect to study Performing arts in conjunction with



Figure 1: Example of multidisciplinary subject combination

This breaks traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Such cross-disciplinary pathways, once virtually inconceivable under the rigid structures of the earlier system, are now explicitly promoted as part of the policy's vision for holistic and integrative learning.

5. Impact of Different Performing Arts:

5.1 Music Education:

Within the framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, both classical and folk music traditions have been accorded formal academic recognition. Indian music is thereby repositioned not merely as a cultural embellishment but as a discipline worthy of rigorous research, structured pedagogy, and scholarly engagement. Students are now afforded the opportunity to pursue Hindustani or Carnatic music in dialogue with Western theoretical frameworks, or to investigate the dynamic relationship between folk traditions and

contemporary composition. This integration affirms the performing arts as serious fields of study, contributing to the broader vision of holistic and interdisciplinary education.

5.2 Dance Education:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 advances a vision of interdisciplinary engagement in the dance education, encouraging connections with history, the social sciences, and even scientific inquiry; areas that earlier curricular frameworks often discouraged. For example, a student of Sattriya Dance, for instance, is not limited to acquiring technical proficiency but is also invited to engage with literature, Vaishnavite philosophy, Sattra Culture (Sattra refers the vaishnavite monasteries of Assam), and centuries of cultural history embedded within the tradition. By granting such breadth legitimate academic space, the policy affirms dance as both an embodied practice and a multidimensional field of scholarly exploration within the wider landscape of Indian performing arts.

5.3 Theatre Education:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes theatre as a discipline that cultivates transferable skills highly valued across professional domains, including communication, collaboration, leadership, and adaptability. By creating formal pathways for the development of these competencies, the policy moves beyond earlier frameworks that positioned theatre primarily as an extracurricular activity associated with character-building but lacking academic legitimacy. In doing so, NEP 2020 affirms theatre's role within Indian performing arts as both a creative practice and a structured means of fostering essential professional capacities.

5.4 Indigenous and Folk Performing Arts:

Perhaps the most consequential impact of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 lies in its provisions for traditions that were at genuine risk of marginalization; forms that might otherwise have survived only through festival performances, disconnected from institutional frameworks of learning. By creating academic space for these practices to be documented, taught, critically studied, and innovated upon, the policy ensures their continuity as living traditions while simultaneously positioning them as legitimate subjects of scholarly inquiry within the broader landscape of Indian performing arts.

1. Case Study- Sattriya: A tradition that NEP 2020 could transform

Sattriya, one of India's eight recognized classical dance forms, originates from the Vaishnavite monasteries, called Sattras of Assam and embodies a comprehensive artistic tradition that integrates dance, music, drama, philosophy, and ritual practice across more than five centuries. The Sattriya tradition, established by Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva in the

15th–16th century A.D., was transmitted and enriched through successive generations, most notably by his prime disciple, Sri Sri Madhabdeva. Despite its historical depth, the institutional presence of Sattriya within formal education has remained limited. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 significantly expands the scope for academic engagement with traditions such as Sattriya by opening multiple avenues of integration. Universities are now empowered to incorporate Sattriya not only as a performance discipline but also as a subject of scholarly inquiry across fields including cultural studies, heritage management, and performance analysis. At the same time, digital documentation initiatives provide vital mechanisms for preserving endangered forms, while interdisciplinary collaborations among choreographers, scholars, and technologists create pathways to honor the tradition while fostering innovation. The evolution of Sattriya thus illustrates how regional performing arts can strategically utilize NEP-2020 as a framework for both survival and dynamic growth, positioning themselves as integral to India's evolving educational and cultural landscape. In this way, the policy underscores the role of performing arts as reservoirs of cultural capital that can be mobilized for creative innovation in contemporary society.

2. Comparative Analysis

Comparing NEP 2020 with global arts education models—such as Finland's creative pedagogy, South Korea's arts-science integration, and UNESCO's frameworks reveals that India's policy aligns with international best practices but requires stronger implementation mechanisms and funding equity.

3. Challenges:

Despite visionary intent, implementation faces obstacles:

3.1 Infrastructure gaps in rural institutions

3.2 Limited teacher training for interdisciplinary pedagogy

3.3 Insufficient funding compared to STEM disciplines

3.4 Urban–rural disparities in access and resources

1) The real obstacles for implementation:

Acknowledging the challenges inherent in implementation is not an act of pessimism but a necessary condition for ensuring that policy objectives translate into practice. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, while visionary in its recognition of the performing arts as cultural capital, faces significant gaps between its stated aspirations and the realities on the ground. Four critical areas highlight this divergence, underscoring the need for sustained institutional commitment, resource allocation, and pedagogical innovation if the policy is to achieve its transformative potential. Addressing these challenges directly is essential

to position performing arts education as a genuine driver of creativity, identity formation, and cultural innovation within India's evolving academic landscape.

2) Infrastructure:

Many institutions, particularly those located outside metropolitan centers, have shortages of essential infrastructure such as auditoriums, rehearsal studios, and recording facilities. In the absence of such physical resources, the vision of arts-integrated education articulated in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 may remain conceptual rather than operational. This infrastructural gap not only limits access to performing arts education but also constrains the ability of regional traditions to serve as dynamic reservoirs of cultural capital. Addressing these gaps is therefore critical to transforming policy intent into lived practice, enabling performing arts to function as catalysts for creativity, innovation, and identity formation within India's evolving educational landscape.

3) Teacher Preparation:

The successful implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 requires the emergence of a new category of educator—one capable of teaching classical art forms, integrating them with other academic disciplines, and effectively utilizing digital technologies. Such multifaceted expertise remains exceedingly rare, and large-scale training programs designed to cultivate these competencies are still in their infancy. Without systematic investment in educator development, the transformative potential of arts-integrated education risks being constrained, limiting the ability of performing arts to serve as dynamic reservoirs of cultural capital and engines of creative innovation within India's educational landscape.

4) Funding:

Performing arts education continues to receive disproportionately lower institutional investment compared to STEM disciplines. In the absence of dedicated funding for infrastructure, faculty development, and programmatic initiatives, arts departments remain constrained in their capacity to realize the transformative vision articulated in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. This imbalance not only undermines the integration of performing arts into mainstream education but also limits their potential to serve as vital sources of cultural capital and creative innovation within India's academic and cultural landscape.

5) Urban – Rural Gap:

The students enrolled in well-resourced urban universities and those studying in rural institutions encounter significantly different educational realities. This inequality underscores the uneven access to infrastructure, faculty expertise, and cultural opportunities that are essential for the effective integration of performing arts into higher education. Bridging such inequities demands deliberate and sustained policy intervention rather than reliance on ideal intent alone. Only through targeted measures can the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 fulfill its vision of positioning performing arts as vital reservoirs of cultural capital and engines of creative innovation within India's educational framework.

4. Recommendations:

To realize the transformative potential of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and position Indian Performing Arts as engines of creative innovation and cultural capital, a series of targeted interventions are essential:

4.1 Performing Arts Resource Centers: Establish dedicated facilities within universities and colleges multi-purpose spaces for rehearsal, performance, and production rather than multipurpose rooms.

4.2 National Digital Archives: Develop open-access repositories to preserve endangered performing art forms, ensuring students and researchers can engage with them as living traditions.

4.3 Teacher Training Reform: Redesign educator preparation programs to cultivate professionals capable of teaching classical art forms, integrating interdisciplinary approaches, and employing digital tools.

4.4 Interdisciplinary Research Funding: Provide sustained support for research that treats performing arts as serious academic fields, fostering collaboration across disciplines.

4.5 Innovation Grants: Introduce funding streams specifically for arts-based projects, enabling students and faculty to experiment without financial constraints.

4.6 Institutional Partnerships: Formalize collaborations between universities and cultural institutions such as Sattras, academies, repertory theatres, and folk arts organizations.

4.7 Regional Curriculum Integration: Integrate local art forms meaningfully into school curricula at the regional level, moving beyond token references in national policy documents.

5. Conclusion:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is representing the most significant opportunity for performing arts education in India now. By repositioning the arts from a peripheral concern to a central pillar of education, the policy acknowledges Indian traditions as intellectually rigorous and culturally vital. It opens the pathways for creative innovation, interdisciplinary learning, and the development of meaningful careers in performing arts.
However, the policy documents alone cannot transform education; but the implementation depends on people and institutions. The real challenge lies in building infrastructure, training educators, allocating resources, and ensuring that the opportunities will reach students in rural contexts as much as in metropolitan centers of India.

The education policy must embody the nation's cultural realities in their most authentic form, and it is anticipated that NEP 2020 will establish a comprehensive framework through which performing arts can function both as repositories of cultural capital and as catalysts for creative innovation within the broader educational landscape.

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MUSIC

THE CURRENT STATUS OF HAOHUAHONG DIAO IN HUISHUI COUNTY, GUIZHOU PROVINCE, CHINA

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Abstract

Haohuahong Diao is a popular song form that best represents the tradition of folk songs of Buyi nationality in Guizhou provincial area of China. Haohuahong Diao is an important form of intangible cultural heritage with the social life, cultural identity and historical memory of the Buyi people in Huishui County. In this study, we investigated the current status of Haohuahong Diao breeding in Huishui County, Guizhou Province, China. Considering the focus and aim of this research I used a qualitative research methodology borrowing extensively from ethnomusicological approaches including fieldwork, participant observation, in-depth interviews as well as documentary analysis. It is based on Buyi communities in Huishui County, known as the native land and major transmission area of Haohuahong Diao. The key informants of this study were local folk artists, intangible cultural heritage inheritors, and teachers. The results showed that Haohuahong Diao still serves as a potential way of cultural expression in the occasions of traditional festival, courtship, ritual ceremony and community entertainment The folk songs also serve as an important carrier of national identity and cultural memory in the Buyi. But now the inheritance of Haohuahong Diao is confronted by challenges including older successors, fewer young practitioners, modernization, urban migration and impact from present popular culture. Even continuing external support through ICH programs and local cultural activities do not guarantee that educational transmission as well as systematic preservation are taking place. The research finally proposes that only strengthening efforts of communities, schools, and cultural organizations together can safeguard the sustainable preservation of Haohuahong Diao so as to continuously pass on Buyi folk song culture in modern society.

Keywords: Haohuahong Diao, Buyi folk song, intangible cultural heritage, ethnic music, Huishui County

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Background

In the extensive and profound treasure trove of Chinese music culture, the music of the Buyi ethnic group in Guizhou Province represents an important component of ethnic minority musical heritage. Guizhou Province is a multi-ethnic cultural region where diverse musical traditions have developed through long historical interaction among ethnic communities. Among these traditions, Buyi folk music possesses distinctive artistic characteristics and cultural meanings that reflect the historical experiences, beliefs, customs, and social values of the Buyi people (Song, 2021). Folk songs function not only as musical expressions but also as important carriers of cultural memory and ethnic identity (Yang, 2022).

Haohuahong Diao is one of the most representative folk song traditions of the Buyi ethnic group in Huishui County, Qiannan Buyi and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Guizhou Province. The folk song originated in Haohuahong Township and has been transmitted among Buyi communities for more than 200 years since the Qing Dynasty. Originally associated with themes of love and courtship, Haohuahong Diao gradually developed into a large musical tradition with more than one hundred melodic variations. Its graceful melody, metaphorical lyrics, and melodious singing style reflect the diligence, hospitality, optimism, and creativity of the Buyi people (Peng, 2024).

Haohuahong Diao also serves important social and cultural functions within Buyi society. The songs are widely used in festivals, courtship activities, ceremonial performances, entertainment, and social communication. In addition, the melodies preserve elements of the Buyi language and function as cultural symbols of community identity and historical continuity. The oral transmission of folk songs has historically played an essential role in preserving Buyi cultural knowledge and traditional values (Yang, 2022).

Despite its cultural importance, the current inheritance situation of Haohuahong Diao faces significant challenges. Rapid modernization, urban migration, and the influence of popular culture have weakened the traditional social environment that once supported the natural transmission of Buyi folk songs. Most active inheritors are elderly people, while younger generations show decreasing interest in traditional musical practices. Wang (2023) explained that the inheritance of Buyi folk songs in the Lianjiang River Basin currently lacks systematic transmission strategies and faces difficulties adapting to contemporary social environments. Furthermore, the involvement of commercialization and external social influences has created additional challenges in maintaining the authenticity and continuity of traditional folk song culture.

Although local government agencies and cultural organizations have attempted to preserve Haohuahong Diao through intangible cultural heritage programs, festivals, and cultural

promotion activities, sustainable preservation and systematic transmission remain major concerns. Shi (2020) stated that the musical forms and cultural functions of Buyi folk songs have gradually changed under modern social development and cultural transformation. Therefore, investigating the current status of Haohuahong Diao is necessary for understanding its contemporary cultural condition, inheritance environment, and existing preservation challenges in Buyi communities of Huishui County.

Purpose of study

This study aims to investigate the current status of Haohuahong Diao in Huishui County, Guizhou Province, China, by examining its cultural significance, transmission practices, preservation strategies, and educational support within contemporary Buyi communities.

Scope of Research

This study focuses on investigating the current status of Haohuahong Diao in Huishui County, Qiannan Buyi and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Guizhou Province, China. The research examines the cultural roles, social functions, inheritance conditions, performance contexts, and preservation environment of Haohuahong Diao within Buyi communities. The study also investigates the contemporary challenges affecting the transmission and sustainability of Haohuahong Diao in modern society, including modernization, urban migration, declining youth participation, and the influence of popular culture.

The research area is limited to Huishui County, which is recognized as the original transmission area and important cultural center of Haohuahong Diao. The study focuses on Buyi communities where Haohuahong Diao is still actively practiced and preserved. The research was conducted between March 2025 and March 2027 through qualitative ethnomusicological approaches.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology grounded in ethnomusicological theory and musicological approaches to investigate the contemporary status of Haohuahong Diao in Huishui County, Guizhou Province, China. The research focused on examining its cultural significance, transmission practices, preservation efforts, educational support, and the challenges affecting its sustainability within Buyi communities. Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted through participant observation, documentary analysis, and in-depth interviews, allowing the researcher to understand Haohuahong Diao within its natural cultural and social context.

1. Research Site

Huishui County, Qiannan Buyi and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Guizhou Province, China, was selected as the research site because it is widely recognized as the place of origin and one of the principal transmission areas of Haohuahong Diao. The area preserves a rich cultural ecology associated with Buyi folk song traditions and continues to serve as an important center for the performance, transmission, and preservation of Haohuahong Diao. The fieldwork was conducted between March 2025 and March 2027 during traditional festivals, community activities, and routine cultural events where Haohuahong Diao is actively practiced.

1.1 Participant Recruitment and Key Informants

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, a widely accepted approach in qualitative and ethnomusicological research. Informants were selected based on their recognized expertise, active involvement in Haohuahong Diao, and their ability to provide rich and reliable information regarding the tradition's current condition, transmission, and preservation.

The inclusion criteria were as follows:

1) Long-term residence within Buyi communities in Huishui County.

2) At least five years of experience performing or transmitting aohuahong Diao.

3) Familiarity with Buyi language, customs, and musical traditions.

4) Participation in community performances, cultural festivals, or intangible cultural heritage activities.

5) Knowledge of the current inheritance situation, educational practices, and preservation challenges of Haohuahong Diao.

Based on these criteria, two principal key informants were selected:

1) Mr. Mu Weiping, a nationally recognized practitioner and experienced performer of Buyi folk songs who has actively contributed to the preservation and transmission of Haohuahong Diao.

2） Ms. Luo Huiping, an experienced folk singer, educator, and cultural practitioner with extensive knowledge of Buyi musical traditions and community-based transmission.

To strengthen the credibility of the study, additional supporting information was obtained through informal interviews and discussions with local folk singers, village elders, school music teachers, cultural officers, festival organizers, and community members. These supplementary participants were consulted to verify information obtained from the principal informants and to provide broader perspectives on contemporary transmission and preservation practices.

1.2 Data Collection

Data were collected using multiple qualitative techniques to ensure comprehensive understanding and data triangulation. These included:

1) Participant observation during festivals, community gatherings, rehearsals, and cultural performances.

2) Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with key informants and supporting participants.

3) Field surveys documenting contemporary performance environments.

4) Audio recordings and photographic documentation of performances and cultural activities.

5) Documentary analysis of historical records, local archives, academic publications, folk song collections, and official intangible cultural heritage documents.

Interview questions focused on the cultural significance of Haohuahong Diao, its contemporary performance contexts, transmission practices, educational activities, preservation initiatives, and the challenges affecting its sustainability. Field notes were maintained throughout the research process to document observations, researcher reflections, and contextual information.

2. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis supported by ethnomusicological interpretation. Interview transcripts, field notes, observational records, and documentary evidence were coded and categorized according to emerging themes. The analysis focused on identifying the cultural functions of Haohuahong Diao, current transmission patterns, preservation strategies, educational support, and the social factors influencing the continuity of Buyi folk song traditions.

Data from different sources including interviews, participant observations, documentary materials, and field records were compared continuously to identify similarities and inconsistencies, thereby strengthening the reliability of the analytical findings.

Trustworthiness

To enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of this qualitative study, the research adopted the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

1 . Credibility was established through prolonged field engagement, participant observation, in-depth interviews, and triangulation of interview data, observational findings, and documentary evidence. Preliminary interpretations were discussed with the principal key informants to confirm the accuracy and authenticity of the findings (member checking).

2. Transferability was enhanced by providing detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, cultural context, and research procedures, enabling readers to evaluate the applicability of the findings to other minority folk music traditions.

3. Dependability was achieved through systematic documentation of research procedures, interview protocols, coding processes, and analytical decisions, creating an audit trail throughout the study.

4. Confirmability was strengthened by maintaining field notes, interview recordings, documentary evidence, and reflective research memos to ensure that the findings were grounded in empirical data rather than researcher bias.

Results

1. Cultural Significance and Social Functions of Haohuahong Diao

The study found that Haohuahong Diao remains an important cultural expression among the Buyi ethnic community in Huishui County, Guizhou Province. The folk songs continue to function in traditional festivals, courtship activities, ritual ceremonies, entertainment, and social interaction within Buyi communities. Furthermore, Haohuahong Diao serves as a significant symbol of ethnic identity, collective cultural memory, and traditional Buyi cultural values.

Table 1 ***Social and Cultural Functions of Haohuahong Dia***

Functions	Description
Traditional Festivals	Performed during important community festivals and seasonal celebrations
Courtship Activities	Used as a medium of emotional communication between young men and women
Ritual Ceremonies	Included in religious and ancestral ceremonies
Entertainment	Performed for recreation and community enjoyment
Social Interaction	Strengthened social relationships and community solidarity
Cultural Identity	Represented Buyi ethnic identity and collective memory

Noted. From Researcher

2. Challenges in the Inheritance and Transmission of Haohuahong Diao

The inheritance situation of Haohuahong Diao currently faces several significant challenges. Most active inheritors and performers are middle-aged or elderly people, while

younger generations show decreasing interest and participation in traditional folk song activities. The natural oral transmission process has gradually weakened due to modernization, urban migration, technological development, and the influence of contemporary popular culture.

Table 2 ***Major Challenges Affecting the Inheritance of Haohuahong Diao***

Challenges	Impacts
Aging Inheritors	Majority of performers are elderly, leading to generational gaps
Declining Youth Participation	Younger generations show limited interest in traditional folk songs
Urban Migration	Migration reduces opportunities for community-based transmission
Modernization	Modern lifestyles weaken traditional cultural practices
Popular Culture Influence	Contemporary media and music replace traditional folk music interests
Weakening Oral Transmission	Traditional face-to-face learning opportunities decrease

Noted. From Researcher

3. Educational Transmission and Curriculum Development

The study also revealed that educational transmission of Haohuahong Diao remains insufficient. Only a limited number of schools and cultural institutions provide educational activities related to Buyi folk songs. In addition, there is a shortage of professional teachers, systematic teaching materials, and curriculum development related to Haohuahong Diao and Buyi musical culture.

Table 3 ***Educational Limitations in the Transmission of Haohuahong Diao***

Educational Issues	Current Situation
School Participation	Only a few schools include Buyi folk songs in educational activities
Professional Teachers	Lack of teachers specializing in Buyi folk music
Teaching Materials	Insufficient textbooks and learning resources
Curriculum Development	Limited integration into formal education curricula
Cultural Institutions	Few institutions actively support systematic music education

Noted. From Researcher

4. Preservation and Promotion Efforts

Despite these difficulties, local government agencies and cultural organizations continue to promote the preservation of Haohuahong Diao through cultural festivals, intangible cultural heritage programs, documentation projects, and community cultural activities. These efforts help increase public awareness of Buyi folk song culture, although sustainable long-term preservation remains a major concern.

Table 4 ***Current Preservation and Promotion Strategies***

Preservation Strategies	Objectives
Cultural Festivals	Promote public participation and cultural visibility
Intangible Cultural Heritage Programs	Protect and preserve traditional cultural heritage
Documentation Projects	Record songs, performances, and oral knowledge
Community Cultural Activities	Encourage local participation and cultural continuity
Government Support	Provide policy and financial assistance

Noted. From Researcher

5. Summary of Research Findings

Overall, the study demonstrates that Haohuahong Diao continues to play an important role in preserving Buyi ethnic culture and cultural identity. However, the tradition currently faces challenges related to generational transmission, modernization, educational limitations, and declining youth participation. Although preservation initiatives have been implemented by local governments and cultural organizations, long-term sustainability will require stronger educational integration, systematic documentation, professional training, and active community participation.

Table 5 ***Summary of Key Findings***

Aspects	Findings
Cultural Value	Strong representation of Buyi cultural identity
Current Practice	Still performed in festivals and social activities
Major Problems	Aging inheritors and weak youth participation
Educational Situation	Limited curriculum and teaching resources
Preservation Efforts	Supported by government and cultural organizations
Future Concerns	Sustainability of long-term cultural inheritance

Noted. From Researcher

Discussion and Conclusions

The results also suggest that Haohuahong Diao still retains significant cultural meanings to Buyi people in Huishui County. Similarly to Yang (2022), I contend that Buyi folk songs continue to reflect local customs, emotional expression, and ethnic identity. It serves not only as a music tradition, but also as an important carrier of Buyi historical memory and cultural continuity.

However, the ever-quickening pace of social change and modernization severely eroded this traditional social milieu that once nurtured and naturally disseminated the folk song repertoire. As Wang (2023) states, traditional inheritance modes of Buyi folk songs gradually cannot adapt to the contemporary social environment. Both the declining youth participation and the aging of inheritors illustrate how badly systematic preservation and educational assistance are needed.

Moreover, the study revealed that although government agencies and cultural organizations consolidated recovery actions through intangible cultural heritage programs as well as initiatives promoting culture from a development perspective (e.g., community celebrations, organized education), the viability of these efforts in the long run would not be established without stronger engagement from beneficiaries enhancing their ownership of local culture for substantive educational integration. In a similar vein to Shi (2020), world social development and cultural evolution are still transforming the types of music and the cultural purpose of Buyi folk songs.

This study concludes that the present status of Haohuahong Diao represents cultural continuity and cultural vulnerability. The tradition, however, continues to be sustained only through increasingly tenuous means among certain Buyi communities and in ceremonial contexts; a durable future for the practice depends on a more robust partnership between communities with institutional support from educational organizations, cultural institutions and local governing agencies.

Suggestions

1. An educational resource, use in music education and as a cultural activity within local schools. With this in mind, government agencies at all levels should strengthen support for documentation, digitization and cultural promotion projects of Haohuahong Diao.

2. Strengthening community-based cultural activities and intergenerational transmission programs to promote the involvement of youth in Bu ethnic folk song traditions.

3. Programming should safeguard sustainable intergenerational cultural transmission whilst remaining true to the fidelity of the original form with contemporary relevance.

4. Future studies should be conducted on musical characteristics, singing methods, and comparative studies of Buyi folk songs in other regions of Guizhou Province.

Acknowledgments

The researcher would like to express sincere gratitude to Mahasarakham University, the College of Music, and all key informants in Huishui County for their valuable support and cooperation throughout this research. Special thanks are extended to local Buyi folk song inheritors, cultural workers, teachers, and community members who generously shared their knowledge, experiences, and cultural traditions related to Haohuahong Diao.

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STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR OVERSEAS MUSIC PERFORMANCE MISSIONS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE CHINA–ASEAN (NANNING) MUSIC FESTIVAL

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Abstract

International music performance missions have become an important strategy for higher education institutions to promote cultural exchange, academic collaboration, and global engagement. However, these missions often encounter operational challenges throughout the mission cycle, affecting both management efficiency and performance quality. This study aimed (1) to identify operational problems encountered before, during, and after overseas music performance missions; (2) to analyze the underlying causes and management practices associated with these problems; and (3) to develop strategic management guidelines for improving overseas music performance missions in higher education institutions. A qualitative research approach employing an embedded single case study design was adopted, using the China–ASEAN (Nanning) Music Festival, People's Republic of China, as the principal case study. Data were collected through documentary research, semi-structured interviews with six key informants, participant observation, and field investigations. Additional data were obtained from eight students who had participated in overseas music performance missions. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed five interconnected stages of the overseas music performance mission cycle:

(1) pre-departure preparation, (2) international travel and immigration, (3) performance operations, (4) post-performance evaluation, and (5) continuous organizational improvement. Major operational problems included travel documentation, communication with immigration officers, transportation of musical instruments, technical coordination, rehearsal management, and the absence of systematic post-performance knowledge management. Based on these findings, the study proposes strategic management guidelines emphasizing comprehensive preparation, effective coordination, organizational learning, and continuous improvement. Unlike previous studies that primarily describe international collaboration activities, this research transforms more than ten years of institutional experience into practical strategic management guidelines that can be adapted by music and performing arts institutions conducting overseas performance missions in diverse international contexts. The study culminates in the development of the Strategic Management Guidelines for Overseas Music Performance Missions (SMG-OMPM Framework), providing a practical framework that higher education institutions can adopt to improve the planning, implementation, and evaluation of international music performance activities. The proposed framework contributes both practical and managerial insights for improving the effectiveness, sustainability, and operational success of overseas music performance missions.

Keywords : Strategic Management, Overseas Music Performance, Music Performance Management, China–ASEAN (Nanning) Music Festival, Higher Education

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Background

In recent decades, the internationalization of higher education has become a strategic priority for universities seeking to enhance academic quality, strengthen institutional reputation, and expand global engagement. International collaboration through student mobility, academic exchange, and cross-cultural activities has been widely recognized as an effective approach to developing graduates with global competencies while strengthening institutional competitiveness (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2004; de Wit, 2020). Within this context, music and performing arts institutions have increasingly employed overseas music performance missions as an important mechanism for promoting cultural diplomacy, artistic collaboration, and intercultural learning. These activities not only showcase artistic excellence but also create opportunities for academic networking, cultural exchange, and international partnership development (Nye, 2004; UNESCO, 2021).

Beyond their artistic value, overseas music performance missions require effective management comparable to other complex international projects. Successful performances depend not only on performers' musical competence but also on systematic planning, organizational coordination, leadership, communication, and risk management throughout the entire performance process (Afroze et al., 2025; David et al., 2024). Previous studies have emphasized that effective management enhances both artistic quality and organizational performance by integrating planning, coordination, and operational control into music performance activities (Afroze et al., 2025). Similarly, research in performing arts management has demonstrated that organizational success increasingly depends upon strategic leadership, collaborative management, and the ability to respond effectively to changing operational environments (Komander & König, 2022; Salvaggio, 2024).

Over the past decade, the College of Music, Mahasarakham University has continuously organized overseas music performance missions, particularly through its participation in the China–ASEAN (Nanning) Music Festival in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China. These international activities have included concert performances, cultural exchange programs, academic presentations, institutional visits, and collaborative projects with Chinese universities and cultural organizations. Such missions have significantly enhanced the College's international visibility while providing valuable experiential learning opportunities for students and faculty members.

Despite these achievements, repeated overseas music performance missions have consistently revealed a range of operational challenges. The researchers observed that problems frequently emerged before departure, during international travel, throughout performance

implementation, and after mission completion. Common issues included passport and visa preparation, transportation of musical instruments, immigration procedures, communication with immigration officers, rehearsal scheduling, coordination with local organizers, stage preparation, sound and lighting management, and post-performance evaluation. Many of these operational problems recurred across multiple international missions despite the institution's accumulated experience over more than ten years.

One particularly significant challenge occurred during immigration procedures in China. Immigration officers primarily communicated in Chinese, while many students possessed only limited Chinese language proficiency. As a result, performers often experienced difficulties answering questions regarding the purpose of their visit, the musical instruments they carried, and the materials used to construct those instruments. These communication barriers frequently prolonged immigration procedures and occasionally affected subsequent travel schedules. Likewise, after arriving in China, additional challenges emerged during rehearsal scheduling, coordination with technical staff, stage preparation, sound system adjustment, lighting control, and communication with local organizers. These findings indicate that overseas music performance missions involve interconnected operational processes that require comprehensive planning and coordinated management rather than isolated problem-solving during individual activities. Such observations are consistent with strategic management and project management literature, which emphasizes that proactive planning and systematic risk management contribute significantly to organizational effectiveness (Kerzner, 2022; Project Management Institute, 2021).

Another important issue concerns organizational learning. Although each overseas music performance mission generated valuable practical experiences, most lessons learned remained as individual experiences rather than institutional knowledge. Operational problems and successful management practices were generally discussed informally after returning to Thailand, with limited systematic documentation or knowledge transfer for future missions. From a knowledge management perspective, the absence of structured documentation reduces organizational learning and limits continuous improvement (Dalkir, 2024). Consequently, similar operational problems tend to recur despite repeated international experience.

A review of previous literature reveals that existing studies have primarily examined internationalization in higher education, cultural diplomacy, arts management, leadership, and organizational development (Altbach & Knight, 2007; de Wit, 2020; Komander & König, 2022; Salvaggio, 2024). Other studies have focused on management principles for music performance, digital engagement, and leadership within performing arts organizations (Afroze et al., 2025; Ford & Mandviwalla, 2020). However, relatively little research has investigated overseas music

performance missions as an integrated operational management process encompassing preparation, international travel, performance implementation, post-performance evaluation, and organizational learning. Furthermore, few studies have proposed practical strategic management guidelines derived from long-term institutional experience in managing overseas music performance missions. This represents a significant research gap in both music performance management and higher education internationalization.

To address this gap, the present study employs the China–ASEAN (Nanning) Music Festival as an embedded case study to examine operational problems encountered during overseas music performance missions undertaken by the College of Music, Mahasarakham University. Drawing upon more than ten years of institutional experience, the study aims to identify recurring operational problems, analyze their underlying causes, and develop practical strategic management guidelines that can reduce operational risks, improve organizational effectiveness, and strengthen the planning, implementation, and evaluation of overseas music performance missions.

Unlike previous studies that primarily describe international collaboration activities or performing arts management from a general organizational perspective, this study synthesizes practical experiences accumulated over a decade into the Strategic Management Guidelines for Overseas Music Performance Missions (SMG-OMPM Framework). The proposed framework provides an evidence-based management model that can support universities, conservatories, and performing arts institutions in improving the effectiveness, sustainability, and operational success of international music performance missions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate operational problems encountered throughout overseas music performance missions and to develop strategic management guidelines for improving the planning, implementation, and evaluation of international music performance activities in higher education institutions. Using the China–ASEAN (Nanning) Music Festival as an embedded case study, the research aimed to synthesize practical experiences accumulated over a ten-year period into systematic management guidelines that can reduce operational risks and improve the effectiveness of future overseas music performance missions.

Scope of the Research

This study focused on overseas music performance missions organized by the College of Music, Mahasarakham University between 2015 and 2025, using the China–ASEAN (Nanning) Music Festival, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China, as the principal case study.

The study examined the complete mission cycle, including (1) pre-departure preparation, (2) international travel and immigration, (3) performance operations, and (4) post-performance evaluation. Participants consisted of administrators, faculty members responsible for music ensembles and international projects, and students who had participated in overseas music performance missions. Documentary evidence, official reports, travel records, photographs, and participant observations were used to support data triangulation.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology using an embedded single case study design (Yin, 2018) to investigate operational problems encountered during overseas music performance missions. The China–ASEAN (Nanning) Music Festival, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China, served as the principal case study because it represents one of the College of Music's most significant and continuous international music performance missions over the past decade.

Data were collected through four complementary methods: documentary research, semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, and field investigation. Documentary sources included official reports, travel plans, performance schedules, institutional documents, photographs, and archival records related to overseas music performance missions. Participant observation was conducted throughout the planning, travel, rehearsal, performance, and post-performance evaluation stages, allowing the researchers to observe operational practices and management processes directly in authentic settings.

Purposive sampling was employed to select key informants with extensive experience in planning, managing, and participating in overseas music performance missions. The principal key informants included Assist. Dr. Sayam Juangprakhon, Dean of the College of Music, Mahasarakham University; Assist. Dr. Surat Jongda, Performing Arts Specialist; Professor Dr. Surapol Virulrak, Performing Arts Scholar; Assist. Akkarapong Phulayyao, Musician and Ensemble Director; Mr. Zhong Juncheng, Chinese Music Specialist; and Mr. Xie Bin, Assistant President of Guangxi Arts University, People's Republic of China. These individuals were selected because of their direct responsibilities for international cooperation, music performance management, cultural exchange, and overseas project coordination.

In addition, eight undergraduate and graduate students who had previously participated in overseas music performance missions at the China–ASEAN (Nanning) Music Festival were purposively selected to provide firsthand experiences regarding mission preparation, international travel, immigration procedures, rehearsal management, performance operations, intercultural communication, and post-performance evaluation.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). Interview transcripts, observation records, field notes, and documentary evidence were systematically coded and categorized to identify recurring operational problems throughout the overseas music performance mission cycle. The emerging themes were subsequently interpreted and synthesized into strategic management guidelines designed to improve future overseas music performance missions in higher education institutions.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, methodological triangulation was employed by comparing evidence obtained from interviews, participant observation, documentary sources, and field investigations. Credibility was further strengthened through member checking with selected key informants and continuous comparison across multiple data sources.

Results

Operational Problems and Strategic Management Guidelines throughout the Overseas Music Performance Mission Cycle

The thematic analysis identified five interrelated themes representing the operational stages of overseas music performance missions. These themes explain the problems encountered throughout the mission cycle and the strategic practices developed from accumulated experiences during participation in the China–ASEAN (Nanning) Music Festival.



Figure 1 Overseas Music Performance Mission Cycle

Noted. **From Researcher**

Theme 1: Operational Problems during Pre-departure Preparation

The first theme concerns operational problems occurring before departure from Thailand. Participants consistently agreed that the success of overseas music performance missions depends largely on the quality of preparation undertaken before international travel. The findings indicate that inadequate preparation often leads to operational difficulties throughout subsequent stages of the mission.

Four operational issues were identified: (1) rehearsal planning, (2) preparation of passports and visas, (3) transportation of musical instruments and performance equipment, and (4) coordination among administrators, instructors, and performers.

One administrator explained:

" Most problems encountered overseas actually begin before departure. Careful preparation significantly reduces operational risks during the mission." (KI-1)

Similarly, an ensemble director stated:

" The rehearsal process should be completed in Thailand because rehearsal opportunities after arriving in China are extremely limited." (KI-4)

Student performers also reported that many participants were unfamiliar with international travel procedures, particularly passport preparation, immigration regulations, and overseas performance logistics.

Table 1 Operational Problems during Pre-departure Preparation

Operational Problem	Strategic Guideline
Incomplete travel documents	Early document verification
Delayed visa application	Standard preparation timeline
Musical instrument transportation	Instrument inventory and packing checklist
Limited rehearsal time	Comprehensive rehearsal schedule
Internal communication	Centralized coordination system

Noted. From Researcher

The findings suggest that systematic preparation before departure constitutes the foundation for successful overseas music performance missions.

Theme 2: Operational Problems during International Travel and Immigration

The second theme focuses on operational challenges encountered during international travel, particularly immigration and customs procedures. Participants consistently identified immigration clearance as one of the most critical stages because delays at border checkpoints directly affect travel schedules, rehearsal arrangements, and overall mission implementation.

The analysis revealed that, beyond documentation and customs inspections, language barriers constituted one of the most significant operational challenges. Immigration officers in China primarily communicate in Chinese, whereas many student performers possess limited Chinese language proficiency. Consequently, participants often experienced difficulties understanding questions regarding their travel purpose, musical instruments, and accompanying performance equipment, resulting in prolonged immigration procedures.

One performing arts specialist explained:

"Immigration officers usually communicate in Chinese. Many students are unfamiliar with the questions and become nervous when they cannot respond appropriately." (KI-2)

A student performer similarly stated:

"I was worried because I could not understand the immigration officer's questions, even though all my documents were complete." (SP-4)

The findings indicate that operational efficiency can be significantly improved through better linguistic and procedural preparation before departure. Participants suggested that all performers should receive orientation sessions covering frequently asked immigration questions, basic Chinese and English communication for international travel, and the names of musical instruments and the materials from which they are constructed in both English and Chinese. Furthermore, appointing a bilingual interpreter or Chinese-speaking coordinator to accompany the delegation would facilitate communication with immigration officers and local authorities.

Table 2 Operational Problems during International Travel and Immigration

Operational Problem	Strategic Guideline
Immigration procedures	Prepare bilingual travel documents
Communication with immigration officers	Basic Chinese and English language orientation
Musical instrument inspection	Prepare instrument names and materials in English and Chinese
Customs inspection	Supporting documentation for instruments
Language barriers	Assign bilingual interpreters or coordinators
Travel coordination	Emergency communication protocol

Noted. From Researcher

These findings demonstrate that communication preparedness is equally as important as document preparation for successful international travel.

Theme 3: Operational Problems during Performance Operations

The third theme concerns operational management after arrival in the host country. Participants emphasized that successful performances depend largely on effective coordination with local organizers, technical personnel, and venue management teams.

The analysis identified several operational challenges, including rehearsal scheduling, communication with technical staff, sound system compatibility, stage preparation, lighting arrangements, electrical equipment, and coordination between Thai performers and Chinese organizing committees. Because rehearsal time in China is often limited, unexpected technical problems may directly affect performance quality.

One ensemble director explained:

"Technical rehearsal is essential because the actual stage, sound system, and lighting conditions are always different from those prepared in Thailand." (KI-4)

A representative from Guangxi Arts University further noted:

"Close communication between performers, technical staff, and local organizers is necessary to ensure that performances proceed smoothly." (KI-6)

Participants consistently agreed that the most effective strategy is to complete intensive rehearsals in Thailand before departure. Overseas rehearsals should therefore focus primarily on adapting performances to the venue, adjusting technical settings, and coordinating with local production teams rather than learning new performance materials.

Table 3 Operational Problems during Performance Operations

Operational Problem	Strategic Guideline
Rehearsal scheduling	Complete intensive rehearsals before departure
Stage preparation	Early venue inspection
Sound system compatibility	Standard sound-check procedures
Lighting arrangements	Technical rehearsal
Electrical equipment	Advance coordination with technical staff
Communication with organizers	Daily coordination meetings

Noted. From Researcher

The findings indicate that comprehensive preparation in Thailand substantially reduces operational uncertainty during overseas performance implementation.

Theme 4: Post-performance Evaluation and Organizational Learning

The fourth theme highlights the importance of organizational learning following overseas music performance missions. Participants agreed that valuable experiences accumulated during each mission should be systematically documented to improve future international performances.

One administrator remarked:

"Every overseas performance provides valuable experience. However, unless these experiences are systematically recorded and discussed, the same operational problems are likely to recur." (KI-1)

A faculty member similarly observed:

" Post-performance meetings are as important as the performances themselves because they allow the team to identify both strengths and weaknesses while the experiences remain fresh." (KI-3)

Participants recommended that every overseas mission should conclude with a structured debriefing session involving administrators, faculty members, technical staff, and student performers. During these meetings, participants should identify operational problems, successful management practices, and recommendations for future improvement. Systematic documentation of these discussions would contribute to institutional knowledge management and facilitate the continuous refinement of overseas music performance management.

Table 4 Lessons Learned from Overseas Music Performance Missions

Experience	Strategic Improvement
Immigration procedures	Develop an immigration preparation handbook
Communication barriers	Language orientation and bilingual interpreter support
Technical coordination	Standard operational procedures for rehearsal and technical setup
Performance management	Intensive pre-departure rehearsal program
Mission evaluation	Structured post-performance debriefing and documentation

Noted. From Researcher

These findings demonstrate that systematic post-performance evaluation transforms individual experiences into institutional knowledge, thereby supporting continuous organizational improvement and enhancing the effectiveness of future overseas music performance missions.

Theme 5: Strategic Management Guidelines for Overseas Music Performance Missions

The final theme synthesizes the findings into practical strategic management guidelines. Rather than treating operational problems as isolated incidents, participants emphasized that successful overseas music performance requires integrated management throughout the entire mission cycle.

The analysis resulted in five strategic management guidelines:

1. Strategic Planning and Preparation,
2. 2 International Travel and Immigration Management,
3. Performance Operations Management,
4. 4.Post-performance Evaluation and
5. Continuous Organizational Improvement

Table 5 Strategic Management Guidelines for Overseas Music Performance Missions

Mission Stage	Strategic Guideline
Pre-departure Preparation	Strategic planning and readiness
International Travel	Risk management and coordination
Performance Operations	Technical and operational management
Post-performance Evaluation	Organizational learning
Continuous Improvement	Standard operating procedures and knowledge management

Noted. From Researcher

The five guidelines collectively constitute the proposed Strategic Management Guidelines for Overseas Music Performance Missions (SMG-OMPM), providing a practical framework for improving overseas music performance management in higher education institutions.

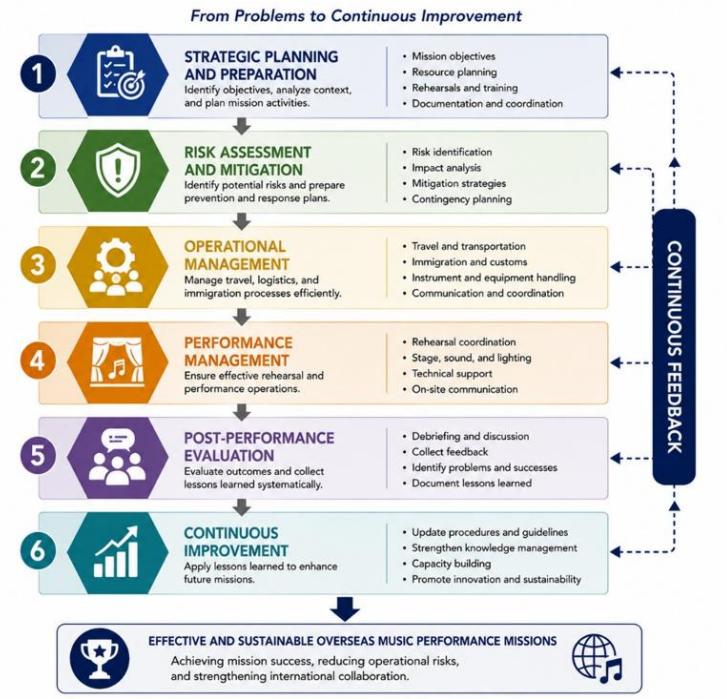


Figure 2 Strategic Management Guidelines Framework

Noted. **From Researcher**

Discussion and Conclusions

This study investigated the operational problems encountered during overseas music performance missions undertaken by the College of Music, Mahasarakham University, using the China–ASEAN (Nanning) Music Festival as an embedded case study. The findings indicate that successful international music performance missions depend not only on artistic excellence but also on effective strategic management throughout the entire mission cycle. Rather than occurring independently, operational problems were found to be interconnected, beginning during preparation and extending through international travel, performance implementation, and post-performance evaluation.

The findings demonstrate that pre-departure preparation is the foundation of successful overseas music performance missions. Inadequate planning for travel documents, visa applications, rehearsal schedules, transportation of musical instruments, and internal coordination frequently affected subsequent operational stages. This finding is consistent with Afroze et al. (2025), who emphasized that effective music performance requires systematic planning and organizational management in addition to artistic competence. Likewise, David et al. (2024) argued that strategic planning enables organizations to anticipate operational challenges and improve implementation effectiveness.

Another significant finding concerns international travel and immigration management. In addition to customs inspections and document verification, language barriers with immigration officers emerged as a major operational challenge. The findings suggest that bilingual communication, interpreter support, and basic language preparation should become standard components of overseas music performance planning. This observation aligns with project management principles emphasizing proactive risk identification and mitigation to reduce operational uncertainty (Kerzner, 2022; Project Management Institute, 2021).

The study also found that performance operations require close coordination among performers, technical staff, and local organizers. Challenges related to rehearsal schedules, stage preparation, sound systems, and technical coordination directly influenced performance quality. These findings support Komander and König (2022), who argued that performing arts organizations operate within complex organizational environments requiring continuous coordination and adaptive management. Similarly, Salvaggio (2024) emphasized that flexible management strategies are essential for responding effectively to dynamic performance environments.

A further finding highlights the importance of post-performance evaluation and organizational learning. Although overseas missions generated valuable practical experiences, lessons learned were rarely documented systematically, resulting in recurring operational problems. This finding supports Dalkir's (2024) knowledge management perspective, which emphasizes systematic knowledge capture and organizational learning as essential mechanisms for continuous improvement.

Collectively, these findings suggest that overseas music performance missions should be managed as an integrated operational process rather than as separate activities. While previous studies have primarily focused on higher education internationalization, cultural exchange, or performing arts management (Altbach & Knight, 2007; de Wit, 2020; Komander & König, 2022), this study demonstrates that effective overseas music performance requires coordinated management across the entire mission cycle.

Based on these findings, this study proposes the Strategic Management Guidelines for Overseas Music Performance Missions (SMG-OMPM Framework), comprising five interconnected components: (1) strategic planning and preparation, (2) international travel and immigration management, (3) performance operations management, (4) post-performance evaluation, and (5) continuous organizational improvement. The framework synthesizes more than ten years of institutional experience into a practical management model that supports operational efficiency, risk reduction, and organizational learning.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the field of music performance management by demonstrating that overseas music performance missions require systematic strategic management rather than relying solely on artistic expertise. The proposed SMG-OMPM Framework provides an evidence-based guideline that can assist universities and performing arts institutions in improving the planning, implementation, and evaluation of international music performance missions while promoting sustainable organizational development.



Figure 3 Overall Research Model

Noted. **From Researcher**

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Institutional Policy: Higher education institutions should incorporate overseas music performance missions into their internationalization strategies by providing clear policies, adequate resources, and long-term planning.

2. Operational Management: Music institutions should establish standardized procedures covering pre-departure preparation, travel and immigration, performance operations, and post-performance evaluation to improve efficiency and reduce operational risks.

3. Capacity Building: Participants should receive orientation on travel procedures, intercultural communication, and basic Chinese and English language skills, while post-performance debriefing should be conducted to strengthen organizational learning.

4. Future Research: Future studies should examine overseas music performance missions in different countries and evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed Strategic Management Guidelines for Overseas Music Performance Missions (SMG-OMPM Framework) in various institutional contexts.

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GELAO FOLK SONG IN SHIQIAN COUNTY, TONGREN CITY, GUIZHOU PROVINCE

CHEN CHAOGANG[*]KHOMKRICH KARIN[*] AND ARNON JULAWAN[**]

Abstract

International music performance missions have become an important strategy for higher education institutions to promote cultural exchange, academic collaboration, and global engagement. However, these missions often encounter operational challenges throughout the mission cycle, affecting both management efficiency and performance quality. This study aimed (1) to identify operational problems encountered before, during, and after overseas music performance missions; (2) to analyze the underlying causes and management practices associated with these problems; and (3) to develop strategic management guidelines for improving overseas music performance missions in higher education institutions. A qualitative research approach employing an embedded single case study design was adopted, using the China–ASEAN (Nanning) Music Festival, People's Republic of China, as the principal case study. Data were collected through documentary research, semi structured interviews with six key informants, participant observation, and field investigations. Additional data were obtained from eight students who had participated in overseas music performance missions. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed five interconnected stages of the overseas music performance mission cycle: (1) pre-departure preparation, (2) international travel and immigration, (3) performance operations, (4) post-performance evaluation, and (5) continuous organizational improvement. Major operational problems included travel documentation, communication with immigration officers, transportation of musical instruments, technical coordination, rehearsal management, and the absence of systematic post-performance knowledge management. Based on these findings, the study proposes strategic management guidelines emphasizing comprehensive preparation, effective coordination, organizational learning, and continuous improvement. Unlike previous studies that primarily describe international collaboration activities, this research transforms more than ten years of institutional experience into practical strategic management guidelines that can be adapted by music and performing arts institutions

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conducting overseas performance missions in diverse international contexts. The study culminates in the development of the Strategic Management Guidelines for Overseas Music Performance Missions (SMG-OMPM Framework), providing a practical framework that higher education institutions can adopt to improve the planning, implementation, and evaluation of international music performance activities. The proposed framework contributes both practical and managerial insights for improving the effectiveness, sustainability, and operational success of overseas music performance missions.

Keywords: Strategic Management, Overseas Music Performance, Music Performance Management, China–ASEAN (Nanning) Music Festival, Higher Education

Background

Folk songs are an important feature of intangible cultural heritage and a core element of traditional culture among ethnic communities. Based in the local community and born out of collective memory, folk songs are a vehicle for reflecting history through the experiences, beliefs, customs, and social values shaped by daily life. Chinese ethnic folk songs hold high artistic and cultural value, as they are closely associated with the character of various places, lifestyles, and traditions. However, with the rapid modernization and urbanization affecting folk song in a multi-cultural context over the years, the social environment that fosters folk songs and traditions has been gradually disappearing. Consequently, in everyday life, this vital vehicle for cultural dissemination across generations is weakening (Han Kun, 2017). Many folk song traditions are therefore now threatened, as folk music traditions of various ethnicities find themselves grappling with issues of survival, resilience, and continuity.

The Gelao are one of the oldest ethnic groups inhabiting Guizhou Province, China. The Gelao possess a rich cultural heritage, including traditional festivals, oral literature, rituals, and folk music. Thus, Gelao folk songs became known as one of the more typical musical forms in northern Guizhou specifically, this defined area comprising Shiqian County and Tongren City. Folk songs are closely related to the daily life of local people and are used for work, dating, ceremonies, entertainment, and other social interactions. Beyond their musicality, Gelao folk songs are important tools for transmitting ethnic identity, cultural memory, and social relations (Ning et al.).

However, the current vitality of Gelao folk songs is increasingly poor. Other studies have also found various serious issues hindering the inheritance of traditional Gelao music culture, including weaker group identity among younger generations, insufficient motivation for cultural preservation, lack of educational support, and fewer opportunities for musical performance (Han Kun, 2017). Research by Lü Hongyun (2017) indicates that among young Gelao, ethnic identity appeared relatively weak on

the whole when compared to other ethnic groups; and in a highly sinicized area of Guizhou, Du Fangjuan, Chen Xiaoliang, and Zhu Hong (2011) even reported identity confusion among some Gelao adults and elderly people.

Moreover, the Gelao people lack internal impetus for innovation in folk song culture, a result of historical restrictions and certain educational approaches (Fang Lili, 2005). Consequently, external forces have always played a significant role in the conservation of culture, thus slowly eroding the core cultural significance of traditional folk songs. In addition, folk songs are no longer as widely used in community life due to the impact of popular culture and urban migration. The primary inheritors are mostly elderly, whereas the young members of the community remain less active in traditional music-making.

Another obvious problem is that Gelao folk songs are not widely taught. Despite some efforts to incorporate folk song education into the Gelao context in individual schools, where it had been a priority for many years, academic resources are lacking in this area. The prevalent problems for local ethnic music education include the shortage of professional music teachers, a lack of standardized teaching materials, and poorly developed curricula (Fang Lili, 2005).

One of the areas where Gelao folk songs persist and are actively performed is Shiqian County. There have been attempts to preserve folk songs by local organizations and government agencies through media such as festivals, cultural expressions, and intangible cultural heritage projects. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the present-day existence of Gelao folk songs in Shiqian County, including their social conditions, cultural functions, and the need for their traditional inheritance.

This article is study of Gelao folk songs in Shiqian County, Tongren City, Guizhou Province, China. It examines the cultural functions, inheritance conditions, and performance settings of Gelao folk song traditions, as well as the contemporary issues they face. The results of this study are expected to provide data for the protection and sustainable safeguarding of Gelao folk songs as a vital phenomenon of ethnic cultural heritage.

Purpose of study

To investigate the current status of Gelao folk songs in Shiqian County, Tongren City, Guizhou Province, with particular emphasis on their cultural functions, transmission practices, educational inheritance, and contemporary preservation efforts.

Scope of Research

This research focuses on investigating the current status of Gelao folk songs in Shiqian County, Tongren City, Guizhou Province, China. The study examines the social context, cultural functions, inheritance conditions, performance practices, and survival environment of

Gelao folk songs within local communities. The research was conducted through qualitative methods, including fieldwork, participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentary analysis between March 2025 and March 2027.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology based on an ethnomusicological approach to investigate the present condition of Gelao folk songs in Shiqian County, Tongren City, Guizhou Province, China. Ethnomusicological fieldwork was selected because it enables the researcher to understand musical practices within their natural cultural and social contexts through direct engagement with local communities.

Research Site

Fieldwork was conducted in Yaoshang Gelao Cultural Village, Pingshan Gelao and Dong Autonomous Township, Shiqian County, Guizhou Province. This community was selected because it remains one of the important areas where Gelao folk songs continue to be practiced during traditional festivals, ritual ceremonies, and community activities.

Key Informants

Purposive sampling was used to select four key informants who possessed extensive knowledge and practical experience related to Gelao folk songs.

1. Mao Chengxiang – National-level inheritor of Gelao folk songs.
2. Liu Chao – Middle school music teacher responsible for local music education.
3. Yang Dajun – Head of the Shiqian County Art Troupe.
4. Cai Jianxin – Cultural administrator responsible for local cultural heritage promotion.

These informants provided information concerning folk song performance, transmission, educational activities, cultural policies, and contemporary preservation efforts.

Data Collection

Multiple qualitative data collection techniques were employed to enhance the credibility and triangulation of the findings.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all four key informants. Each interview lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and explored topics including the current status of Gelao folk songs, cultural functions, performance contexts, transmission practices, educational issues, preservation activities, and future challenges. Interviews were conducted in Chinese and subsequently translated into English for analysis.

Field Observation

Participant observation was undertaken during field visits to observe musical performances, community festivals, ritual activities, rehearsals, and informal singing events. The researcher recorded observations regarding performance settings, audience participation, performer interactions, costume, musical instruments, and cultural contexts. Detailed field notes were prepared immediately after each observation session.

Audio Recordings

Audio recordings were made, with permission from participants, to document representative Gelao folk songs, vocal performance styles, melodic characteristics, singing techniques, and performance practices. These recordings supported subsequent transcription and musical analysis.

Photography

Photographs were taken to document performance environments, ritual ceremonies, costumes, musical instruments, community activities, and interactions among performers. The photographs served as visual evidence supporting the interpretation of field observations.

Documentary Research

Documentary research included reviewing academic books, journal articles, master's theses, government reports, local cultural documents, intangible cultural heritage records, and historical publications concerning Gelao ethnic culture and folk songs. Documentary evidence was compared with field data to verify historical and cultural information.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following qualitative research procedures. Interview transcripts, field notes, documentary sources, photographs, and audio recordings were first organized and coded according to recurring themes. Similar codes were then grouped into broader categories representing cultural functions, transmission practices, educational issues, preservation efforts, and current challenges.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from interviews, participant observation, documentary sources, audio recordings, and photographic evidence. The final interpretation was conducted within an ethnomusicological framework to explain the relationships between musical practices and the social and cultural contexts of the Gelao community.

Results

The study findings indicate that Gelao folk songs continue to play an important role in the cultural life of the Gelao ethnic community in Shiqian County, Tongren City, Guizhou Province. The results can be categorized into four major aspects as follows.

1. Cultural Functions of Gelao Folk Songs

The study found that Gelao folk songs remain closely connected with the daily life and traditional culture of the local community. Folk songs are still performed during ritual ceremonies, traditional festivals, labor activities, entertainment events, and social interaction among community members. In addition, folk songs function as important symbols of ethnic identity and collective cultural memory among the Gelao people.

During fieldwork in Yaoshang Gelao Cultural Village, the researcher observed that Gelao folk songs were still performed during traditional ceremonies, community gatherings, and seasonal festivals. Elderly singers usually initiated the performances, while community members gathered around the ceremonial space to participate in singing and cultural activities. The performances were closely integrated with ritual practices and social interaction, demonstrating that Gelao folk songs continue to function as a living cultural tradition rather than merely staged performances.

As **Key Informant 1** explained:

"Gelao folk songs are not only music. They represent our ancestors' wisdom and remind us of who we are as Gelao people."

Likewise, **Key Informant 2** stated:

"Whenever traditional ceremonies are organized, people still expect folk songs to be performed because they symbolize our cultural identity."

Table 1 *Cultural Functions of Gelao Folk Songs in Shiqian County*

Cultural Function	Description
Ritual Function	Used in ceremonies, ancestor worship, and traditional festivals
Labor Function	Sung during agricultural and collective labor activities
Entertainment Function	Used for recreation and community enjoyment
Social Function	Promotes communication and relationships among community members
Cultural Identity Function	Represents Gelao ethnic identity and cultural memory

Noted. From Researcher

2. Current Problems in Folk Song Transmission

The research revealed that the inheritance of Gelao folk songs is currently facing serious challenges. Most active performers and inheritors are middle-aged or elderly people, while younger generations demonstrate limited interest and participation in traditional musical activities. The transmission chain has gradually weakened due to modernization, migration to urban areas, and the influence of contemporary popular culture.

Interviews and field observations consistently revealed that the continuity of Gelao folk songs has become increasingly fragile. Most active singers were elderly, while younger generations participated only occasionally in traditional performances. During community activities observed by the researcher, young participants were more likely to engage in contemporary popular music than in traditional folk singing.

Key Informant 2 commented:

"Many young people leave the village for education or work. They seldom have opportunities to learn or perform traditional songs after returning home."

Key Informant 3 added:

"If experienced singers are not able to transmit their knowledge to younger people, many songs may disappear within one generation."

Modernization

↓

Urban Migration

↓

Reduced Community Practice

↓

Decline of Youth Participation

↓

Weakening of Folk Song Transmission

Figure 1 ***Current Challenges Affecting the Transmission of Gelao Folk Songs Noted.*** **From Researcher**

Table 2 *Current Challenges in the Preservation of Gelao Folk Songs*

Problems	Current Situation
Aging Inheritors	Most performers are elderly people
Youth Disinterest	Younger generations rarely participate
Urban Migration	Young people move to cities for education and work
Popular Culture Influence	Modern entertainment replaces traditional folk songs
Problems	**Current Situation**

Noted. From Researcher

3. Educational Transmission of Gelao Folk Songs

The study also found that the educational transmission of Gelao folk songs remains insufficient. Only a limited number of schools provide activities related to local folk music culture. In addition, schools face several problems, including shortages of professional teachers, lack of standardized teaching materials, and insufficient curriculum development related to Gelao music traditions.

Field observations conducted in local schools indicated that opportunities for learning Gelao folk songs remain limited. Although some schools occasionally organize cultural activities related to local traditions, systematic music instruction focusing on Gelao folk songs has not yet been fully developed.

According to Key Informant 2:

" Teachers recognize the importance of local folk songs, but there are very few teaching materials and insufficient time within the curriculum."

Key Informant 4 emphasized:

" Schools cannot preserve traditional music alone. Community elders and families must also participate in the learning process."

Table 3 *Problems in Educational Transmission*

Educational Issues	Description
Limited School Programs	Few schools offer Gelao folk song education
Lack of Teachers	Insufficient professional music teachers
Lack of Teaching Materials	Few systematic textbooks or learning resources
Weak Curriculum Development	Local music culture is not fully integrated into education
Limited Student Participation	Students show low interest in traditional folk music

Noted. From Researcher

4. Preservation Efforts and Cultural Support

Despite these challenges, local cultural organizations and government agencies continue to support the preservation of Gelao folk songs through cultural festivals, documentation projects, and intangible cultural heritage programs. These activities help maintain public awareness and encourage the continuation of traditional musical practices within the community.

During fieldwork, the researcher observed several preservation activities organized by local government agencies and community organizations, including folk song performances, cultural festivals, and intangible cultural heritage exhibitions. These events successfully increased public awareness of Gelao folk songs; however, most preservation activities were organized periodically rather than practiced continuously within everyday community life.

Key Informant 4 explained:

" Festivals help introduce Gelao folk songs to visitors, but long-term preservation depends on whether young people continue singing these songs in their daily lives."

Similarly, Key Informant 1 remarked:

"Recording songs is important, but traditions survive only when people continue singing them from one generation to the next."



Figure 2 ***Current Preservation Approaches for Gelao Folk Songs***

Noted. **From Researcher**

Table 4 *Current Preservation Activities*

Preservation Activities	Objectives
Cultural Festivals	Promote public awareness of Gelao folk songs
Documentation Projects	Record songs and preserve cultural knowledge
Intangible Cultural Heritage Programs	Support long-term cultural preservation
Community Performances	Encourage local participation
Educational Promotion	Introduce folk songs to younger generations

Noted. From Researcher

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that Gelao folk songs continue to function as an essential cultural resource within the Gelao community of Shiqian County, Guizhou Province. Field observations and interviews revealed that these songs remain closely associated with ritual ceremonies, seasonal festivals, agricultural activities, and community gatherings, where

they reinforce social cohesion, collective memory, and ethnic identity. Rather than serving solely as artistic performances, Gelao folk songs continue to operate as living cultural practices embedded in the daily lives of community members. This finding supports the ethnomusicological perspective proposed by Merriam (1964), who argued that music should be understood as an integral component of culture and human behavior, and further reflects Rice's (2010) interpretation that musical traditions derive their meaning from the cultural and social contexts in which they are performed.

However, the study also reveals that the continuity of Gelao folk songs is increasingly threatened by rapid social transformation, modernization, urban migration, and declining participation among younger generations. Interviews with key informants consistently indicated that traditional songs are now maintained primarily by elderly practitioners, while opportunities for informal learning within families and communities have gradually diminished. Similar concerns have been reported by Han (2017), who identified the weakening of traditional transmission mechanisms, and by Lü (2017) and Du et al. (2011), who observed a gradual decline in ethnic identity among younger members of the Gelao community. Compared with these earlier studies, the present research provides updated ethnographic evidence demonstrating that these challenges remain evident in contemporary community life and continue to influence the sustainability of Gelao folk song traditions.

Another significant finding concerns the role of formal education in cultural transmission. Although several local schools have introduced activities related to Gelao culture, systematic instruction of Gelao folk songs remains limited because of insufficient curriculum development, shortages of qualified music teachers, and the lack of standardized teaching materials. Interviews with teachers and cultural administrators suggest that effective transmission requires stronger collaboration between schools, traditional practitioners, local communities, and cultural institutions. These findings are consistent with the observations of Fang (2005) and Hao (2016), who emphasized that educational support is one of the most important mechanisms for sustaining traditional musical heritage. The present study further suggests that integrating Gelao folk songs into local music curricula may strengthen cultural identity while creating meaningful learning opportunities for younger generations.

The findings also indicate that local government agencies and cultural organizations have implemented various safeguarding initiatives, including cultural festivals, documentation projects, and intangible cultural heritage programs. These activities have increased public awareness and enhanced the visibility of Gelao folk songs within the broader society. Nevertheless, field observations suggest that festival-based promotion alone cannot ensure the long-term vitality of the tradition. Sustainable preservation depends primarily upon continuous community participation, intergenerational transmission, and the active engagement of young people in everyday musical practice. This observation is consistent with the principles outlined in the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003), which emphasizes that intangible cultural heritage can only

remain viable when communities themselves continue to practice, transmit, and reinterpret their cultural traditions.

From an ethnomusicological perspective, the present study contributes empirical field-based evidence concerning the contemporary social functions and transmission of Gelao folk songs. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasized historical development or cultural description, this research documents the current relationships among community life, education, cultural policy, and heritage safeguarding through direct fieldwork and interviews. Consequently, the findings provide a broader understanding of how traditional folk music continues to adapt within rapidly changing social environments while maintaining its cultural significance.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that Gelao folk songs remain an important expression of ethnic identity and cultural continuity in Shiqian County despite increasing pressures from modernization and changing social conditions. The research contributes to the ethnomusicological literature by documenting the present status, cultural functions, educational conditions, and preservation practices of Gelao folk songs within their contemporary social context. The findings also provide practical implications for educators, cultural organizations, and policymakers responsible for safeguarding China's intangible cultural heritage through stronger cooperation among communities, educational institutions, and government agencies. Since this article reports only the findings related to the first research objective, future research will investigate the musical characteristics, melodic structures, performance practices, and singing techniques of representative Gelao folk songs, thereby providing a more comprehensive ethnomusicological understanding of this important musical tradition.

Suggestions

1. Gelao folk songs should be incorporated into the music programs of local schools.
2. Cultural groups must enhance community folk song performances in society.
3. It is recommended that government departments support systematic documentation and preservation projects of Gelao folk songs.
4. Because local cultural activities are serving as a focal point to exert ethnic cultural identity making participation of younger generations at such activities necessary.
5. More studies are needed to explore the role of community involvement in Gelao folk songs and how it has been adapted to present-day life.

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PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUES OF SHANBEI SHUOSHU: A CASE STUDY OF CHEN WENYI

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Abstract

Shanbei Shuoshu is a popular Chinese folk art of narrative-singing from northern Shaanxi province, and was designated as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2006. Shanbei Shuoshu, as a typical representative of Chinese Quyi, is a complete art system combining vocal performance, instrumental accompaniment with rhythm and narrative communication. Yet, this tradition has encountered issues of transmission and preservation owing to its cultural relevance. The present study is the first ethnomusicological attempt to investigate the performing techniques of Chen Wenyi, a well-known transmitter of Shanbei Shuoshu (Shanbei storytelling). The representative performance repertoire Dajiaoniang can be analyzed in three interrelated dimensions: singing techniques, Sanxian accompaniment techniques, and Shuaiban rhythmic techniques. The results show that these dimensions function as a unified system connecting music, language and narrative representation. This study both enriches the ethnomusicological field and provides evidence for the preservation of Shanbei Shuoshu as a significant item of intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: Shanbei Shuoshu, Chen Wenyi, Performance Techniques, Ethnomusicology, Chinese Narrative Singing, Intangible Cultural Heritage

Introduction

Traditional narrative-singing arts are a major part of the colourful performing arts tradition in China. Quyi is one of them, the narrative performance genres that blend storytelling, singing, musical accompaniment and oral commentary. Since Quyi belongs to an important class of Chinese folk performance arts, historically it has functioned not only as a form of entertainment but also for the transmission of social beliefs, historical recollection, local knowledge and cultural identity. From the perspectives of both language and music, Quyi traditions development is a reflection of community life and regional culture, so ethnomusicologically significant (Nettl, 2005).

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Shanbei Shuoshu, one of differing regional styles of Quyi, is considered by some to be one of the most unique narrative-singing traditions in north Shaanxi Province, China. "Shanbei" is a region in northern Shaanxi and "Shuoshu", literally "eloquence through speech and song". It combines spoken storytelling, sung verses and melodies, dialect expression, musical accompaniment on instruments, as well as rhythmic performance in one art–form. Traditionally, Shanbei Shuoshu has been performed in village gatherings, temple fairs, seasonal festivals and community celebrations as performers narratively conveyed local histories, folk legends, moral values and everyday experiences. Accordingly, Shanbei Shuoshu has served both as an artistic practice and a means of local cultural transmission (UNESCO, 2003).

What distinguishes Shanbei Shuoshu is its close link to the linguistic and cultural ecology of northern Shaanxi. The Shanbei dialect has a strong influence on vocal tonality, rhythm, and the way a shiju is delivered. In contrast to many highbrow vocal traditions that emphasize melodic complexity, Shanbei Shuoshu instead stresses speech and "the speech-song interface" allowing performers to tell stories in a straightforward, colorful, and emotionally powerful way. This stylistic trait is often referred to among practitioners as effect of speaking in singing and singing in speaking, which evidently sets Shanbei Shuoshu apart from other Chinese oral traditions (Sun 2011).

Since Shanbei Shuoshu is an important part of local culture, it was listed as the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List by the Chinese government in 2006. Despite this official recognition, it now faces various challenges. The overall decline in audience numbers and opportunities for traditional performance practices can be explained by socio-economic factors, including rapid social transformation, urbanisation, the changing temper of cultural consumption patterns and increased influence of digital entertainment. Meanwhile, many established practitioners are getting on in years and fewer younger people choose to spend short or even most of their lives within the tradition. These elements have raised questions about whether Shanbei Shuoshu operates as a sustainable living cultural heritage (Mao and Li 2019).

Individual Performers: Individual performers are particularly important in preserving and transmitting traditional arts, when the focus is on the safeguarding of cultural heritage. Amongst current carriers of Shanbei Shuoshu during the contemporary era, Chen Wenyi is one the most attested practitioners and teacher of this tradition. Over decades of artistic practice, he has played an important role in the preservation, performance and dissemination of Shanbei Shuoshu. His recitals show brilliant technique without breaking with the norms of stylistic research. Concurrently, his artistic renditions embody creative adaptation and personal

expression while exemplifying the fluctuating interplay between tradition and innovation in traditional performative art (Sun, 2011).

Previous studies have focused on: the historical evolution of Shanbei Shuoshu, its cultural function, way of transmission and heritage value. These works have been invaluable in illuminating the social and cultural contexts of the tradition. But much of the research has failed to go into detail on what specific performance techniques the transmitter uses. In particular, there are few comprehensive studies exploring the interdependence of vocal techniques, instrumental accompaniment, rhythmic organization and narrative communication in real world performance. Consequently, key aspects of artistic knowledge are poorly captured and understood. As an ethnomusicologist, though, performance techniques are much more than technical skills: they contain cultural knowledge, artistic values and communicative strategies that are passed down through practice and the experience of the performer. The study of master performers and their practice thus reveals mechanisms by which traditional music cultures are preserved, transformed, and passed from one generation to the next. Conducting such research informs practices of performance analysis as well as more general conversations about oral tradition, cultural identity, and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage (Merriam, 1964; Schechner, 2003).

This paper aims to fill this void by exploring the performative aspects of styles adopted by Chen Wenyi as exemplified in the representative Shanbei Shuoshu genre of Dajiaoniang. Explaining the integration of musical, linguistic, and narrative elements within performance practice, the study will focus on singing techniques, Sanxian accompaniment techniques and Shuaiban techniques. The examination of these techniques advances the understanding of Shanbei Shuoshu as an active cultural practice and lays the groundwork for future research on another strand of narrative-singing arts in China.

Purpose of Study

To analyze the performance techniques of Shanbei Shuoshu as demonstrated by Chen Wenyi.

Literature Review

Chinese Quyi and Narrative-Singing Traditions

Chinese Quyi (simplified Chinese: 曲艺; traditional Chinese: 曲藝), literally meaning 'art of music and song', is an umbrella term for various kinds of traditional narrative-singing genres that combine narrated speech, vocal recitation and instrumental accompaniment. Traditionally, Quyi has served as a major vehicle of passing on local history and social values as well as

moral education and cultural knowledge in many communities across China (Wang, 1980). Whereas the content of puremusical Genres is not themselves a type of communication; quyi brings togethermeans written and sung, forming an artistically communicative whole thateffectively recreates the narrative itself by bridging both hearthe storyteller and even more importantly, momentarily without anydisjunct between storytellers/performers through their words with musicality.

Because Quyi traditions have developed in a context-dependent manner with localizing linguistic and cultural environments. Various styles of Quyi have specific performance styles that are influenced by local dialects, so it is necessary for performers to cater their performances to the specific Quyi genre. Most scholars make a distinction between northern and southern traditions. However, Weiser (1980) notes that northern genres tend to be more direct and rhythmically organized with clear expressive recitations of stories as compared to southern genres where the melodic structures are often much clearer and vocal delivery is more refined (Wang, 1980). The close connection between musical performance and cultural context that explains these regional variations in Quyi makes it an important topic for ethnomusicological study.

Shanbei Shuoshu

Out of the different types of Chinese Quyi, Shanbei Shuoshu is a typical narrative-singing art form from northern Shaanxi Province. The tradition itself is an artistic genre that integrates storytelling, singing and dialectizational performance accompanied by Sanxian and a rhythmic form of Shuaiban. Traditionally, Shanbei Shuoshu has been performed at gatherings of villages and neighbourhoods as well). temple fairs, seasonal festivals, and other community events that functioned as mechanisms for entertainment (Sun. 2011) education cultural transmission.

One of the most unique features of Shanbei Shuoshu is its close relationship with the Shanbei dialect. Local speech, its tonal, rhythmical and phonetic nature intensively affects the vocal delivery, melody contour and narrative mode. Thus, the artistic personality of Shanbei Shuoshu is closely tied to the linguistic and cultural setting in which it was created. Past research has noted some key musical features of the tradition which include dialect-based articulation of vocalisation, flexible rhythmic organization, improvisational narration delivery and interplay between vocals and instruments (Sun 2011).

Just like other types of traditional Chinese folk art, Shanbei Shuoshu is also faced with the problems of cultural transmission and audience development even though it has been nominated as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage of China. Traditionally, performance

environments have come under stress from modern social and cultural changes that are raising fears of the survival of tradition (Mao & Li, 2019).

Ethnomusicological Perspectives

Merriam (1964) considers the concept of music as culture that has primarily informed this study from an ethnomusicological theoretical perspective. This view of music is not as a mere collection of organized sound but in terms of social relationships, how you value life, what beliefs and values you identify with and where your community belongs. So, musical performance is an avenue of human behavior through which cultural meanings are constructed and transmitted.

Contemporary ethnomusicological scholarship also stress the analysis of biological and sociocultural variables within musical events 9 among other methodologies. Instead of studying music as systems, researchers examine the social context surrounding various aspects of performers, audiences/spectators, production and consumption of musical performance settings along with cultural associations (Nettl, 2005). These approaches are especially pertinent to Shanbei Shuoshu as the practice operates as music, narrative and cross-cultural engagement at once.

It also builds on performance-focused perspectives of understanding performance as process, which constructs and negotiates meaning. Performance is, from this perspective, not simply the showcasing of artistic works but a dynamically interactive phenomenon involving performers, viewers and contexts (Schechner 2003). This methodology offers an effective model for the way contextual analysis explores how Chen Wenyi uses vocal practice, musical backing and phrasal rhythm to convey narrative meaning and to stimulate our listeners.

Research Gap

Earlier studies situate Shanbei Shuoshu well within historical, cultural and transmission. Previous studies provided insights into the evolution of this tradition and its social roles, as well as how it forms an important part of China's intangible cultural heritage. However, less attention has been given to an in depth analysis of the individual performance techniques used by transmitters.

In particular, however, systematic investigation of the interaction between singing techniques, Sanxian accompaniment techniques and Shuaiban techniques in practice remains lacking. Previous research has discussed traits of Shanbei Shuoshu itself, and scant attention has been given to the artistic mechanisms in specific responsible for how performers create narrative expression and musical communication. But also his performing aspects never been

relatively ethnomusicologically examined in total, especially not analyzed out of linkage for the performance techniques for Chen Wenyi that have appeared to be a leading and leading contemporary bearer of Shanbei Shuoshu.

So this study fills in the gap by analyzing Chen Wenyi's performing styles via her key repertoires such as Dajiaoniang. Through examinations of vocal technique, musical accompaniment as well as rhythmic structuring, this research attempts to expand our understanding of the artistic means that maintain Shanbei Shuoshu as a living art.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach within the framework of ethnomusicology to investigate the performance techniques of Chen Wenyi, a recognized transmitter of Shanbei Shuoshu. Ethnomusicology was adopted because it enables musical performance to be examined within its cultural, linguistic, and social contexts, emphasizing the relationships among musical behavior, cultural meaning, and performance practice (Merriam, 1964; Nettl, 2005). The research was conducted between March 2024 and March 2025, during which ethnographic fieldwork was undertaken in Yulin City, Shaanxi Province, China.

Research Site and Participant

Fieldwork was conducted in Yulin City, Shaanxi Province, China, one of the principal cultural centers of Shanbei Shuoshu. The site was selected because it remains an active area where Shanbei Shuoshu continues to be practiced and transmitted.

The principal participant was Chen Wenyi, a recognized practitioner and transmitter of Shanbei Shuoshu. He was selected through purposive sampling because of his extensive performance experience, artistic reputation, and long-standing contribution to the preservation and transmission of the tradition.

Research Materials

The representative repertoire Dajiaoniang was selected as the principal analytical material because it demonstrates the characteristic integration of vocal performance, Sanxian accompaniment, and Shuaiban rhythmic performance within Shanbei Shuoshu. The repertoire contains diverse musical and narrative features suitable for detailed performance analysis.

Data Collection

Data were collected through ethnographic fieldwork using four complementary methods. First, participant observation was conducted during rehearsals and performances to document the interaction between singing, instrumental accompaniment, rhythmic performance, and narrative communication. Second, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with Chen Wenyi to obtain information regarding performance techniques, artistic concepts, performance practice, and the transmission of Shanbei Shuoshu. Third, audio-video recordings of performances were made to provide primary materials for subsequent musical transcription

and detailed performance analysis. Finally, documentary research was conducted to examine relevant academic publications and historical documents concerning Shanbei Shuoshu, Chinese Quyi, and ethnomusicological studies.

Musical Transcription Procedures

Recorded performances of Dajiaoniang were repeatedly reviewed and transcribed into Western staff notation for analytical purposes. The transcription process focused on identifying melodic contour, phrase structure, rhythmic organization, articulation, breathing points, and expressive vocal characteristics. Repeated listening and comparison between the recordings and the transcriptions were undertaken to improve transcription accuracy.

The completed transcriptions served as the primary analytical material for examining the relationship between musical structure, vocal delivery, instrumental accompaniment, and narrative expression.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using qualitative performance analysis within an ethnomusicological framework. The musical analysis examined vocal techniques, including breath control, timbral variation, rhythmic flexibility, dialect-based articulation, and melodic organization. Instrumental analysis focused on the functions of the Sanxian and Shuaiban, particularly their contributions to accompaniment, rhythmic organization, and narrative communication. Interpretation of the findings was guided by Merriam's concept of music as culture (1964), which views musical performance as culturally embedded human behavior, together with performance theory (Schechner, 2003), which emphasizes the interaction among performer, performance, and audience. These complementary perspectives facilitated an integrated understanding of the relationships among music, language, and narrative communication in Shanbei Shuoshu performance.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study employed methodological triangulation by integrating participant observation, semi-structured interviews, audio-video recordings, documentary research, and musical transcription. Information obtained from these different sources was compared throughout the analytical process to improve the consistency and reliability of the interpretation.

Furthermore, repeated comparison between the musical transcriptions and the original audio-video recordings was conducted during the analytical process to ensure that the documented musical features accurately reflected the performance.

Results

The analysis of Dajiaoniang reveals that Chen Wenyi's performance techniques are founded upon the integration of vocal expression, instrumental accompaniment, rhythmic organization, and narrative communication (Sun, 2011; Mao & Li, 2019; Cao & Pantasri, 2025). The findings are organized according to three principal performance dimensions: singing techniques, Sanxian techniques, and Shuaiban techniques.

1. Singing Techniques

The vocal performance of Chen Wenyi demonstrates a sophisticated combination of breath control, timbral manipulation, dialect articulation, and rhythmic flexibility. These vocal elements collectively serve the narrative function of the performance, creating expressive variation that guides the listener through the story.

1.1 Breath Control

Analysis of the repertoire indicates that breath control functions as a primary mechanism for sustaining narrative continuity Throughout the performance, Chen Wenyi adjusts respiratory support to manage phrase length, dynamic intensity, and emotional expression. The findings reveal a systematic relationship between breath patterns and narrative structure, with respiratory cycles corresponding to the organization of textual and dramatic content.



Figure 1 bars 14-17

Source: Researcher,2025

Figure 1 (Bars 14–17): The opening narrative section demonstrates stable diaphragmatic support and gradual breath expansion. The performer maintains continuous vocal flow while introducing the narrative context, establishing a calm and descriptive tone.



Figure 2 bars 19-33

Source: Researcher.2025

Figure 2 (Bars 19–33): As the narrative introduces the protagonist, breath support becomes more dynamic. Extended phrases describing the "Big-Footed Woman" require controlled respiratory management, allowing Chen Wenyi to maintain vocal clarity across long textual passages.



Figure 3 bars 34-51

Source: Researcher,2025

Figure 3 (Bars 34–51): During the development of dramatic tension, breath cycles become shorter and more frequent. The performer strategically alternates between sustained narration and rapid delivery, using breath management to create a sense of narrative momentum.



Figure 4 bars 52-69

Source: Researcher,2025

Figure 4 (Bars 52–69): The conflict section exhibits the highest degree of respiratory activity. Rapid textual delivery describing wolves attacking sheep requires flexible breathing patterns. Chen Wenyi employs intercostal breathing to maintain vocal power while sustaining rapid articulation.



Figure 5 bars 70-81

Source: Researcher,2025

Figure 5 (Bars 70–81): At the climax of the performance, breath release is coordinated with dramatic exclamations and powerful vocal projection. The resulting effect enhances the portrayal of the protagonist's courage and reinforces the emotional impact of the narrative resolution.

1.2 Timbre and Resonance

The analysis reveals extensive use of timbral variation throughout the performance. Vocal color changes correspond directly to narrative developments and emotional content. In descriptive passages, Chen Wenyi employs a bright and transparent tone centered within the middle vocal register. During moments of dramatic conflict, resonance becomes more concentrated and forceful, conveying urgency and intensity.

Particularly significant is the climactic section, where expanded resonance and increased vocal projection create a heroic and dramatic sonic image. These timbral transformations contribute to the audience's emotional engagement and demonstrate Chen Wenyi's mastery of vocal technique as a narrative tool.

1.3 Rhythm and Articulation

Rhythmic flexibility represents one of the most distinctive characteristics of Chen Wenyi's performance style. Rather than adhering strictly to metrical regularity, he continuously adjusts tempo, accent, and phrase length in response to narrative content and dramatic development. This rhythmic flexibility is a hallmark of Shanbei Shuoshu performance aesthetics and reflects the tradition's roots in oral storytelling.

Dialect-based articulation further enhances expressive effectiveness. The Shanbei dialect influences pronunciation, stress patterns, and rhythmic organization, creating a vocal texture that is simultaneously musical and linguistic. The dialect's tonal characteristics shape melodic contour and contribute to the distinctive sonic identity of the tradition.

The findings demonstrate that vocal rhythm functions simultaneously as a musical structure and a storytelling device. Through rhythmic manipulation, Chen Wenyi creates shifts in narrative pace, emotional intensity, and audience engagement, illustrating the deep integration of musical and narrative dimensions in Shanbei Shuoshu performance.

2. Sanxian Techniques

The Sanxian serves as the principal melodic accompaniment instrument in Shanbei Shuoshu performance. Analysis indicates that its role extends beyond simple accompaniment to become an active participant in narrative communication.

The instrument provides melodic support, rhythmic stability, and expressive coloration throughout the performance. During narrative passages, the Sanxian reinforces vocal contours

and provides harmonic context. During dramatic moments, it amplifies emotional intensity through changes in tempo, articulation, and dynamic level.

The performer utilizes variations in tempo, articulation, and melodic emphasis to support emotional expression. Faster patterns accompany moments of excitement and conflict, while slower and more lyrical passages support reflective and descriptive sections. These variations demonstrate the Sanxian's function as a narrative instrument.

The close coordination between voice and instrument demonstrates a highly integrated performance practice. Rather than functioning independently, the Sanxian interacts continuously with vocal delivery, creating a dynamic dialogue between singer and instrument that is characteristic of Chinese narrative-singing traditions.

The analysis further reveals that instrumental accompaniment embodies the traditional Shanbei aesthetic principle of "enhancing emotions through music". Through changes in rhythmic density, melodic contour, and timbral quality, the Sanxian contributes to the emotional arc of the performance and reinforces the communicative effectiveness of narrative delivery.

3. Shuaiban Techniques

The Shuaiban constitutes a fundamental rhythmic component of Shanbei Shuoshu performance. The findings indicate that its function extends beyond timekeeping to include narrative structuring and audience communication.

Throughout the performance, rhythmic patterns produced by the Shuaiban correspond closely with changes in dramatic intensity. Strong accents emphasize key textual moments, while rhythmic variations signal transitions between narrative sections. This structural function parallels the role of percussion in other Chinese performance traditions.

During conflict scenes, increased rhythmic activity contributes to the perception of urgency and excitement. Conversely, less dense rhythmic patterns accompany descriptive and reflective passages, allowing the narrative content to be absorbed by the audience. This dynamic variation reflects the performer's mastery of rhythmic communication as a storytelling tool.

The Shuaiban also facilitates interaction between performer and audience. Accented rhythmic gestures often coincide with humorous expressions, dramatic exclamations, or important narrative moments, drawing the audience into active engagement with the performance. This interactive dimension is a hallmark of Chinese Quyi performance aesthetics.

From an analytical perspective, the Shuaiban functions as both a musical and communicative device. Its rhythmic patterns organize performance structure while

simultaneously reinforcing narrative meaning, demonstrating the deep integration of musical and communicative dimensions in Shanbei Shuoshu performance.

Summary of Findings

The analysis demonstrates that Chen Wenyi's performance techniques consist of three interconnected artistic dimensions. Singing techniques provide the primary vehicle for narrative communication through breath control, timbral variation, rhythmic flexibility, and dialect articulation. Sanxian techniques contribute melodic support, rhythmic stability, and expressive coloration. Shuaiban techniques provide rhythmic organization, narrative structuring, and audience engagement. Together, these dimensions form a coherent and highly integrated performance system.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of this study demonstrate that the performance techniques of Chen Wenyi represent a highly integrated artistic system in which vocal performance, instrumental accompaniment, rhythm, language, and narrative operate as mutually reinforcing dimensions. This integration reflects the fundamental aesthetic principle of Shanbei Shuoshu: the unity of speaking and singing within a single performance act.

From an ethnomusicological perspective, the findings support the concept of music as culture, which emphasizes the interrelationship among sound, behavior, and cultural meaning (Merriam, 1964). Chen Wenyi's performance demonstrates how musical techniques, linguistic features, and narrative structures collectively generate cultural significance. Rather than functioning as isolated artistic elements, these components operate within a broader cultural framework that reflects local identity and collective memory.

One of the most significant findings concerns the relationship between language and music. The analysis reveals that the Shanbei dialect directly shapes vocal rhythm, melodic contour, phrase organization, and articulation style. The dialect functions not only as a linguistic medium but also as a musical resource that contributes to the distinctive sonic identity of Shanbei Shuoshu. This observation reinforces previous scholarship emphasizing the close relationship between regional language and musical expression in Chinese narrative traditions (Sun, 2011).

The findings also align with performance-centered approaches that view performance as an active process through which meaning is constructed and communicated (Schechner, 2003). Throughout *Dajiaoniang*, Chen Wenyi employs vocal techniques, instrumental accompaniment, and rhythmic organization not merely as musical structures but as communicative tools that engage audiences in the narrative experience. The performance therefore functions as an interactive process rather than a simple presentation of musical material.

The results further highlight characteristics commonly associated with oral traditions. The flexible relationship between speech and song, the use of dialect expressions, and the adaptation of performance techniques according to narrative context demonstrate the dynamic nature of oral transmission. These features allow performers to maintain continuity with inherited traditions while simultaneously responding to contemporary performance situations.

Another important observation concerns the role of instrumental accompaniment. The Sanxian and Shuaiban function as active components of narrative communication rather than passive supporting instruments. Their interaction with the vocal line contributes to dramatic development, emotional expression, and audience engagement. This finding suggests that instrumental accompaniment should be understood as an integral element of narrative construction within Shanbei Shuoshu performance.

The findings also contribute to current discussions concerning intangible cultural heritage preservation. As emphasized by UNESCO (2003), living cultural heritage survives through continued practice and transmission rather than through documentation alone. The techniques demonstrated by Chen Wenyi represent embodied knowledge that can only be fully understood through performance and direct participation in the tradition.

Finally, the study illustrates the dynamic relationship between tradition and innovation. Although Chen Wenyi maintains core stylistic characteristics inherited from earlier generations, he continuously adapts performance techniques to contemporary contexts and audience expectations. This balance between continuity and adaptation contributes to the ongoing vitality of Shanbei Shuoshu and supports the sustainability of the tradition in contemporary society.

Conclusions

The present study was intended to spread light on the performance techniques of Shanbei Shuoshu, which were taken as exemplified by Dajiaoniang in Chen Wenyi's interpretations. Using qualitative ethnomusicological approaches such as fieldwork, participant observation, interviews, audio-video recording and musical transcription, this research presents a detailed account of the performance system behind contemporary Shanbei Shuoshu.

Three (overlapping) dimensions explain how Chen Wenyi sees and uses these performances: singing techniques, Sanxian techniques, and Shuaiban techniques. Music, language and narrative are unified as an integrated performance system by way through each dimension.

Firstly, the dimension of singing techniques which is the main medium of narrative communication. This analysis shows how Chen Wenyi uses flexible breath control, dynamic

timbral variation, articulation based on dialect and rhythmic flexibility to provide an expressive voice that communicates with audiences both emotionally and intellectually.

The Sanxian techniques described in the second dimension Counterfactuals (of types & flows) shows the value of instrumental accompaniment in Shanbei Shuoshu performance. The Sanxian plays an active role in narrative communication, contextualizing the vocal with melodic support throughout all phrases, rhythmic consistency to ground the performance and expressive coloration to reinforce and embellish key moments.

The third dimension, Shuaiban techniques, inversely points to rhythm as a guiding force for performance structure and audience engagement. The Shuaiban thus plays a vital role in holding the key components of musical literacy together, namely rhythmic organization and accentuation, as well as dynamic variation, all of which reinforce emotional trajectory with respect to communicative effectiveness vis-à-vis the narrative space.

These three dimensions together comprise the ancient aesthetic tenet of Shanbei Shuoshu: "To speak within song, and to sing into speech." The singing, instrumental accompaniment and rhythm do not act as independent aspects of the art form but, rather, mutually reinforcive parts of a true system of performance.

Academically, the study adds rich detail to ethnomusicological studies of recording technology by documenting and analyzing a contemporary Shanbei Shuoshu transmitter. The Music–Language–Narrative framework introduced in this paper provides a viable model for conducting comparative analyses of such Chinese Quyi traditions and other narrative-singing genres.

Please write something about: In terms of heritage, the study highlights the need to preserve knowledge of performance as much as repertoires and historical records. Chen Wenyi's mastery techniques - embodied knowledge - are (or should be) a form of cultural resource that is irreplaceable. Systematic documentation and active transmission will allow Shanbei Shuoshu to continue as a living art form.

To conclude, Chen Wenyi's vocal methods are a significant demonstration of the artfulness and cultural relevance of Shanbei Shuoshu. His performance, through a stem of vocal art, instrument art and rhythm arrangement, shows that this valuable intangible cultural heritage of China is still alive.

Recommendations

1. Academic Recommendations

Future studies should undertake comparative analyses of performance techniques among different Shanbei Shuoshu transmitters in order to identify stylistic variations and regional characteristics. Scholars should also explore the application of the Music–Language–Narrative framework to other Chinese Quyi traditions, including Jingyun Dagu, Shandong Kuaishu, and Suzhou Pingtan, in order to develop a broader comparative understanding of Chinese narrative-singing performance practices.

Additionally, digital documentation methods should be employed to preserve performance knowledge in accessible formats for future researchers, educators, and practitioners.

2. Practical Recommendations

Cultural organizations and educational institutions should establish systematic training programs, workshops, and apprenticeship opportunities to support the transmission of Shanbei Shuoshu performance techniques. University music programs may consider incorporating Shanbei Shuoshu into vocal music and traditional music curricula in order to raise awareness and cultivate future practitioners.

Furthermore, digital platforms and contemporary media channels should be utilized to expand the reach of Shanbei Shuoshu to younger and geographically dispersed audiences. Such initiatives would contribute to the sustainable preservation and revitalization of Shanbei Shuoshu as a living cultural heritage tradition in contemporary society.

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A FRAMEWORK FOR APPLYING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO SUPPORT THAI MUSIC CREATION BASED ON THAI MUSICOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

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Abstract

This article is part of a research project on the application of artificial intelligence in Thai music creation. It aims to synthesize a framework for applying artificial intelligence as a supporting tool in the creative process of Thai music based on Thai musicological principles. The article draws upon documentary research, related studies, and relevant concepts concerning artificial intelligence, technology-assisted music creation, creativity, technology acceptance, task-technology fit, ethical issues in the use of artificial intelligence, Thai music composition, and musical form analysis. The synthesis indicates that artificial intelligence can support idea generation, melodic experimentation, sound prototyping, and the exploration of new possibilities in Thai music creation. However, the application of AI-generated outputs in the context of Thai music requires guidance, examination, selection, and refinement by individuals with knowledge of Thai musicology in order to ensure accuracy in melody, rhythm, rhythmic patterns, cadential tones, idiomatic phrasing, musical expression, and cultural appropriateness. The article proposes a four-dimensional framework consisting of Thai musicological appropriateness, the suitability of technology for the task, creativity and developmental potential, and ethical considerations in the use of artificial intelligence. This framework can serve as a preliminary guideline for Thai musicians, music teachers, creative practitioners, and researchers who seek to apply technology in conjunction with Thai musical wisdom in a systematic manner.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Thai Music, Thai Music Creation, Thai Musicology

Introduction

Thai music is a form of cultural heritage that has long reflected the systems of thought, beliefs, tastes, and aesthetic wisdom of Thai society. Its major elements, including melody, rhythm, rhythmic patterns, cadential tones, idiomatic phrasing, instrumental interpretation, and musical expression, demonstrate that Thai music constitutes a body of knowledge requiring theoretical understanding, practical experience, and continuous transmission from teacher to student.

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The creation of Thai music therefore requires careful consideration of musical structure, the relationship of tones within each melodic phrase, the placement of cadential tones, the alignment of melodic movement with rhythmic patterns, and the selection of idiomatic phrasing appropriate to the musical expression and purpose of the work. These areas of knowledge are related to Thai musicological concepts found in various sources on Thai music, such as explanations of terminology and musical elements in the Encyclopedia of Thai Music Terminology: Vocal and Instrumental Music by the Royal Institute and information on Thai musical compositions in Narongchai Pidokrajt's Encyclopedia of Thai Songs (Royal Institute, 2002; Narongchai Pidokrajt, 2014).

At present, digital technology plays an increasingly significant role in learning, media production, data management, and artistic and cultural creation. Artificial intelligence has become particularly important because it enables computer systems to learn, analyze, process information, and generate new outputs from given data. Fundamental concepts of artificial intelligence explain that such systems aim to enable computers to perform certain tasks associated with human intellectual abilities, such as learning, reasoning, data analysis, and decision-making (Boden, 2016; Russell & Norvig, 2021).

In contemporary music, artificial intelligence has been applied in various ways, including melody generation, arrangement, sound synthesis, musical structure analysis, sound classification, and the provision of preliminary ideas for further creative development. Studies on music generation through deep learning indicate that technology can learn musical patterns from large datasets and generate new outputs in the form of melodies, sounds, or musical structures (Goodfellow et al., 2016; Briot et al., 2020).

However, Thai music has a knowledge system that differs from Western music and popular music in many respects, particularly in its tonal system, melodic movement, use of rhythmic patterns, cadential structures, idiomatic instrumental phrasing, and the transformation of core melodies into instrumental versions for different instruments. If artificial intelligence is applied without an understanding of Thai musicological principles, the resulting output may merely resemble Thai music in sound while lacking structural accuracy, musical meaning, and cultural appropriateness.

The use of artificial intelligence in Thai music should therefore be considered as a tool that supports thinking, experimentation, analysis, and creation. Human creators must remain responsible for determining the concept, examining quality, refining the output, and making the final artistic judgment. This position is consistent with ethical principles of artificial intelligence that emphasize transparency, responsibility, human oversight, and respect for human dignity and society (UNESCO, 2021).

This article therefore aims to propose a framework for applying artificial intelligence to support Thai music creation without diminishing the value of traditional wisdom.

It gives importance to Thai musicological principles, technological suitability, creativity, and ethical considerations in the use of data and outputs generated by artificial intelligence.

Content

This article presents the related concepts and the synthesized framework for applying artificial intelligence in Thai music creation. The content is organized into two main parts: related concepts and literature, and the proposed framework for applying AI in Thai music creation.

1. Related Concepts and Literature

1.1 Artificial Intelligence and Creativity

Artificial intelligence is a technology that seeks to enable computer systems to perform tasks related to human intellectual abilities, such as learning, analysis, decision-making, and output generation from data. Boden (2016) explains that artificial intelligence concerns attempts to make computers do the kinds of things that the human mind can do. Russell and Norvig (2021), meanwhile, describe AI as an intelligent agent that perceives its environment and selects actions in order to achieve goals.

In music, AI can support melody generation, audio data analysis, song prototyping, and experimentation with musical structures. Briot, Hadjeres, and Pachet (2020) suggest that music generation using deep learning involves multiple dimensions, including the objective of music generation, forms of musical data, model architecture, controllability of outputs, and limitations related to creativity.

When considered in the context of Thai music, artificial intelligence can serve as a tool for proposing directions, creating prototypes, and opening experimental spaces for sound. Nevertheless, outputs generated by such systems must still be evaluated according to Thai musicological principles, because Thai music creation must correspond with melodic systems, rhythm, rhythmic patterns, cadential tones, idiomatic phrasing, and musical expression.

1.2 Creativity and the Role of Human Creators

Creativity is a process involving the production of something new and valuable within a particular context. Boden (2004) proposes that creativity is related to the exploration and transformation of existing conceptual systems into new forms. In Thai music, creativity does not mean producing new sounds without foundation. Rather, it refers to the use of traditional knowledge as a basis for development, extension, or transformation in response to a new context.

For this reason, the role of humans in the process of using AI is highly significant. Creative practitioners must define the musical problem, select appropriate tools, examine the outputs, and decide which elements can be further developed. Thai music creation using AI

should therefore be understood as a collaboration between Thai musicological knowledge and contemporary technology.

1.3 Technology Acceptance and Task-Technology Fit

The use of technology in Thai music should consider both the capacity of the tool and its suitability for the nature of the task. Davis's Technology Acceptance Model (1989) emphasizes perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which can be adapted to assess AI music platforms.

At the same time, the Task-Technology Fit model proposed by Goodhue and Thompson (1995) explains that the effectiveness of technology use depends on the correspondence between the characteristics of the technology and the task to be performed. For Thai music, such suitability refers to the capacity of AI to support tasks related to melody, sound, structure, rhythm, and musical prototyping without causing the work to lose essential Thai musicological principles.

1.4 Thai Musicological Principles and Musical Form Analysis

Thai music contains elements that must be considered systematically, including melody, rhythm, rhythmic patterns, cadential tones, idiomatic phrasing, instrumental interpretation, instruments, and musical expression. Explanations of these terms and elements appear in the Encyclopedia of Thai Music Terminology: Vocal and Instrumental Music, an important reference source for the accurate use of Thai music terminology (Royal Institute, 2002).

The evaluation of creative works in Thai music requires musical form analysis, including song structure, melodic phrasing, cadential placement, melodic movement, and the relationship between melody and rhythmic pattern. Information on Thai songs in the work of Narongchai Pidokrajt (2014) demonstrates that understanding the history, details, and contexts of Thai songs is an important foundation for the study and creation of Thai music.

1.5 Ethical Considerations in the Use of Artificial Intelligence

The use of AI in Thai music creation requires consideration of ethical issues in the use of data and outputs, particularly rights related to sound data, musical works, the role of Thai music teachers, transparency in declaring the use of AI, and the creator's responsibility for the final work. UNESCO (2021) proposes key ethical principles for AI, including transparency, accountability, human oversight, and consideration of social impacts.

When AI is applied to Thai music, ethical considerations are not limited to copyright or technical usage. They also include responsibility toward cultural heritage, respect for teachers and transmitters of knowledge, and the need to prevent Thai musical idioms from being reduced merely to external sound characteristics.

2. Method of Synthesis

This article draws upon a research progress report on the application of artificial intelligence in Thai music creation. It selects only the sections related to the background, objectives, scope, conceptual framework, research methodology, and data analysis approach

The synthesis was conducted through the study of documents and related research concerning artificial intelligence, technology-assisted music creation, technology acceptance, task-technology fit, AI ethics, creativity, Thai music composition, and musical form analysis.

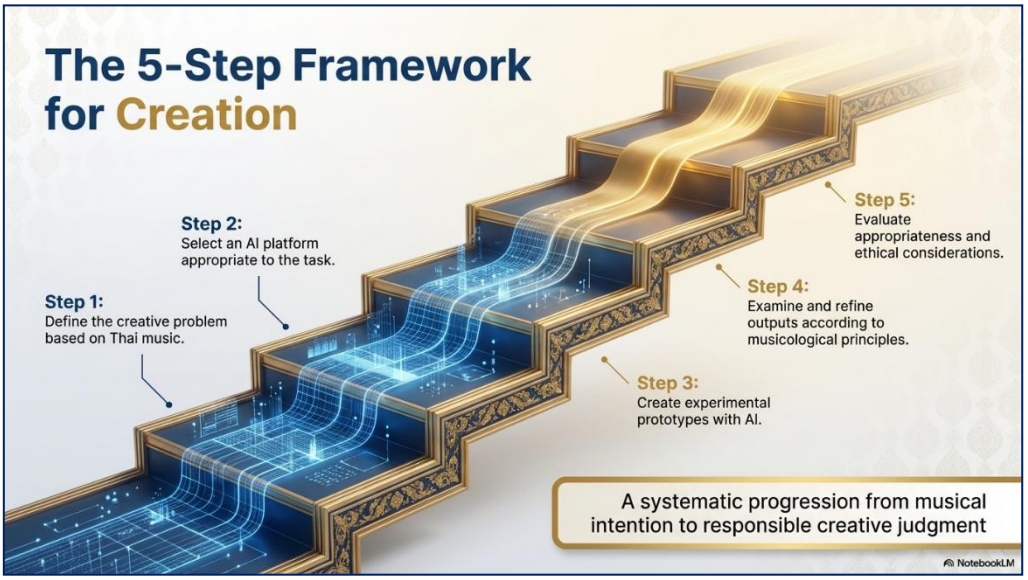
The content was analyzed qualitatively by considering the relationship between AI technology and the elements of Thai music. The findings were then synthesized into a framework for using AI to support Thai music creation, with emphasis on the researcher's role as the person who defines the concept, selects the tool, examines the output, refines the work, and determines its artistic value.

3. Findings: A Framework for Applying AI in Thai Music Creation

The synthesis proposes a five-step framework for applying AI in Thai music creation, as shown in Table 1 and discussed in the following subsections.

Table 1 Framework for Applying AI in Thai Music Creation

Step	Focus	Key consideration	Expected output
1	Defining a creative problem based on Thai music	Song type, melody, rhythm, rhythmic pattern, instrument, and musical expression	A clear creative problem grounded in Thai music
2	Selecting an AI platform	Capability, controllability, usability, output format, copyright, and task-technology fit	A platform appropriate to the intended musical task
3	Creating prototypes with AI	Melodic ideas, sound atmosphere, and preliminary musical structures	Experimental musical prototypes
4	Examining and refining outputs	Melody, rhythm, rhythmic pattern, cadential tone, idiomatic phrasing, and expression	Refined outputs aligned with Thai musicological principles
5	Evaluating appropriateness and ethics	Thai musicological appropriateness, technological suitability, creativity, and AI ethics	A culturally responsible creative direction



3.1 Defining a Creative Problem Based on Thai Music

The first step in applying AI to Thai music creation is to define the creative problem clearly. For example, the creator may wish to experiment with melody, create a sound prototype, compare approaches to melodic movement, or explore sound structures for the development of a new work. The problem must begin from Thai musical principles rather than from the capability of the tool alone.

The creative problem should identify the elements to be controlled, such as song type, melodic character, musical expression, instrument, tonal grouping, rhythm, rhythmic pattern, or idiomatic phrasing. A clearly defined problem allows the researcher to use AI with direction and helps reduce inaccuracies in the system's outputs.

3.2 Selecting an AI Platform Appropriate to the Nature of the Task

The selection of an AI platform should consider several characteristics of the system, including its capacity to generate melody, sound, or musical structure; its ability to refine or control outputs; the form of outputs that can be further studied; usage conditions; copyright issues; and the possibility of adapting the platform to Thai music.

Platform evaluation should be connected to Davis's concept of technology acceptance (1989) and Goodhue and Thompson's concept of task-technology fit (1995). In this sense, a suitable tool must be practically usable, understandable, not unnecessarily complex, and capable of responding to the task of Thai music creation at a level that allows the researcher to analyze or further develop the outputs.

3.3 Creating Prototypes with AI

After selecting the tool, the researcher may experiment with AI to create musical prototypes, such as melodic ideas, accompanying sounds, sound atmospheres, or preliminary

musical structures. This step should be considered an experiment in thought and sound rather than the production of a finished work.

AI-generated outputs may contain useful elements, such as interesting melodic ideas, sound atmospheres that can be developed further, or sound patterns that stimulate creativity. However, such outputs may not yet conform to Thai musical principles. For example, cadential tones may be placed inappropriately, rhythm may not correspond with rhythmic patterns, or sound idioms may not match Thai musical instruments. The researcher must therefore use Thai musicological knowledge in the selection and analysis of these outputs.

3.4 Examining and Refining Outputs According to Thai Musicological Principles

The most important step is to examine AI-generated outputs according to Thai musicological principles. At least six aspects should be considered: melody, rhythm, rhythmic pattern, cadential tone, idiomatic phrasing, and musical expression.

In terms of melody, the researcher must consider whether the melody is continuous, whether it possesses characteristics of Thai music, and whether it can be developed into an instrumental version. In terms of rhythm and rhythmic pattern, the researcher must consider whether the melody corresponds with rhythmic structure. In terms of cadential tones, the researcher must consider whether the important tones at the end of each phrase are appropriate to the musical structure. In terms of idiomatic phrasing, the researcher must consider whether the phrasing retains the character of Thai music. In terms of musical expression, the researcher must consider whether the work communicates the intended feeling of the creator.

Refining AI-generated outputs is therefore a process that requires human experience, especially the experience of individuals with a background in Thai music. AI can propose outputs, but it cannot assume responsibility for cultural value or Thai musicological accuracy on behalf of the researcher.

3.5 Evaluating Appropriateness and Ethical Considerations

The framework for evaluating AI-generated outputs in Thai music creation should consist of four dimensions: Thai musicological appropriateness, the suitability of the technology for the task, creativity and developmental potential, and ethical considerations in the use of AI.

Thai musicological appropriateness is considered through the accuracy of melody, rhythm, rhythmic patterns, cadential tones, idiomatic phrasing, and musical expression. The suitability of the technology for the task is considered through the platform's capacity to support actual creative work. Creativity is considered through the potential of the output to be developed into a new work. Ethical considerations include the appropriate use

of data, respect for sources, declaration of AI involvement, and the creator's responsibility for the final work.

Discussion and Conclusions

The synthesis indicates that AI has the potential to support Thai music creation as an experimental tool and as a means of expanding creative possibilities, particularly in the stages of prototyping, sound exploration, and melodic experimentation. This idea corresponds with the work of Briot and colleagues (2020), who explain that deep learning technology can generate musical content in various forms, although issues of control, creativity, and the use of outputs in real contexts must still be considered.

However, the use of AI in Thai music involves cultural limitations that differ from general music generation. Thai music does not consist only of sound or melody. It consists of a knowledge system connected to teachers, conventions, listening experience, performance practice, and an understanding of musical expression. From the perspective of Thai musicological principles, AI-generated outputs must pass through multiple layers of examination before being used in practice.

The framework proposed in this article therefore emphasizes the role of humans as directors of the creative process. The researcher must define the problem, select the tool, experiment, analyze, refine, and evaluate the value of the work, while AI functions as a tool that supports thinking and experimentation. This positioning helps reduce the risk of superficial technology use and allows the application of AI to Thai music to maintain academic and cultural responsibility.

Another important issue is that the assessment of AI in Thai music should not rely solely on technological criteria, such as speed, ease of use, or sonic realism. It must also apply Thai musicological criteria, such as the accuracy of cadential tones, the relationship with rhythmic patterns, the appropriateness of idiomatic phrasing, and the ability to communicate musical expression. These criteria prevent evaluation from being limited to the efficiency of the tool and instead connect it directly with the value of Thai musicology.

The application of artificial intelligence in Thai music creation can be undertaken if AI is positioned as a tool that supports thinking, experimentation, analysis, and prototyping, while humans remain responsible for guiding, examining, refining, and making the final value judgment.

The framework proposed in this article consists of five steps: defining a creative problem based on Thai music, selecting an AI platform appropriate to the nature of the task, creating prototypes with AI, examining and refining outputs according to Thai musicological principles, and evaluating appropriateness and ethical considerations.

The use of AI in Thai music should be considered through four dimensions: Thai musicological appropriateness, the suitability of the technology for the task, creativity and developmental potential, and ethical considerations in the use of AI.

This article proposes that AI can expand the experimental space of Thai music. However, the value of the work must remain grounded in the knowledge, experience, and responsibility of Thai music creators. A principled use of AI therefore offers one possible approach to connecting Thai musical wisdom with contemporary technology while maintaining respect for its cultural foundations.

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EDUCATION

CULTURALLY SITUATED TBLT WITH AI SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPING ENGLISH-SPEAKING PERFORMANCE AMONG MUSIC EDUCATION AND DRAMATIC ARTS EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study examined students' English-speaking performance before and after participating in a culturally situated Task-Based Language Teaching intervention with AI support. A quantitative one-group pre-test and post-test design was employed with 76 second-year undergraduate students selected through convenience sampling from a population of 226 students enrolled in English courses at a Ministry of Culture-affiliated institution specializing in Dramatic Arts in Kalasin Province, Thailand. The 15-week intervention integrated Task-Based Language Teaching, Global Englishes principles, ChatGPT-supported script preparation, and ElevenLabs-generated listening practice. Students completed two main speaking tasks: a guided personal information task and a role-play task based on a Thai cultural event. Data were collected using a speaking performance test administered before and after the intervention. The test scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired-samples t-test. The results showed that students' mean speaking score increased from 11.89 in the pre-test to 23.80 in the post-test. The improvement was statistically significant, $t(75) = 13.13$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size, Cohen's $dz = 1.51$. These results suggest that the culturally situated TBLT intervention with AI support was associated with meaningful improvement in students' English-speaking performance within this specific educational context.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, English-speaking performance, AI-assisted language learning, Global Englishes, Dramatic Arts Education

Introduction

English-speaking performance has become increasingly important in higher education, particularly in disciplines where students are expected to communicate cultural, artistic, and professional knowledge to diverse audiences. In Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education, English is not merely a general academic subject but a communicative resource for introducing

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oneself, explaining cultural practices, describing performance traditions, and presenting Thai artistic knowledge in academic and professional contexts. From an English for Specific Purposes perspective, language instruction should respond to learners' disciplinary and professional needs rather than focus only on decontextualized grammar knowledge (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hyland, 2006). Speaking performance is therefore especially important because it requires learners to use vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, interaction, and coherence to communicate meaning in real time (Richards, 2008).

However, students in performance-based arts education may encounter particular difficulties when using English for speaking tasks. Preliminary classroom observation in the first semester of the 2024 academic year, in the course Language for Communication for Teachers, revealed that many students had difficulty pronouncing task-related vocabulary, producing spoken sentences independently, and preparing English scripts for oral performance without support. Although students possessed strong cultural and artistic knowledge in their own disciplines, they often needed scaffolding in vocabulary preparation, pronunciation practice, script development, and confidence before speaking in English. These challenges suggest that English instruction for Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts students should provide structured opportunities for meaningful speaking practice linked to students' cultural knowledge, academic learning, and future professional roles.

Task-Based Language Teaching offers a relevant pedagogical response to these needs because it positions language as a tool for achieving meaningful communicative outcomes. Rather than treating speaking as the mechanical production of accurate sentences, task-based pedagogy encourages learners to use language for purposeful communication, interaction, performance, and reflection (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015; Willis, 1996). In Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education, tasks can be designed around culturally and professionally relevant activities, such as introducing oneself as a future teacher, explaining Thai cultural events, presenting performance-related knowledge, or performing role-play tasks related to classroom and cultural communication.

At the same time, English instruction in this context should recognize the diversity of English users and communicative norms. Global Englishes provides such an orientation by viewing English as a plural, dynamic, and globally shared language rather than as the property of native speakers alone (Jenkins, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019). From this perspective, successful speaking performance is not defined by native-like pronunciation but by

intelligibility, clarity, flexibility, and meaningful communication. This orientation is particularly relevant to Thai learners, who may hesitate to speak English because they believe their accent or pronunciation is inadequate.

Recent developments in artificial intelligence also create new possibilities for supporting English speaking development. AI-supported tools can provide model dialogues, vocabulary support, pronunciation exposure, listening practice, and script-writing assistance. These forms of support may be especially useful for learners who need preparation before performing speaking tasks. In this study, students used ChatGPT to support script preparation, while the researcher used ElevenLabs-generated audio materials uploaded to YouTube for listening practice. AI was used as pre-task scaffolding, not as a replacement for teacher guidance, classroom interaction, or students' actual speaking performance. When integrated with task-based instruction, AI can support learners before they engage in meaningful oral communication (Godwin-Jones, 2023; Kohnke et al., 2023).

Although TBLT, Global Englishes, and AI-assisted language learning have received increasing attention in English language education, limited research has examined how these dimensions can be integrated in culturally situated, performance-based higher education contexts. This gap is significant in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education, where English-speaking performance involves not only linguistic production but also cultural explanation, professional identity, and intercultural intelligibility. Therefore, this study examined students' English-speaking performance after participating in a culturally situated Task-Based Language Teaching intervention with AI support. The study contributes context-specific evidence on how meaningful tasks, Global Englishes-informed instruction, and AI-supported preparation can support English-speaking development among Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts students.

Literature Reviews

1. English Communication in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education

English communication plays a significant role in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education because students in these fields are expected to use English not only for general interaction but also for explaining cultural, artistic, and professional knowledge. In performance-based education, communication is closely connected to cultural interpretation, artistic presentation, classroom demonstration, and audience engagement. Students may need to introduce themselves as future teachers or performers, explain the background of Thai

cultural events, describe musical or dramatic performances, and communicate the meanings of cultural practices to listeners from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, English in this context should be understood as a communicative resource that supports students' academic learning, professional preparation, and cultural representation.

From an English for Specific Purposes perspective, language instruction should respond to learners' disciplinary and professional needs rather than focus only on general language knowledge (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hyland, 2006). For students in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education, these needs include explaining cultural events, describing performance practices, using classroom language, and communicating artistic knowledge in English. English learning in this field should therefore be linked to students' future roles as teachers, performers, and cultural communicators. This means that speaking tasks should be culturally relevant and professionally meaningful rather than limited to decontextualized textbook dialogues.

In the Thai performing arts context, English communication is particularly important because students may be expected to represent Thai arts and culture beyond local Thai-speaking contexts. Previous research in vocational Dramatic Arts education has emphasized that English communication skills are essential for students' academic and professional development, especially because students may need to present Thai arts and culture internationally (Pholying & Ambele, 2024). Vocabulary development, speaking ability, and communicative confidence are therefore important foundations for students in arts-related fields. This is especially relevant in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education, where students need English to express cultural meanings, artistic interpretations, and performance-related knowledge.

Speaking performance is especially important in this context because students are expected to communicate orally and respond to audiences, classmates, or learners in real time. Effective speaking involves more than grammatical accuracy. It also requires fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, interaction, and coherence, which together support successful communication in everyday, academic, and professional contexts (Richards, 2008). In Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education, these components are closely connected to students' ability to explain artistic content, organize cultural information, and communicate with confidence. For example, when students explain a Thai cultural event or perform the role of a teacher in English, they need to speak clearly, select appropriate vocabulary, organize ideas logically, and make their message understandable to listeners.

However, students in performance-based arts education may face specific challenges when using English. Although they often possess strong artistic knowledge and cultural understanding, they may experience difficulty transforming this knowledge into English communication. These difficulties may include limited vocabulary, hesitation, pronunciation concerns, weak fluency, and anxiety about speaking in front of others. Such challenges are significant because students' future professional roles may require them to communicate Thai cultural and artistic knowledge to diverse audiences. Previous work has shown that task-based learning can support learners by engaging them in meaningful tasks, such as role plays, simulations, and collaborative projects, that allow them to use English in practical contexts related to their future careers (Pholying & Ambele, 2024).

A Global Englishes is also important for English communication in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education. English is now used by diverse speakers across different linguistic and cultural contexts, and successful communication should not be judged only by native-speaker norms (Jenkins, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019). In the Thai context, Global Englishes supports a shift toward intelligibility, flexibility, linguistic diversity, and intercultural communication (Pholying, 2025). Similarly, Global Englishes Language Teaching encourages learners to claim ownership of English, recognize diverse English users, challenge native-speakerism, and treat English varieties with respect (Prabjandee, 2024). This perspective is highly relevant for students who may feel anxious about their accents or pronunciation because it allows them to understand that Thai-accented English can still be meaningful and effective when the message is clear and appropriate to the communicative context.

In this study, English-speaking performance was situated within students' disciplinary and cultural contexts. The learning activities were designed to help students use English to introduce themselves, explain Thai cultural events, and participate in role-play tasks related to their future professional roles. The focus was not on native-like English performance but on meaningful, intelligible, and culturally grounded speaking performance.

2. Task-Based Learning and Speaking Performance

Task-Based Learning is a communicative approach to language teaching in which tasks serve as the central unit of instruction. Rather than presenting language as isolated grammar or vocabulary items, TBL encourages learners to use language to achieve meaningful communicative goals (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015; Willis, 1996). In this approach, learners engage in purposeful activities that require them to understand, negotiate, express, and exchange

meaning. Such activities are particularly relevant to speaking development because they provide learners with opportunities to use English in realistic situations, receive feedback, and improve their communicative performance through practice.

A task is commonly understood as a classroom activity in which learners use the target language to achieve a communicative outcome. Willis (1996) explains that tasks allow learners to use language for communicative purposes, while Ellis (2003) emphasizes that tasks require learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome. Similarly, Nunan (2004) argues that task-based instruction links classroom learning with real-life language use. These definitions suggest that TBL is particularly suitable for speaking instruction because it gives learners opportunities to use English as a tool for meaning-making rather than as a set of forms to memorize.

Speaking performance requires learners to manage language use in real time. It involves fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, interaction, and coherence, all of which contribute to successful oral communication (Richards, 2008). Through task-based activities, learners are encouraged to organize ideas, select appropriate vocabulary, negotiate meaning, and speak for communicative purposes. This is different from traditional form-focused instruction, where students may understand grammar rules but have limited opportunities to use English meaningfully in interaction.

Empirical research has provided evidence that TBLT can enhance EFL learners' oral performance. Xuyen and Trang (2021), for example, found that task-based speaking activities improved EFL learners' oral performance more effectively than traditional instruction. Their study used pre- and post-speaking tests and showed that learners in the experimental group made greater improvement in oral performance after engaging in task-based speaking activities. Similarly, Ngọc (2023) reported that TBLT significantly improved EFL learners' speaking performance and that students developed positive attitudes toward the use of TBLT in speaking classes. These findings support the use of task-based instruction as an effective approach for developing speaking ability in EFL contexts.

The pedagogical value of TBL also lies in its structured learning cycle. A typical task-based lesson includes a pre-task stage, a task cycle, and a language focus stage (Willis, 1996). In the pre-task stage, learners are introduced to the topic, task requirements, useful vocabulary, and relevant input. During the task cycle, learners perform the task, prepare a report, and present their outcomes. In the language focus stage, learners analyze and practice

language that emerges from the task. This cycle is useful for speaking development because it supports learners before, during, and after oral performance. It also allows learners to move from preparation to meaningful communication and then to reflection on language use.

In Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education, TBL is especially appropriate because students' future professional roles require them to communicate through explanation, demonstration, interaction, and performance. Tasks can be designed to reflect authentic communicative situations, such as introducing oneself as a future teacher, explaining a Thai cultural event, describing a performance, or demonstrating classroom content through role play. These tasks allow students to connect English learning with their disciplinary knowledge and professional identity. Previous research in vocational Dramatic Arts education has also emphasized that TBL can support vocabulary acquisition, language proficiency, and English communication skills by engaging students in meaningful tasks such as role plays, simulations, and collaborative projects (Pholying & Ambele, 2024).

In the present study, TBL was applied through two culturally situated speaking tasks. The first was a guided personal information task, which functioned as monologic speaking practice. This task helped students develop basic speaking confidence by introducing themselves and communicating personal information in English. The second was a role-play task on a Thai cultural event, which functioned as group interaction. This task required students to use English to explain cultural content, interact with peers, and present Thai cultural knowledge. These tasks were supported by weekly AI-generated dialogues, listening practice, teacher observation, and feedback.

Therefore, Task-Based Learning provides a strong pedagogical foundation for enhancing English-speaking performance in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education. It allows students to use English not only as a subject of study but also as a communicative tool for cultural explanation, professional preparation, and intercultural engagement. In this study, TBL was used to help students develop speaking performance through meaningful, culturally situated, and professionally relevant communication.

3. Global Englishes and Intercultural Communication

Global Englishes provides an important theoretical foundation for English communication in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education because it recognizes English as a plural, dynamic, and globally shared language. Rather than viewing English as a fixed system owned by native speakers, Global Englishes emphasizes that English is used by diverse speakers across different

linguistic, cultural, and social contexts (Jenkins, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019). This perspective is particularly relevant in English as a Foreign Language context, where learners are often expected to approximate native-speaker norms even though their actual communication may occur with speakers from many different language backgrounds.

In the Thai context, Global Englishes is especially significant because traditional English language teaching has often privileged British or American English as ideal models of proficiency. Such an orientation may reinforce the belief that successful communication requires native-like pronunciation or grammatical perfection. However, this belief may limit learners' confidence and willingness to communicate, especially when students feel that their accents or English use are inadequate. Pholying (2025) argues that Global Englishes in Thailand should promote linguistic diversity, intercultural understanding, and more inclusive language education by moving beyond native-speaker models and recognizing the legitimacy of localized English use.

A Global Englishes perspective shifts the goal of English learning from imitation of native-speaker norms to intelligible and meaningful communication. In this view, learners should be prepared to communicate with diverse English users whose accents, vocabulary choices, and communicative styles may vary. Therefore, English instruction should help students develop flexibility, tolerance of linguistic variation, pragmatic awareness, and intercultural sensitivity. These qualities are important for students in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education because they may use English to explain Thai cultural practices, present performances, and interact with audiences or learners from different cultural backgrounds.

Global Englishes Language Teaching also emphasizes learners' ownership of English. Prabjandee (2024) explains that teacher education for Global Englishes Language Teaching should help teachers and learners understand English as plurilithic, pluricentric, and globally owned. This means that learners should not view English only as the language of native speakers but as a communicative resource that they can use to express their own identities and cultural knowledge. Prabjandee further highlights the importance of revisiting English ownership, raising awareness of diverse interlocutors, challenging native-speakerism, introducing World Englishes, and treating Englishes with respect.

Recent work on English as a lingua franca further extends this perspective by emphasizing transcultural communication. Baker (2026) argues that ELF communication involves multilingual and multicultural resources, pragmatic strategies, and the flexible

negotiation of meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries. From this view, successful communication does not depend on following a fixed set of native-speaker pragmatic norms. Rather, it depends on learners' ability to use communicative resources flexibly, negotiate meaning, accommodate interlocutors, clarify misunderstandings, and adapt to specific communicative situations.

This transcultural perspective is highly relevant to Thai performing arts education. Students in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education are not learning English simply to reproduce foreign cultural norms. Rather, they need English to communicate Thai artistic and cultural meanings to wider audiences. For example, when students explain Thai cultural events, describe traditional performances, or act as teachers in English, their goal is to communicate meaning clearly and appropriately. A Global Englishes and transcultural communication perspective allows students to maintain their Thai cultural identity while developing English as a tool for intercultural and professional communication.

Intercultural communication is also central to this study because students' speaking tasks require them to present culturally situated content. Explaining Thai cultural events in English involves more than translating words from Thai into English. Students must select relevant information, organize cultural meanings, and communicate them in ways that listeners from other cultural backgrounds can understand. This requires intercultural awareness, audience sensitivity, pragmatic flexibility, and respect for cultural difference.

In this study, Global Englishes informed the instructional design by encouraging students to focus on intelligibility, clarity, and meaningful communication rather than native-like pronunciation. This orientation supported students in understanding that effective communication does not require native-like English. Instead, students were encouraged to focus on clarity, meaning, and communicative success. This is consistent with the study's task observation focus on confidence, fluency, intercultural awareness, and acceptance of diverse English accents.

Therefore, Global Englishes provides a strong theoretical basis for culturally situated English communication in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education. It supports a more inclusive view of English learning, where students are encouraged to communicate Thai cultural knowledge through intelligible, flexible, and identity-affirming English. In this way, Global Englishes strengthens the pedagogical value of Task-Based Learning by ensuring that speaking tasks are not only communicative but also intercultural, transcultural, culturally meaningful, and relevant to students' future professional roles.

4. AI-Supported Language Learning

AI-supported language learning has become increasingly relevant in English language teaching because it can provide learners with immediate access to language input, practice opportunities, and individualized support. In speaking instruction, AI tools can assist learners through model dialogues, listening practice, vocabulary support, pronunciation exposure, and script-writing assistance. These forms of support are particularly useful for EFL learners who may have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom and who require preparation before engaging in oral communication tasks.

Recent research suggests that generative AI can support language learning by providing flexible input, interactive practice, and scaffolding for learners' language production (Godwin-Jones, 2023; Kohnke et al., 2023). A systematic review of current AI trends in foreign language learning also indicates that AI-supported technologies show potential for enhancing language learning through learner engagement, personalized learning, and support for teachers' instructional practices (Alhusaiyan, 2025). Therefore, AI can function as a preparatory tool that helps learners become familiar with useful expressions, sentence patterns, and pronunciation before they perform speaking tasks.

However, AI should not be understood as a replacement for teachers, classroom interaction, or communicative pedagogy. Its educational value depends on how it is integrated into meaningful learning processes. When AI is used only for mechanical translation or script production, it may limit students' active language development. In contrast, when AI is embedded within a task-based learning framework, it can serve as a scaffold that supports learners before they engage in authentic communication. This aligns with the view that technology should enhance language learning by supporting interaction, reflection, and meaningful language use rather than replacing human communication (Chapelle, 2003; Godwin-Jones, 2023).

In the context of Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education, AI support can be particularly useful because students need to communicate culturally specific content in English. They may need to explain Thai cultural events, describe performance practices, or prepare role-play scripts related to teaching and cultural presentation. AI-generated dialogues can provide examples of how cultural content may be expressed in English, while listening practice can help students become more familiar with pronunciation, rhythm, and useful expressions. These forms of support can help students prepare for speaking tasks more confidently.

In the present study, AI was used to support weekly listening practice, script writing, vocabulary preparation, and pronunciation awareness. Students practiced with AI-generated dialogues before completing two culturally situated speaking tasks: a guided personal information task and a role-play task on a Thai cultural event. AI support was therefore positioned as a preparatory scaffold within a broader Task-Based Learning intervention rather than as the central teaching method. The teacher continued to observe students' performance and provide feedback throughout the task-based learning process.

The integration of AI support also aligns with Global Englishes-informed pedagogy. Since Global Englishes emphasizes intelligibility, flexibility, and communication with diverse English users, AI-supported materials can be used to expose learners to varied language models and communicative expressions. However, teachers should guide students critically so that they do not treat AI-generated English as a fixed native-speaker standard. Instead, AI should be used to help students prepare for intelligible and meaningful communication while maintaining their own cultural and linguistic identity.

Therefore, AI-supported language learning provides an important dimension of the present study. It supports students' preparation for speaking tasks by providing input, practice, and language scaffolding. When combined with Task-Based Learning and Global Englishes, AI can help create a learning environment in which students are better prepared to communicate culturally meaningful content in English. In this study, AI support strengthened the task-based process by helping students move from preparation to performance, while the main emphasis remained on meaningful communication, teacher feedback, and students culturally situated English use.

5. Integrating TBLT, Global Englishes, and AI Support in Culturally Situated English Instruction

The integration of Task-Based Language Teaching, Global Englishes, and AI support provides the conceptual foundation for culturally situated English instruction in this study. These three components are complementary rather than separate. TBLT provides the pedagogical structure for meaningful language use, Global Englishes provides the theoretical orientation for intelligible and culturally meaningful communication, and AI support provides preparatory scaffolding before students perform speaking tasks. Together, these components create an instructional model that is suitable for students in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts

Education, where English-speaking performance is closely connected to cultural explanation, professional preparation, and identity expression.

Task-Based Language Teaching serves as the core pedagogical framework because it allows learners to use English to achieve meaningful communicative outcomes. In TBLT, language learning is not limited to the study of grammar or vocabulary in isolation. Instead, learners engage in tasks that require them to understand, produce, negotiate, and communicate meaning (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015; Willis, 1996). This is particularly relevant to speaking development because task-based activities provide opportunities for learners to practice fluency, vocabulary use, pronunciation, interaction, and coherence in purposeful contexts. Previous studies have also shown that task-based speaking activities can improve EFL learners' oral performance and support positive attitudes toward speaking instruction (Ngọc, 2023; Xuyen & Trang, 2021).

In the context of Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education, TBLT becomes more meaningful when tasks are culturally situated. Students in these fields need English not only for general communication but also for explaining Thai cultural events, describing performance traditions, and demonstrating professional knowledge. Therefore, tasks should reflect communicative situations students may encounter as future teachers, performers, and cultural presenters. In the present study, this was reflected in two major speaking tasks: a guided personal information task and a role-play task based on a Thai cultural event.

Global Englishes strengthens this task-based framework by reframing what counts as successful English-speaking performance. Rather than positioning native-speaker norms as the only target, Global Englishes emphasizes English as a plural, dynamic, and globally shared language used by diverse speakers across linguistic and cultural contexts (Jenkins, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019). This orientation is important for Thai learners because it encourages them to focus on intelligibility, clarity, flexibility, and meaningful communication rather than native-like pronunciation. In the Thai context, Global Englishes also supports linguistic diversity and recognizes localized English use as legitimate for intercultural communication (Pholying, 2025).

Global Englishes Language Teaching further emphasizes learners' ownership of English and respect for diverse English varieties. Prabjandee (2024) argues that teachers and learners should understand English as plurilithic, pluricentric, and globally owned. This means that students should be encouraged to use English as a communicative resource for expressing

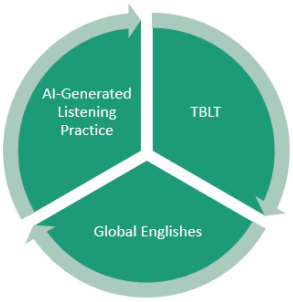
their own identities and cultural knowledge. In this study, such an orientation is especially relevant because students used English to present Thai cultural content. Their goal was not to imitate foreign cultural norms but to communicate Thai cultural meanings clearly and intelligibly to diverse audiences.

AI support adds another important layer to this integrated model. AI-supported tools can provide listening input, vocabulary support, script-writing assistance, and pronunciation exposure before task performance. Recent research suggests that AI can support language learning by providing flexible input, interactive practice, and individualized scaffolding (Godwin-Jones, 2023; Kohnke et al., 2023). However, AI should not replace teacher guidance or classroom interaction. In this study, AI functioned as a preparatory scaffold within the task-based learning process.

The relationship among these three components can be understood as an integrated instructional sequence. First, AI support prepared students through listening input, vocabulary preparation, script support, and pronunciation awareness. Second, TBLT gave students opportunities to use this preparation in meaningful speaking tasks. Third, Global Englishes shaped the communicative values of the learning process by emphasizing intelligibility, clarity, and respect for diverse English use. This sequence helped students move from preparation to performance and from language practice to culturally meaningful speaking.

In the present study, this integration was implemented through a 15-week instructional intervention. The process included pre-testing, orientation, TBLT instruction, ChatGPT-supported script preparation, ElevenLabs AI-generated listening practice, task performance, teacher feedback, and post-testing. The present article focused specifically on students' English-speaking performance before and after the intervention.

Therefore, the integration of TBLT, Global Englishes, and AI support provides a culturally responsive approach to English-speaking instruction in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education. TBLT creates meaningful opportunities for language use, Global Englishes promotes intelligible and identity-affirming communication, and AI support prepares learners for successful task performance. Together, these components support students' English-speaking performance in culturally and professionally relevant contexts.



Source: Developed by the Author

Figure 1 Conceptual Integration of TBLT, Global Englishes, and AI-Generated Listening Practice

The figure illustrates the conceptual integration of TBLT, Global Englishes, and AI-generated listening practice in culturally situated English instruction. TBLT provides meaningful task-based speaking opportunities, Global Englishes supports intelligibility, clarity, and respect for diverse English use, and AI-generated listening practice provides preparatory input before task performance. Together, these components support English-speaking performance in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education.

Purpose of study

The study aimed to:

1. develop a culturally situated TBLT intervention with AI support for undergraduate Musical and Dramatic Arts students;
2. compare students' English-speaking performance before and after the intervention;
3. examine the magnitude of improvement in students' English-speaking performance after the intervention.

Scope of Research

This study was limited to the context of a Ministry of Culture-affiliated institution specializing in Dramatic Arts in Kalasin Province, Thailand. The population consisted of 226 undergraduate students enrolled in English courses during the second semester of the 2025 academic year. The sample consisted of 76 second-year undergraduate students selected through convenience sampling. The participants were enrolled in the compulsory course English for Communication in the Digital Age and were from two majors: Dramatic Arts Education and Music Education.

In terms of instructional scope, the study focused on a 15-week culturally situated Task-Based Language Teaching intervention with AI support. The intervention integrated Task-Based Language Teaching, Global Englishes principles, ChatGPT-supported script preparation, and ElevenLabs-generated listening practice. Students completed two culturally situated speaking tasks. The first task was a guided personal information task used as monologic speaking practice. The second task was a role-play task based on a Thai cultural event used as group interaction.

The outcome scope of this article was limited to students' English-speaking performance before and after the intervention. Speaking performance was assessed through an interview-based speaking test focusing on fluency, pronunciation and intelligibility, vocabulary use, grammatical control, interaction, and task achievement. This article did not examine all areas of English proficiency, such as reading, writing, grammar knowledge, or broader English communication skills. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the specific context of second-year Dramatic Arts Education and Music Education students at the selected institution.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative one-group pre-test and post-test design to examine students' English-speaking performance before and after participating in a culturally situated Task-Based Language Teaching intervention with AI support. The design was appropriate for an authentic classroom context in which all students were enrolled in the same compulsory English course. Since no control group was used, the findings were interpreted as evidence of improvement after the intervention rather than as definitive causal evidence.

The study was conducted at a Ministry of Culture-affiliated institution specializing in Dramatic Arts in Kalasin Province, Thailand. To protect institutional identity, the name of the institution is not directly identified. The population consisted of 226 undergraduate students enrolled in English courses during the second semester of the 2025 academic year. The sample consisted of 76 second-year undergraduate students enrolled in the compulsory course English for Communication in the Digital Age. The participants were from two majors: Dramatic Arts Education and Music Education.

The participants were selected through convenience sampling because they were accessible within the researcher's actual teaching context and were available throughout the 15-week intervention. Students were not separated by major or assigned to different

instructional groups in order to ensure fairness and equal access to learning. Therefore, all participants received the same culturally situated TBLT intervention with AI support.

The 15-week intervention integrated Task-Based Language Teaching, Global Englishes principles, and AI-supported preparation. Students completed two main speaking tasks: a guided personal information task and a role-play task based on a Thai cultural event. AI was used as pre-task scaffolding. Students used ChatGPT through researcher-provided licensed access to support script preparation, idea generation, vocabulary selection, and sentence revision. The researcher also used ElevenLabs, a publicly accessible AI text-to-speech tool, to create English audio materials, which were uploaded to YouTube for listening practice before task performance. The AI-generated listening materials were designed at approximately A1–B1 CEFR levels, beginning with simple self-introduction language and gradually moving toward longer cultural explanation and role-play expressions. AI support did not replace teacher instruction, feedback, or students' actual speaking performance.

The research instrument was a speaking performance test administered before and after the intervention. The test was adapted from an interview-based speaking format and consisted of three parts: introduction and interview, individual long turn, and two-way discussion. Students' speaking performance was assessed using an analytic rubric focusing on fluency, pronunciation and intelligibility, vocabulary use, grammatical control, interaction, and task achievement. Two trained raters assessed the speaking performances using the same rubric to strengthen scoring consistency.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired-samples t-test. Mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores were used to summarize students' pre-test and post-test performance. The paired-samples t-test was used to examine whether students' post-test scores differed significantly from their pre-test scores, and effect size was calculated to determine the magnitude of improvement. Ethical considerations included institutional anonymity, confidentiality of student data, equal access to the intervention, and reporting the findings only in aggregate form.

Results

This section presents the results of the pre-test and post-test speaking performance scores. Descriptive statistics were first used to examine students' speaking performance before and after the 15-week intervention. A paired-sample *t*-test was then used to determine whether the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant.

1. Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Performance

The descriptive statistics show a clear improvement in students' speaking performance after the intervention. The pre-test mean score was 11.89 with a standard deviation of 7.11,

while the post-test mean score increased to 23.80 with a standard deviation of 4.45. This indicates that students' speaking performance improved substantially after participating in the culturally situated TBLT intervention with AI-generated listening practice.

Table 1 *Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Performance*

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D.
Pre-test	76	0	35	11.89	7.11
Post-test	76	14	35	23.80	4.45

Table 1 shows a shift in score distribution from the pre-test to the post-test. In the pre-test, many students' scores were concentrated at the lower range, indicating limited speaking performance before the intervention. In contrast, the post-test scores were distributed at a higher range, suggesting that more students achieved stronger speaking performance after the intervention. The increase in the mean score from 11.89 to 23.80 provides descriptive evidence that the intervention had a positive effect on students' learning outcomes.

2. Paired-Samples t-Test

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether students' English-speaking performance differed significantly before and after the intervention. The results showed that students' post-test speaking scores were significantly higher than their pre-test scores, t (75) = 13.13, $p < .001$, 95% CI [10.10, 13.72]. The mean difference was 11.91, indicating that students improved by approximately 11.91 points after the intervention. The effect size was large, Cohen's dz = 1.51, suggesting that the improvement was not only statistically significant but also educationally meaningful.

Table 2 *Paired-Samples t-Test*

Comparison	Mean Different	S.D.	S.E.	95% CI	*T*	df	*p*	*effect Size (Cohen's dz)*	*Interpretation*
Post-test vs. Pre-test	11.908	7.906	0.907	[10.101, 13.715]	13.130	75	< .001*	1.51	Large

Note. *p < .001* The positive mean difference indicates that students' post-test scores were higher than their pre-test scores.*

Therefore, the results indicate that students' English-speaking performance was significantly higher after the 15-week culturally situated TBLT intervention with AI support than before the intervention. Students' mean score increased from 11.89 in the pre-test to 23.80 in the post-test. This improvement suggests that task-based speaking activities, ChatGPT-supported script preparation, ElevenLabs AI-generated listening practice, teacher feedback, and Global Englishes-informed instruction were associated with students' development in English-speaking performance. The large effect size further indicates that the improvement was educationally meaningful.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study aimed to examine students' English-speaking performance before and after participating in a culturally situated TBLT intervention with AI support in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education. The findings showed a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking performance after the 15-week intervention. Students' mean score increased from 11.89 in the pre-test to 23.80 in the post-test, and the paired-samples t test confirmed that the improvement was statistically significant, t (75) = -13.13, $p < .001$. This result indicates that the integration of task-based speaking activities, Global Englishes-informed instruction, and AI-generated listening practice had a positive effect on students' English-speaking performance.

From a Task-Based Language Teaching perspective, this improvement can be explained by the role of meaningful tasks in promoting purposeful language use. TBLT emphasizes the

use of language to achieve communicative outcomes rather than the memorization of isolated linguistic forms (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015; Willis, 1996). In this study, students completed two culturally situated speaking tasks: a guided personal information task and a role-play task based on a Thai cultural event. These tasks required students to use English for self-introduction, cultural explanation, interaction, and group performance. Therefore, the improvement in students' speaking scores may be attributed to repeated opportunities to use English in meaningful and professionally relevant situations.

The findings are consistent with previous studies showing that task-based speaking activities can improve EFL learners' oral performance. Xuyen and Trang (2021) found that task-based speaking activities enhanced EFL learners' oral performance more effectively than traditional instruction, while Ngọc (2023) reported that TBLT significantly improved students' speaking performance and promoted positive attitudes toward speaking classes. These studies support the present finding that TBLT can strengthen students' ability to use English communicatively, particularly when tasks are designed around meaningful outcomes.

The results are also meaningful in the context of Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education. Students in these fields need English not only for general communication but also for explaining Thai cultural events, describing artistic knowledge, and preparing for future roles as teachers, performers, and cultural presenters. Previous research in vocational Dramatic Arts education has emphasized that English communication skills are important for students who may represent Thai arts and culture internationally, and that task-based learning can support vocabulary acquisition and communication skills (Pholying & Ambele, 2024). The present study extends this perspective by showing that culturally situated TBLT can also support broader speaking performance in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education.

A Global Englishes perspective also helps explain the positive outcome of the intervention. Global Englishes challenges the dominance of native-speaker norms and emphasizes intelligibility, linguistic diversity, intercultural communication, and learners' ownership of English (Jenkins, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019). In this study, students were encouraged to focus on meaningful and intelligible communication rather than native-like pronunciation. This orientation was important because Thai students may feel anxious when they believe their English accent is not good enough. By recognizing diverse English accents and focusing on communicative clarity, students may have become more willing to speak and more confident in using English to express Thai cultural meanings.

This interpretation aligns with Global Englishes Language Teaching, which encourages teachers and learners to view English as plurilithic, pluricentric, and globally owned. Prabjandee (2024) emphasizes the importance of English ownership, respect for diverse English varieties, awareness of diverse interlocutors, and the need to challenge native-speakerism in English language teaching. These principles are relevant to the present study because students used English to communicate Thai cultural knowledge rather than to imitate foreign cultural norms.

AI support also contributed to the learning process. Weekly AI-generated dialogues provided students with listening input, vocabulary preparation, script support, and pronunciation awareness before task performance. In this study, AI did not replace teacher instruction or classroom interaction. Instead, it functioned as preparatory scaffolding within the task-based learning process. This is important because AI-supported learning is most useful when it is connected to clear pedagogical goals and meaningful language use. In this intervention, AI helped students prepare before speaking, while the actual development of communication occurred through task performance, peer interaction, teacher observation, and feedback.

The integration of TBLT, Global Englishes, and AI support therefore created a supportive model for culturally situated English instruction. TBLT provided meaningful speaking tasks, Global Englishes shaped the communicative orientation toward intelligibility and intercultural awareness, and AI support prepared students before task performance. Together, these components helped students move from language preparation to actual speaking performance. This integrated model is especially appropriate for Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education because students' English communication is closely connected to cultural identity, artistic knowledge, and future professional practice.

However, it is also important to recognize that students' stress during the task cycle is a normal part of task-based speaking development. During task performance, learners are required to use English in real time, organize ideas, negotiate meaning, collaborate with peers, and complete communicative outcomes. These demands may create temporary pressure or anxiety. Nevertheless, such stress should not always be viewed negatively. When teachers provide appropriate scaffolding, encouragement, flexible support, and constructive feedback, this temporary stress can become productive anxiety that encourages students to prepare, participate, and improve their speaking performance.

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that culturally situated TBLT with AI support can enhance English-speaking performance among students in Musical Arts and

Dramatic Arts Education. The significant improvement from pre-test to post-test indicates that the intervention helped students develop their ability to use English for meaningful communication. The study contributes to ELT by demonstrating how TBLT, Global Englishes, and AI support can be integrated in a culturally relevant and professionally meaningful way. English instruction in performance-based arts education should therefore be designed around authentic tasks, cultural content, intelligible communication, and supportive preparation.

Ultimately, while TBLT, Global Englishes, and AI-supported listening practice can enrich English instruction, the teacher remains the key factor in transforming preparation into actual speaking performance. Teachers need to be flexible, responsive, and psychologically supportive in order to help learners manage task-related stress, build confidence, and feel ready and willing to communicate in English.

Limitation of the Study

This study was limited by its one-group pre-test and post-test design without a control group; therefore, the findings should be interpreted as improvement associated with the intervention rather than definitive causal evidence. The participants were selected through convenience sampling from one specialized Dramatic Arts institution in Kalasin Province, Thailand, which limits generalizability. In addition, this article reports only the speaking performance test results and does not include qualitative data or a delayed post-test. Therefore, the findings reflect short-term improvement in students' English-speaking performance within this specific educational context.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, English instructors in Musical Arts and Dramatic Arts Education should design speaking activities that connect English learning with students' disciplinary knowledge, cultural identity, and future professional roles. Culturally situated tasks, such as self-introduction and role-play based on Thai cultural events, can help students use English for meaningful and professionally relevant communication.

AI tools can also be used as pre-task scaffolding. ChatGPT may support students in preparing and revising speaking scripts, while ElevenLabs AI-generated listening materials can provide pronunciation exposure, rhythm, intonation, and vocabulary input before task performance. However, AI should not replace teacher guidance. Teachers should monitor students' AI use,

encourage script personalization, provide feedback, and ensure that students perform the speaking tasks by themselves.

Future research should include a control group, larger samples from different institutional contexts, qualitative data such as interviews or classroom observations, and a delayed post-test to examine whether students' speaking improvement is sustained over time. Further studies may also investigate how AI-supported TBLT influences confidence, fluency, intercultural awareness, and acceptance of diverse English accents, which were not directly examined in the present article.

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DEVELOPING AN AI-INTEGRATED SMARTEDU SYSTEM TO PROMOTE PERSONALIZED LEARNING AMONG GRADE 4 STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study developed SmartEdu**,** an AI-integrated smart classroom platform consisting of two core components: ClassScan, an automated online assessment and grading module, and a real-time Learning Analytics Dashboard integrated with an AI tutor. The system was designed to support Vietnamese primary school teachers in collecting, processing, and visualizing student learning data with high accuracy and efficiency while providing AI-assisted personalized learning support aligned with the competency-based assessment framework of Vietnam's 2018 General Education Curriculum.

A quasi-experimental design was employed involving 32 Grade 4 students in the experimental group (n = 32) and 34 students in the control group (n = 34) at Pham Phu Thu Primary School in Da Nang City, Vietnam. The intervention was implemented over a six-week period. Post-intervention results indicated that the experimental group achieved significantly higher mean scores than the control group, with the difference reaching statistical significance. A post-implementation survey of 25 primary school teachers demonstrated a high level of acceptance of the system: 100% agreed that SmartEdu accelerated assessment submission and grading processes**,** 100% agreed that the Learning Analytics Dashboard clearly visualized students' learning progress, and 92% expressed willingness to extend the system to other subjects. These findings demonstrate the pedagogical feasibility and practical applicability of SmartEdu in supporting the implementation of AI-enabled smart classrooms and promoting personalized learning in Vietnamese primary education.

Keywords: Smart classroom, Learning analytics dashboard, AI-assisted personalized learning, Automated assessment, Primary education

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Introduction

The advent of Industry 4.0 technologies artificial intelligence, big data analytics, the Internet of Things (IoT), and cloud computing has fundamentally reconstituted expectations for educational environments. Globally, the concept of the smart classroom has transitioned from a futuristic vision to a pressing practical imperative, particularly as competency-based pedagogical approaches demand continuous, granular, and individualized assessment practices (Yang et al., 2018; Jo & Lim, 2015; UNESCO, 2021).

In Vietnam, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has institutionalized this transition through a series of policy instruments: Decision No. 131/QD-TTg (2022) mandating the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in education by 2030; Decision No. 4725/QD-BGDDT (2022) establishing digital transformation standards for schools; and Circular No. 02/2025/TT-BGDDT introducing the Digital Competency Framework for learners. These instruments converge on a common imperative: educational systems must leverage technology not merely for knowledge transmission but for the collection, analysis, and actionable use of real-time learning data.

Notwithstanding this policy momentum, primary school teachers in Vietnam continue to face substantial operational burdens. Formative assessment mandated by Circular No. 27/2020/TT-BGDDT as the cornerstone of competency-based learning remains predominantly manual in practice. Teachers report considerable difficulty in efficiently grading assignments, systematically tracking individual student progress, and translating assessment data into timely pedagogical interventions. A preliminary survey of 37 teachers at Pham Phu Thu Primary School, Da Nang, confirmed that the majority experience moderate to high levels of difficulty with these tasks and express a strong demand for technology-mediated assessment support.

The international literature provides substantial evidence for the efficacy of automated grading systems and learning analytics dashboards. Optical mark recognition (OMR)-based grading systems have been shown to achieve high scoring accuracy while significantly reducing teacher workload (Lainez et al., 2024; Alomran, 2018; Silao & Luciano, 2021). Learning analytics dashboards are recognized as effective tools for visualizing student progress, identifying at-risk learners early, and supporting data-driven instructional adjustments (Schwendimann et al., 2016; Verbert et al., 2013). In the context of smart classrooms in China, Sun and Liu (2022)

demonstrated that a three-phase data-integrated instructional model produced measurable gains in primary school student learning outcomes.

Nevertheless, a significant gap persists: the majority of existing systems were developed for secondary or higher education contexts, require complex infrastructure, or are inaccessible to teachers with limited technical proficiency. Few studies address the design and empirical validation of an integrated, web-based smart classroom platform specifically tailored to the cognitive and developmental characteristics of primary school students within a Southeast Asian context.

The present study addresses this gap by introducing SmartEdu an integrated smart classroom platform comprising two complementary components: an automated online assessment module for managing, grading, and analyzing student results in real time; and a Learning Analytics Dashboard that visualizes class-level and individual learning data, wherein an AI tutoring system recommends subsequent practice activities (with particular emphasis on remediation of previously identified errors), flags students requiring support, and generates personalized practice recommendations. The study reports the results of a quasi-experimental trial and stakeholder surveys conducted at a primary school in Da Nang, Vietnam, evaluating the impact of SmartEdu on student learning outcomes, teacher instructional efficiency, and overall system usability.

This study aimed to develop an AI-integrated SmartEdu system for Grade 4 students comprising two core platforms. The first is an automated assessment and learning analytics platform designed to evaluate and analyze students' learning performance in real time. The second is an AI-assisted personalized learning platform that delivers automated error correction, individualized feedback, and adaptive learning recommendations to support continuous learning improvement and enhance students' learning outcomes.

Literature Review

1. Smart Classroom Models in Primary Education

Smart classrooms are broadly defined as technology-integrated instructional environments that employ digital methodologies to enhance interaction, personalization, and data-mediated learning management (Yang et al., 2018). At the primary school level, the concept encompasses flexible physical-digital learning spaces, multimodal interaction,

real-time data collection, and continuity between in-class and out-of-class learning environments (Pham Quang Tiep & Le Thi Thu Net, 2025).

International implementations have evolved from device-centric models toward ecosystem-oriented architectures. South Korea's Smart School Programme (2012) integrated interactive boards, personal devices, and real-time response systems, yielding positive effects on student engagement and achievement (Jo & Lim, 2015). Rwanda deployed smart classrooms with digital content repositories to address regional educational inequity. China's primary education sector has developed three-phase smart classroom models encompassing pre-class preparation, in-class activities, and post-class review supported by data analytics platforms enabling teachers to adjust instruction based on real-time performance data (Sun & Liu, 2022).

In Vietnam, a comparable but earlier-stage trajectory is evident. Research published in the Journal of Education (2025) proposes AI-integrated smart classroom frameworks incorporating LMS-linked assessment platforms, virtual teacher assistants, and personalized learning modules, with pilot evidence of improved student outcomes. The literature collectively affirms that effective smart classrooms are defined not by the quantity of devices but by the quality of integration between pedagogical practice and data infrastructure.

2. Automated Assessment Systems

Automated assessment systems have a well-documented history in educational technology. OMR-based systems, which recognize student responses on standardized answer sheets, have been in use since the 1970s and remain applicable in paper-based testing contexts (Alomran, 2018). Contemporary digital assessment platforms extend these capabilities to online environments, enabling automatic grading, item-level error analysis, and statistical reporting (Lainez et al., 2024; Silao & Luciano, 2021).

Educational data mining (EDM) research has further enhanced these applications by developing predictive models for identifying at-risk students, clustering learners according to performance profiles, and generating adaptive practice content (Romero & Ventura, 2010). In the SmartEdu system, these principles are operationalized through an online testing system, automated scoring, error pattern detection, and AI-generated personalized exercise recommendations — functions grounded in established EDM literature.

3. Learning Analytics Dashboards in Education

Few (2006) defines a dashboard as a visual display of the most critical information needed to achieve one or more objectives, consolidated onto a single screen.

In the educational context, Schwendimann et al. (2016) characterize learning analytics dashboards as interfaces that aggregate multiple learner, learning process, and contextual indicators through one or more data visualization techniques. Verbert et al. (2013) further establish that effective educational dashboards must support progress monitoring, performance evaluation, and evidence-based decision-making for teachers, students, and administrators.

Empirical studies confirm that learning analytics dashboards can enhance teacher awareness of student difficulties, facilitate timely intervention, and reduce cognitive load when synthesizing large assessment datasets (Schwendimann et al., 2016). The SmartEdu Dashboard is designed in accordance with these principles, presenting class-level and individual performance metrics, item-level error rate heat maps, at-risk student lists, and AI-generated instructional recommendations.

4. Formative Assessment in Vietnamese Primary Education

Circular No. 27/2020/TT-BGDDT stipulates that the assessment of primary school students in Vietnam must be continuous, multidimensional, and oriented toward promoting student progress rather than merely classifying outcomes. Teachers are required to assess both academic competencies and personal qualities through formative and summative modalities, with particular emphasis on written feedback and ongoing monitoring.

In practice, the implementation of these requirements is constrained by teacher workload, the absence of standardized digital tools, and limited institutional support for data-driven pedagogy. SmartEdu directly targets these constraints by automating the assessment cycle while generating structured data that teachers can translate into competency-aligned feedback consistent with the descriptors prescribed by the 2018 National Curriculum.

System Design: SmartEdu

1. System Architecture Overview

SmartEdu is a web-based smart classroom platform designed to support primary school assessment and student management through two integrated subsystems: first, automated data collection and assessment, along with a Learning Analytics Dashboard (providing data visualization and pedagogical decision-making support); and second, an AI tutoring component supporting learner personalization. The system is accessible via standard web browsers on both teacher and student devices without requiring additional software installation.

The SmartEdu architecture follows a three-tier design: a front-end user interface layer, a data processing and analytics layer, and a cloud-based storage and retrieval layer. The data processing engine comprises five functional modules: (1) automated grading, (2) student performance analysis, (3) early detection and risk alerting, (4) personalized exercise recommendations, and (5) competency-level assessment modeling. These modules continuously supply data to the Dashboard display layer, presenting actionable insights to teachers in real time.

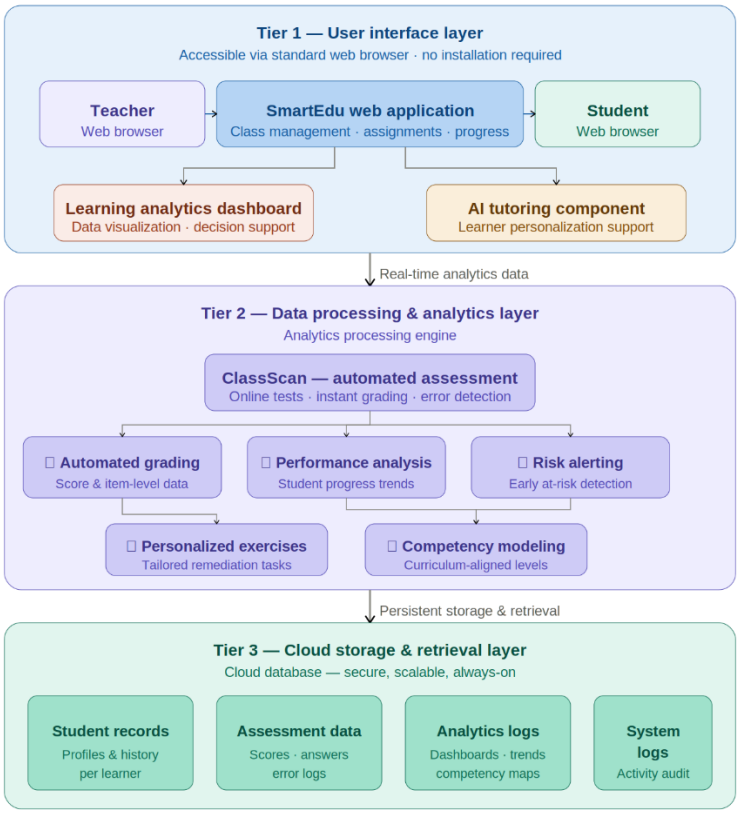


Figure 1: System Architecture Diagram — Three-Tier

2. ClassScan: Automated Assessment Module

ClassScan serves as the data intake subsystem of SmartEdu. Students access the ClassScan interface through the student web portal, which presents multiple-choice assessments in a structured, age-appropriate format. Upon submission, the system automatically grades each response, computes total and item-level scores, and transmits the data to the analytics engine without requiring teacher intervention.

The core functions of ClassScan include: (1) online test administration with time-limiting capabilities; (2) automated grading with immediate result feedback to students; (3) item-level

error identification, pinpointing the knowledge domains in which each student responded incorrectly; (4) AI-generated personalized learning recommendations following each assessment, directing students toward specific remedial activities; and (5) automatic generation of supplementary exercises calibrated to each student's observed error patterns.

The system distinguishes between high-achieving students for whom the AI tutor recommends advanced exercises and low-achieving students, for whom the AI tutor proposes foundational remediation tasks targeting specific knowledge gaps. This personalization logic is driven by item-response data rather than broad performance categories, enabling highly targeted instructional differentiation.

3. Learning Analytics Dashboard

The Dashboard serves as the analytical interface for teachers within SmartEdu. Upon login, teachers are presented with a comprehensive class-level overview, including aggregated score distributions, overall class mean performance, and item-level correct-response rates displayed as a visual heat map. This interface enables teachers to identify content domains in which the majority of students encounter difficulty, thereby informing whole-class instructional adjustments.

The dashboard system permits teachers to access individual student profiles, including performance trends across multiple assessments, specific error patterns, and AI-generated instructional support recommendations. An at-risk student list is automatically updated whenever a student performs below the threshold score (50%), prioritizing teacher attention and facilitating targeted intervention.

The Dashboard further integrates an AI-powered pedagogical advisory module, which synthesizes class-level error patterns and generates instructional recommendations for teachers for example, highlighting that a majority of students misapplied a specific mathematical procedure and proposing focused re-teaching strategies. This feature extends the Dashboard's function from passive reporting to proactive pedagogical support.

4. Student Interface

The student interface of SmartEdu is designed to accommodate the cognitive and affective characteristics of primary school learners (aged 9–11 within the target group). The interface presents one question at a time in a large, legible typeface, employs color-coded feedback (green for correct, red for incorrect), and provides results immediately upon submission. The post-test feedback screen displays each student's total score, item-by-item

response analysis, and AI-generated personalized recommendations regarding concepts requiring review.

This design is theoretically grounded in cognitive and developmental literature on primary school children, emphasizing the importance of immediate feedback, visual concreteness, and low extraneous cognitive load in technology-mediated learning contexts. The provision of real-time, actionable feedback aligns with established principles of formative assessment efficacy in primary education.

5. Competency Assessment Model

SmartEdu integrates a competency-level assessment model that maps student performance across multiple assessments onto competency descriptors aligned with the Vietnamese 2018 National Curriculum. Students are categorized into four competency levels Outstanding, Good, Satisfactory, and Needs Improvement based on cumulative performance data. This model supports teachers in formulating summative end-of-term judgments grounded in longitudinal data rather than single-point snapshots, consistent with the formative assessment regulations of the Vietnamese national curriculum.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employs a pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design with a control group. The research was conducted at Pham Phu Thu Primary School, Ngu Hanh Son District, Da Nang, Vietnam, during the 2025–2026 academic year. Two intact Grade 4 classes were assigned to experimental conditions: the experimental group (Class 4/1, n = 32) received SmartEdu-supported instruction during a six-week intervention period; the control group (Class 4/2, n = 34) received standard instruction without SmartEdu. Both groups were taught by teachers from the same school using identical prescribed curricular content.

2. Participants

The student participants consisted of 32 Grade 4 students (mean age ≈ 9.5 years) in the experimental group and 34 Grade 4 students in the control group. The teacher survey involved 25 teachers from Pham Phu Thu Primary School who had used the SmartEdu system for periods ranging from less than two weeks (64%) to six weeks (32%). Most participating teachers were in the early stages of their careers, with 84% having fewer than five years of teaching experience, while 12% had more than ten years of experience. Grade 4 teachers

accounted for 56% of the teacher sample, ensuring consistency between the teacher participants and the student intervention.

3. Research Instruments

Two parallel mathematics achievement tests were administered**:** Test 1 (pre-test) before the intervention and Test 2 (post-test) after the intervention. Each test consisted of 10 multiple-choice questions developed in accordance with the Grade 4 Mathematics curriculum. Both instruments were reviewed by subject-matter experts and pilot-tested to ensure clarity and appropriateness before implementation. Content validity was established by aligning the test items with the competency descriptors specified in Vietnam's 2018 General Education Curriculum for Grade 4 Mathematics. Teachers' perceptions of SmartEdu were measured using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*), administered after the intervention. The questionnaire assessed seven dimensions: ease of use, assessment effectiveness, support for instructional decision-making, quality of data visualization, perceived impact on student learning, system suitability, and intention to adopt the system**.** Students' perceptions were collected through a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire designed to evaluate three dimensions: system usability, learning support, and student engagement.

4. Data Analysis

Quantitative learning outcome data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, mode, median, standard deviation) and an independent-samples t-test to evaluate the statistical significance of between-group differences. The alpha level was set at $p < 0.05$. Likert-scale survey data from teachers and students were analyzed by computing item means and percentage frequencies of agree/strongly agree responses (ratings 4–5). Open-ended student responses were subjected to thematic categorization.

Results

1. Pre-Intervention Equivalence

Prior to the intervention, both groups completed Assessment 1 under identical conditions. Baseline analysis confirmed that the two groups exhibited comparable foundational performance, with no statistically significant difference on the pre-test, providing a reasonable basis for attributing post-test differences to the SmartEdu intervention.

2. Learning Outcomes

1) Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents combined descriptive statistics across both assessments (Assessment 1 and Assessment 2) for the experimental and control groups.

Table 1. Summary Statistics for the Experimental Group (4/1) and Control Group (4/2) Across Both Assessments

Statistical Measure	Experimental Group (n=32)	Control Group (n=34)	Difference	Significance
Mean Score ($\bar{X}$)	7.91	7.25	+0.66	p = 0.032
Standard Deviation (s)	1.62	1.87	−0.25	-
Mode (M_0)	8 and 9	7	-	-
Median (Me)	8	7	-	-
% ≥ Average (≥5)	95.31%	88.24%	+7.07%	-
% Good–Excellent (≥7)	81.25%	69.12%	+12.13%	-

Note. Combined data across Assessment 1 (pre-intervention) and Assessment 2 (post-intervention). t (129) = 2.17, p = 0.032.

2) Statistical Significance and Interpretation

The independent-samples t-test yielded t (129) = 2.17, p = 0.032, confirming that the difference in mean performance between the experimental and control groups is statistically significant at the α = 0.05 level. The higher mean score (7.91 vs. 7.25), higher median (8 vs. 7), higher mode (8 and 9 vs. 7), and lower standard deviation (1.62 vs. 1.87) of the experimental group collectively indicate that SmartEdu-supported instruction produced not only superior mean outcomes but also more equitable and consistent learning results across the student cohort.

Specifically, the lower standard deviation in the experimental group suggests that SmartEdu's personalized error detection and remediation features were particularly

beneficial for lower-achieving students — a subgroup that conventional instruction often fails to reach systematically. Students who might otherwise have been left behind received more targeted support through tailored exercise recommendations and immediate corrective feedback. The larger standard deviation of the control group indicates greater performance heterogeneity under conventional instruction.

Examination of the score distribution across both assessments reveals that, on Assessment 1, 78.12% of experimental group students achieved a Good or Excellent grade, compared to 70.59% in the control group. By Assessment 2, the experimental group's proportion increased to 84.34%, compared to 67.65% in the control group a widening advantage attributable to the cumulative benefits of SmartEdu's real-time feedback and personalized practice functionalities.

3. Teacher Survey Results

Table 2 presents teacher feedback from the post-trial SmartEdu evaluation survey (n = 25, 1–5 Likert scale).

Table 2. Teacher evaluation of SmartEdu effectiveness (n = 25)

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
ClassScan accelerates assignment collection	0	0	0	60	40
Dashboard clearly displays learning progress	0	0	0	27.5	72.5
System identifies at-risk students early	0	0	12	68	20
Dashboard data enables timely instructional adjustment	0	0	32	44	24
System enhances objectivity in student assessment	0	0	12	56	32
Supports competency-based and formative assessment	0	0	8	60	32

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Teacher-friendly interface	0	0	4	52	45
Compatible with current school conditions	0	0	20	56	24
Willing to extend use to other subjects	0	0	8	60	32

Notably, no teacher selected 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' on any item, indicating comprehensive baseline acceptance of the platform. ClassScan's assignment collection function achieved 100% agreement, and the clarity of the Dashboard's data visualization achieved 100% agreement (27.5% agree; 72.5% strongly agree) the highest-rated item in the survey. Early identification of at-risk students received 88% positive endorsement; competency-aligned assessment support achieved 92%. Regarding adoption intention, 92% of teachers reported willingness to continue using SmartEdu for additional subjects.

The item that received the lowest level of agreement was, *"The Learning Analytics Dashboard data enables timely instructional adjustments,"* with 32% of teachers indicating a neutral response. This finding suggests that some teachers had not yet developed sufficient confidence in using learning analytics data to inform real-time instructional decision-making. The result aligns with previous research on learning analytics dashboards, which has shown that teachers commonly face challenges related to data literacy during the early stages of implementation. Consequently, they require targeted professional support to accurately interpret analytical information and effectively translate data-driven insights into timely instructional practices.5.4 Student Survey Results

Table 3 presents student satisfaction ratings for SmartEdu (n = 32, 1–5 Likert scale).

Table 3. Student Satisfaction with SmartEdu (n = 32)

Survey Item	Mean Score (M)	% Agree/Strongly Agree
Identifying content areas I answered incorrectly	4.47	93.7%
Ease of completing assignments on SmartEdu	4.25	87.5%
Helps me know which answers are correct or incorrect	4.25	87.5%

Survey Item	Mean Score (M)	% Agree/Strongly Agree
Helps improve my academic performance	4.22	87.5%
SmartEdu is easy to use	4.19	84.4%
I feel engaged when learning with SmartEdu	4.03	78.1%
SmartEdu promotes greater autonomy in my learning	3.93	78.0%
Recommendations help me know how to review material	3.92	77.2%
I wish to continue using SmartEdu	4.12	87.4%
SmartEdu helps me understand lessons more deeply	3.63	53.1%

Student satisfaction was consistently high across the dimensions of usability, error feedback, and assessment utility. The highest-rated item content-specific error identification (M = 4.47) indicates that students particularly value detailed, actionable feedback over aggregate score reporting. The lowest-rated item 'SmartEdu helps me understand lessons more deeply' (M = 3.63) reflects a distinction that students implicitly recognize between assessment support and content instruction.

Discussion

1. Pedagogical Effectiveness

The statistically significant improvement in experimental group outcomes (t = 2.17, p = 0.032) provides preliminary empirical evidence for the hypothesis that SmartEdu-integrated instruction enhances student achievement at the primary school level. This finding is consistent with analogous international studies: Jo and Lim (2015) documented significant improvements in engagement and performance from real-time response systems in Korean smart classrooms; Sun and Liu (2022) reported improved learning outcomes from data-integrated instruction in Chinese primary schools.

The reduction in performance dispersion within the experimental group (1.62 vs. 1.87) warrants particular attention. This convergence in student outcomes suggests that SmartEdu's personalized remediation and error-targeting functionalities were especially beneficial for lower-achieving students a population that conventional instruction often fails to reach

systematically. This finding is consistent with learning analytics research demonstrating that timely, personalized feedback can reduce achievement gaps.

Although teachers generally evaluated SmartEdu positively, the fact that 32% of respondents selected the neutral option regarding the statement that the Learning Analytics Dashboard supports timely instructional adjustments suggests that translating data into pedagogical decision-making remains a challenge. According to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), even when a system is perceived as useful and easy to use, users still require sufficient competence to effectively utilize its decision-support functions (Davis, 1989). Similarly, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) emphasizes that facilitating conditions play a critical role in enabling the transition from behavioral intention to effective system use (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Therefore, future versions of SmartEdu should incorporate context-aware pedagogical prompts or actionable recommendations linked to specific Learning Analytics Dashboard indicators to support teachers in interpreting analytics and making timely instructional adjustments. This interpretation is also consistent with previous studies showing that the successful adoption and effective use of Learning Analytics Dashboards depend not only on system quality but also on teachers' data literacy and the availability of appropriate professional support.

The lower rating for 'SmartEdu helps me understand lessons more deeply' (M = 3.63) signals an important boundary condition: SmartEdu functions primarily as an assessment and feedback platform rather than a content delivery system. Teachers and system developers should recognize that improvements in assessment quality do not automatically translate into deeper conceptual understanding — instructional design must complement the assessment support that SmartEdu provides.

2. Teacher Acceptance and Data-Driven Pedagogy

Teachers' consistently positive reception particularly the 100% agreement on ClassScan collection efficiency and Dashboard visualization clarity aligns with technology acceptance models predicting high adoption rates when perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are simultaneously enhanced (Davis, 1989). The 92% adoption intention reflects robust system credibility within a short trial window.

The identification of initial setup time (60%), insufficient devices (36%), and unfamiliarity with the system interface (36%) as barriers is consistent with the broader EdTech adoption

literature. These limitations can be addressed through institutional investment in device availability, teacher professional development, and streamlined onboarding procedures.

3. Contributions to Smart Classroom Research

SmartEdu represents a methodological advancement over prior smart classroom implementations in two principal respects. First, unlike systems that merely automate existing assessment procedures, SmartEdu integrates data collection, analytics, and instructional feedback into a unified closed-loop workflow: *Assessment* ⟶ *Automated Grading* ⟶ *Error Analysis* ⟶ *Personalized Remediation* ⟶ *Teacher Dashboard Review* ⟶ *Instructional Adjustment.* This closed-loop architecture embodies the data-driven instructional cycle advocated in both international smart classroom literature and Vietnamese education policy. Second, SmartEdu is specifically designed for primary education — a context frequently overlooked in EdTech development, which predominantly targets secondary and tertiary learners. The system's interface design, feedback modality, and cognitive load management are calibrated to the developmental characteristics of children aged 9–11, rendering it one of the few empirically evaluated smart classroom platforms at this educational level in Vietnam.

Limitations

Several limitations constrain the generalizability of these findings. The student sample was drawn from a single primary school in Da Nang, restricting ecological validity across diverse institutional contexts, socioeconomic environments, and regional infrastructure conditions. The six-week intervention window was insufficient to capture long-term effects on competency development, the formation of autonomous learning habits, or sustained performance improvement.

The teacher sample was predominantly early-career (84% with fewer than five years of experience), which may have inflated acceptance ratings relative to a more experientially diverse group. More experienced teachers, more accustomed to traditional assessment routines, may exhibit different adoption trajectories. Additionally, SmartEdu's current functionality is limited to multiple-choice assessment, constraining its capacity to evaluate complex competencies such as analytical reasoning, written expression, and creative problem-solving.

Finally, the absence of formal reliability and validity analyses for the assessment instruments used in the experimental trial represents a methodological limitation. While

content validity was established through expert review, psychometric analysis would further strengthen claims regarding the precision of learning outcome measures.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Conclusions

This study developed an integrated learning system for fourth-grade students consisting of two main components: an automated assessment and learning analytics platform, and an AI-powered personalized learning platform that delivers corrective feedback. The empirical findings indicate that the proposed system has significant potential to enhance fourth-grade students' learning outcomes, providing evidence for the effectiveness of integrating learning analytics and AI-driven personalized feedback in primary education.

This study makes four main contributions. First, it proposes the SmartEdu architecture as an integrated learning system that combines automated assessment, a Learning Analytics Dashboard, and an AI Tutor within a unified platform to support both teachers and students. Second, it develops an AI Tutor capable of providing personalized corrective feedback and adaptive learning support based on individual students' learning performance, thereby facilitating the implementation of personalized and adaptive learning in primary education. Third, it provides empirical evidence through the implementation and evaluation of SmartEdu in an authentic primary school setting, demonstrating the system's potential to improve students' learning outcomes while achieving a high level of teacher acceptance. Finally, the study offers design implications for future AI-enhanced learning systems by highlighting the importance of integrating learning analytics with pedagogical decision-support mechanisms and AI-driven personalized learning.

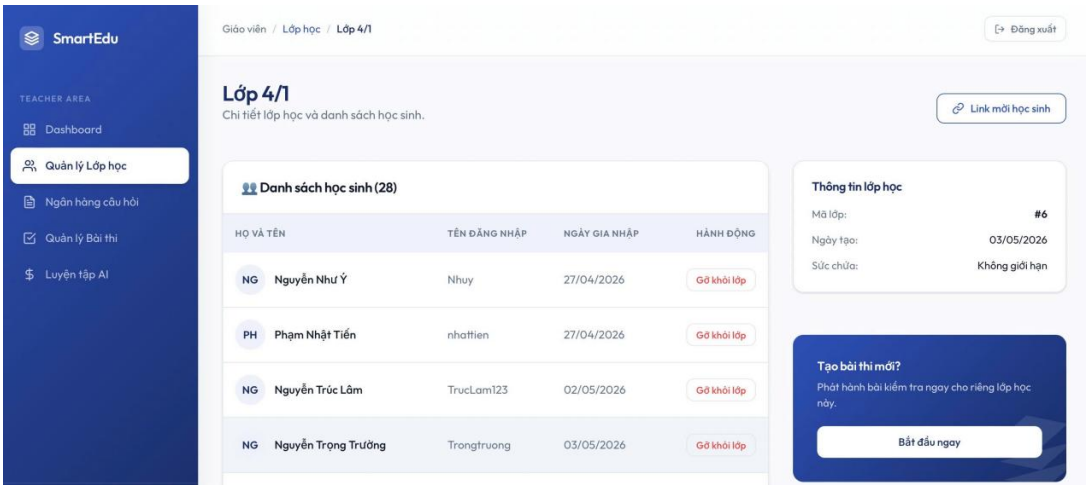
Although these conclusions are supported by relatively strong empirical evidence, this does not eliminate the need for further validation using larger and more diverse samples, as discussed in the limitations section of this study.

2. Recommendations

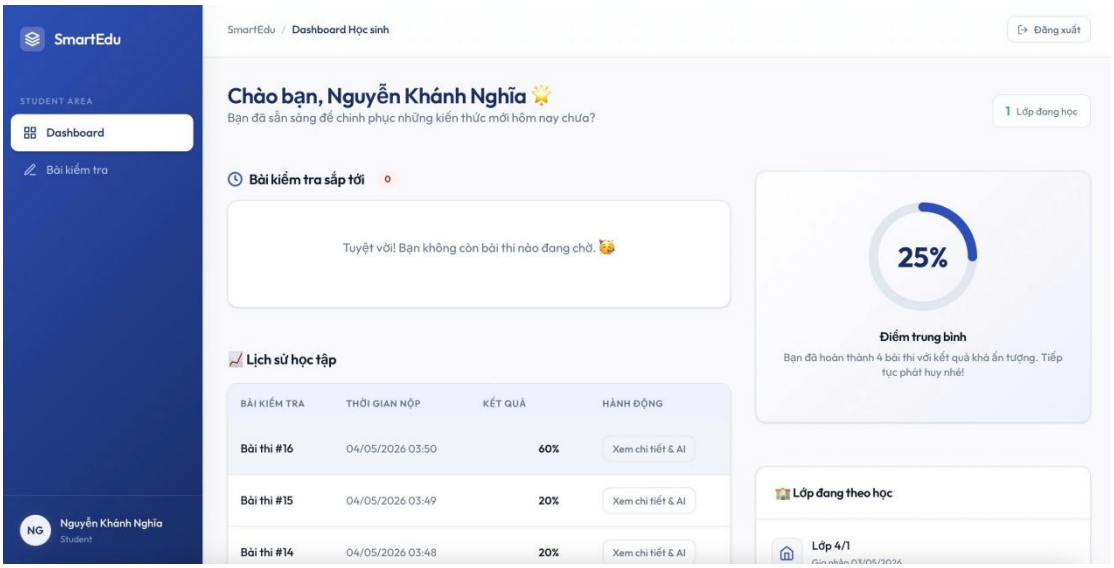
Future research should validate the effectiveness of SmartEdu using larger and more diverse samples, longer intervention periods, and more rigorous research designs, such as randomized controlled or quasi-experimental studies, supported by appropriate statistical analyses to strengthen the generalizability of the findings. From an implementation perspective, a structured teacher onboarding framework should be developed to enhance

teachers' data literacy and their ability to integrate Learning Analytics Dashboard insights into instructional decision-making. In addition, future versions of SmartEdu should incorporate context-aware pedagogical recommendations and decision-support features to facilitate timely, data-informed instructional adjustments.

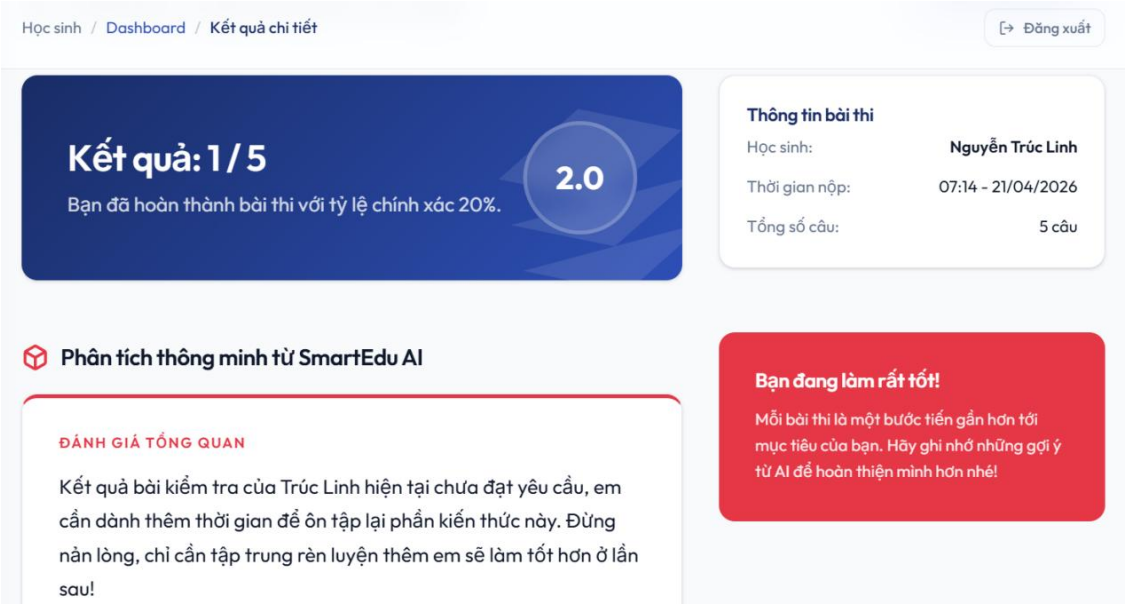
Appendix



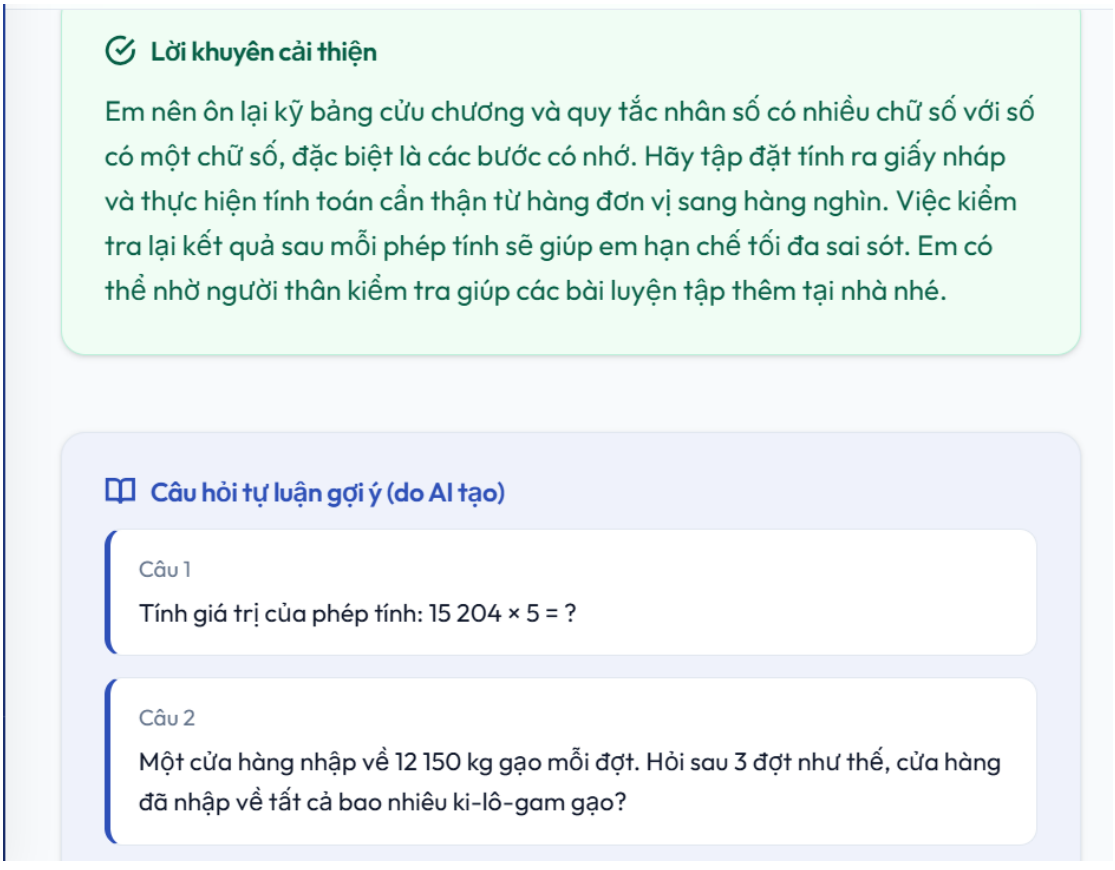
A1. Class Performance Overview Dashboard



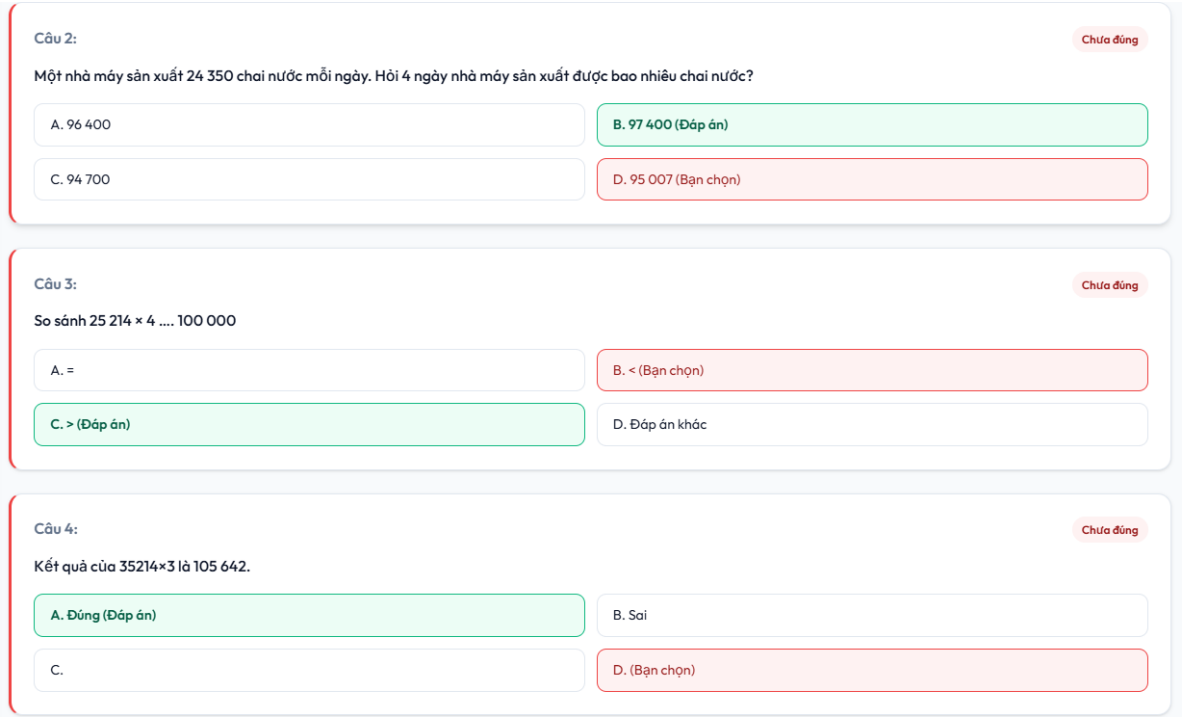
A2. Interface for Students



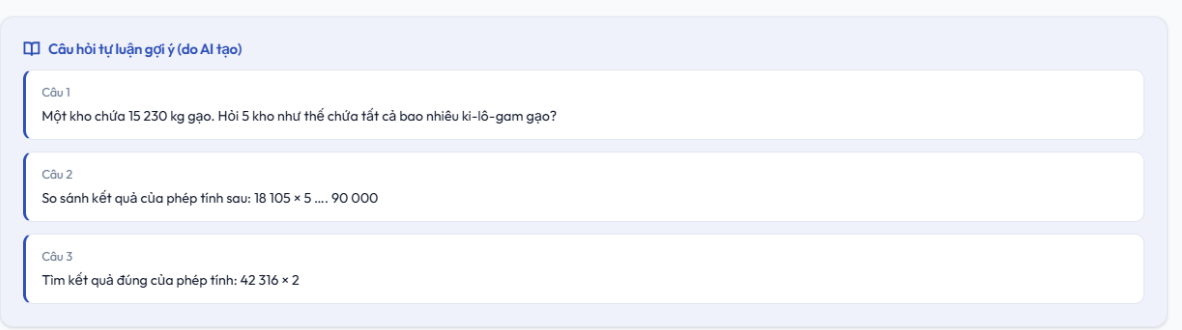
A3. Student Assignment Results



A4. Improvement Suggestions



A5. Notice Board of Students' Weak Knowledge Areas



A6: Learning Gap Exercise Recommendation System

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UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION REFORM IN INDIA UNDER NEP 2020: CURRICULUM RESTRUCTURING, INSTITUTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION, AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION

ASMITA BHARADWAJ* AND KHUSI BHARADWAJ*

Abstract

This paper offers a policy review and document-based case analysis of undergraduate education reform in India under the National Education Policy 2020, focusing on the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme. NEP 2020 displaced a framework that had governed Indian education since 1986, replacing fixed streams and terminal degrees with an architecture built around flexibility, credit portability, and multidisciplinary breadth. Its principal undergraduate provisions are the four-year degree with multiple entry and exit points, the Academic Bank of Credits, and a restructured curriculum comprising Major, Minor, Multidisciplinary, Skill Enhancement, Ability Enhancement, and Value-Added components.

Working from national policy texts, University Grants Commission regulatory frameworks, and institutional curriculum documents, the paper traces how these provisions move from national design into institutional practice, taking Gauhati University as an illustrative case. Three findings emerge. The reform's flexibility rests almost entirely on the Academic Bank of Credits, whose functioning presupposes digital and administrative capacity that is distributed unevenly across Indian institutions. The graded exit awards may operate either as recognition of partial study or as a formalised exit route, and which of these obtained depends less on policy design than on how employers come to read a one-year certificate. And cultural integration, though genuinely embedded in the curriculum rather than appended to it, enters through elective provision and is therefore only as robust as a department's ability to staff those electives.

The paper argues that the undergraduate reforms are structurally coherent but implementation-constrained, and that evaluation over the coming decade should hold the distinction between what the policy makes possible and what institutions actually deliver. Five operational recommendations follow from the analysis.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Four-Year Undergraduate Programme, higher education reform, Indian Knowledge Systems,

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Introduction

India runs one of the largest higher education systems in the world, assembled over seven decades through the steady addition of universities, colleges, and institutes of national importance (Agarwal, 2009). Scale, however, has not translated evenly into quality. Concerns about graduate employability, thin research output, pedagogies weighted towards recall rather than reasoning, and disciplinary boundaries rigid enough to foreclose interdisciplinary work have shaped Indian policy debate for a generation (Tilak, 2015). What sharpened these concerns was the arrival of a knowledge economy in which employers expect adaptability and applied competence alongside subject knowledge, and in which the gap between a degree and the capacity to use it became difficult to ignore (Altbach, 2016; UNESCO, 2021).

Educational reform in India has been shaped less by discontinuity than by the slow accumulation of commitments the state has struggled to fund. The Education Commission of 1964–66 recommended that six percent of national income be devoted to education, a target reiterated by the National Policy on Education in 1968 and again in 1986, and one that has never been sustained in practice (Government of India, 1966). The constitutional trajectory has been more decisive. Free and compulsory education for children began as a non-justiciable directive principle, became a fundamental right through the Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act of 2002, and acquired statutory machinery in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009. Together with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and its successors, this settled the question of access at elementary level in a way that earlier policy had not.

That settlement created the conditions for the present reform. A cohort brought into schooling by a justiciable right does not stop at Class VIII, and the pressure generated at elementary level has moved steadily upward through secondary and into higher education, where gross enrolment remains well below the levels the policy aspires to (Ministry of Education, 2022). The constraint has thus shifted from getting students into the system to what the system does with them once they arrive. It raises questions about curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional capacity rather than about provision. It is this shift that explains why NEP 2020, unlike its predecessors, devotes so much of its attention to the structure of the degree itself. The National Education Policy 2020, approved on 29 July 2020, is India's first comprehensive education policy in more than three decades and speaks directly to this inheritance (Government of India, 2020).

1. Research Problem

As a text, NEP 2020 is thoroughly documented. What has received less attention is the distance between what the policy grants and what institutions can deliver. Flexibility is conferred by regulation; it is realised only where administrative systems, faculty capacity, and infrastructure permit. Much of the existing commentary describes the policy's architecture without interrogating the conditions of its execution. A second gap concerns cultural integration, which is generally read as a parallel commitment running alongside the structural reforms, when in fact the two are carried by the same curricular machinery.

This paper addresses both. It reads the design of the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme against the implementation conditions of a single institution, and it locates cultural integration inside the curriculum structure rather than beside it.

2. Research Objectives

2.1 To examine NEP 2020's structural reforms in undergraduate education against the 1986 framework.

2.2 To analyse the curriculum architecture of the FYUGP and how its components are operationalised institutionally, using Gauhati University as an illustrative case.

2.3 To assess how cultural integration and Indian Knowledge Systems are embedded within the undergraduate curriculum structure.

2.4 To evaluate the reform's opportunities and constraints, and derive operational policy recommendations from that evaluation.

3. Research Methodology

The study employs qualitative document analysis within a policy-review framework. Three categories of source material were examined. The first comprises national policy texts, principally NEP 2020 itself, with attention to Part II on higher education and Chapter 22 on the promotion of Indian languages, arts, and culture. The second consists of regulatory instruments issued by the University Grants Commission, chiefly the Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes (UGC, 2022) and the operational guidelines for the Academic Bank of Credits (UGC, 2021). The third comprises institutional documents from Gauhati University: the FYUGP curriculum structure and departmental syllabi, examined for the Political Science programme as a representative social science discipline working within the framework.

Gauhati University was selected on three grounds. Established in 1948, it is the oldest university in Northeast India and remains a regional academic anchor, so its curricular decisions

carry weight beyond its own campus. It adopted the FYUGP in line with UGC and Government of Assam directives, which makes it a compliant implementer rather than an exceptional one. And it operates under staffing and infrastructural conditions characteristic of state universities outside the metropolitan centres, so its constraints generalise in ways that those of a well-resourced central university would not.

Documents were read thematically against four categories drawn from the policy text: structural flexibility, curricular breadth, skill and research orientation, and cultural integration. The study presents no survey, interview, or administrative data. Its claims about institutional practice are therefore bounded by what curriculum and regulatory documents can evidence, and we have been careful throughout to distinguish provision from realisation.

The Structural Paradigm Shift: An Overview

NEP 2020 replaced the 1986 National Policy on Education and, in doing so, changed the organising logic of Indian education from standardised access and terminal qualification to flexibility, breadth, and portability of credit. Table 1 sets out the contrast across the dimensions most relevant to undergraduate study.

Dimension(s)	NPE 1986	NEP 2020
School structure	10+2, ages 6–18; early childhood education largely outside the formal system	5+3+3+4, ages 3–18; Anganwadis and preschools brought within it
Disciplinary organisation	Science, Commerce, and Arts as separate streams	Streams dismantled; subjects combined freely
Assessment	High-stakes annual board examinations	Formative assessment oriented to critical thinking
Medium of instruction	Standardised Three-Language Formula	Mother tongue or regional language to at least Grade 5
Vocational exposure	Deferred to post-secondary stages	Introduced from Grade 6, with a ten-day bagless internship

Dimension(s)	NPE 1986	NEP 2020
Undergraduate duration	Fixed three-year degree (four for professional programmes)	Four years, with multiple entry and exit points
Exit qualification	Single terminal degree; withdrawal yields nothing	Certificate at one year, diploma at two, bachelor's at three, bachelor's with research at four
Credit portability	Absent; inter-institutional transfer effectively impossible	Academic Bank of Credits: a digital locker permitting accumulation, transfer, and re-entry
Regulatory architecture	UGC, AICTE, and NCTE operating separately	Consolidation towards a single Higher Education Commission of India

Table 1 Structural contrast between the 1986 and 2020 frameworks

Source: Compiled by the authors from Government of India (2020) and UGC (2022).

Two features of this shift deserve comment beyond what the table records. The first is that the reform's internal coherence depends on a single mechanism. Multiple exit points mean something only if a student who leaves after two years can return without repeating completed work, and that in turn requires the Academic Bank of Credits to function reliably across institutions. The ABC is thus not one reform among several but the element on which the others rest. Should it fail, the graded exits collapse into a set of consolation awards and the flexibility the policy advertises largely evaporates. We return to this in Section 5.

The second is that the fourth year carries a weight disproportionate to its length. It converts the degree from a teaching qualification into something closer to a research apprenticeship; it supplies the route to direct doctoral admission under UGC regulations; and, incidentally but usefully, it aligns Indian degrees with the four-year structures common in North America and East Asia, serving the policy's internationalisation aims without requiring separate provision (UGC, 2022).

Curriculum Design and Institutional Implementation: The Case of Gauhati University

Established in 1948, Gauhati University was the first university in Northeast India and remains among the region's principal centres of higher education and research. For much of its

history it has served as the academic anchor of Assam, with a large network of affiliated colleges extending across the state. Its adoption of the FYUGP, following UGC and Government of Assam directives, therefore reshapes undergraduate study not only on its own campus but across the many institutions for which it sets the curricular template.

The UGC's Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes gives the policy's curricular vision its regulatory form (UGC, 2022). Each component is set out below together with its implementation in Gauhati University's Political Science programme.

Major courses supply disciplinary depth. Political Science majors at Gauhati take core papers in Political Theory, Indian Government and Politics, International Relations, Comparative Politics, Public Administration, and Political Sociology a sequence substantially continuous with the pre-reform syllabus. That continuity is itself worth noting: the reform has restructured what surrounds the major far more than it has altered the major itself.

Minor courses permit a secondary discipline alongside the first. A Political Science student at Gauhati may take Economics, Sociology, History, Education, Environmental Studies, or Computer Applications, producing combinations that stream-based organisation had ruled out.

Multidisciplinary courses carry students outside both major and minor, into environmental sustainability, gender studies, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, peace and conflict studies, or Indian Knowledge Systems. The last of these matters for reasons taken up in Section 4.

Ability enhancement courses develop language proficiency, academic writing, and communication. Gauhati requires students to complete a course in an Indian language before the fourth semester, which is where the policy's commitment to multilingualism acquires undergraduate form.

Skill enhancement courses target employable competence: digital skills, entrepreneurship, data analysis, project management, media literacy, vocational training. Of all the components, these respond most directly to the qualification–employability mismatch described in Section 1 (Tilak, 2015).

Value-added courses and internships address ethics, constitutional values, environmental awareness, and community engagement, with internships supplying exposure to organisational settings outside the university.

The fourth-year research component requires a project, dissertation, or field study under supervision, cultivating research capacity at undergraduate level and opening the route to doctoral study (UGC, 2022).

Provision and realisation

Gauhati University adopted the FYUGP following UGC recommendations and Government of Assam directives, redesigning its curriculum around multidisciplinary learning, credit-based progression, and skill-oriented provision.

The curriculum documents record a marked expansion in the combinations formally available to students. Whether that formal availability becomes a realised choice is a different question, and one the documents cannot answer. It depends on whether departments can staff the full slate of multidisciplinary and skill courses each semester, whether timetabling allows students to move across faculties, and whether advisory support exists to help them navigate an unfamiliar structure. This is the point at which curricular flexibility on paper and flexibility in practice diverge, and it is not a small gap.

Three constraints are visible in the institutional context. Delivering interdisciplinary courses, supervising undergraduate research, and integrating skill-based teaching call for competencies distinct from those for which the existing faculty were recruited. Administrative systems must now handle credit transfer, ABC record-keeping, and cross-faculty registration at a level of complexity the previous structure never generated. And infrastructural and digital resources, particularly those needed for ABC participation and for field or laboratory research at cohort scale remain unevenly available.

Epistemological Roots and Cultural Integration

Social science offers no single definition of culture, but its major traditions converge on treating it as a whole way of life rather than a stock of artefacts a system of meanings through which people interpret experience and transmit it across generations (Williams, 1976; Geertz, 1973). Research in education has pressed this further, showing that schooling does not merely reflect culture but selects and legitimises particular cultural forms, conferring advantage on students already at home in them (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Read against this literature, the cultural provisions of NEP 2020 are not decorative additions to the curriculum but a claim about which knowledge counts as knowledge, and they are best assessed on those terms.

NEP 2020 treats education as an instrument for transmitting India's cultural inheritance, holding that cultural preservation and education cannot sensibly be separated (Government of India, 2020, Chapter 22). The policy's cultural provisions are often read as a second agenda running parallel to the structural reforms. Within the FYUGP they are not parallel at all: they are carried by the same curricular components examined in Section 3.

Three mechanisms do this work. Indian Knowledge Systems enter as a multidisciplinary course option, which means a Political Science major meets Indian philosophical, scientific, and governance traditions through the same structural slot that delivers digital literacy or

environmental studies. The placement is consequential. It positions indigenous knowledge as a field of study on equal curricular footing with contemporary disciplines rather than as heritage appreciation bolted on for ceremonial reasons. The ability enhancement requirement, meanwhile, gives effect to the policy's understanding of languages as carriers of history and indigenous knowledge rather than as instruments of communication alone. And value-added provision brings in arts, crafts, music, literature, and community-based learning, where the policy's emphasis on experiential engagement with local tradition is realised.

Cultural element	NEP provision	FYUGP carrier	Intended outcome
Indian languages	Mother-tongue and regional-language instruction	Ability enhancement requirement	Preservation of linguistic diversity
Sanskrit and classical languages	Curricular promotion	Ability enhancement and elective provision	Cultural continuity
Indian Knowledge Systems	Inclusion in teaching and research	Multidisciplinary courses; fourth-year research	Revival of indigenous knowledge
Arts and crafts	Experiential learning	Value-added courses	Cultural appreciation
Local traditions	Community-based learning	Value-added courses and internships	Strengthened cultural identity
Yoga and Ayurveda	Curriculum integration	Multidisciplinary and skill courses	Holistic development

Table 2. Cultural provisions and their curricular carriers

Source: Compiled by the authors from Government of India (2020, Chapter 22) and UGC (2022).

There is, however, a fragility built into this arrangement. Because Indian Knowledge Systems enter through elective multidisciplinary provision, their reach extends only as far as departments can staff the courses. A university unable to mount an IKS course delivers no cultural integration at undergraduate level whatever the national commitment, because no other slot in the curriculum carries it. Expertise in classical languages, indigenous sciences, and traditional knowledge was not a recruitment criterion under the previous framework, and it is not evenly distributed across the system. Cultural integration is therefore subject to the same capacity constraint as everything else in the reform.

Critical Evaluation: Opportunities and Constraints

1. Flexibility and the exit question

The multiple entry and exit system is presented as a mechanism of recognition. A student who leaves after one or two years departs with a certificate or diploma rather than with nothing, and may re-enter later without forfeiting accumulated credit. On its own terms this is a clear equity gain, particularly for students whose withdrawal owes more to financial or family circumstance than to academic difficulty.

The provision admits a second reading, though. Formalising graded exits lowers both the institutional and the psychological cost of leaving, and it has not been established whether this mainly rescues students who would have withdrawn regardless or whether it also makes withdrawal easier for students who would previously have persisted. Much depends on how the labour market receives the new awards. Should employers treat a one-year certificate as a credential of substance, the provision works as recognition. Should they read it as documentation of non-completion, it becomes a formalised exit route that shifts risk towards the students least able to absorb it. Institutional evidence on exit patterns and employer response is not yet available at any scale, and this remains the most consequential open question about the reform's equity effects.

2. The accessibility of the Academic Bank of Credits

Section 2 identified the ABC as the mechanism on which the rest of the reform depends. Its accessibility rests on infrastructure the policy assumes rather than supplies. Participation requires institutional systems capable of issuing and recognising credits in a common format, administrative staff trained to maintain the records, and, on the student side, connectivity and digital confidence sufficient to manage a credit account over several years and possibly across institutions.

None of these is evenly distributed. Institutions in rural and economically disadvantaged regions face well-documented constraints in digital provision (Agarwal, 2009), and the students most likely to need credit portability those whose studies are interrupted by economic necessity are

disproportionately the ones attending institutions least equipped to provide it. The reform's flexibility is thus most dependably available to the students who have least use for it. This inversion is not an incidental defect; it goes to whether the policy's equity claims can be sustained, and policy design has so far not addressed it.

3. Regional disparity and the risk of a two-tier system

Metropolitan universities generally command stronger infrastructure, deeper faculty resources, and better technological provision than institutions in rural regions (Govinda, 2018). Under a uniform national framework, unequal capacity yields unequal outcomes from identical policy. Two students holding nominally the same degree may have received materially different educations depending on whether their institution could staff its multidisciplinary slate, supervise fourth-year research, or participate in the ABC at all.

The risk, then, is not that the reform fails. It succeeds unevenly and in doing so hardens a hierarchy that already exists, producing a system in which the FYUGP is delivered in full at well-resourced institutions and in name only elsewhere. That is a distributional problem, and uniform intervention will not solve it.

4. Research capacity and the fourth year

Extending research from postgraduate to undergraduate level cultivates analytical habits early and strengthens the pipeline into doctoral study (Altbach, 2016). It also multiplies supervisory load considerably. A department accustomed to supervising a handful of postgraduate dissertations must now supervise an entire fourth-year cohort, generally without a corresponding expansion in faculty. Where the load exceeds capacity, the likely outcome is not that the requirement is abandoned but that it thins into a nominal exercise satisfying the regulation while defeating its purpose, which is the more difficult failure to detect.

5.5 Internationalisation

Alignment with four-year degree structures and credit-based curricula improves compatibility with systems abroad, easing graduate mobility and supporting India's ambition to attract international students and scholars (Government of India, 2020). This is the one objective the structural reform advances largely under its own power, since it depends on degree architecture rather than on institutional delivery. That may explain why it has proved the least contested element of the package.

Conclusion

NEP 2020 is the most substantial reform of Indian higher education since independence, and the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme is its principal undergraduate instrument. Set against the 1986 framework it replaced, its design logic holds together: credit portability enables flexible progression, flexible progression enables multidisciplinary breadth, and that breadth carries both skill development and cultural integration through the same curricular slots.

Coherence is also a vulnerability. Because the components depend on one another, the failure of any one degrades the rest, and the Academic Bank of Credits is the point of greatest exposure. What the Gauhati University case suggests is that a compliant institution can adopt the whole curricular architecture on paper while the conditions for delivering it remain contingent on faculty capacity, administrative systems, and digital infrastructure that the policy assumes rather than provides.

Evaluation of the reform should therefore hold firmly to the distinction between what the policy makes possible and what institutions realise. The undergraduate provisions of NEP 2020 establish a framework capable of improving the quality and relevance of Indian higher education substantially; whether they do so is a question about resourcing and institutional capacity rather than about policy design, and it will be answered institution by institution rather than nationally. The recommendations above are addressed to that answer.

Our own assessment is that the reform's most durable achievement may turn out to be neither the four-year degree nor credit portability considered on their own, but a quieter change in what the undergraduate years are understood to be for. The 1986 framework treated them as a period of predetermined specialisation, in which the decisive choice was made at sixteen and everything afterwards followed from it. NEP 2020 treats them as a period of directed exploration. That is a shift in the purpose of education rather than in its structure, and it is likely to outlast any particular provision through which it currently travels.

Policy Recommendations

1. Bind education funding to a legislated floor of six percent of GDP**.** Every constraint identified above reduces eventually to resourcing: digital infrastructure for the ABC, recruitment for multidisciplinary and IKS provision, supervisory capacity for the fourth year. Central and state governments should commit to the six percent allocation on a multi-year schedule, with annual

disbursement published against target, so that institutions can plan implementation against known funding rather than annual budgetary discretion.

2. Direct infrastructure and staffing grants specifically to non-metropolitan institutions. Uniform funding applied to unequal starting positions reproduces the two-tier outcome described in Section 5.3. The UGC and state higher education councils should operate a targeted grant stream for rural and regionally disadvantaged institutions, conditional on demonstrated ABC readiness and on the capacity to staff the full multidisciplinary and skill course slate.

3. Make faculty development mandatory for interdisciplinary teaching, research supervision, and Indian Knowledge Systems. Faculty capacity is the binding constraint on both cultural integration and the research component. Universities should require certified professional development in these three areas for faculty delivering FYUGP courses, funded through the grant stream above rather than absorbed into departmental budgets that cannot bear it.

4. Institute a standardised orientation for parents and guardians at admission. Subject choice under the FYUGP is exercised by students but frequently directed by parents, whose frame of reference is the stream-based system they themselves passed through. A standardised orientation covering the credit structure, exit and re-entry provisions, and the career pathways attached to different combinations would allow that guidance to rest on the present framework rather than the previous one.

5. Mandate annual institutional evaluation against four published indicators. The reform's central questions are empirical and currently unmeasured. Universities should publish annual data on student feedback regarding course availability and advisory support; curriculum audits recording which multidisciplinary and skill courses were actually delivered as against listed; credit-mobility tracking covering exit, re-entry, and inter-institutional transfer; and graduate employability disaggregated by exit point. Without the last of these, the question raised in Section 5.1 cannot be settled at all.

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DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA CREATION FOR PROMOTING LOCAL CULTURAL HERITAGE OF NAKHON SI THAMMARAT AMONG VOCATIONAL CERTIFICATE STUDENTS AT NAKHON SI THAMMARAT COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were: 1) to compare students' cultural communication skills before and after participating in learning activities through digital media creation for disseminating the local cultural heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat, and 2) to examine students' satisfaction with the learning activities. The participants were the entire population of 30 first-year vocational certificate students in the Fine Arts Program at Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Fine Arts during the first semester of the 2026 academic year. No sampling technique was applied. The research instruments consisted of learning activity plans, a cultural communication skills scoring rubric, and a student satisfaction questionnaire. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and the Effective Index (E.I.).

The findings showed that students' cultural communication skills increased from a moderate level before the learning activities (μ = 3.08, σ = 0.52) to a high level after the learning activities (μ = 4.41, σ = 0.43), with an E.I. of 0.69, representing 69.27% of possible improvement. Students' overall satisfaction with the learning activities was at the highest level (μ = 4.56, σ = 0.52).

Keywords: Cultural Communication Skills, Digital Media, Local Cultural Heritage, Vocational Certificate Students.

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, advances in digital technology have played a significant role in people's daily lives, learning processes, and communication practices. As a result, the methods of transmitting knowledge and culture have evolved considerably. Digital media

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has become an important tool for learning and for disseminating cultural identity to wider audiences. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2023) has emphasized the application of digital technology for the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage, encouraging young people to participate in learning activities, recognize the value of cultural heritage, and creatively communicate cultural knowledge through digital platforms. This approach is consistent with twenty-first-century educational practices that aim to develop learners' communication skills, creativity, digital literacy, and lifelong learning competencies (Panich, 2012).

Within the context of culturally diverse societies, cultural communication skills are regarded as essential competencies that enable individuals to understand, interpret, and appropriately convey cultural meanings. According to Byram (1997), cultural communication is a process that fosters mutual understanding among individuals from different cultural backgrounds while promoting awareness of cultural values and diversity. In educational settings, the development of cultural communication skills not only enhances learners' knowledge of culture but also enables them to effectively communicate and disseminate cultural knowledge to society.

Cultural heritage serves as a fundamental foundation of identity, pride, and social continuity. It encompasses tangible and intangible forms, including historical sites, traditions, beliefs, performing arts, and local wisdom. The Department of Cultural Promotion (2022) stated that the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage in contemporary society require the active participation of youth and the integration of modern technologies to ensure that cultural knowledge can be effectively communicated to younger generations. The creation of digital media is therefore considered an important approach to disseminating cultural heritage, as it provides learners with opportunities to investigate, analyze, synthesize, and present information creatively in formats that are accessible and compatible with the information consumption behaviors of modern audiences.

Nakhon Si Thammarat Province is renowned for its rich history, religion, arts, culture, and local wisdom. The province possesses numerous significant cultural heritage assets, including Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan, the Hae Pha Khuen That Festival, Nang Talung shadow puppetry, Nora performance art, and Nielloware craftsmanship, all of which reflect the cultural identity and traditional way of life of local communities (Nakhon Si Thammarat Provincial Cultural Office, 2023). In particular, Nora has been inscribed by UNESCO on the

Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, highlighting the significance and value of the cultural capital of Nakhon Si Thammarat. Nevertheless, social and technological changes have altered the lifestyles and learning patterns of younger generations, making it necessary to adapt cultural learning and heritage transmission to the context of the digital age.

Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Fine Arts is an educational institution dedicated to developing students' competencies in fine arts and the preservation of local arts and culture. First-year vocational certificate students in the Fine Arts Program possess foundational skills in design, creative production, and media technology, which provide strong potential for communicating cultural knowledge through digital media. Observations and classroom records from previous instructional practices in the Fine Arts Program indicated that students were able to produce creative artworks but had limited opportunities to investigate local cultural heritage systematically and transform cultural knowledge into digital media for public communication. This classroom issue is consistent with the need emphasized by the Department of Cultural Promotion (2022) and Maneeruang and Saithong (2024), who highlighted the importance of youth participation, cultural-value learning, and digital media creation for cultural heritage dissemination. Consequently, students' cultural communication skills, particularly cultural interpretation, message design, channel selection, and adaptation of cultural content for specific audiences, have not been fully developed. Furthermore, there remains a need for learning activities that concretely integrate artistic knowledge, digital technology, and local cultural resources.

Given these circumstances, the researcher recognized the importance of organizing learning activities that provide students with opportunities to explore the cultural heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat and create digital media for public dissemination. Such activities not only contribute to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage but also support the simultaneous development of students' cultural communication skills and digital competencies. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the development of cultural communication skills through the creation of digital media for disseminating the local cultural heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat among first-year vocational certificate students at Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Fine Arts. Specifically, the study sought to compare students' cultural communication skills before and after participating in the learning activities and to examine their satisfaction with

the activities. The findings are expected to contribute to the improvement of arts and cultural learning management in vocational education institutions.

Objectives

1. To compare students' cultural communication skills before and after participating in learning activities through the creation of digital media for the dissemination of the local cultural heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat.

2. To examine students' satisfaction with learning activities through the creation of digital media for the dissemination of the local cultural heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat.

Research Methodology

1. Population and Study Participants

1.1 Population

The population consisted of 30 vocational certificate students enrolled in the Fine Arts Program at Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Fine Arts during the first semester of the 2026 academic year.

1.2 Study Participants

The study participants comprised all 30 first-year vocational certificate students enrolled in the Fine Arts Program at Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Fine Arts during the first semester of the 2026 academic year. Since the study covered the entire population, no random sampling or cluster sampling technique was employed, and the findings should be interpreted within this specific group of learners rather than generalized to other populations.

2. Research Instruments

2.1 Learning Activity Plans

The learning activity plans were designed based on constructionist learning and active learning principles, emphasizing learning through the creation of digital media for disseminating the local cultural heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat. The plans consisted of four learning units, each lasting three hours, for a total of 12 instructional hours. The instructional process comprised four main steps: (1) exploring and collecting information about local cultural heritage; (2) analyzing cultural values, identity, and target audiences; (3) designing and producing digital media by selecting appropriate channels, messages, visuals, and presentation techniques; and (4) presenting, receiving feedback, and reflecting on the media products. The quality of the learning activity plans was evaluated through content validation and

assessment of the appropriateness of the lesson-plan components by three experts. The Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) values ranged from 0.67 to 1.00, and the appropriateness ratings indicated that the plans were suitable for implementation at a high level.

2.2 Cultural Communication Skills Assessment Form

The Cultural Communication Skills Assessment Form was developed as an analytic scoring rubric with a five-point scale and 20 items. The rubric covered four dimensions: understanding cultural values, interpreting cultural information, communicating cultural knowledge, and utilizing digital media for cultural communication. The assessment was conducted by the course instructor and two qualified raters using the same rubric. Scoring criteria ranged from 1 = needs improvement to 5 = excellent performance, with descriptors for accuracy of cultural content, depth of interpretation, clarity of message, suitability of digital media, and adaptation to target audiences. Content validity was examined by three experts; IOC values ranged from 0.67 to 1.00. Reliability was examined through inter-rater reliability (IRR), yielding a coefficient of 0.89.

2.3 Student Satisfaction Questionnaire

The Student Satisfaction Questionnaire regarding the learning activities was a five-point rating scale consisting of 20 items. The questionnaire covered five aspects: (1) learning content and activities, focusing on relevance, clarity, and suitability of tasks; (2) use of digital media, focusing on accessibility and usefulness of digital tools; (3) participation in learning, focusing on collaboration and active engagement; (4) development of cultural communication skills, focusing on perceived improvement in cultural understanding and communication; and (5) benefits gained from learning, focusing on applicability to learning, community communication, and future work. Content validity was assessed by three experts, with IOC values ranging from 0.67 to 1.00. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87.

3. Data Collection

3.1 The researcher explained the objectives, procedures, and students' roles in participating in the learning activities through the creation of digital media for disseminating the local cultural heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat.

3.2 Before the implementation, students' cultural communication skills were assessed by the course instructor and two qualified raters using the Cultural Communication Skills Assessment Form as a pre-test scoring rubric.

3.3 The researcher conducted the learning activities as part of course learning in the Fine Arts Program related to digital media creation and local cultural heritage. The activities were implemented once a week for four weeks, consisting of four learning units, each lasting three hours, for a total of 12 instructional hours. During each unit, students' communication behaviors, cultural interpretation, media design decisions, and presentation practices were observed, and feedback was provided to support improvement.

3.4 Upon completion of the learning activities, students' cultural communication skills were assessed again as a post-test using the same rubric and the same group of raters.

3.5 Students' satisfaction was assessed after the post-test in the final learning session using the Student Satisfaction Questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered in class, and the collected data were subsequently analyzed statistically.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Students' cultural communication skills before and after participating in the learning activities were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean (μ), standard deviation (σ), mean gain, and the Effective Index (E.I.). The E.I. was calculated using the formula: (post-test mean – pre-test mean) / (maximum possible score – pre-test mean).

4.2 Students' satisfaction with the learning activities was analyzed using mean (μ) and standard deviation (σ). The results were interpreted according to the criteria of a five-point rating scale: 4.51–5.00 = highest, 3.51–4.50 = high, 2.51–3.50 = moderate, 1.51–2.50 = low, and 1.00–1.50 = lowest.

Research Findings

1. Comparison of Students' Cultural Communication Skills Before and After Participating in Learning Activities Through the Creation of Digital Media for Disseminating the Local Cultural Heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat

Table 1 Comparison of Students' Cultural

Communication Skills Before and After Participating in Learning Activities Through Digital Media Creation for Disseminating the Local Cultural Heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat (N = 30)

Assessment	μ	σ	Level	E.I.
Pre-test	3.08	0.52	Moderate	-
Post-test	4.41	0.43	High	0.69 (69.27%)

Note. E.I. = (post-test mean – pre-test mean) / (maximum possible score – pre-test mean). The maximum possible score of the five-point rubric was 5.00.

As shown in Table 1, students' cultural communication skills before participating in the learning activities were at a moderate level (μ = 3.08, σ = 0.52). After participating in the learning activities, their cultural communication skills increased to a high level (μ = 4.41, σ = 0.43). The mean gain was 1.33 points. The Effective Index was 0.69, indicating that students achieved 69.27% of the possible improvement. This indicates that the learning activities through digital media creation for disseminating the local cultural heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat effectively enhanced students' cultural communication skills within the studied group.

2. Students' Satisfaction with Learning Activities Through the Creation of Digital Media for Disseminating the Local Cultural Heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat

Table 2 Students' Satisfaction with Learning Activities Through Digital Media Creation for Disseminating the Local Cultural Heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat (N = 30)

Item	μ	σ	Level of Satisfaction
Learning Content and Activities	4.42	0.58	High
Use of Digital Media	4.58	0.52	Highest
Participation in Learning Activities	4.63	0.49	Highest
Development of Cultural Communication Skills	4.69	0.45	Highest
Benefits Gained from Learning	4.47	0.54	High
Overall	**4.56**	**0.52**	**Highest**

As shown in Table 2, students' overall satisfaction with the learning activities was at the highest level (μ = 4.56, σ = 0.52). When considering each aspect individually, the highest mean score was found in the development of cultural communication skills (μ = 4.69, σ = 0.45), followed by participation in learning activities (μ = 4.63, σ = 0.49) and use of digital media (μ = 4.58, σ = 0.52), all of which were rated at the highest level. The aspects of benefits gained from learning (μ = 4.47, σ = 0.54) and learning content and activities (μ = 4.42, σ = 0.58) were rated at the high level, respectively.

Discussion

1. Development of Cultural Communication Skills Through the Creation of Digital Media for Disseminating the Local Cultural Heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat

The findings revealed that first-year vocational certificate students at Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Fine Arts showed higher cultural communication skills after participating in the learning activities than before participation based on descriptive comparison and E.I. results. This improvement may be attributed to the learning activities that provided students with opportunities to explore authentic information related to local cultural heritage and transform the acquired knowledge into digital media for public dissemination. Through this process, students practiced information searching, content analysis, cultural interpretation, and the effective communication of cultural content to target audiences. Such experiences enhanced their understanding of local cultural identity and enabled them to communicate cultural knowledge more effectively. These findings are consistent with Papert's (1993) theory of Constructionism, which proposes that learners construct knowledge most effectively when they actively create meaningful artifacts. Similarly, Israsena na Ayudhya (2005) explained that constructionist learning enables learners to develop knowledge through hands-on experiences and the creation of tangible products, resulting in deeper and more sustainable learning outcomes. The findings also support Panich's (2012) perspective on twenty-first-century learning, which emphasizes the development of communication skills, critical thinking, technological literacy, and knowledge construction through authentic learning experiences. Furthermore, Khammani (2017) asserted that learner-centered instruction, which encourages students to construct knowledge independently, promotes meaningful learning, communication, and higher-order thinking skills. The findings are also consistent with Soe (2016), who noted that intercultural communication competence comprises the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective communication across cultural contexts and can be enhanced

through activities that allow learners to explore and communicate cultural meanings independently. In addition, Robin (2008) found that digital storytelling contributes to the development of communication skills, creativity, and the ability to connect knowledge with social and cultural contexts. Therefore, creating digital media for disseminating local cultural heritage can be considered an effective learning process that enables students to learn through authentic experiences while simultaneously developing cultural communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and digital literacy, all of which are essential competencies for learners in the twenty-first century.

2. Students' Satisfaction with Learning Activities Through the Creation of Digital Media for Disseminating the Local Cultural Heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat

The findings indicated that students' overall satisfaction with the learning activities was at the highest level. This may be attributed to the fact that the activities allowed students to participate actively in every stage of the learning process, including information gathering, cultural exploration, data collection, digital media design, and presentation of their work. Such participation fostered a sense of ownership and pride in their achievements while enhancing their awareness of the value of local cultural heritage. Moreover, the integration of digital technology into the learning process aligned with students' interests and contemporary learning behaviors, thereby increasing their motivation and enthusiasm for learning. These findings are consistent with the principles of Active Learning, which emphasize learners' active roles in constructing knowledge. Khammani (2017) stated that learning activities involving participation, hands-on experiences, and collaborative knowledge exchange can enhance students' engagement and foster positive attitudes toward learning. The findings also support the work of Dechakup and Yindeesuk (2014), who suggested that learning experiences connected to real-world contexts and involving the creation of authentic products can effectively enhance learners' motivation and satisfaction. Likewise, Maneeruang and Saithong (2024) found that the development of digital media for cultural heritage dissemination promotes learning about cultural values and facilitates effective communication of cultural knowledge to the public. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with the Digital Cultural Heritage Thailand initiative proposed by the National Digital Economy and Society Commission (2021), which aims to encourage learning, cultural pride, and youth participation in preserving and disseminating cultural heritage through digital technology. Similarly, Ohler (2013) reported that the use of digital media in educational activities enhances students' sense of ownership, stimulates creativity, and increases engagement in the learning process. Consequently, the high

level of student satisfaction observed in this study may be attributed to the successful integration of local cultural learning with digital technology in ways that matched students' interests and learning preferences. As a result, students found the learning activities enjoyable, recognized the value of the knowledge acquired, and perceived its applicability to real-life situations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, learning activities based on digital media creation for disseminating the local cultural heritage of Nakhon Si Thammarat supported the development of cultural communication skills among first-year vocational certificate students in the Fine Arts Program. Students improved from a moderate to a high level, with an E.I. of 0.69, and reported overall satisfaction at the highest level. The findings suggest that integrating local cultural heritage with digital media creation can provide a practical learning approach for vocational arts students to interpret cultural meanings, design appropriate messages, select suitable communication channels, and present cultural knowledge to wider audiences.

Recommendations

Practical Implications

1. Teachers may apply learning activities based on the creation of digital media in courses related to arts and culture, local studies, or social studies in order to enhance students' cultural communication skills alongside their digital literacy and technological competencies.

2. Educational institutions should encourage students to explore and create digital media based on the cultural heritage of their own communities. Such activities can foster cultural awareness, strengthen pride in local identity, and facilitate the dissemination of cultural knowledge to wider audiences.

3. The digital media products created by students can be utilized as promotional materials or cultural heritage databases for educational institutions, communities, and relevant organizations. These resources can contribute to the preservation, promotion, and sustainable transmission of local cultural heritage.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Future studies should investigate the effects of learning activities through the creation of digital media on additional variables, such as cultural awareness, creativity, digital media

literacy, and pride in local identity, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of learning outcomes.

2. Future research should expand the sample to include learners from different educational levels or institutions in diverse contexts to compare the effectiveness of cultural communication skill development across different populations.

3. Future studies should examine and compare the effectiveness of various forms of digital media, such as short-form videos, infographics, podcasts, and virtual reality (VR) media, in order to identify the most effective approaches for promoting cultural learning in the digital age.

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THE JOURNEY OF LINE PATTERNS TOWARD THE CREATIVE PROCESS OF LAI ROT NAM ART

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Abstract

This academic article presents an instructional approach integrated with a creative process by examining methods for preserving and innovating the art of *Lai Rod Nam* (Thai gilded black lacquer decoration), a highly refined form of traditional Thai decorative art that is currently facing significant challenges due to the declining number of skilled artisans and the high production costs that limit its accessibility. Although traditional transmission has primarily emphasized copying master patterns to develop technical craftsmanship, the context of the contemporary creative economy requires further developmenttoward contemporary artistic expression in order to enhance learners' analytical thinking and creative abilities.

The proposed creative process is based on the principles of simplification, decoding, and integration, with Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Fine Arts serving as the case study. The process begins with an exploration of the lifestyles and cultural heritage of Southern Thailand, including forms inspired by rubber plantation practices, the maritime way of life, *Nang Talung* (Southern Thai shadow puppetry), and *Manora* (Southern Thai traditional dance drama), which serve as sources of creative inspiration. This is followed by the simplification stage, in which complex details are reduced to their essential structural forms; the decoding stage, in which distinctive visual symbols are developed; and the integration stage, in which newly designed motifs are systematically combined with traditional *Kanok* motifs according to classical compositional principles. Contemporary materials and tools are also incorporated into the creation of *Lai Rod Nam* artworks.

The findings indicate that encouraging learners to initiate the creative process from their own inspiration and local cultural context effectively promotes originality, creative thinking, and the development of individual artistic identity. This approach transforms traditional cultural capital into contemporary artistic expressions that respond to changing social contexts while contributing to the sustainable preservation and continuation of the *Lai Rod Nam* tradition in the form of contemporary.

Keywords: Simplification, Decoding, Integration, Thai Art, Lai Rot Nam, Art Education, Pattern Design

Introduction

Lai Rot Nam (Thai lacquer works) is regarded as one of Thailand's most valuable forms of fine art. Distinguished by its delicacy, intricacy, and aesthetic elegance, it represents a tangible cultural heritage that reflects the wisdom, craftsmanship, and artistic spirit of master artisans whose knowledge has been transmitted across generations (Yupho, 1979). At present, the traditional practice of Lai Rot Nam is facing a critical situation due to the declining number of skilled artisans and the lack of systematic succession within formal educational frameworks (Fine Arts Department, 2019). Furthermore, the high cost of production, the use of pure gold leaf materials, and the extensive time required to achieve the necessary level of craftsmanship have resulted in these fine-art works possessing considerable economic value while remaining accessible only to a limited audience (Leesuwan, 2016). Moreover, there remains a lack of development and adaptation of master-level traditional techniques into contemporary artistic practices.

Traditionally, the teaching and learning process of Lai Rot Nam has primarily focused on copying master patterns, enabling learners to study the forms, structures, and rhythms of traditional Thai motifs. Such an approach plays a vital role in developing technical proficiency and establishing a strong foundation of craftsmanship among learners. This practice is consistent with the traditional system of transmitting knowledge in Thai classical arts, which emphasizes disciplined practice as a pathway to technical mastery (Silpa Bhirasri, 1963).

Under the supervision of the Institute of Fine Arts, whose educational philosophy is "Preserving Knowledge, Creating Art, and Advancing to the International Level," the three Colleges of Fine Arts—College of Fine Arts, Suphan Buri College of Fine Arts, and Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Fine Arts—offer courses in Lai Rot Nam. These institutions continue to preserve and transmit both traditional techniques and contemporary adaptations employing substitute materials for educational purposes. In today's context, however, the world has entered the era of the creative economy, in which art and design can no longer be confined solely to the preservation of traditional conventions. Instead, they require adaptation, innovation, and creative development to remain relevant in contemporary society.

Although copying traditional motifs helps learners acquire technical precision, limiting instruction solely to imitation may hinder the development of analytical thinking and creative abilities necessary for engaging with contemporary audiences. As observed by Preecha Thaothong (2013), the study of Thai art in the modern era must move beyond replication

toward analysis and decoding in order to generate new forms and meanings that resonate with contemporary contexts. A central challenge in modern art education is how to encourage learners to develop creative thinking skills and design new motifs that express their own identities while preserving the values and aesthetic essence of Thai art. This perspective aligns with contemporary cultural management theories, which emphasize transforming traditional cultural capital to respond to the dynamic conditions of modern society (Poshyananda, 2003).

Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Fine Arts offers Lai Rot Nam courses for both vocational certificate and higher education students, with the goal of preserving, promoting, and cultivating appreciation for Thai art among younger generations. Recognizing this mission, the present study proposes an approach for developing creative works with distinctive local identities through a process of transforming line patterns into Lai Rot Nam artworks based on the principles of simplification, decoding, and integration. The development of an instructional training package that encourages learners to create motifs inspired by their own experiences serves as the starting point for creative thinking, allowing students to define artistic problems and direct their own learning processes through personal conceptual frameworks (Khemmanee, 2020).

This training package emphasizes a process in which learners move beyond mere imitation by extracting and reinterpreting motifs derived from personal sources of inspiration and integrating them with traditional masterworks of Lai Rot Nam painting. It represents a journey of line patterns toward the creative process of Lai Rot Nam production. The study presents examples of creative works inspired by the lifestyles and cultural heritage of Southern Thailand, reflecting social and cultural contexts that are familiar, distinctive, and readily accessible to learners. These cultural references serve as sources of inspiration for design, whereby simplified and decoded forms are integrated with traditional Kanok motifs according to established principles of Thai art and subsequently developed into Lai Rot Nam paintings.

When learners begin by exploring inspiration from within themselves, they are encouraged to develop flexible thinking and originality—two essential foundations for creating innovative visual artworks that sustainably express individual identity (Moolkam, 2018).

Lessons Learned from the Creative Process: "The Journey of Line Patterns Toward the Creative Process of Lai Rot Nam"

Simplification: The process begins with learners reflecting on the concepts and sources of inspiration they wish to communicate through their artworks. Learners are encouraged to

explore the lifestyles and local identities of Southern Thailand, including forms derived from rubber plantation occupations, coastal fishing communities, oil palm cultivation, fruit farming, Nang Talung (Southern Thai shadow puppetry), Manorah (Southern Thai folk dance drama), as well as other personal sources of inspiration. These physical forms are then simplified by reducing complex details into essential lines and fundamental structures that are easier to understand and reinterpret within a design framework.

Decoding: The simplified forms are subsequently analyzed to decode their symbolic meanings. Through this process, the values embedded in the original sources of inspiration are transformed into visual identities characterized by personal artistic expression. Learners identify and select prominent features that best represent their conceptual intentions, enabling the creation of distinctive and recognizable forms that clearly communicate individual ideas and artistic perspectives.

Integration: The motifs that have undergone the processes of simplification and decoding are then developed through compositional design and the creative imagination of the artist. Particular attention is given to the use of line quality for creating tonal values, depth, light, and shadow within the artwork. These newly developed motifs are integrated with the traditional two-dimensional characteristics of classical Lai Rot Nam painting.

Subsequently, the process of motif composition is undertaken by combining the newly created forms with traditional Kanok motifs according to the conventions of classical Thai art. This integration results in innovative decorative patterns inspired by contemporary experiences, the evolving spiritual dimensions of the creator, and the advancement of modern materials and tools. Such developments facilitate the adaptation of traditional Lai Rot Nam craftsmanship into contemporary artistic forms while maintaining its connection to the aesthetic principles and cultural values of Thai traditional art.

Reverse Analysis of Traditional Thai Motif Decoding

An important component of the learning process is the study of traditional Thai decorative motifs through a reverse analytical approach. Learners examine ancient Lai Rot Nam (gilded lacquer painting) patterns to explore the conceptual foundations of traditional craftsmanship and to understand how artisans of the past transformed elements from nature, cultural beliefs, local ways of life, and symbolic meanings into artistic expressions through the Lai Rot Nam painting technique.

This reverse decoding process enables learners to gain a profound understanding of the creative principles underlying traditional Thai ornamentation. It also provides an essential foundation for the development of contemporary motifs that preserve the aesthetic qualities and cultural identity of Thai art. Furthermore, learners are encouraged to extend these principles and create distinctive works of their own within the framework of contemporary art practice.

An Example of Reverse Analysis in Decoding Traditional Thai Motifs



Figure 1 *Lai Rot Nam* Artwork on a Buddhist Scripture Cabinet at Wat Soeng Wai
Source: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/493284965405673796

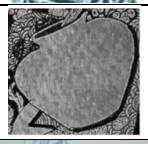
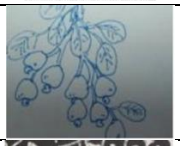
Study of Traditional Lai Rot Nam Motifs Demonstrating the Design Process of Bird Imagery. Various bird species and postures are analyzed from real-life references, then simplified, decoded, and integrated with the artist's imagination to create distinctive ornamental line patterns.



Figure 2 Bird Motif Design Process

Source: Phattanasin, W. (2021). *Teaching Materials*.

Design of Line Patterns Inspired by the Lifestyles of Southern Thai Communities. Real-world forms are simplified, decoded, and integrated with the creator's imagination to produce distinctive and unique visual motifs.

Source of Motif	Original Reference Image	Decoded Line Pattern
Rubber Leaf		
Fish		
Earthen Jar		
Cashew Apple		
Lotus Flower		
Chicken Coop		

Source: Wanwisa Phattanasin. (2021). *Teaching Materials*.

Examples of Creative Works: From Decoded Line Patterns to the Aesthetic Charm of *Lai Rot Nam*

Example of a Creative Work: "Decoding Lines into the Charm of *Lai Rod Nam*"



Figure 3 Contemporary *Lai Rot Nam* Artwork Inspired by the Cultural Lifestyle of Southern Thailand

Source: Wanwisa Phattanasin (2022).



Figure 4 Cultural Identity of Southern Thai Coastal Communities

Source: Sujitra Pahukarn (2019)

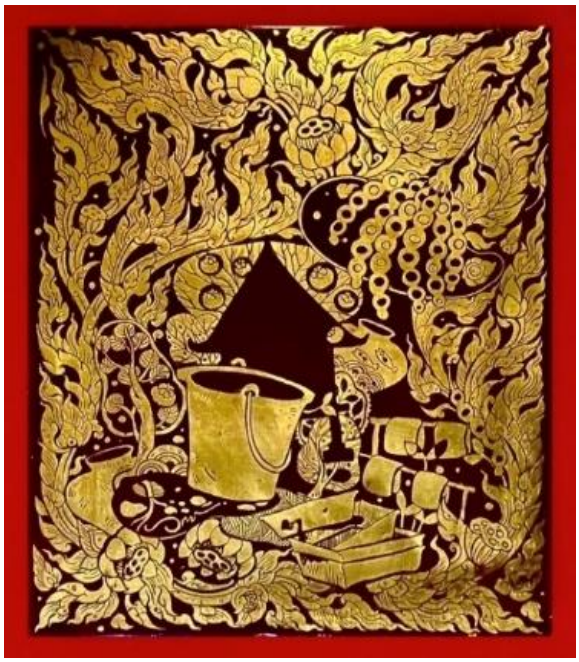


Figure 5 "Forms of Way of Life"

Source: Wannarwisa Phattanasin (2026).

Conclusion

Lai Rot Nam is a highly refined traditional art form and a valuable component of Thailand's cultural heritage. However, the current state of Lai Rot Nam art is facing significant challenges, including a shortage of skilled artisans and the absence of a systematic succession process. In addition, the high cost of materials, particularly gold leaf, and the lengthy production process contribute to the high market value of these artworks and limit their accessibility to a broader audience. Traditional instructional approaches have primarily emphasized the replication of master motifs to develop technical proficiency. Although this method effectively establishes a strong foundation of craftsmanship, it often limits the development of analytical thinking and creative innovation required in the contemporary creative economy.

In response to these challenges, Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Fine Arts has adopted a contemporary cultural management approach that shifts the focus from mere imitation toward analysis and decoding as a means of generating new forms and artistic values. The creative process is structured around three principal stages: simplification, decoding, and integration.

Simplification involves exploring the lifestyles and local identities of Southern Thailand, including rubber plantation communities, coastal ways of life, Nang Talung shadow puppetry, and Manorah performance traditions. The physical characteristics of these cultural references are then reduced to their essential forms and primary line structures.

Decoding focuses on analyzing symbolic meanings embedded within the selected forms in order to develop distinctive visual identities and personalized aesthetic expressions.

Integration involves arranging the newly developed motifs into creative compositions, combining them with the artist's imagination and the use of tonal values to create visual depth within Lai Rot Nam paintings. These motifs are subsequently incorporated into traditional Kanok patterns according to the conventions of classical Thai art, while also embracing the possibilities offered by contemporary materials and techniques.

This process proposes an instructional approach integrated with a creative process, aiming to encourage learners to begin with their own personal inspiration and the social contexts surrounding them. Such an approach fosters originality and creative thinking while enabling learners to produce contemporary *Lai Rod Nam* paintings that reflect their individual artistic identities.

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