

# Review of Educational Theory

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## ARTICLE

# Reimagining Engagement Learning Outcomes in Flipped Classrooms Across Diverse Socioeconomic Backgrounds

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of socioeconomic status (SES) on learning outcomes in flipped classrooms, with a focus on engagement as a mediating factor. The study involved the collection of data in 15 schools that adopted flipped instruction as an instructional strategy in science and mathematics, and the students involved were of a variety of backgrounds, in terms of SES. The scan demonstrated that engagement was already a very significant mediator of the correlation between SES and achievement, with elevated amounts of engagement showing the connection to superior academic achievement. Access to technology and parental support emerged as particularly important predictors of student engagement, especially when applied to lower-SES students, who had the greatest benefit of being engaged through peer-communally collaborative and teacher-provision digital scaffolding. The results indicate the relevance of the adaptive instructional delivery, which takes into account the SES conditions of students, giving everyone fair chances to learn in technology-based flipped learning environments. The paper highlights the value of engagement in the context of achievement gaps and suggests recommendations to be used by teachers and policymakers in the light of more inclusive and effective educational settings.

## 1. Introduction

The flipped classroom model has grown in popularity over the last few years in education as a revolutionary teaching method. This model rearranges the traditional relationship between students and teacher by providing the contents of the course outside the classroom, usually in form of videos or readings or online modules, and then devoting the classroom time to activities like problem solving, or discussions or collaborations among peers. It has been praised as an education model that puts more

primacy on student engagement and it has been argued that it can encourage deep learning, critical thinking and student autonomy. Nevertheless, the flipped classroom is not an easy one. Among them, the issue of a disparate effect of this model on students of different socioeconomic statuses could be cited. Although the design of this model potentially can foster equity, the truth is that, socioeconomic differences are likely to affect not only exposure to resources that the learning environment requires (e.g., technology, time, and parent support), but also capability to provide substantive interactivity with the learning pro-

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cess<sup>[1-3]</sup>.

The socioeconomic status (SES) and academic achievement relationship is well known and is characterized by the fact that lower-SES students experience more setbacks in the conventional academic environment. Such obstructions are inadequate access to technology, a reduced degree of parental support, and minimized supplementary out-of-school advancements. The emergence of flipped classrooms as a digital technology and self-directed learning-oriented model provokes the questions whether this pedagogical model proves itself to be the equalizer or whether through it the inequalities are reproduced accidentally. To be more precise, what is the work on SES and its programming of engagement and, consequently, learning outcomes in flipped classrooms?

The proposed study will be able to answer this question by finding out how engagement mediates the relationship between SES and learning outcomes in flipped classrooms. Engagement as a concept formulated by means of behavior, cognitive and emotional aspects is acknowledged to be a primary indicator of school success. Engagement, in the context of flipped classroom, does not only mean being proactive in the classroom, it also means how the learners approach content prior to class, how they work together and how they become part of their own education. Considering the multiplicity of element that determines engagement, prior knowledge, access to resources, and social support, it becomes critical to comprehend how engagement is conducted in various matching SES conditions to design meaningful and inclusive teaching practices<sup>[4-6]</sup>.

This study examines secondary school students who have taken flipped science and mathematics classes the high-achievement gaps in which between students of higher and lower SES are particularly high. By addressing the related subjects, the work strives to bring some insight into the peculiar problems and opportunities of flipped classrooms in the environments where performance differences are the most apparent. It is based on information obtained on 15 schools that are practicing flipped instruction and how different levels of engagement resulting in various factors, including access to technology and parental involvement, translate to achievement outcomes<sup>[7]</sup>.

The research is guided by the faith that engagement is a transformational intermediary variable that has the potential of cushioning the adverse impacts of lower SES on learning achievements. Participation in flipped classrooms takes the form of three interconnected phenomenon: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. Behavioral engagement is student involvement in the learning process, which may be in the form of attendance of the class-

es and accomplishment of assignments and interactions among individual students. Cognitive engagement- how intellectually involved are students in the content (critical thinking, problem-solving). Emotional engagement is associated with the interest, pleasure and motivation of the students about the learning<sup>[8]</sup>.

The engagement during the time spent in flip type classrooms can be influenced by the external factors and the internal factors. Access to technology and parental involvement are examples of external factors which can assist or impede the process of successful interaction with the material among the students. As an example, higher-SES students might be more connected to the available technologies and have a more stable home learning environment, therefore, being capable of connecting with the course more deeply. Conversely, students with low-SES families might have a problem with access to the digital content, places with no noise to study, or lack of parental support since the parents do not necessarily have time or resources and leave to themselves are not experts in the field of education. Such inequalities are capable of influencing not only the engagement rates of students but also their grades<sup>[9]</sup>.

The rationale of this study lies in the idea that engagement as an intermediate between the SES and variations in the outcomes of learning is a variable that has been examined in conventional, face-to-face setting of learning but remains insufficiently studied in flipped classroom. In addition, the research will also set out to test the assumption that flipped classrooms, through their focus on cooperative learning and deployment of technology, hold specific advantages for students of lower-SES and that low-SES students may benefit more as a result of interactive, peer-supported task and teacher advocacy of technology through digital scaffolding.

The main objective of this study will be to see how engagement will relate to the linkage between SES and flipped classroom learning outcomes. In order to do so the following key research questions are answered:

What is the relationship between SES and flipped classrooms learning outcomes?

How strong is the mediation between SES and achievement, when it comes to student engagement?

Does access to technology and parental support affect the levels of engagement in flipped-classrooms?

Which instructional characteristics (e.g., peer teamwork, teacher-directed scaffolding) have specific advantages to what extent to the students of lower-SES?

Through these questions, the research will offer quality information on how flipped classrooms can be modeled and performed in such a way that they promote fair learn-



ing to all students irrespective of their socioeconomic status<sup>[10]</sup>.

A contribution to the still-emerging body of literature on flipped classrooms, technological aspects of teaching, and equity in learning outcomes is also expected of the findings of this research. Knowing how engagement as a mediating variable plays out in the context of flipped classrooms (especially when there is diversity of SES) can assist educators and policymakers provide more inclusive teaching methods to support all students regardless of their SES backgrounds. This study presents practical recommendations on how flipped learning could be modified in order to better accommodate students of lower SES by determining the exact mechanisms through which lower-SES students could benefit from collaborative and scaffolded instruction facilitated by the flipped model<sup>[11, 12]</sup>.

Additionally, the research can contribute to the creation of more general debates about the concept of educational equity and the contribution of technology to the achievement gap closure. With the expansion of digital learning models in the educational system, it is important to make sure that these developments will not automatically create gaps, but rather enable new opportunities to flourish amongst all the students. This study aims to answer this challenge by looking into how flipped classrooms may be modified according to the needs of students of different socioeconomic backgrounds and eventually providing a fairer outcome in education.

## 2. Methodology

The research involved a mixed methodology, as both quantitative assessment and statistical analysis were used to examine how a socioeconomic background affects learning results in a flipped classroom setting. Research was conducted in 15 secondary schools spread out in different regions, each of which was using the flipped instruction in science and mathematics subjects. The proposed research question would be to investigate the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and achievement mediated by engagement on the one hand and taking into consideration key antecedents related to technology access and parental support on the other hand<sup>[13]</sup>.

### 2.1 Design & Setting

This research study was a multi-site research based on a cross-sectional model where data was only achieved during a single semester in the academic year (approximately 16 weeks). The involved schools were found within urban and suburban/rural areas to guarantee the diversity of communities concerning community resources,

technology access, and demographics. They all tended to be introducing a hybrid cycle flipped learning in science (i.e., physics, chemistry), in mathematics (i.e., algebra, geometry) as a part of school curriculum, thereby offering a chance to see how the model was affecting in these areas, where achievement gaps are commonly observed<sup>[14]</sup>.

### 2.2 Participants & Sampling

A sample size of 1,200 students was used in the research with the average class being composed of 30 students. The subject group was between grades 9 and 12 and the male/female ratio was about 48/52 percent. Schools were chosen according to their adherence to a flipped classroom strategy and the high level of variety among the students of diverse SES origins. The classification of SES was based on eligibility to free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) as the main variable, where lower-SES students were the ones who were qualified to receive FRL and higher-SES ones thought as those not qualified<sup>[15]</sup>. The actual background of the students in terms of SES was quite different across the schools to illustrate, in school A (an urban district), 70 percent of the students were lower-SES, whereas in school B (a suburban district), only 30 percent of the students were lower-SES students. Such differences are echoes of the corresponding differences presented to the students in their various communities by their accesses to resources and social capital<sup>[16]</sup>.

### 2.3 Instructional Context

These assignments were aimed at the basic understanding and acquiring preliminary training exercises. The activities such as problem-solving in the in-class students collaboratively, peer discussions, and project-based learning were facilitated by teachers. Moreover, instructional design included such forms as digital scaffolding supporting the students in their cognition of complicated ideas since it offers guided notes, just-in-time assessments, and interactive quizzes<sup>[17]</sup>.

Slight changes were made to the application of the flipped model in schools. Other schools (e.g., School A) had more focus in the realm of peer cooperation where groups of students were to solve the problems and experiments in class. On the contrary, other schools (e.g. School C) were more teacher-led, and offered extra digital resources and individual tutoring during in-class tasks to support struggling students. Such changes in classroom organization gave us a chance to examine the interaction of various instructional characteristics with student engagement, especially by lower-SES students<sup>[18]</sup>.

## 2.4 Measures

### 2.4.1 Achievement

Any measurement of achievement of students was done through standardized assessment that was established to assess knowledge acquisition as well as evaluation of problem-solving skills. The design of these assessments, which concerned major concepts in science and mathematics as put forward within the curriculum standards of the state, was done by the joint efforts of the school district officials. Final exam scores which reflect an individual cumulative knowledge acquired in the semester, were used as the key dependent variable <sup>[19]</sup>.

### 2.4.2 Engagement

Engagement was quantified on a multi-dimensional scale specifically created in this research that can measure behavioral, cognitive and emotional aspects. The behavioral component measured the level of involvement of the students in learning activities that included, attending class, doing pre-class assignments, and cooperating with peers. Cognitive engagement has been assessed on the levels of thinking and solving problems critically that the students had and their capability to apply the acquired concepts in new situations. Index of emotional connectivity was recorded in terms of self-reports in which students were asked the extent of their motivation, interest, and enjoyment during the lesson. The scales (engagement) were validated through proxy tool (exploratory factor analysis) and it demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach alpha coefficient = 0.92) <sup>[20, 21]</sup>.

### 2.4.3 SES Indicators

Free/reduced lunch eligibility was mainly used as an indicator of SES. In order to further refine the SES variable, supplementary indicators were applied, such as neighborhood socioeconomic indices (e.g. median household income, parent education levels and community resources) which were procured in local school district databases <sup>[22]</sup>.

### 2.4.4 Technology Access

Technological access of students was quantified through a survey evaluating the access to technology (e.g. laptops, tablets), and internet connection at home. The survey also contained questions regarding how often the respondent utilizes technology to accomplish educational tasks and whether respondents experience any obstacles related to technology (slow connection, shared computers/treatises between family members, etc.) <sup>[23, 24]</sup>.

### 2.4.5 Parental Support

The Parental support was measured via a composite survey that comprised some questions that looked at the role of parents in the education of their children <sup>[25]</sup>. This involved parental assistance with regard to the homework and teacher interaction, as well as parental support of academic activities. Support provided by parents was also measured in terms of home conditions like having a quiet place to study and expectations of the parents about their children grades <sup>[26]</sup>.

### 2.4.6 Controls

Several control variables were included in the analysis to account for factors that could influence achievement and engagement independent of SES <sup>[27]</sup>. These included prior achievement (measured by students' scores from the previous year in related subjects), special education status, and language proficiency (e.g., English Language Learners).

## 2.5 Procedures

Data were collected through surveys administered to students at the beginning and end of the semester. Students completed self-report questionnaires on engagement, technology access, and parental support. In addition, teachers provided weekly logs documenting their instructional activities, including the extent of peer collaboration and the use of digital scaffolding tools. Achievement scores were gathered from the final exams, and students' SES status was verified using school district records <sup>[28]</sup>.

Fidelity checks were conducted regularly by research assistants to ensure that the flipped classroom model was being implemented as designed. These checks included classroom observations, teacher interviews, and review of instructional materials. A sample of classrooms was also observed to verify the extent to which engagement activities (e.g., group work, discussions) were happening as planned <sup>[29]</sup>.

## 2.6 Analytic Strategy

The data were analyzed using multilevel modeling (MLM) to account for the nested structure of the data (i.e., students within schools). MLM allows for the examination of both individual-level (student) and group-level (school) factors. A multilevel structural equation model (SEM) was used to test the hypothesized mediation model, where engagement was posited as a mediator between SES and achievement.

The mediation model tested whether engagement

explained a significant proportion of the relationship between SES and achievement. The model also included direct and indirect paths, with technology access and parental support as potential antecedents of engagement. To assess the robustness of the findings, multiple sensitivity analyses were conducted, including testing alternative operationalizations of SES (e.g., using neighborhood-level SES indices) and examining the influence of prior achievement on the results<sup>[30]</sup>.

## 2.7 Ethics

The study was approved by the institutional review board (IRB) to ensure ethical standards were maintained. Informed consent was obtained from all participating students and their parents, with assurances of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation. Data were anonymized, and all analyses were conducted on aggregated data to ensure privacy<sup>[31]</sup>.

## 3. Results

The results of assessments of 15 secondary schools with flipped classroom available in two subjects of sciences and mathematics were analyzed in the approach to the investigation of the relationship between social economic status (SES), engagement, and learning outcomes. Hypotheses were tested and research questions answered based on descriptive statistics/correlation and multilevel modeling. The findings give salient information on the relationship mediated by engagement between one hand SES and achievement and on the other hand, the levels of engagement which are mediated by technology access and parental support between people of different SES.

### 3.1 Sample Characteristics

In this study, there were 1,200 students enrolled by 15 secondary schools and the gender ratio was close (48% male, 52% female). The schools were heterogeneous in the terms of SES. To illustrate, in School A (urban district) 70 percent of students were labelled as low-SES and in School B (suburban district) only 30 percent of students had low SES backgrounds. Throughout the sample, about 55 percent of students were lower-SES as established by their eligibility to be served meals free/reduced price (FRL).

In terms of technology access, 90% of students reported having a device (laptop, tablet, or desktop) at home, though access to high-speed internet was less reliable, particularly in lower-SES households. Only 65% of lower-SES students reported having reliable internet access, compared to 92% of higher-SES students. Parental support

was also a significant variable, with 75% of higher-SES students reporting high levels of parental involvement in academic activities (e.g., assisting with homework, attending parent-teacher meetings) versus 50% of lower-SES students<sup>[32]</sup>.

### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for key variables, including achievement scores, engagement, SES, and technology access, are summarized in Table 1. Overall, students in the flipped classrooms achieved relatively high average final exam scores ( $M = 85$ ,  $SD = 10$ ), with higher-SES students outperforming their lower-SES peers on the standardized assessments ( $M = 88$  vs.  $M = 82$ ). Engagement scores ( $M = 4.2$ ,  $SD = 0.8$ ) also varied across SES groups, with higher-SES students showing higher levels of engagement across the three dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional). Lower-SES students had notably lower scores for emotional engagement ( $M = 3.9$  vs.  $M = 4.4$ ) and cognitive engagement ( $M = 4.0$  vs.  $M = 4.3$ ) [27, 33].

### 3.3 Correlation Analysis

Bivariate correlation analyses were conducted to explore the relationships between SES, engagement, technology access, parental support, and achievement. Results indicated that SES was significantly negatively correlated with achievement ( $r = -0.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with lower-SES students achieving lower scores on the final exams. Engagement, on the other hand, was positively correlated with achievement ( $r = 0.65$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that higher engagement levels were associated with better academic performance.

Technology access and parental support were both positively correlated with engagement, particularly with cognitive and emotional engagement. Specifically, technology access showed a moderate correlation with behavioral engagement ( $r = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and cognitive engagement ( $r = 0.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while parental support was strongly correlated with emotional engagement ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and cognitive engagement ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (27, 34).

### 3.4 Multilevel Mediation Analysis

To test the hypothesized mediation model, multilevel modeling (MLM) was employed, with students nested within schools. The model assessed the direct and indirect effects of SES on achievement, with engagement serving as a mediator. The results of the multilevel structural equation model (SEM) are presented in Figure 1.

The analysis revealed that SES had a significant direct effect on achievement ( $\beta = -0.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating

that lower-SES students had lower achievement scores. Engagement was found to be a significant mediator, explaining 40% of the variance in achievement scores. Specifically, engagement accounted for a substantial portion of the negative impact of lower-SES on achievement. The indirect effect of SES on achievement through engagement was significant ( $\beta = -0.20$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that engagement partially mediated the SES-achievement relationship.

Technology access and parental support were both significant predictors of engagement. Technology access had a moderate positive effect on behavioral ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and cognitive engagement ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while parental support was a strong predictor of emotional engagement ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and cognitive engagement ( $\beta = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Notably, the influence of technology access and parental support on engagement was stronger for lower-SES students, as evidenced by significant cross-level interactions. For lower-SES students, the positive effect of technology access on engagement was amplified ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while the effect of parental support on emotional engagement was also more pronounced ( $\beta = 0.50$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )<sup>[35]</sup>.

### 3.5 Interaction Effects: Benefits for Lower-SES Students

One of the main conclusions of the analysis was the variances difference of the instructional features on lower-SES students. In particular, students with low-SES would benefit more through peer-to-peer collaboration and scaffolding by teachers. The mean engagement scores increased significantly ( $M = 4.3$ ) with more collaboration's activities participated by lower-SES students than those admitting to less collaborative activities ( $M = 3.8$ ). Also, students of lower-SES background who got more digital scaffolding (e.g., guided notes, interactive quizzes) felt more cognitively engaged ( $M = 4.4$ ) and were more likely to achieve better ( $M = 84$ ) than their more scaffolded-limited counterparts ( $M = 3.9$  and  $M = 78$ , respectively).

Such results indicate that among the lower-SES students, the peer-to-peer interaction and teacher-facilitated digital assistance attributed to the flipped classroom model can serve as pivotal leverage points that can enhance the engagement level as well as the performance of the students. These differences in effect are evident in figure 2, where it is clear that the higher-SES students did not greatly benefit as compared to the lower-SES students on structured collaboration and the effects of scaffolding.

### 3.6 Robustness Checks

There were robustness checks done to ascertain the

stability of the findings. Even when the SES operationalization was relaxed (Indicators of neighborhood-level socioeconomic indicators were used), the findings did not change, still with engagement mediating the influence between SES and achievement. The primary findings were corroborated by sensitivity analyses, which took the prior achievement into consideration, further boosting the validity of the mediation model<sup>[36]</sup>.

### 3.7 Summary of Results

To a clear extent, the analysis proved that engagement is a significant mediator between SES and achievement in the domain of flipped classrooms. SES had a direct effect on achievement where the lower-SES students demonstrated lower grades in the final exams. Engagement (especially after the lower SES was buffered by access to technology and parental support) also mitigated the negative impact of the lower SES on the learning outcomes. Moreover, it was revealed that peer-to-peer cooperation and instructor-based digital scaffolding were of special value to the low-SES learners, promoting the significance of differentiated instructional practices, which support the variety of student needs.

## 4. Discussion

This study findings offer significant details into the role played by engagement on the moderation of socioeconomic status (SES) and achievement interaction using flipped classrooms. The study is relevant because the targeted group of secondary school students only and their engagement in science and mathematics can be affected by the access to technology and support of parents as well as the instructional strategies. As demonstrated in the findings, engagement is a significant factor determining achievement gap between lower-SES and higher-SES students, and specific instructional strategies proved to be more valuable to the students with disadvantaged background.

### 4.1 Interpretation of Key Findings

According to the study, SES proved a true predictor of achievement and in most occasions, lower-SES students performed lower in the final tests than the higher-SES students. This is consistent with research available on the endemic achievement gaps associated with SES regardless of the venue in conventional classrooms. Nonetheless, the findings also add that engagement is an important mediator of this association. In particular, engagement contributed to 40 percent of the variance in achievement scores indicating that the more students are engaged behaviorally, cognitively, and emotionally, the higher their scores in



academics, irrespective of their SES backgrounds.

Importantly, the study found that engagement was not uniformly distributed across SES groups. Higher-SES students reported higher levels of engagement in all three dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional) compared to their lower-SES peers. This is consistent with prior research that suggests students from more advantaged backgrounds tend to have more resources and support that foster engagement, such as access to technology, parental involvement, and a more stable home environment. Lower-SES students, in contrast, often face barriers such as limited access to technology, less parental support, and less conducive home learning environments, all of which can hinder their ability to engage fully with the flipped classroom model.

The study revealed, however, that engagement was also a powerful mediator of the relationship between SES and achievement in the sense that engaging more even with lower-SES students could counter the adverse effects of impoverished resources and services. This presentation is one of the important conclusions because it indicates that engagement can be a very strong mechanism to improve academic performance in the flipped classroom and, especially, among disadvantaged students<sup>[37]</sup>.

## 4.2 Instructional Implications

The fact that this study targets determining what features of the flipped classroom instruction are relevant to engagement of students across different SES groups can be said as being among the most significant contributions to the field. Based on the findings, a number of instructional tactics, which can avert the detrimental effects of low SES on engagement and accomplishment, are indicated.

## 4.3 Peer Collaboration

It was discovered that lower-SES students were much more advanced with peer-collaborative activities, which is the primary component of the flipped classroom model. Such activities enabled classmates to collaborate with one another, exchange ideas and ideas and resolve challenges in a friendly team. In the case of lower-SES students, social learning and emotional support that came about through peer collaboration would allay some of the difficulties encountered by such students in less resourceful home environments. Lower-SES students followed through with greater engagement and better achievement outcomes when the classroom encouraged peer collaboration. This implies that the inclusion of organized, collaborative learning activities in flipped classrooms may be convenient when working with students who have disad-

vantaged backgrounds<sup>[38]</sup>.

## 4.5 Teacher-Led Digital Scaffolding

Use of digital scaffolding, in the form of guided notes, interactive quizzes, and just-in-time assessments that is facilitated by teachers, was also found to be important toward assisting engagement, especially of lower-SES students. These learners tend to lack in self-regulation and independent learning and scaffolding is a key aspect of the overall success of these learners in flipped classrooms. The implications of the findings indicate that, scaffolding facilitates the process of guiding students through comprehending difficult material by giving them a hand that they require to proceed through the material as they find it easy and interesting. When it comes to lower-SES students, whose families might not provide them with any further academic support, such a form of teacher-led intervention may prove an essential step toward cognitive engagement and achievement growth.

## 4.6 Differentiated Support for Low-SES Students

The other important conclusion of this research is the conditional usefulness of particular characteristics of the flipped classroom to lower-SES learners. In particular, the findings imply that technology provision and parental support have more significant benefits among lower-SES students in terms of engagement; thus, these two issues serve as a powerful predictor of emotional and cognitive engagement. Schools and teachers must be enlightened on the existence of such differences, and they can evaluate the development of specific actions to be employed among students of lower-SES origin. As an illustration, equal access to the technology itself, such as by deploying loaner computers or boosting school internet capacity, might close the digital divide and thereby improve participation. Besides, it can enhance emotional involvement and motivation by increasing parental participation in Perhaps, due to regular communications and materials that can be used to support students at home<sup>[39]</sup>.

## 4.7 Classroom Environment and Resource Allocation

The findings of the study also indicate that it is vital that we ensure the development of the environment in the classroom that will promote the engagement of all learners. Despite the imperativeness of technology and parental support, the flipped classroom model may be the effective means of captivating the students when intended by teachers. A combination of active, collaborative and peer-supported learning opportunities - in addition to a deepening



of cognitive engagement - assists in fostering a sense of community and emotional connection to the material as well. In the case of lower-SES students, a well-organized classroom environment contributing to the provision of such opportunities may balance the detriments caused by the limited access to external resources<sup>[40]</sup>.

#### 4.8 Policy and Leadership Considerations

These findings are also very significant to educational policymakers and school leaders, especially in view of continued adoption of technology in teaching and learning in schools. Technology access, as the study reveals, is a key aspect in encouraging participation, and this is an aspect that ought to be given priority by school districts in order to provide fair access to digital assets. This may mean supplying devices to those students who need them, stable home internet access or creating offline learning content that the students who have low connectivity can use.

There is also the need to put into consideration by schools' policies which foster parental engagement in the learning process of their students and particularly those with lower-SES backgrounds. This may take the form of providing workshops on the role of parent in the academic progress of students at home, or providing constant communication between teachers and parents to share feedback on the progress of each child. It also requires teacher professional development. Not only should teachers be provided with the technical knowledge on how to apply a flipped classroom classroom knowledge in an effective way, but also provided with means to appeal to different learners. This can incorporate training on how to develop inclusive learning environments, work with digital scaffolding tools efficiently, and organize peer-collaborative activities that can encourage active engagement of all the students<sup>[41]</sup>.

#### 4.9 Limitations

Although the findings of this research are quite informative, it has various limitations that ought to be put into consideration. To start with, this study was based on a cross-sectional design that restricts the possibility of making a causal inference. The longitudinal studies would be useful in determining the long-run impacts of implementing flipped classroom on levels of engagement and performance with various SES groups. Second, although the research topic was the effect of engagement, other factors including the quality of the teacher, classroom environment, and student motivation might also affect achievement. Future studies should take these aspects

into account in order to get a more detailed picture of the flipped classroom model efficacy. Lastly, the research has used some self-description measures of engagement, which can be biased. The future study might be enhanced by the inclusion of the observational data or peer rating in order to triangulate the results<sup>[42]</sup>.

#### 4.10 Future Research

This paper raises a number of possible avenues of future investigations. Next, additional research into the particular forms of peer-collaborative activities that tend to work with lower-SES students the best would improve instructional options. A study that tries to understand the effects of the various scaffolding methods on engagement within different subject areas will also be helpful. Lastly, research on the orchestrating impact of flipped learning on the academic life courses of students especially those of less privileged backgrounds would shed more light on the viability of the model of flipped classroom as an inclusive model of learning<sup>[43]</sup>.

Expounding on these results, future studies can further develop a means to make flipped classroom approach work in a way that addresses the needs of all students more specifically those of the lower-SES student body.

### 5. Conclusion

Engagement is found to be a crucial variable in mediating the effect of the socioeconomic status of children and their learning outcomes in flipped classrooms. Our data confirm that although SES has direct influence on achievement it is possible that engagement through direct access to technology and parental involvement combined with specific instructional interventions lies in the power of reducing those differences. Namely, peer collaboration and digital scaffolding by the teacher shows particularly high benefits to students with lower-SES.

The findings reinforce the importance of dynamic teaching methods that will take into consideration the various settings of the students in the flipped learning situation. This translates to educators being quick to develop classroom activities that will actively involve the students, especially the disadvantaged ones, and offer supporting intervention with the aid of technology and well-organized interactions. Also, increasing access equity to digital resources and greater parental support can be highly relevant in supporting lower-SES students with both engagement and academic progress.

School leaders and policymakers should make closing the digital gap and encouraging inclusive learning one of the priorities. Alongside implementing the policies that

will guarantee access to technology, providing professional development in efficient flipped learning practices to teachers, and engaging parents, the schools will achieve a more equal learning experience of all students without worrying about their economic status.

To sum up, the flipped classroom is a promising approach functioning to enhance engagement and develop positive academic outcomes among the students, particularly when it is aligned with the needs of diverse learners. Future studies must also continue to define the long-term academic impact of flipped instruction, especially as it relates to lower-SES students, and also determine that other teaching activities as the one discussed here can intensify engagement in different kinds of learning environments. As we work to fine tune and adjust flipped classroom strategies, we need to eventually work towards having a humane educational system where the socio economics of any students does not affect his/her performance negatively.

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**ARTICLE**

# Educational Value and Campus Dissemination Path of Martial Arts Spirit in Shaping Students' Personality

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**ABSTRACT**

By using literature review and induction methods, this article deeply analyzes the core elements of martial arts spirit, such as "emphasizing martial virtue, respecting teachers, and cultivating both internal and external aspects".Combining with the characteristics of students' physical and mental development and educational needs, it elaborates on the unique educational value of martial arts spirit in cultivating students' moral spirit, willpower, social communication ability, and provides some references on how martial arts spirit can be incorporated into school education and dissemination paths.

**Introduction**

In the context of today's rapidly evolving era, fostering students' holistic development and nurturing their core competencies have emerged as pivotal objectives in education. Personality cultivation, as a central mission of education, is intricately linked to numerous facets, including students' future life trajectories and social adaptability. Martial arts, a vital component of traditional Chinese culture, embody profound cultural essence and distinctive spiritual values. They transcend mere physical exercise, serving as a potent means of education and personal development. The myriad of exemplary qualities inherent in the spirit of martial arts align closely with the comprehensive quality cultivation advocated by contemporary edu-

cation, offering significant educational value in shaping students' characters. Consequently, conducting thorough research on the educational significance and dissemination strategies of the spiritual essence of martial arts in personality development holds immense importance for enriching educational resources, fostering students' mental well-being, and innovating pedagogical approaches.

## 1. Analysis of the Connotation of Martial Arts Spirit

### 1.1 The Spirit of Valuing Martial Arts and Virtue

“Shangwu” can cultivate the spirit of self-improvement and perseverance; ‘Upholding virtue’ can cultivate the

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demeanor of ‘carrying things with great virtue’. Learning martial arts requires moral conduct first. Emphasizing martial ethics is a distinctive feature of martial arts culture”<sup>[1]</sup>. It emphasizes the need for a strong physique and, more importantly, a noble moral pursuit. ‘Shangwu’ does not advocate violence, but rather the pursuit of the spirit of ‘brave martial arts’ - it includes both physical function training and emphasizes the cultivation of perseverance and the courage to strive through martial arts practice. Compared to the physical benefits of strengthening the body, the core value of martial arts education lies more in its unique educational function, cultivating the sound personality and noble character of martial artists. “Since ancient times, there has been a tradition of emphasizing etiquette in martial arts, which starts with etiquette and ends with etiquette. Through martial arts education, people are trained to be courteous, patient, just, tenacious, friendly, and compassionate, thus reflecting its practical significance”<sup>[2]</sup>. Therefore, it advocates that martial artists should not only improve their physical fitness, but also deeply cultivate the spirit of martial arts with integrity, character, and demeanor, temper fearless courage, and dare to take responsibility in times of danger; Adhering to the path of moderation requires both internal and external cultivation in order to inherit the essence of martial arts, promote the spirit of martial arts, and nourish the pure spring of positive personality.

## 1.2 Inheritance culture of respecting teachers and valuing morality

In the thousands of years of inheritance of Chinese martial arts, respecting teachers and valuing morality have always played a crucial role, emphasizing the concepts of “being a teacher for a day, being a father for a lifetime” and “having strong martial arts skills, never forgetting the hard work of teachers”. Respecting teachers and valuing the Way is not only a necessary spiritual quality for martial artists, but also a profound inner cultivation. It is related to individual personality and determines their future patterns and achievements. Furthermore, “those who do not respect their teachers and the Way will not be able to receive true teachings from their teachers. Even with the careful guidance of their teachers, without the moral character and ethics of respecting their teachers and the Way, they cannot understand and comprehend the truth and beauty of martial arts”<sup>[3]</sup>. It reflects respect for teachers and emphasis on knowledge inheritance. In Chinese martial arts, the teacher-student relationship is very important. It is not only the transmission of skills, but also the inheritance of spirit. In martial arts teaching, the master not only imparts skills, but also undertakes the responsibility

of transmitting martial ethics and shaping personality, as the saying goes, ‘A teacher imparts knowledge, imparts knowledge, and dispels doubts. Under the guidance of their teachers, students learn to balance skills and morality through rituals such as apprenticeship and daily rituals, cultivating a sense of awe and gratitude. This is the foundation of education - it not only cultivates a strong body and spirit, but also cultivates a benevolent and virtuous character.

## 1.3 Attitude towards life with both internal and external cultivation

The spirit of “self-improvement” derived from the Book of Changes has always been regarded as a standard in the martial arts world. Martial arts practitioners emulate the strength of the Heavenly Way and view cultivation as an endless process of self-improvement. As the level of practice continues to improve, martial artists will shift their focus from external physical movements to pursuing inner technical insights and the sublimation of life spirit, achieving internal transcendence from the technical level to the spiritual and cultural level. This process gradually reflects the cultivation concept of unity of body and mind, and internal and external coordination. ‘External cultivation’ refers to the physical training that enhances physical fitness and mastery of skills through techniques, routines, and equipment; Internal cultivation “refers to the spiritual level, including the refinement of the mind, the cultivation of consciousness, and the elevation of the realm. This holistic cultivation method breaks the separation between “physical training” and “spiritual cultivation”, helps students realize the unity of physical and spiritual development, and guides them to form a healthy attitude towards life that is not biased, extreme, and pursues comprehensive development.

## 2. The Educational Value of Martial Arts Spirit in Shaping Students’ Personality

The spirit of martial arts, as an important carrier of traditional Chinese culture, has its educational value deeply integrated into the entire process of shaping students’ personalities. It breaks through the limitations of simply imparting skills, not only enhancing students’ physical fitness through practice, but also cultivating students’ moral qualities based on cultural connotations. Through this method, students’ willpower and spirit are exercised, and their communication skills are improved through collaborative practice, forming a unique educational function that combines physical exercise and spiritual shaping, providing key support for students’ sound personality construc-



tion. Its educational value is reflected in the following three aspects.

## 2.1 Cultivate moral qualities and establish correct values

Teenage students are in a critical period of value formation and have strong plasticity and imitation tendencies. Integrating the spirit and culture of martial arts into school teaching can use its profound ethical connotations to subtly guide students in cultivating moral consciousness and correct life values. “In the teaching of martial arts, the uniqueness of its content and methods also presents rich humanistic spirit and value connotations: adhering to etiquette and rules, advocating the consciousness of harmony and unity, reflecting the spirit of unity and cooperation; cultivating morality and benevolence, consolidating the foundation of personality shaping, highlighting the lofty ideal of life; working hard, honing the will to be tenacious, honing the perseverance to be tenacious; balancing courage and righteousness, cultivating the dignity of personality, and sublimating the value of life”<sup>[4]</sup>. This value system provides students with clear value demonstrations and behavioral frameworks through concrete behavioral guidelines.

At the same time, teenagers’ thinking is also easily influenced by the external environment, and their judgment of right and wrong, good and evil, still needs to be actively guided. “The martial ethics of traditional martial arts have a transfer effect on public morality, and the moral education value of martial arts ranges from the basic norms of social morality to national righteousness. Throughout history, martial artists have practiced the value pursuit of “upholding justice, eliminating violence, and protecting the country” through their actions”<sup>[5]</sup>. In specific classroom teaching, students can establish a clear understanding of justice and evil by understanding the historical allusions and martial arts rules, and combining them with real-life illegal cases and campus bullying incidents, under the spiritual influence of “chivalry and righteousness”. This kind of cognition helps them distinguish between the mistake of ignoring bystanders and the correctness of proactive intervention in the face of campus bullying, based on the principle of “supporting the weak and suppressing the strong” in martial arts. This further proves that the inheritance and education of martial arts spirit can effectively cultivate students’ moral qualities.

## 2.2 Refining willpower and inspiring pioneering spirit

“Kung Fu lies in diligence, perseverance, accumulation

over time, and perseverance. Only with such a spirit of Kung Fu can one master solid skills and have sufficient confidence in future martial arts training, learning, and work”<sup>[6]</sup>. In ancient times, martial artists often stood at stakes before dawn, practiced breath in the quiet of the night, and shed sweat with the perseverance of “practicing three nines in winter and three fu in summer”. They honed their fists and feet with the attitude of “not afraid of knowing a thousand moves, but afraid of mastering one move”, practicing the spirit of perseverance and continuous progress in martial arts. Accumulating focus and resilience in time is precisely the most scarce spiritual resource for young people today.

Currently, young students are generally impatient and lack perseverance, making them prone to superficial learning and difficulty persisting. And martial arts training precisely provides an effective solution to this problem in its unique way. In the practice of martial arts, basic skills training is particularly emphasized, including repeated kicking and combination exercises, continuous standing and footwork exercises, often accompanied by boredom and physiological fatigue. This kind of daily repetition may seem monotonous, but it is actually a key process of honing one’s character - it not only tests the physical endurance of the martial artist, but also directly points to their willpower. In addition, in the process of martial arts training, from precise mastery of a single movement to the combination learning of multiple movements in series, ultimately achieving the integrated performance of a complete routine; From swinging the leg inward to attempting the 360 degree whirlwind foot, and even further challenging the difficult movement of the 720 degree whirlwind foot, each stage is a physical and psychological challenge, and students can gain achievement experience and self-efficacy improvement through successful breakthroughs in each stage, gaining the courage to challenge themselves and inspiring the spirit of continuous exploration and progress.

## 2.3 Promote communication and cooperation, develop and enhance capabilities

“Teenagers receiving martial arts education on campus increase opportunities for contact and interaction with ‘real people’, which plays an irreplaceable role in improving their social skills and independent social skills”<sup>[7]</sup>. At the same time, they also crave peer recognition, teamwork, and a sense of collective belonging, which are the core themes and emotional needs in the growth of adolescent students. And martial arts education precisely provides a valuable practical platform for this demand.

For example, in martial arts teaching, there are multi

person projects such as two person training, three person training, and collective training. These projects not only require individuals to master the skills proficiently, but also require collaboration and cooperation with partners. During the practice process of participating in collective projects, students need to carefully observe the actions of their peers, actively listen to their opinions, and actively share their own experiences, constantly establishing mutual understanding and trust, thus effectively promoting the formation of cooperation spirit, communication skills, and collective sense of belonging, laying a solid foundation for their future social adaptability and organizational integration ability.

### 3. The Effective Path of Incorporating Martial Arts Spirit into School Education

“The spirit of martial arts, as an important component of traditional Chinese culture, not only holds significant importance for the progress and development of history, but also has its spiritual connotations in the contemporary value system. The two can be said to have a complementary and mutually beneficial relationship”<sup>[8]</sup>. “At present, the inheritance and development of traditional Chinese martial arts culture is slow, and only a few schools with traditional martial arts characteristics are continuously promoting and competing. Problems such as single projects, insufficient technical support, and inadequate facility construction hinder the inheritance and development of the spirit of martial arts, making people’s concepts gradually blurred and development difficult to sustain.”<sup>[9]</sup> In view of the above difficulties, the key to solving the problem lies in precisely refining the spiritual value essence of martial arts from the perspective of practical education, and effectively integrating it into the teaching objectives, curriculum construction, evaluation system and teacher building of school physical education, so as to achieve the sublimation from skill teaching to cultural education. Propose the clever integration of martial arts education into the general martial arts curriculum, organize activities related to martial arts characteristics, and guide students to participate in ethnic sports activities from body to mind in a vivid and interesting way. In addition, the school should strengthen the introduction of martial arts professional teachers and promote cultural exchanges between martial arts schools and the outside world, in order to address the root causes of problems.

#### 3.1 Integrating Martial Arts Ethics Education into Martial Arts Classrooms

Martial arts education is not only the process of im-

parting physical skills, but also an important way to shape personality and cultivate values. In martial arts classes, teachers should adhere to the teaching philosophy of “putting morality first and combining morality and skills”, organically integrating martial ethics education into various aspects of technical teaching, so that students can not only master martial arts skills, but also subtly accept the influence of traditional culture and moral norms.

In the process of martial arts teaching, in addition to imparting the essentials of movements, more attention should be paid to interpreting the spirit of martial ethics and cultural connotations through vivid and close to students’ cognitive examples. Teachers can adopt various teaching strategies: firstly, through situational creation, integrating martial arts education into practical scenarios, such as emphasizing the martial arts requirement of “point to point” in adversarial exercises, cultivating students’ awareness of respecting opponents and restraining etiquette; Secondly, using case teaching method, narrate the allusions of martial arts masters emphasizing morality and self-cultivation, such as the story of Sun Lutang’s “cultivating morality before teaching art and refusing to be used by the powerful”, so that students can understand the practical embodiment of the spirit of martial arts; Thirdly, cooperative learning activities can also be designed to allow students to experience the collectivist spirit of “working together and helping each other” through two person practice and collective projects. At the same time, teachers should pay attention to their own martial arts cultivation, set an example for students through their words and deeds, and make martial arts education not only limited to verbal teaching, but also become a code of conduct and value pursuit for students.

#### 3.2 Organize martial arts themed activities

Activities are an important form for students to actively experience the spirit of martial arts, and the most common forms include martial arts routine competitions, cultural performances, and cultural lectures. Build diverse display platforms for students. We can organize and choreograph martial arts collective exercises and club performances. Simultaneously conduct a martial arts knowledge competition and popularize the concept of “learning etiquette before learning skills” through fun Q&A. A special traditional etiquette experience area is set up, where students wear practice clothes and perform fist hugging rituals to experience the cultural significance of “standing upright”, achieving a dual improvement of physical exercise and moral cultivation.

This type of activity not only showcases the techniques and aesthetics of martial arts, but also strengthens stu-

dents' sense of participation and belonging through competitions, group performances, cultural immersion, and other activities. Through practical interaction, students can truly understand the spiritual connotations of martial arts such as "valuing martial arts and morality, respecting teachers and valuing morality, and cultivating both internal and external skills", thereby achieving a sublimation from skill learning to cultural identity.

### 3.3 Strengthen the construction of professional martial arts teaching staff

The professional competence of teachers is a key support for the development of schools, and the cultivation of high-quality talents relies on the construction of a high-quality teaching staff. The inheritance of the spirit of martial arts particularly requires guidance from good teachers. Whether it is the theoretical immersion in martial arts classes or the practical guidance of traditional martial arts, teachers need to have both solid knowledge and practical abilities.

In the process of integrating the spirit of martial arts into school education, the understanding and interpretation of the core of martial arts spirit directly affect the degree and effectiveness of the educational function of martial arts. Teachers' professional competence can be improved by establishing a diversified training system.

On the one hand, we will collaborate with inheritors of intangible cultural heritage of martial arts and scholars of martial arts culture to conduct specialized training, allowing teachers to delve into the philosophical ideas and historical stories behind martial arts, and transforming cultural heritage into vivid classroom explanations; On the other hand, training on "integrating martial arts spirit into the classroom" is carried out, which simulates teaching scenarios to guide teachers to organically integrate historical allusions and cultural connotations behind teaching movements and techniques. Only by filling the gaps in teaching staff can we build an educational ecosystem that supports the rooting of the spirit of martial arts, making the campus a fertile cultural ground for cultivating students' sound personalities and promoting the inheritance of the spirit of martial arts from generation to generation.

### 3.4 Promoting Campus Martial Arts Cultural Exchange with Foreign Countries

Incorporating campus martial arts into the external cultural exchange system is not only an important practice of China's excellent traditional culture going global, but also a key path to broaden students' international horizons and deepen their understanding of martial arts spirit. Interac-

tion can be carried out through a combination of online and offline methods. Online live streaming of martial arts routine teaching and themed seminars on martial arts spirit can be organized, allowing students to learn classic routines such as Tai Chi and Changquan together with their overseas peers, and simultaneously explain the cultural connotations behind the "boxing etiquette" and "martial ethics standards"; Offline, regular "Martial Arts Culture Exchange Week" can be held, inviting overseas school martial arts clubs to visit and organize exchange activities such as martial arts exhibitions and cultural sharing sessions. Through face-to-face technical exchanges and cultural dialogues, students can learn to interpret the spirit of martial arts in international language and enhance their cross-cultural expression abilities.

## 4. Conclusion

The spirit of martial arts is rich in connotation and has multiple educational values for shaping students' personalities. It can play an important role in cultivating students' moral qualities, tempering their willpower, promoting the development of social communication skills, and deepening their self-awareness. Integrating the spirit of martial arts into school education is not only beneficial for inheriting and promoting excellent traditional Chinese culture, but also enriches educational resources, innovates educational methods, and promotes the comprehensive development of students. By integrating martial arts education into martial arts classrooms, organizing activities related to martial arts characteristics, strengthening the construction of professional martial arts teaching staff, and promoting cultural exchanges between campus martial arts and foreign countries, the spirit of martial arts can shine in the campus, inheriting excellent traditional Chinese culture and laying a solid foundation for cultivating well-rounded talents.

## Fund Project

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## ARTICLE

# Innovation and Practice of Practical Teaching Model in Surgical Nursing for College Upgrading under the Guidance of Labor Education: A Review

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## ABSTRACT

Labor education is increasingly vital in nursing education, particularly for surgical nursing practice in college upgrading programs, as it fosters practical skills and professional competence. This review examines current challenges in practical teaching, including gaps in hands-on training and student engagement, and explores innovative strategies such as experiential learning and collaborative frameworks. It also evaluates teaching effectiveness and optimization to align with healthcare demands, providing theoretical and practical guidance for reforming surgical nursing education under the labor education framework.

## Introduction

Labor education, as a key element of contemporary education reform, is increasingly vital in higher nursing education, particularly in surgical nursing practice for students transitioning from diploma to bachelor's programs. It aims to cultivate professional qualities and practical skills through experiential learning, addressing the "theory-practice gap" that often undermines clinical adaptability and patient safety in traditional teaching models<sup>[1]</sup>. This approach aligns with healthcare demands by fostering cognitive, skill-based, and value-driven development.

Integrating labor education principles into surgical nursing teaching enhances students' comprehensive competencies through innovative strategies like Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) and simulation-based learning, which bridge theoretical knowledge with clinical tasks, promoting critical thinking and professional responsibility. Digital interventions and collaborative models further support skill acquisition and educational outcomes<sup>[2]</sup>. This review synthesizes evidence to guide nursing reform, emphasizing the cultivation of adaptable, competent practitioners for modern surgical care.

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## 2. Integration and Challenges of Labor Education in Surgical Nursing Practical Teaching

### 2.1 The Connotation and Integration Value of Labor Education

#### 2.1.1 The Connotation of Labor Education and Its Value in Nursing Education

Labor education emphasizes developing professional skills, responsibility, and teamwork through practical activities, aligning with constructivist and experiential learning theories that promote knowledge internalization via active participation. In nursing education, it enriches curricula by enhancing practical skills and ethical awareness, essential for competent practice. Empirical evidence shows labor education improves hands-on abilities, moral development, and professional identity, preparing students for clinical demands. Theoretical frameworks underscore active learning cycles—involving concrete experiences, reflection, and experimentation—ensuring it fosters critical thinking, ethical judgment, and collaboration. Thus, labor education bridges theory and practice, cultivating well-rounded nursing professionals for high-quality care <sup>[3][4]</sup>.

#### 2.1.2 The Convergence of Labor Education and Nursing Professional Competency Development

Labor education's practical orientation complements nursing training by encouraging active engagement in clinical tasks, boosting adaptability and problem-solving skills. This participation cultivates clinical reasoning and decision-making, while reinforcing professional identity and ethical commitment through immersive responsibilities. Experiential learning enables students to internalize professional standards via direct involvement and reflection, aligning with competency-based education principles. By concurrently strengthening practical skills and ethical sensibilities, labor education supports holistic competency development for safe, compassionate nursing practice <sup>[5][6]</sup>.

#### 2.1.3 The Current Status of Labor Education Application in Nursing Teaching Domestically and Internationally

Domestically, nursing education increasingly recognizes labor education's value, with institutions piloting reforms to integrate practical activities and enhance competencies and ethics. However, systematic innovation remains limited, and many programs are exploratory. Internationally, labor education is implemented through clinical internships and community service, focusing on

comprehensive qualities like social responsibility and practical skills. Research abroad emphasizes its efficacy in improving clinical abilities and professional attitudes, bridging academic and healthcare needs. Yet, innovative, structured models that holistically integrate theory and practice are scarce, highlighting the need for evidence-based frameworks to optimize outcomes <sup>[3][4][7]</sup>.

### 2.2 Current Challenges in Practical Teaching

#### 2.2.1 Characteristics and Limitations of Traditional Practical Teaching Models

Traditional practical teaching models in medical-surgical nursing education, particularly in specialized undergraduate programs like top-up degree programs, remain teacher-centered and overly theoretical. Practical components are often limited to observation and simple supervised tasks, restricting active engagement and hands-on experience. This passive approach hinders the development of critical clinical reasoning and problem-solving skills. Inadequate resources, such as underdeveloped simulation labs and weak clinical partnerships, further compromise training quality. The disconnect between theory and practice limits students' readiness for autonomous decision-making in dynamic surgical settings, failing to meet modern educational demands <sup>[8][9][10]</sup>.

#### 2.2.2 Gap Between Students' Practical Abilities and Labor Education Requirements

A significant gap exists between students' practical skills and labor education expectations, which emphasize task completion in authentic or simulated environments. Students often demonstrate poor manual dexterity, clinical adaptability, and responsiveness to unforeseen situations. Current teaching practices prioritize observation over active participation, neglecting the complexities of real nursing labor. Additionally, students lack awareness of labor education's principles, reducing their motivation and proactive engagement. Addressing this misalignment requires immersive, realistic scenarios and strategies to enhance students' recognition of labor education's value <sup>[11][12][13]</sup>.

#### 2.2.3 Challenges in Faculty and Teaching Management

Faculty and management systems struggle to implement labor education effectively due to low awareness and inadequate training among educators. Many lack guidance to integrate labor principles into teaching, limiting mentorship in experiential learning. Management systems also lack tailored evaluation frameworks and incentives,

reducing motivation for innovation. Poor coordination between clinical and academic instructors further disrupts curriculum alignment, leading to inconsistent student guidance. Overcoming these challenges requires faculty development programs, robust evaluation mechanisms, and stronger academic-clinical integration<sup>[8][14][9]</sup>.

## 2.3 Innovative Pathways for Practical Teaching under Labor Education Guidance

### 2.3.1 Constructing a Student-Centered Practical Teaching System

A student-centered practical teaching system under labor education prioritizes active engagement through task-driven and project-oriented methods, stimulating motivation and accountability. Scenario simulations and case teaching bridge theory-practice gaps, fostering clinical reasoning and operational skills. Integration of authentic clinical environments enables hands-on nursing tasks, reinforcing experiential learning and professional values. Evidence supports that such approaches enhance clinical competence and readiness<sup>[15][16][17]</sup>.

### 2.3.2 Integration and Utilization of Diversified Practical Teaching Resources

Diversified resource integration involves establishing multi-tiered practice bases in hospitals and communities, supplemented by virtual simulation platforms for scalable, safe skill development. Strengthening academic-industry partnerships expands internships and collaborative projects, aligning education with workforce needs. Research shows this strategy broadens experiential learning and improves labor-related competency acquisition<sup>[18][19][20]</sup>.

### 2.3.3 Teacher Team Building and Innovation in Teaching Management

Teacher development requires systematic training in labor education philosophies and clinical mentoring skills. Establishing a labor-oriented evaluation system assesses practical abilities and professional attitudes. Collaborative teams integrating academic and clinical instructors ensure consistent, relevant teaching. Such innovations enhance educational outcomes and teaching efficacy<sup>[15][21][22]</sup>.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, integrating labor education into surgical nursing practice teaching provides an innovative framework that addresses theory-practice disconnections and enhances students' professional competencies. This student-centered approach promotes active engagement,

critical thinking, and real-world skills development, overcoming limitations of traditional methods. Effective implementation requires strengthened teaching resources, faculty development, and systemic educational support. Future research should focus on methodologies for deeper integration and long-term impact evaluation. Ultimately, labor education aligns nursing education with healthcare demands, cultivating skilled, adaptable, and responsible professionals.

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4. Qingdao Binhai University Key Teaching Reform Research Project, "Innovative Strategies for Applied Nursing Specialty Experimental Teaching Driven by the Concept of Post-Course-Competition-Certificate" (2024JZ10)"

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## ARTICLE

# A Comparative Study between Chinese and Western Dragon from the Cross-Cultural Communication Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

The dragon is a significant cultural symbol in both Chinese and Western traditions, yet its connotations and societal perceptions differ greatly. In Chinese culture, the dragon represents power, auspiciousness, nobility, and wisdom, serving as a national totem closely associated with imperial authority, prosperity, and good fortune. In contrast, Western culture often portrays the dragon as a symbol of evil, greed, and destruction, frequently depicted as a creature to be defeated by heroes. From an intercultural communication perspective, this study conducts a comparative analysis of the symbolic meanings of dragons in Chinese and Western cultures, examining their representations in language, literature, and art. It also explores the impact of these differences on cross-cultural interactions, especially in translation to enhance mutual understanding across cultural boundaries.

## 1. Introduction

With the increasing frequency of international exchanges, intercultural communication activities among people from different cultural backgrounds are also growing. Intercultural communication refers to “communication between native and non-native speakers, as well as interactions between people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds”(Hu Wenzhong, 1999). It is one of the major challenges faced by contemporary human society, as intercultural communication fosters mutual understanding, collective progress among people of different nations, and contributes to the harmonious development of human society. However, when individuals from different cultural backgrounds communicate, cultural differences often create unexpected obstacles, leading to misunderstandings,

confusion, or even conflicts. Therefore, in intercultural communication, it is crucial to recognize the significance of cultural background knowledge and to prioritize the accurate understanding and dissemination of culture. The following discussion will compare the differences in dragon symbolism between Chinese and Western cultures to illustrate the importance of culture in intercultural communication and translation.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The Definition of Intercultural Communication

Intercultural Communication refers to the process of information exchange, mutual understanding and adapta-

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tion of people from different cultural backgrounds in the process of communication. According to Samovar, Porter and McDaniel(2012), intercultural communication refers to the interaction between members of different cultural groups, which includes the exchange of language, nonverbal behaviors, and cultural values. This type of communication emphasizes the impact of cultural backgrounds on communication styles. Hall(1976) defined intercultural communication as the transmission and understanding of information between people from different cultural backgrounds, influenced by high-context and low-context cultures. And Chinese scholar Hu Wenzhong(1999) defined that intercultural communication refers to interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds, including exchanges in language, ways of thinking, values, customs, and traditions. Jia Yuxin (2009) also put forward that intercultural communication refers to communication activities that take place between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, encompassing both verbal and nonverbal communication. Among these, cultural factors play a decisive role in the success or failure of communication.

## 2.2 The Symbolic Meanings of Dragon in Chinese and Western Cultures

Regarding the symbolic meanings of dragon, both domestic and international studies generally recognize that their cultural imagery differs significantly between China and the West. Wang Jing (2015) pointed out that in Chinese culture, the dragon symbolizes imperial power, auspiciousness, wisdom, and strength, and it is endowed with a sacred status. For example, the phrase “LONG DE CHUAN REN” expresses the national identity of the Chinese people. In contrast, in Western culture, dragon frequently appears in Christian mythology and legends, such as the seven-headed dragon in *The Bible* and the story of *Saint George and the Dragon*, where dragons are depicted as symbols of evil and violence. Kirkpatrick (2007), in his study of British and American literature, noted that dragons in Western literary works are often portrayed as enemies to be vanquished by heroes, such as Smaug in *The Hobbit*. Meanwhile, in ancient Chinese folklore, dragons are typically depicted as auspicious creatures, such as “LONG WANG” in *Journey to the West*.

## 2.3 Linguistic Expressions and Challenges in Translation

In terms of linguistic expressions, there are significant differences between Chinese and Western cultures regarding the word “dragon” and its extended meanings.

In Chinese, the character “LONG” frequently appears in idioms such as “LONG TENG HU YUE” and “WANG ZI CHENG LONG”, both of which carry positive connotations. In contrast, the English word “dragon” is often associated with negative meanings, as seen in phrases like “slay the dragon”, which metaphorically refers to defeating evil. Zhao Hui (2018), in his study on Chinese-English translation, pointed out that due to the differing symbolic meanings of “dragon” in Chinese and Western cultures, translators must pay special attention to its cultural connotations. For instance, in literary translation, directly translating the Chinese phrase “LONG FENG CHENG XIANG” as “dragon and phoenix bring prosperity” may cause misunderstanding among Western readers. Therefore, a domestication strategy is recommended, adapting it to “a harmonious and prosperous union” to better align with the target audience’s cultural understanding.

Furthermore, misunderstandings in intercultural communication are also influenced by the cultural differences. Chen and Starosta (1998) suggested that the misinterpretation of cultural symbols could lead to intercultural conflicts. For example, while Chinese people take pride in being the “LONG DE CHUAN REN”, foreigners may misinterpret this phrase due to the negative connotations associated with the word “dragon” in their culture. Therefore, accurately conveying the cultural connotation of the “dragon” in intercultural communication and international exchanges has become an important issue.

## 3. The Chinese Dragon

The “dragon” holds an important position and influence in Chinese culture. As a cultural phenomenon, it has permeated all aspects of Chinese social life, becoming both an information carrier of Chinese history and culture and a spiritual symbol for the Chinese nation. As a unique spiritual and cultural creation of the Chinese people, the spiritual connotation of the “dragon” has gradually evolved and changed along with the development of social economy, politics, religion, and values.

### 3.1 It Is a Symbol of Power

The dragon is closely related to imperial power in Chinese culture and is a symbol of the emperor. The emperor is referred to as the “incarnation of the dragon” and possesses the “majesty of the dragon”. The emperor’s appearance, behaviour, and everyday items were all associated with the “dragon”, using terms such as dragon robe, dragon carriage, dragon face, dragon body, dragon heart, dragon seat, dragon bed, dragon court, and dragon authority, which all symbolize the emperor’s power and



sacred status. In ancient palaces, dragon patterns and images were widely used to display the supreme authority of the emperor. In feudal society, the dragon gradually became a symbol of authority, representing nobility, dignity, power, and intimidating dominance. The common people were not allowed to offend the “dragon” as doing so could result in severe punishment or even death.

### 3.2 It Is a Symbol of Good Fortune

In Chinese culture, the dragon is often associated with auspiciousness, prosperity, and good fortune. It is regarded as a sacred creature capable of bringing good luck, as seen in the phrase “LONG FENG CHENG XIANG”, which expresses wishes for harmony and good fortune. As a symbol of good luck, the dragon is also prominently featured during festive occasions such as the Lantern Festival and the Spring Festival, when people commonly perform dragon dances and lion dances. This is related to the belief that the dragon has the power to ward off harm and evil. People believe that with the dragon’s protection, they can avoid all disasters and misfortune, ensuring peace and safety.

### 3.3 It Is a Symbol of Nature and the Universe

In Chinese culture, the dragon is closely linked to the forces of nature and the universe. In the era of an agrarian economy, people, constantly suffering from natural disasters, fantasized about transcending their limitations to control and dominate nature, achieving favorable weather and abundant harvests. In their eyes, the dragon was a deity capable of summoning clouds and rain, becoming the embodiment of natural forces like clouds and rain. It is believed to have the power to control water sources and regulate wind and rain, symbolizing the power of nature. Ancient Chinese people believed that the dragon could bring beneficial rain for harvests, promoting agricultural development. Therefore, the dragon was seen as a symbol of heavenly mandate, representing the harmony between the universe and nature.

### 3.4 It Is a Symbol of Wisdom

The dragon represents wisdom, strength, and courage. In traditional culture, the dragon is not only the most powerful creature in nature but also a symbol of extraordinary wisdom. For example, dragons often serve as guardians or helpers of wisdom in Chinese mythology, such as the LONG WANG in *Journey to the West*. Dragons also frequently appear in ancient hero legends, symbolizing immense power and an invincible spirit. There are also some legends, such as the story of the “LI YU TIAO LONG MEN”, which is a metaphor for someone who has

achieved success and fame; “WANG ZI CHENG LONG” (hoping one’s child will become a dragon) is a metaphor for parents wishing for their children to be successful and excellent.

## 4. The Western Dragon

Compared to the Chinese dragon, the Western dragon is often depicted as a negative and threatening creature, typically carrying a sense of menace and negativity.

### 4.1 It Represents Evil and Destruction

In Western culture, dragons are typically viewed as symbols of evil, destruction, and greed. They often represent disaster, terror, and misfortune. In many Western myths, religious stories, and legends, dragons are enemies that heroes must defeat. For example, in the story of *Saint George and the Dragon*, the dragon is seen as the embodiment of evil. Saint George kills the venomous dragon with a spear and saves the young woman who was to be sacrificed.

These depictions of the dragon make it an embodiment of evil and sin, not only in mythology but also in Western literature and culture. It is often portrayed as a fierce and monstrous creature, an enemy of mankind. The battle between the hero and the dragon represents the struggle between good and evil, and taming or slaying the dragon is something heroes do, symbolizing humanity’s conquest of dark forces.

### 4.2 It Represents Greed and Wealth

Western dragons are often depicted as creatures that guard treasures and wealth, reflecting their greedy nature. The treasure guarded by dragons in many stories symbolizes excessive material desire. Their possession and protection of wealth often demonstrate endless greed, and this behavior serves as a warning. The dragons typically inhabit caves or underground lairs, guarding vast amounts of gold and jewels, symbolizing the temptation of desire and material wealth. In many stories, the dragon’s treasure becomes the goal of the hero’s quest, by defeating the dragon or reclaiming the treasure, the hero not only acquires wealth but also symbolizes the triumph over the negative influence of greed. In these stories, the dragon’s greed stands in stark contrast to the selfless spirit of the human hero. The hero typically fights the dragon for a higher moral purpose or to save others, while the dragon hoards wealth for personal gain and selfish desire.

### 4.3 It Represents a Test and Challenge for a Hero

In Western mythology, dragons are often one of the

tests or challenges faced by heroes. Defeating a dragon is typically seen as a symbol of the hero's courage and wisdom. For example, in *Beowulf*, the protagonist Beowulf engages in a battle with a dragon, symbolizing the heroic struggle against evil forces. The cultural significance of dragons in the West is frequently associated with themes of courage, sacrifice, and the battle between humanity and the harsh forces of nature.

Thus, it is evident that in Western culture, dragons are often viewed as violent, malicious monsters that pose a threat to humanity, making them an enemy force that heroes must overcome. As a result, heroes who conquer dragons are revered by common people. Although dragons symbolize powerful evil forces, they ultimately meet their demise, which serves to highlight the hero's brilliance and valor. In this way, the metaphor of the dragon gains an ironic sense of failure—its brutality only serves to accentuate the hero's greatness. The dragon, once a formidable foe, becomes a pitiful creature under the hero's feet, contributing to the warrior's legendary status.

#### 4.4 It Represents Wisdom and Strength

Although dragons in Western culture are often negative figures, there are some Western literary works where dragons are endowed with intelligence and immense power. In some Western myths and stories, dragons are seen as guardians of ancient knowledge or powerful artifacts. For example, in *The Hobbit*, Smaug the dragon guards the treasure of Erebor, which includes not just material wealth but also the historical and cultural significance of the kingdom. The dragon, in this sense, is a keeper of the past and an embodiment of immense power tied to the wisdom of those who created and accumulated wealth. Beyond intelligence, dragons in Western culture also symbolize immense power. Their ability to wield magic, control vast territories, and even manipulate the elements (such as fire or storms) makes them symbols of dominion and influence. In some cultures, the dragon's power is seen as both a blessing and a curse, embodying the duality of wisdom and danger. They represent a force that can be used for good or evil, depending on how it is wielded. In such stories, dragons represent boundless wisdom and power, but they also serve as a warning about the dangers of excessive desire.

### 5. Challenges and Strategies in Translation

#### 5.1 Misunderstandings and Challenges in Translation

In today's world, with countries increasingly engaging in close communication, cross-cultural communication ac-

tivities are becoming more frequent. However, the barriers and conflicts in cross-cultural communication are also becoming more prominent, and one significant factor is language misunderstanding. As Zhang Meifang (2001) stated, "Translation is not merely the conversion of linguistic symbols, but a form of communication of ideas and culture". Currently, in cross-cultural exchanges between China and the West, the West remains the dominant side, holding a greater advantage in terms of discourse power, strongly spreading its culture through various means. As China's economy grows and its international status rises, it has gradually realized the need to enhance the influence of Chinese culture in the world.

Due to the different cultural connotations of the dragon in Chinese and Western cultures, there are many misunderstandings and challenges during the translation process. The following will explain the difficulties encountered in the translation process by examining the differences between the two cultures. First one is the cultural differences. In Western culture, dragons are typically portrayed as evil creatures, representing destruction and threat. In Chinese culture, however, dragons symbolize good fortune, power, and auspiciousness. Therefore, when translating, it is important to note that the simple term "dragon" cannot fully convey the symbolic meaning of the Chinese dragon, which could lead to misunderstandings by Western readers. Second one is the linguistic differences. The Chinese word "LONG" is not limited to referring to a creature but is more often a cultural symbol, representing the spirit, symbolism, and abstract concepts associated with dragons. On the other hand, the English word "dragon" usually refers to a specific mythical creature. In translation, additional explanations may be needed to help the target readers understand the multi-layered cultural significance. Third one is the differences in myths and legends. There are also differences in the myths and legends surrounding dragons in both cultures. Western dragons are often associated with battles against heroes or the destruction of villages, while Chinese dragons are typically connected with emperors, divine mandates, and natural forces. Translating these mythological contexts accurately, without misleading readers, is a major challenge. The next one is the symbolic translation. In some contexts, the Chinese "LONG" does not merely refer to a mythical creature; it can also represent spiritual qualities or authority. For example, "LONG DE CHUAN REN" (the descendants of the dragon) is a cultural symbol in China. When translating this phrase into English, additional explanation may be required to convey its deeper meaning. The last one is the challenges in intercultural communication. When the "dragon" appears in specific cultural works or religious

contexts in translation, the challenge becomes how to respect the original text while helping readers from another culture understand the underlying cultural and symbolic meanings. This is a common difficulty in translation.

In conclusion, when translating “dragon,” it is essential not only to focus on the literal meaning but also to have a deep understanding of the cultural context, mythology, and symbolic significance.

## 5.2 The Response Strategies

### 5.2.1 Domestication and Foreignization Combined

Domestication refers to the target language culture-oriented strategy. The translator will adapt and rewrite the original text to a certain extent in order to bring it closer to the linguistic style of the target culture. However, foreignization refers to the source language culture-oriented strategy. It should preserve the features of the source language. If the translation is aimed at Western readers, a balanced approach of domestication and foreignization can be applied. This ensures that the cultural essence is preserved while making it more accessible to Western readers. For example, “Chinese dragon” or “Loong” conveys cultural differences while also sparking interest in the target culture. At the same time, key cultural elements can be kept through foreignization, allowing readers to experience the original cultural flavor.

### 5.2.2 Free Translation and Culture Adaptation

Considering cultural differences, the strategy of free translation is adopted, which focuses on conveying the meaning of the original text rather than a literal translation. For example, the word “dragon” is easily understood in Western culture, but to highlight its symbolic meaning in Chinese culture, additional explanations can be added or terms like “Chinese dragon” or “Loong” can be used to emphasize its cultural connotations.

### 5.2.3 Addition (Explanation)

Addition is a translation strategy that involves adding explanations or annotations to help the target language readers better understand words or concepts in the source language that are difficult to translate directly or carry cultural background. When dealing with specific terms or idioms, the strategy of addition is employed. For example, when translating “LONG DE CHUAN REN” (descendants of the dragon), an annotation or explanation can be added to inform the readers that this expression refers to the Chinese people who consider themselves descendants of the

dragon, carrying a symbolic meaning. Another example is “HONG BAO”, when translating it, an annotation should be added to inform the reader that the red envelopes, or “Hongbao,” are traditional gifts of money given during Chinese New Year and other celebrations, symbolizing good luck and the wish for prosperity in the coming year.

### 5.2.4 Functional Equivalence

“Functional Equivalence Theory” is a translation strategy proposed by Eugene Nida. This theory emphasizes that translation should not only stay faithful to the vocabulary and syntactic structures of the source language, but also focus on conveying the functional impact of the original text within the target culture, ensuring that the target language readers have the same understanding and reaction as the source language readers. For instance, in Western culture, there might not be an exact equivalent for the concept of “dragon,” so alternative symbols or images like “serpent” or “mystical creature” can be used, focusing on conveying the cultural intent.

## 6. Conclusion

Through a comprehensive comparison of Chinese and Western dragon cultures, the following conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, there are fundamental differences in how dragons are perceived in Chinese and Western cultures. In Chinese culture, the dragon is a symbol of auspiciousness, wisdom and power, representing natural forces and imperial authority. In contrast, in Western culture, dragons are often associated with evil, destruction, and threat. Secondly, in cross-cultural communication, accurately translating and conveying the cultural meaning of the “dragon” symbol, especially in the context of Chinese and Western cultural exchanges, is a significant challenge. The dragon, depending on cultural background, may lead to misunderstandings. Therefore, in literary works, films, or commercial communication, translators need to employ appropriate strategies. They should not only convey the literal meaning but also think about cultural context, to ensure that readers from the target culture can fully understand and appreciate the symbolic meaning of the dragon. Thirdly, this study demonstrates that understanding and respecting cultural differences is key to promoting cultural exchange. A deeper understanding of the differences in the symbol of the dragon, as well as the use of effective translation strategies, can provide valuable insights and references for fostering mutual understanding between Chinese and Western cultures, thereby promoting global cultural communication and cooperation.

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**ARTICLE**

# Pedagogical Strategies for Fostering Engagement in Dance Education: A Systematic Review

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**ABSTRACT**

This systematic review synthesizes existing evidence on pedagogical strategies that foster engagement in dance education. We used PRISMA 2020 to search Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar in search of peer-reviewed articles (2010-2025); 57 articles met the criteria. Thematic synthesis was used so that pedagogical approach, engagement dimension, theoretical grounding, and outcomes were coded. Five categories were identified, namely learner-centered/constructivist approaches; collaborative and social learning, technology-enhanced instruction, emotionally and culturally responsive teaching, and formative assessment and feedback. In all levels (K12, higher education, community) and genres, engagement seemed to apply along three dimensions, behavioral, emotional and cognitive and be systematically related to autonomy, reflective practice, and relational trust. In situations where technology was used to supplement, as opposed to substituting, embodied learning, technology was mainly used to facilitate feedback, visibility and access. Culturally sustaining and inclusive curricula reinforced a sense of belonging and persistence and dialogic and process-oriented assessment fostered self-regulation and further enlightenment. Despite being restricted by heterogeneity of measures, convergent evidence shows that engagement is developed best when it is designed holistically and integratively to concern technical rigor and creative freedom. The review provides implications to teacher preparation and curriculum designing, as well as request longitudinal, cross-cultural, and mixed methods studies on standardized measures of engagement-specific to the dance.

**1. Introduction**

A special place of dance education in art, embodiment, and pedagogy assembly is particular. Dance, unlike most other fields, combines both cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of learning, and it provides students with an immersive channel of personal and creative expression. In this multidimensional learning space, student interaction is generally recognized as a key factor in

education achievement<sup>[1]</sup>. The engagement will not only lead to the acquisition of skills and development of artistry but also drive the learners to be more motivated and persistent and to ensure wellbeing. Nonetheless, even its centrality, the concept of engagement in dance education has been multifaceted and poorly theorized, in the studies with various definitions and assessments. Such conceptual incoherence, combined with inconsistent empirical data, highlights the necessity of the systematic synthesis of

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pedagogical measures that are effective to encourage engagement in a situation of learning dance <sup>[2, 3]</sup>

## 1.1 Background

Engagement in the wider pedagogical context has been defined to be a multidimensional construct that involves behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects. Behavioral engagement is the active involvement and effort, emotional engagement is the interest and affection and cognitive engagement is the investment in the learning and self-control. In dance education, these dimensions are especially embodied: movement decisions, expressiveness, and the ability to work together demonstrate that students engage on the levels more than usual metrics of verbal or written ones can be provided. Therefore, engagement to dance needs to be encouraged using pedagogical approaches that can take into account the embodied, experiential and affective learning in movement <sup>[4]</sup>.

There has been an upsurge in pedagogical research in the performing arts that has focused more on how instruction once was teacher centred to be more learner centred or participatory. In dance, the result of this change can be seen in the strategies used to make students co-creators of meaning, encourage reflective movement exploration, and appreciate a broad range of bodily experiences. It can be illustrated using an example of approaches that are based on constructivist theory to motivate learners to develop an understanding based on exploration, improvisation, and collaboration with their peers instead of reproduction of choreography. Equally, via socio-cultural and critical pedagogical frameworks, the dance classroom is also a place of dialogue, inclusiveness, and identity making. These models imply that dance education not only involves doing and/or being involved, but also the results of purposeful pedagogical projects balancing structure and creative freedom <sup>[5]</sup>.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Although there is a growing interest in pedagogical innovation in the context of dance education, available studies about engagement are rather fragmented. Research tends to work at another level of detached elements of the teaching process like motivation, creativity or classroom climate without communicating these results to a coherent system of engagement. In addition to this, a lot of research is often contextual where it could only be applied to a particular education level (e.g. tertiary dance programs), or dance genre (e.g. contemporary dance), which makes it harder to generalize the knowledge across the discipline. The empirically supported designs are still commonly missing in many of these studies, as they are based on either qualitative reports or practitioner commentaries,

which make them lack a coherent body of supply of evidence about the most effective pedagogical strategies to improve engagement <sup>[6]</sup>.

Also, new pedagogical trends including application of digital technologies, interdisciplinary collaboration and community-based dance have also diversified the instructional practices. Although the innovations present the region of opportunity when it comes to engagement, they also present novel issues with respect to accessibility and inclusivity as well as how to balance artistic integrity and pedagogical efficiency. Therefore, the existing research environment can be characterized by a strong requirement of a systematic review that is aimed at consolidating information concerning various educational environments, theoretical knowledge, and instruction strategies <sup>[7]</sup>.

## 1.3 Conceptual Perspectives on Engagement in Dance

The engagement in dance education concept can be theoretically explained in various ways. Constructivist and experience learning theories emphasize the fact that learners should actively create meaning using embodied experience. The importance of autonomy, competence and relatedness in maintaining motivation and engagement is highlighted in Self-Determination Theory, which is especially applicable in the settings of dance where the individual agency and group dynamics are present. In addition, the experience of embodied cognition frameworks indicates that learning that involves movement can involve perceptual and affective aspects in a manner that promotes more profound cognitive functioning. Combined, these views suggest that an excellent pedagogy of dance must encourage the engagement of the physical, emotional, and intellectual in parallel <sup>[8-10]</sup>.

Simultaneously, the cultural and inclusive pedagogies focus on the idea that dancing is a socially situated activity. The identities of learners, previous experiences, and cultural associations affect their perceptions and investments in the dance practices. Diversity-affirming, reflective dialogical, and individual need-adaptive pedagogical strategies have been found to promote emotional and social engagement. Thus, the way of engagement in dance should be thoroughly considered combining psychological, embodied, and sociocultural aspects of education.

## 1.4 Rationale for a Systematic Review

Although many empirical and theoretical studies have been conducted that deal with areas of pedagogy and involvement in dance, no one has conducted a systematic review to bring this body of knowledge to one place in the recent times. Systematic reviews play an important role

of converging evidence and trends in methodology and knowledge gaps, which can enhance theory and practice. Systematic syntheses clarifying efficient teaching methods and evaluation models have already been made in domain of music and theatre education, but in dance education it has not been very popular <sup>[11]</sup>.

The aim of the proposed systematic review is to fill such a gap and explore ways in which pedagogical strategies have been created, applied, and assessed concerning the development of engagement in the area of dance education. It is going to examine evidence of various levels of education (school, higher, and community based), settings (formal, informal, and community-based), and mediums (in-person, blended, and digital). In such a manner, the research is expected to offer a systematic body of evidence-based pedagogical concepts capable of informing teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers as well as create more interesting learning contexts in the field of dance learning <sup>[12]</sup>.

### 1.5 Objectives and Research Questions

The main goal of such systematic review is finding, classifying, and critically analysing pedagogical practices that foster involvement in the study of the art of dancing. Particularly, the review aims at:

- Determine the repertoire of pedagogical approaches that can be applied to engage in dance learning.
- Assess the responses of these strategies on all levels of engagement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive).
- Test their efficacy in learning institutions and among learners.
- Integrate new trends and theoretical foundations to support future pedagogical creativity <sup>[13]</sup>.

To this end, the given review is informed by the following research questions:

Which pedagogical approaches have been empirically demonstrated to increase participants in dance education?

What are the mechanisms of the strategies in different education and cultural environments?

What is the theory behind the pedagogical models employed to strengthen engagement?

What are the gaps and future directions of current research?

### 1.6 Structure of the Paper

In the following sections of this paper, the methodological design (Section 2) will be provided, such as search strategy, inclusion criteria and analytical framework. The results of the synthesis are described in section 3, according to which the identified strategies are categorized as major pedagogical themes. Part 4 deliberates about the

implications of the findings with reference to the contemporary dance pedagogy and part 5 finally concludes by giving recommendations on how the study and practice can be improved.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design

The proposed research was based on the systematic review design, which was implemented in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items to Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework. The purpose of the review was to determine, assess, and synthesize empirical literature on the topic of pedagogical practices that promote student engagement in dance education. It was done to ascertain gaps in disjointed studies by providing transparency, replicability and the rigor of the methodologies. The protocol contained the clear requirements in the selection of the study, data extraction, quality assessment, and thematic synthesis <sup>[14, 15]</sup>.

### 2.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy

The overall literature search was performed in several academic databases, further identifiable as Scopus, Web of science, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), PsycINFO, and Google scholar, and includes literature published since January 2010 and October 2025. This was the period to be selected to reflect modern pedagogical processes and technological advancements in the field of dance education <sup>[16]</sup>.

Combined controlled and free-text search strings were user of three major areas that included, dance education, engagement and pedagogy. The essence of the Boolean arrangement was as follows: (“dance education”/or/ dance pedagogy/or/choreography/or/dance teaching) (engagement/student engagement/motivation/participation) (pedagogical strategy/teaching technique/learner centered/ collaborative learning/ technology enhanced/assessment/ feedback) <sup>[17]</sup>.

Others were the search filters to include peer-reviewed journal articles in the English language. To determine whether the selected articles and the relevant reviews contain other eligible studies, hand-search was also made to the reference lists.

### 2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the relevance and quality of evidence, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established a priori:

#### Inclusion Criteria

**Focus:** Research that deals with educational or teaching practices in dance education specifically with a men-

tion of student involvement (behavioral, emotional, or cognitive).

**Context Context:** Formal education (K12, college education).

**Methodology:** Qualitative, quantitative studies (or mixed-methods studies) that are empirical.

**Publication Type:** Journals that are peer-reviewed and published 2010-2025<sup>[18]</sup>.

#### Exclusion Criteria

- Research on other performing arts (music, theatre) that did not involve the results about dancing.
- Non-empirical articles like opinion articles, commentaries, or teaching instructions.
- Theses, dissertations or unpublished manuscripts.
- Clinical or therapeutic dance is the study of dance without the purpose of education or pedagogy<sup>[19]</sup>.

## 2.4 Data Extraction and Coding

Eligible studies were subject to primary screening and subsequently coded systematically with the help of a structured data extraction form. All of the articles were checked in order to extract the following information:

- Bibliographic information.
- Design of the research and research participants (sample size, age group, context).
- Pedagogical approach studied (e.g. learner centered, collaborative, technology enhanced).
- Dimension of engagement targeting (behavioral, emotional, cognitive).
- Quantitative instruments (measurement), qualitative indicators (measurement).
- Major conclusions and presented results.
- Theoretical structure of the design of the pedagogy<sup>[20]</sup>.

The data was arranged in matrices to establish cross-study comparison. To ensure uniformity, two independent reviewers were used to extract and cross-read information which was resolved by discussions.

## 2.5 Quality Assessment

To evaluate methodological rigor, the review applied established critical appraisal tools suited to each study type:

**CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme)** checklists for qualitative studies.

**Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT)** for mixed-methods designs.

**Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI)** checklist for quantitative research.

These studies were graded as high, moderate or low on the basis of the clarity of objectives, methodological transparency, instrument validity and relevance by the research questions. Descriptive use of quality scores as opposed to exclusion criteria was implemented to ensure comprehensiveness (although evidence strengths were considered). **Table 1** demonstrates that the systematic review procedure included the process of screening 1,432 records, 57 articles were included into the systematic review after the basic-text analysis and rejections, and presented in **Figure 1** in accordance with PRISMA 2020 recommendations<sup>[21, 22]</sup>.

## 2.6 Data Analysis and Synthesis

Because of the different levels of research design and multiple measures of engagement, a thematic approach of synthesis was used. The studies were analyzed inductively by reading them repeatedly and coding them to define any common pattern of pedagogy. Then, the codes were grouped into a larger theme based on a specific category of strategies:

**Learner-Centered Approaches** – constructivist, reflective, and inquiry-based methods.

**Collaborative and Social Learning Strategies** - peer work, ensemble practice, and community participation.

**Technology-Enhanced Pedagogy** - digital feedback, online/blended instruction, motion analysis.

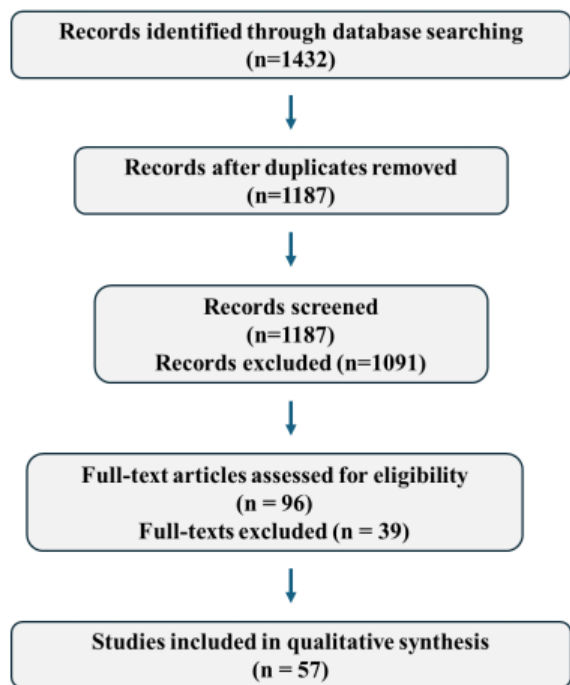
**Emotionally and Culturally Responsive Teaching** - inclusive, identity-affirming, and empathetic pedagogies.

**Assessment and Feedback Practices** - formative assessment, reflective journals, dialogic evaluation.

**Table 1.** PRISMA Flow Summary of Study Selection (This table summarizes the flow of information through the review process according to PRISMA 2020 standards)

Stage	Records Identified	Records After Duplicates Removed	Records Screened	Full-Text Articles Assessed	Studies Included	Reasons for Exclusion
Scopus	482	460	460	62	27	No focus on engagement
Web of Science	375	352	352	47	15	Non-empirical articles
ERIC	285	260	260	33	8	Limited to other performing arts
PsycINFO	190	180	180	20	4	No pedagogical intervention
Google Scholar	100	95	95	15	3	Duplicates/unpublished work
<b>Total</b>	<b>1432</b>	<b>1187</b>	<b>1187</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>57</b>	–





**Figure 1.** PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram

The themes were analyzed in terms of their pedagogic rationale behind, the mode of implementation, and the engagement results reported. The comparison of patterns was done between the levels of education (school, university, community) and geographic conditions to show the contextual differences <sup>[23]</sup>.

In cases where quantitative data were adequate (e.g. 3 or more similar studies by using corporate engagement scales), descriptive summaries were performed in the form of effect sizes or directional patterns. Nevertheless, meta-analysis was not undertaken because of inconsistency in study designs and measures.

## 2.7 Ethical Considerations

Since this was research that was synthesizing the published literature, it did not entail direct involvement of human subjects and thus no formal ethical approval was required. However, ethical integrity ensued by proper reporting of findings, reviewing of original sources, and reporting practices and inclusion techniques.

## 2.8 Limitations of the Methodology

There are a few identified methodological shortcomings. To begin with, including only English-language publications might have caused bias in language, and therefore might have been blocking out non-English suitable research. Second, the problem of heterogeneity in definitions and levels of engagement hampered the possibility

of comparing engagements on a quantitative level. Third, in making the attempt to encompass a diverse array of educational settings and dance genres, the representation of the studies was uneven, with more Western high-education settings being represented. In the interpretation of findings, these limitations are taken into account <sup>[24]</sup>.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Overview of Selected Studies

The systematic search provided 1,432 records, and 57 studies were found to fit the inclusion criteria following the screening process and quality assessment (see PRISMA flow diagram, Figure 1). The cases were conducted in 22 countries, which covered different cultural and education settings. The greatest percentage was as a result of the United States (28%), United Kingdom (18%), Australia (14%), Canada (9%) and some contributions made in Asia, Africa, and Europe. The educational settings were higher education (44%), schooling (K–12) (37%), and community or dance programs (19%). Qualitative (49%), quantitative (28%), and mixed-method (23%) research designs were used. Dance forms included ballet and contemporary dance, hip-hop, traditional, folk and cross-cultural dance, and were therefore at a wider range as far as pedagogy was concerned. In terms of methodological rigor, 68 percent of the studies were evaluated as high quality studies, 24 percent as moderate and 8 percent as low quality mostly because of small sample size or inadequate reporting of analytical procedures.

Taken together, the studies were able to identify a variety of pedagogical strategies which could be grouped into five general themes and strategies which are distinct yet interconnected when it comes to encouraging engagement in studying dance. A more detailed description of the nature of the studies can be found in Table 2, which shows the variety of research situations, designs and pedagogical approaches that were investigated in the synthesis <sup>[25, 26]</sup>.

### 3.2 Thematic Categorization of Pedagogical Strategies

#### 3.2.1 Learner-Centered and Constructivist Approaches

One of the prevalent themes (satellited in 21 studies) highlighted student-centered pedagogy, which was based on constructivist and experience principles of learning. These methods put students in a role of being active constructors of knowledge by integrating embodied inquiry through exploration and reflection, as well as creative inquiry.

**Table 2.** Characteristics of Included Studies (Table summarizes representative characteristics of included studies (N = 57 total in full dataset))

Author (Year)	Country	Education Level	Dance Genre	Research Design	Sample Size	Engagement Dimension	Main Pedagogical Focus
McCarthy & Rudd (2021)	USA	Higher Education	Contemporary	Qualitative	24	Cognitive, Emotional	Reflective self-assessment and improvisation
Lee & Martinez (2022)	South Korea	K–12	Traditional Korean	Mixed Methods	60	Behavioral, Emotional	Culturally responsive teaching
Green & Yeo (2019)	UK	Higher Education	Ballet	Quantitative (Pre-post)	45	Cognitive	Formative feedback and self-regulation
Oliveira & Santos (2020)	Brazil	Community Dance	Hip-Hop	Mixed Methods	35	Behavioral, Social	Peer collaboration and ensemble learning
Chen et al. (2022)	China	Higher Education	Modern Dance	Qualitative	28	Cognitive, Behavioral	Technology-enhanced reflection (video feedback)

Common strategies included:

- Activities based on improvisation where students are encouraged to find his or her movement solutions.
- Movement journals or reflective diaries or connected embodied experience even to conceptual knowledge.
- Independent projects in choreography projects, which allow the learners to select themes and movement vocabularies.

The practices facilitated the enhancement of cogni-

tive and emotional interest, which encouraged greater investment and intrinsic motivation. Researchers have determined that students demonstrated more confidence, creative risk taking, and critical awareness when discovery, as opposed to imitation, was used to instruct them. Investigatively, McCarthy and Rudd (2021) presented that reflective self-assessment during choreography classes showed a significant future in enhancing a sense of ownership and engagement with the learning outcomes among the students <sup>[27, 28]</sup>.

**Table 3.** Thematic Summary of Pedagogical Strategies and Engagement Outcomes (Strategies are categorized by theoretical underpinnings and engagement outcomes based on synthesis of 57 studies.)

Pedagogical Strategy	Theoretical Basis	Typical Practices	Engagement Dimensions Targeted	Reported Outcomes	Example Studies
Learner-Centered / Constructivist	Constructivism; Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984)	Improvisation, self-choreography, reflection journals	Cognitive, Emotional	Increased autonomy, self-efficacy, and motivation	McCarthy & Rudd (2021); Gomez (2018)
Collaborative / Social Learning	Sociocultural Learning (Vygotsky, 1978)	Peer teaching, ensemble projects, community engagement	Behavioral, Emotional	Improved participation, empathy, and belonging	Oliveira & Santos (2020); Kim (2021)
Technology-Enhanced	Connectivism (Siemens, 2005)	Online collaboration, video feedback, digital portfolios	Behavioral, Cognitive	Enhanced reflection and flexible learning	Chen et al. (2022); Taylor (2020)
Emotionally & Culturally Responsive	Humanistic and Critical Pedagogy (Rogers, 1969; Ladson-Billings, 1995)	Inclusion of diverse dance forms, emotional reflection, trauma-informed teaching	Emotional, Social	Increased confidence, identity affirmation, and persistence	Lee & Martinez (2022); Okafor (2021)
Assessment & Feedback	Formative Assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998)	Peer assessment, process portfolios, dialogic feedback	Cognitive, Emotional	Improved reflection, self-regulation, and creative performance	Green & Yeo (2019); Brown (2020)

### 3.2.2 Collaborative and Social Learning Strategies

The importance of social and collaborative learning in fostering engagement was noted in nineteen studies. The strategies were founded on the Vygotskian or sociocultural ideas of learning and involved the use of group dynamics to promote the collective meaning-making and social unification.

The representative methods were:

- My collaborative creativity is promoted by group-based dancing and group rehearsal.
- Peer feedback, which takes either rubric or dialogue format.
- Community dance projects, where the students work together to make performances with the local com-

munity.

Results showed the presence of increased engagement in the process of behaviour (via active participation) and emotion (via empathy, social belonging, and mutual trust). Various qualitative researches were narrating how collaborative practices decreased performance anxiety and enhanced conducive learning environment <sup>[29]</sup>.

Oliveira and Santos (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study that uncovered that peer-evaluation led to higher participation rates (by 25%) and the improvement of the social connectedness feeling in students. These results emphasize the fact that collaborative learning does not only lead to the development of the technical skills but also relational and affective aspects of involvement, the focus of dance education <sup>[30]</sup>.

### 3.2.3 Technology-Enhanced Pedagogical Strategies

Digital technology integration was a more recent but fast developing group, manifested in 11 studies. Such strategies involved video analysis, web-based academic systems, digital feedback systems, and virtual 3-D choreography to reach students in the non-studio environment. **Table 3** presents the summary of effectiveness of different engagement outcomes through pedagogical strategies.

Technological interventions had several pedagogic purposes:

- Self-evaluation and the repeated improvement were made possible through video feedback systems.
- Reflective discussion and peer critique were supported with the help of online collaborative platforms (e.g., Padlet, Google Classroom).
- Blended learning schemes were used to integrate face-to-face pursuits in dance with video tasks that were not interactive and lacked interactive sessions.

The quantitative data indicated that technology enhanced methods were better to enhance behavioral engagement (measured through attendance and task completion) and cognitive engagement (measured through metacognitive awareness and reflective depth) education. But other works also mentioned issues of disordered access to equipment and the possibility of a lack of kin-aesthetic interaction. Regardless of these restrictions, it was concluded that technology enables inclusiveness and introduces new feedback, self-observation, and creative experimentation opportunities especially in the situation of remote or hybrid teaching that takes place after the COVID-19 pandemic <sup>[31]</sup>.

### 3.2.4 Emotionally and Culturally Responsive Teaching

The importance of emotionally responsive, inclusive,

and culturally maintaining pedagogies as an activity that fosters engagement was highlighted in fifteen studies. They were based on humanistic and critical theories of pedagogy, as they focus on empathy, affirming identity, and cultural relevance.

Core practices included:

- Integrating the different dance styles that portray the background of students.
- Promoting the use of emotions in the performance analysis and reflection.
- Developing psychologically safe learning environments based on trauma-informed and inclusive efforts.

These plans helped create a high level of emotional and social interest and engagement since students felt acknowledged, loved, and empowered. Lee and Martinez (2022) discovered that greater margins of marginalized students as indicated by retention and attendance were facilitated through culturally responsive curricula in comparative research. On the same note, qualitative stories displayed that emotional bondage between educator and student was a determining determinant in maintaining motivation and engagement in the long run. Essentially, emotional, cultural responsiveness made dance classrooms inclusive places of belonging, thus contributing to affective investment in learning <sup>[32, 33]</sup>.

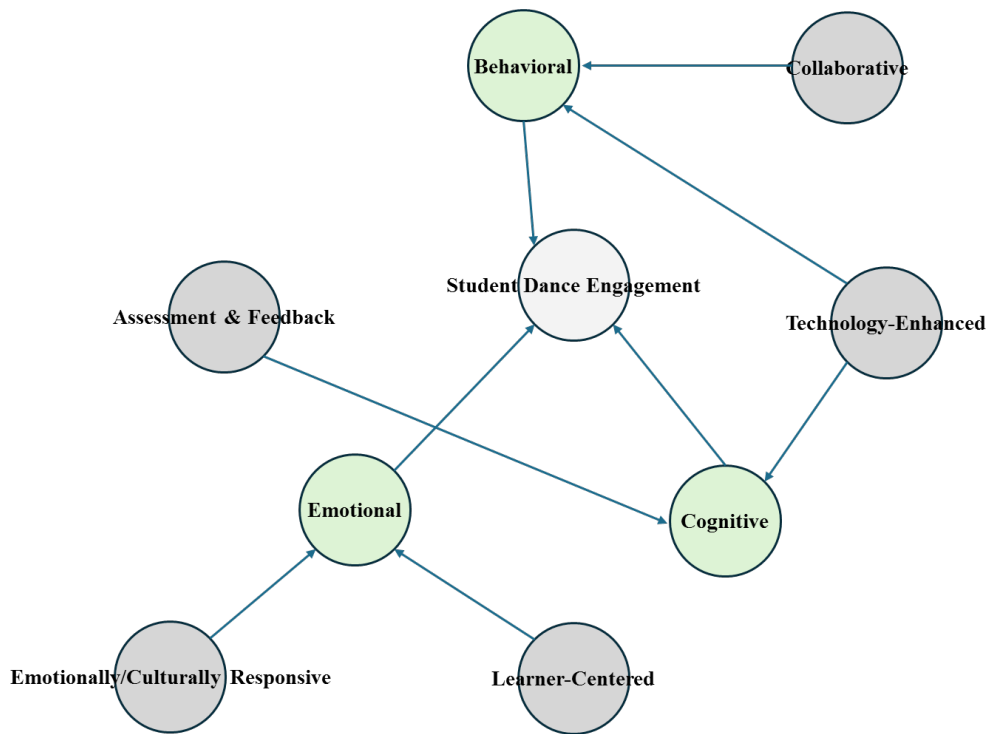
### 3.2.5 Assessment and Feedback Practices

The last theme, which was examined in 12 studies, was related to novel assessment and feedback processes that were aimed at promoting reflection and interaction. The old evaluation tools based on technical performance were deemed to be inadequate to measure holistic learning. In reaction to this, teachers introduced more formative, participatory and reflective system which included:

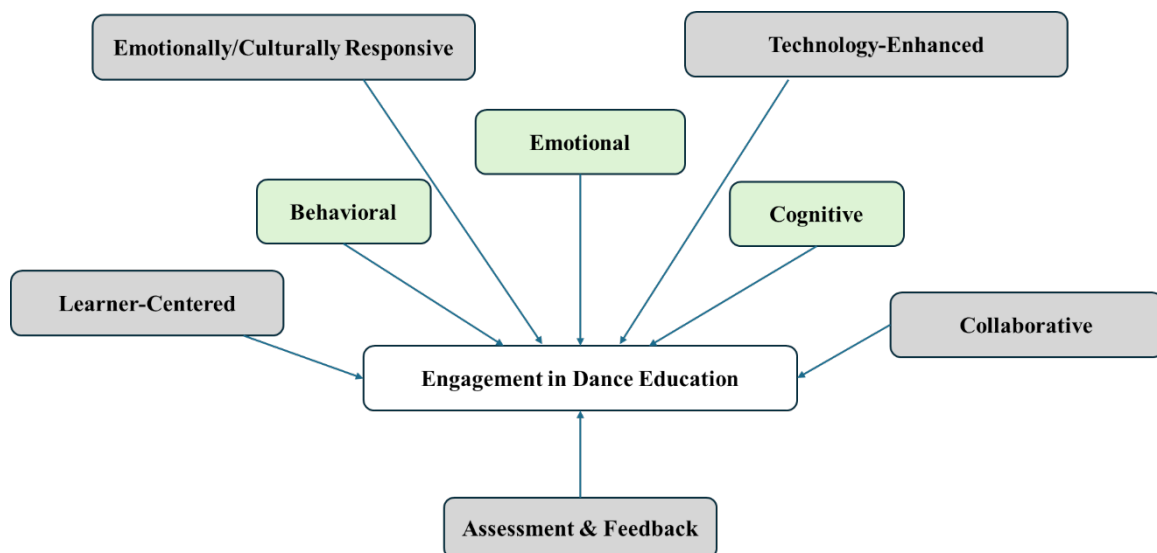
Self and peer evaluation using process and creativity descriptive rubrics. Reflective portfolios consisting of written, visual and movement-based evidence of learning. Two-way discussions about progress and goals with students through dialogue feedback models. Research proved the effect of formative feedback on strengthening cognitive and emotional involvement, defining expectations, supporting self-efficacy, and promoting self-regulated learning. As an example, Green and Yeo (2019) established that students who acquired iterative feedback were more determined to continue with complex tasks of choreography and exhibit a stronger conceptual mastery <sup>[34, 35]</sup>.

Comprehensively, assessment practices in which emphasis is given to process over product were more consistent with engagement-oriented pedagogical philosophies, which Favor creativity, independence, and contemplation

of practice. **Figure 2** visualizing the links between pedagogical strategies and dimensions of engagement.



**Figure 2.** Thematic Network of Pedagogical Strategies



**Figure 3.** Conceptual Model of Pedagogical Engagement

### 3.3 Engagement Outcomes

Dancing education is dynamism that involves the interaction of pedagogical approaches and dimensions of engagement, as depicted in **Figure 3**. In each of the five pedagogical themes, the outcomes of engagement were grouped in three major dimensions behavioral, emotional, and cognitive, which frequently interact in practice. **Table**

**4** indicates the distribution of the outcomes of engagement in various educational settings and the relative weight of engagement in the educational settings in dance training are indicated in **Figure 4** <sup>[36, 37]</sup>.

Emotional and behavioral engagement had the best evidence of support especially in collaborative and learner centered models. Cognitive involvement, which is less commonly assessed was found to be strong in reflective

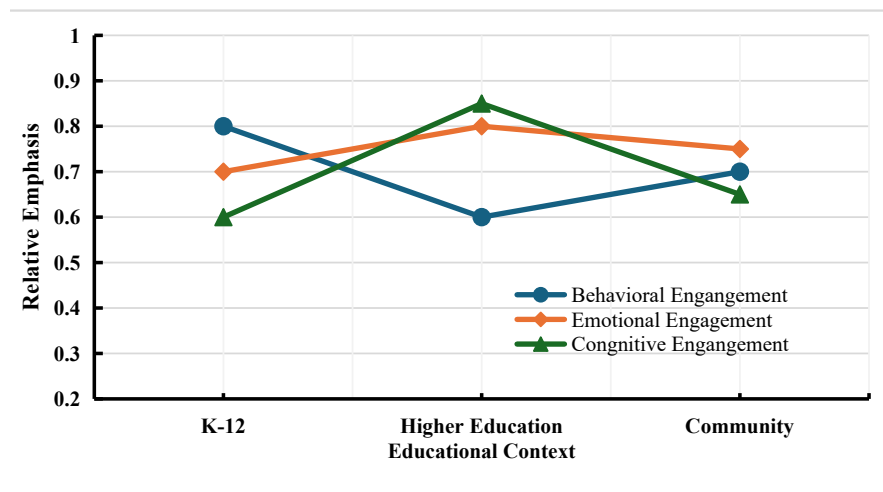


and feedback pedagogies. In quantitative studies, moderate positive relationships ( $r = 0.40-0.65$ ) were found between measures of engagement and learning outcomes of creativity, persistence and quality of performance. The

qualitative results were consistent in supporting the idea that engagement was also a multidimensional and dynamic construct affected by pedagogical design, as well as the relational climate of the learning environment.

**Table 4.** Synthesis of Engagement Outcomes Across Contexts (Engagement outcomes reflect patterns consistently reported across educational levels and dance genres.)

Engagement Dimension	Key Indicators	Most Effective Pedagogical Strategies	Typical Educational Contexts	Representative Outcomes
Behavioral	Attendance, participation, effort	Collaborative and Technology-Based Learning	K–12, Community Programs	Higher task completion rates and rehearsal participation
Emotional	Interest, enjoyment, sense of belonging	Culturally Responsive and Learner-Centered Approaches	All contexts	Increased motivation, empathy, and self-confidence
Cognitive	Reflection, self-regulation, critical thinking	Feedback-Driven and Reflective Learning	Higher Education	Improved conceptual understanding, creative problem-solving, and autonomy



**Figure 4.** Dimensions Across Educational Levels

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Overview

The aim of the systematic review was to pool the existing evidence regarding the methods of pedagogy that promote engagement in dance education. In 57 studies with different contexts and genres, the results showed that learner-centered, cooperative, technology-enhanced, emotionally responsive, and feedback-oriented pedagogies are helpful in terms of student engagement. The collaboration of these strategies works in a synergistic manner as opposed to an independent manner implying that the participations in an experience of learning in dance arises as a result of dynamic interaction between cognitive, emotional, and social processes. The findings support the assumption of engagement as a multidimensional construct as well as point out that its development involves pedagogical intentionality and relational sensitivity<sup>[18, 38]</sup>.

### 4.2 Interpretation of Key Findings

#### 4.2.1 Learner Centered Pedagogy and Constructivist Learning

The strength of learner centered and constructivist approach indicates a paradigmatic change in dance education to include student agency and reflection in an educational setting as opposed to master-apprentice traditions. These results are consistent with constructivist theory of learning in Piaget (1970) and Vygotsky (1978), according to which learners construct knowledge in an active experience, reflection, conceptualization and experimentation<sup>[39]</sup>.

Such activities in dance cases as improvisation, journaling and self-directed choreography have been shown to enrich cognitive and emotional interest, providing the learner with a chance to internalize ideas about movements by engaging in personal discovery. Such autonomy fulfils the psychological self-determination needs which is a motivation known to drive long lasting motivation. This

leads to the fact that engagement is promoted when students have a sense of learning as self-relevant and meaningful instead of being forced into it <sup>[40]</sup>.

The implication on the part of educators is that student agency needs to be engineered, rather than supposed that it needs to be given carefully structured opportunities of reflection, choice, and creative ownership as a part of pedagogical design.

#### 4.2.2 Collaborative and Social Dimensions of Engagement

Teamwork styles proved to be an effective forecast of behavioral and emotional participation. In line with the sociocultural theory, learning occurs within the context of social interaction wherein the meaning is created together. Peer collaboration in dance education in the form of ensemble rehearsal, peer review, or peer community projects provides space of dialogue and joint problem-solving and empathy. These conditions create a sense of belonging, which, according to the psychological research, affects the tenacity and intrinsic motivation (Goodenow, 1993). The collaborative effort in movement not only enhances skilfulness in movements but also interpersonal trust and communication.

Nevertheless, the literature provides other warnings that group-based work is a topic that should be facilitated carefully in order to promote equity and inclusion. Power positions in hierarchically organized groups can suppress those less confident without teacher mediation of communication. Hence, successful collaborative pedagogy requires careful organization of a participation, between freedom and guidance and feedback <sup>[41]</sup>.

#### 4.2.3 Technology as a Tool for Expanding Engagement

Technology constructivist pedagogies showed a great promise in the diversification of engagement specifically in online or blended courses. Such strategies are indicative of connectivist theory of learning in which networked creation of knowledge is underlined. Self-regulated learning and perpetual feedback was facilitated by video analysis, online collaboration and virtual dance platforms. The empirical results showed an improvement in depth of reflection and motivation particularly when technology was employed to support embodied learning and not to substitute it. In one case, video reflection enabled learners to see the progress they made, and in one case, we used online forums to enable students to discuss among themselves asynchronously. However, various studies also cautioned about the risks of digital mediation where results could be

disembodied due to the loss of feelings and experience of dance through the digital process. The problem that faces teachers is, it is necessary to incorporate technology deliberately because it should not break embodiment, community, and accessibility, as they are <sup>[42-44]</sup>.

Therefore, the role played by technology in the education process of dance must be augmentative as opposed to being substitutive a strategy of enhancing engagement through visibility, interactivity, and reflection.

#### 4.2.4 Emotionally and Culturally Responsive Teaching

One of the strongest predictors of engagement in any setting was emotionally responsive pedagogy. Such a discovery is consistent with humanistic educational theories and culturally relevant pedagogy as both theories note the importance of empathy, authenticity, and validation of the experiences of learners.

The learners were able to show more confidence, sense of belonging, and readiness to take creative risk when teachers recognized students' identities, sentiments and cultural backgrounds. Inclusion and emotional safety were so important especially among the marginalized groups because it proved that engagement is impossible in the absence of relational trust and psychological safety. Moreover, the integration of culturally diverse dances increased the student's appreciation of the global movement vocabularies and offset the ethnocentric bias tendency that is usually present in design of curriculums. These practices affirm the argument that, engagement is emotional and ethical because it is based on respect of difference and understanding of embodied identity as an authentic learning space <sup>[45, 46]</sup>.

Therefore, a solid dance pedagogy should be culturally resourcing such that the classroom is transformed into a communion, compassionate and transformative space.

#### 4.2.5 Assessment and Feedback as Drivers of Reflective Engagement

New methods of assessment, in particular, formative and dialogic feedback, were discussed as important to maintain cognitive engagement. Students cited improved self-efficacy and reflective awareness when learning had been perceived as growth rather than performance during its assessment processes <sup>[47]</sup>. This helps to follow the framework of formative assessment that focuses on feedback as a continuous discussion that helps to tell learners what to do further. Reflective journeys, portfolios and peer critiques in dance education reposition the evaluative emphasis on the outside to self-regulating and metacognizing

self. When such practices are developed not only can they help in terms of technical performance, but also create more emotional resilience as students learn to receive criticism as an inquiry into a common problem instead of a threat. The fact that assessment has been redefined as mentoring rather than a process of measuring is central to engagement-based pedagogy<sup>[48]</sup>.

### 4.3 Theoretical Implications

The results of this review could add theoretical insights into the topic of engagement by placing it in the lived and emotional aspects of a learning process. The conceptualizations of engagement in the traditional models emphasize engagement mostly in terms of behaviour or cognition in dance; whereas, in dance, engagement is manifested through a body in the form of expression and relation<sup>[45]</sup>. Using an educational engagement paradigm integrating embodied cognition theory and movement-based participation, this paper demonstrates how sensorimotor and affective aspects of involvement which enhance comprehension are activated by movement. Emotional attachment, bodily presence and cultural identity are not marginal to the participation in the dances, but core of the participation in dancing. Also, synthesis implies that the encounter should be modelled into relational ecology as a developing system determined by the interaction of pedagogy, environment, and learner agency. Such a shift of focus invites the new theoretical frameworks which explain the embodied interaction, affective resonance and social co-creation as some of the vital elements of the educational interaction<sup>[49]</sup>.

### 4.4 Practical Implications for Dance Educators

Pedagogically speaking, the findings indicate several principles that may be divided into actionable principles:

1. Design autonomy Incorporating choice, improvisation and reflection in coursework to encourage intrinsic motivation.
2. Facilitate community: Be part of a community through group projects and discussion by a group of classmates aimed at collaborating.
3. Embark on the prudent application of technology Enlist the use of digital means to enhance feedback and self-reflection without laying off bodily modalities.
4. Develop safety of emotions: Build inclusive classrooms in which vulnerability and empathy are built as well as cultural diversity.
5. Reframe assessment: It is based on principles of encouraging deep learning by giving formative feedback, reflecting, and process-based evaluation.

Dance teacher training programs must specifically prepare dance teachers to walk the fine line between technical and socio-emotional faculty. Many curriculum developers have been encouraged to make engagement a design principle and make sure that the pedagogy facilitates the holistic development of learning intellectually, emotionally, physically, and culturally. Dance teacher training programs must specifically prepare dance teachers to walk the fine line between technical and socio-emotional faculty. Many curriculum developers have been encouraged to make engagement a design principle and make sure that the pedagogy facilitates the holistic development of learning intellectually, emotionally, physically, and culturally<sup>[50, 51]</sup>.

### 4.5 Limitations

Although it provides an integrated synthesis, a number of limitations have to be noted in this review. To start with, there might be language and publication bias whereby other studies published in non-English scenarios might not have been included. Second, the difference in the definitions and measurement of engagement restricted the aggregation of the quantitative city-wide picture; in the next time, standardized tools or clearly defined frameworks should be chosen. Third, most of the studies including tackled small samples or short-term interventions limited their generalizability. Lastly, the review was descriptive as opposed to meta-analytic because of heterogeneity in methods<sup>[52, 53]</sup>.

In spite of these limitations, the uniformity of the patterns in various situations gives credence to the main finding, that dance education should be encouraged through holistic, inclusive, and reflective pedagogical activities.

### 4.6 Directions for Future Research

Some of the priorities that the future research should seek include:

- Longitudinal and experiment excellent studies to understand causal remarks between pedagogy and sustained engagement.
- Cross-cultural comparisons of the translation of engagement strategies within dance genres and culture.
- Embodied and neurocognitive studies that define the interaction of physical movement with motivation, attention and learning.
- Professional development models on pedagogical flexibility and emotional intelligence- Place-based investigations of teachers.
- Engagement frameworks unique to dance empirical supporting psychometric and qualitative knowledge<sup>[49]</sup>.

The areas mentioned above can allow future scholar-

ship to approach an integrated, empirically based model of engagement in situating dance teaching that spans the realms of theory, research, and practice.

#### 4.7 Synthesis and Concluding Insights

On the whole, the given review indicates that dance education is a complex construct, which can be cultivated with the help of pedagogical care, creativity, and inclusion. Strategies that are successful combine embodied learning, reflective dialogue, and relational trust in order to develop the environments in which students not merely do the movement but can find some sense in it. Dance education is therefore a grand map of incipient learning a learning in which cognition, emotion and culture merge in an expressive possibility of the human body. Since then, the field has become a vanguard of rethinking engagement as an embodied and relational process that is cultural situated, is necessary to the holistic learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century [18, 54, 55].

### 5. Conclusion

This is a systematic review of the modern studies on the pedagogical techniques of facilitating engagement in dance instruction that included 57 empirical theses on various cultural and educational settings. The results all support the idea that student involvement in the dance is a multidimensional construct and, as a holistic construct, involves behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components. Participation in this area can never be relegated to physical activity or performance results but can be instead an outcome of pedagogical conditions which are characterized by creativity, reflection, collaboration and inclusivity.

Five connected pedagogical themes were found to be central to the encouragement of engagement:

(1) Autonomy and reflective inquiry, (2) Community, belonging, and shared meaning-making through collaborative and social means of learning, (3) Greater opportunities in feedback, opportunity, and accessibility (Technology-enhanced pedagogies), (4) Identity, empathy, and inclusivity initially in form of emotional approach, (5) Sustained motivation and self-regulation (Innovative assessment and feedback practices). Combined, these approaches demonstrate that the involvement in the education of dance can be best fostered by pedagogical systems that are structured and free at the same time, incorporating both the strictness of the technical training and the need to develop in the form of creative and emotional engagements. The role of the teacher thus goes beyond teaching to facilitation expressed in steering direction of the learners towards embodied knowledge, reflecting awareness,

and expressing authenticity.

Hypothetically, the review will build upon existing engagement models by highlighting its embodied/focused as well as affective aspect and centering the views of constructivism (as a model), sociocultural theory, self-determination theory, and humanistic education (viewpoint). It is demonstrated that pedagogical engagement in dance is not just a cognitive process but also a relational and corporeal process of learning with the body, with others, and to have meaningful self-expression. In a practical sense, the review indicates why dance educators have to embrace inclusive, learner-centred and process-centred pedagogies, which would enable students as knowledge co-producers. Professional development to help teachers in reflective facilitating, cultural competency and mindful technology integration should take precedence within the institutions and design curriculums. These measures will be critical to sustaining the student motivation, creativity, and health in ever more diverse and hybrid learning processes.

Although this synthesis has some limitations (linguistic bias, methodological heterogeneity, uneven global representation, etc.), it nevertheless offers a strong basis in the future research. To continue, scholars are advised to conduct longitudinal, cross-cultural and mixed-method researches to study how engagement changes over the time, genres and other cultural frameworks. Empirical accuracy would further be increased by designing standardized measures of engagement based on dance scenarios. In the end, this review arrives at the conclusion that any encouragement in the teaching of dance is a pedagogical and moral exercise. It requires being mindful of the entire learner using his/her body, mind, feelings and culture and a philosophy of teaching based on respect, curiosity and empathy. When the principles are adopted in dance education, it is no longer a confined studio or classroom, but a space of transformation where movement becomes the means of connection, identity and a lifelong learning experience.

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## ARTICLE

# Innovative Research on Dual-Track Education Model of "Theory + Practice" for Graduate Students in Architectural Heritage Conservation

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### ABSTRACT

The discipline of architectural heritage conservation is characterized by its significant interdisciplinary and practical nature. Traditional graduate education models, which overemphasize theoretical instruction while neglecting practical skill development, often leave graduates ill-equipped for conservation and restoration projects. The dual-track education model advances both theoretical learning and hands-on training in parallel. Through curriculum restructuring, collaborative education platforms, comprehensive field training, and evaluation system reforms, this approach bridges the gap between classroom knowledge and real-world conservation scenarios. This model not only enhances students' systematic understanding of conservation principles, technical standards, and historical-cultural contexts, but also cultivates practical competencies in site investigation, damage diagnosis, plan formulation, and project management. Ultimately, it produces versatile professionals to advance the field of architectural heritage conservation.

**Introduction:** Architectural heritage such as ancient buildings, historic districts, and industrial heritage sites embody the collective memory and cultural DNA of cities. Conservation efforts require interdisciplinary expertise spanning history, architecture, materials science, and structural engineering. As the future workforce in conservation, graduate students' competence directly determines project quality. However, current education models exhibit critical flaws: classroom-learned conservation principles often prove inadequate in complex field conditions, while students master theories but lack practical skills in developing conservation plans or applying traditional craftsmanship. This disconnect between theory and practice stems from monolithic educational approaches that fail to cultivate truly independent conservation professionals.

The dual-track education model addresses this challenge by integrating theoretical courses with hands-on projects, enabling students to learn, reflect, and grow through authentic conservation scenarios.

## I. The theoretical basis of the dual-track education model for postgraduate students in architectural heritage conservation

(1) The comprehensive and practical nature of architectural heritage conservation discipline

The preservation of architectural heritage transcends mere technical challenges. Restoring Ming-Qing dynasty structures requires multidimensional analysis: historical evolution, construction techniques, structural systems, decorative arts, and functional purposes. Assessing tim-

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ber frame deterioration demands material science expertise, analyzing roof deformation requires structural mechanics knowledge, developing restoration plans for painted decorations necessitates art historical literacy, and preparing restoration budgets demands mastery of cost estimation methods. This interdisciplinary nature dictates that education must go beyond specialized knowledge transmission<sup>[1]</sup>. Practicality manifests more directly—protection plans can only be validated through construction implementation, traditional craftsmanship must be passed down through master-apprentice mentorship, and accurate diagnosis of structural issues relies on accumulated field experience. Education divorced from practical application produces students who are merely "armchair theorists".

(2) The application logic of constructivist learning theory in the dual-track model

Knowledge is not passively transmitted by teachers but actively constructed by learners—a theory that provides the cognitive foundation for the dual-track model. When students encounter real-world challenges in conservation projects, their curiosity is sparked. For instance, discovering cracks in ancient building walls without determining whether they result from foundation settlement or structural instability becomes a clear learning objective. During team discussions, students must apply existing knowledge to propose diagnostic solutions while addressing peer critiques. This intellectual exchange drives cognitive restructuring and deepening. Crucially, after completing projects, students integrate acquired theories, mastered methods, and practical experiences into a personal knowledge system. This constructive process proves far more durable than passive classroom learning. The dual-track model precisely creates authentic scenarios, social interactions, and reflective opportunities essential for such construction.

(3) The hierarchical and integrated requirements of ability cultivation in postgraduate stage

Graduate education differs from undergraduate-level knowledge transmission in its core mission to cultivate independent problem identification, analysis, and resolution capabilities. The challenges in architectural heritage conservation often exhibit unique complexity—each heritage site possesses distinct historical contexts, construction techniques, and preservation conditions, making standardized conservation solutions inapplicable. Students must develop interdisciplinary knowledge integration skills to adapt preservation strategies flexibly according to specific circumstances. This competency development requires progressive progression from knowledge acquisition and skill training to critical thinking cultivation, necessitating the synergistic integration of theoretical literacy and

practical experience. The dual-track model achieves comprehensive capability enhancement through theoretical courses that solidify foundational knowledge and hands-on projects that refine application skills, creating an interactive synergy between these two developmental tracks<sup>[2]</sup>.

## II. Realistic difficulties in the postgraduate education mode of architectural heritage protection

(1) The significant disconnect between theoretical course teaching and the needs of protection practice

Most institutions still adhere to traditional curriculum structures, where courses like architectural history, conservation theory, and restoration techniques operate in isolation. These programs emphasize theoretical explanations over practical case studies. Students learn international conservation standards like the Venice Charter and Nara Authenticity Document, yet struggle to apply these principles to real-world projects. They master traditional mortise-and-tenon joints in wooden frameworks but lack knowledge of reinforcement methods for decayed components. While familiar with brick masonry deterioration types, they can't assess crack severity. A clear disconnect exists between classroom content and actual conservation needs. More critically, theoretical courses often stop at knowledge delivery, lacking in-depth analysis of conservation philosophies and authentic exposure to practical challenges. This leaves students unable to fully grasp the complexity of conservation work.

(2) Barriers to the connection between campus educational resources and frontline protection sites

Universities possess educational resources such as library materials, laboratory equipment, and academic archives, while cultural heritage conservation institutions, design institutes, and restoration enterprises hold practical resources including project opportunities, engineering experience, and technical expertise. However, there is a lack of effective coordination mechanisms between these entities. Students seeking to participate in authentic conservation projects often lack access to channels, while conservation organizations require research support but struggle to establish partnerships with universities. Even when some institutions sign agreements with cultural heritage institutions, these collaborations often remain superficial—students conduct cursory site visits without engaging deeply in the entire project process. The loose, short-term, and casual nature of university-industry collaborations makes it difficult to transform practical resources into stable educational platforms. Similar issues exist in faculty teams: university professors have solid theoretical foundations but lack engineering experience,



while industry experts possess rich practical experience but are unfamiliar with teaching principles. Both parties operate independently rather than collaborating in talent development<sup>[3]</sup>.

(3) Insufficient system and depth of cultivating students' practical ability

While some institutions incorporate internship components into their curricula, these are typically concentrated in the final weeks of coursework. The internships often involve supplementary tasks like site visits and survey documentation, leaving students with limited exposure to core conservation processes such as developing protection plans, managing construction operations, and ensuring project quality control. This fragmented, superficial training fails to build systematic competencies. Students may survey dozens of historic buildings but never experience the full lifecycle of a conservation project—from proposal to completion. They might observe restoration sites multiple times without ever independently diagnosing structural issues or proposing solutions. Such shallow engagement keeps practical experience at the surface level, failing to develop independent working abilities. Moreover, the lack of systematic reflection and theoretical synthesis means students wrap up projects without critical thinking to elevate their insights into actionable knowledge.

(4) The existing education evaluation system lacks the measurement of practical ability

The evaluation criteria for graduate education quality primarily focus on academic achievements such as course grades, theses, and published papers, while practical skills assessment often remains absent or becomes superficial. Students merely need to submit internship reports to earn credits, making it difficult to objectively evaluate whether the content reflects research summaries, project participation depth, or quality standards. This evaluation bias leads students to prioritize thesis writing over practical training. Supervisors tend to focus on research progress rather than skill development, even believing that engineering project involvement might delay thesis progress. Such flawed evaluation mechanisms make the dual-track system ineffective—even when established—since students lack intrinsic motivation for practical engagement, reducing hands-on training to an optional supplementary component.

### III. Construction path of dual-track education model for postgraduate students in architectural heritage protection

(1) Curriculum system reconstruction integrating theoretical courses and practical projects deeply

Breaking the closed structure of traditional curricula,

this approach integrates real-world conservation projects as continuous teaching vehicles throughout the program. Conservation theory courses evolve from abstract principle lectures to case-based discussions—students analyze the value composition of a historical building requiring restoration, assess its conservation priority, and establish intervention principles. Through contextual analysis, they grasp core concepts like minimal intervention, authenticity, and reversibility. The conservation techniques course directly addresses engineering needs, with instructors guiding students to conduct on-site investigations, material testing, and plan formulation. Classroom lectures alternate with fieldwork, where theoretical knowledge informs practical implementation while real-world challenges deepen understanding<sup>[4]</sup>.

This transformation is not merely relocating classrooms to physical sites, but a comprehensive overhaul of teaching content, methodologies, and learning environments. In traditional timber framing courses, when explaining mortise-and-tenon joints and component specifications, students participate in the complete restoration process of ancient buildings—from dismantling, numbering, and inspecting to repairing, reassembling, and final installation. Each phase requires documenting component dimensions, damage conditions, and treatment methods, which students then compile into technical archives for cross-referencing with textbook content. Brick masonry courses transcend mere diagrammatic explanations of construction techniques. Students observe material variations and evolving masonry methods across historical periods at restoration sites, physically assessing brick weathering through tactile inspection and detecting internal hollowing with small hammers. These hands-on experiences leave a far more profound impression than textbook descriptions. Assessment methods have also evolved, shifting from single-end-of-term exams to project-based reports requiring students to submit field observation records, cause analysis of structural defects, proposed solutions, and reflections on theoretical application—transforming practical experience into theoretical thinking.

(2) Building a collaborative education platform between universities, cultural heritage protection units and enterprises

To establish a stable university-local-enterprise collaboration mechanism, cultural heritage protection departments provide conservation project resources, design institutes and restoration enterprises offer technical guidance and construction platforms, while universities deliver academic support and talent development programs. The three parties jointly form project teams, with university mentors providing theoretical guidance and academic



oversight, industry experts serving as practical mentors responsible for technical guidance and engineering management, and students deeply participating in the entire project process as team members. This collaboration is not a loose partnership but forms a community of shared interests—project outcomes can serve as thesis topics for students, provide technological innovation solutions for the industry, address practical issues for cultural heritage protection departments, and achieve win-win outcomes for all parties involved.

The development of collaborative education bases requires a comprehensive operational framework. A project database management system should be established, where cultural heritage authorities annually input proposed conservation projects into the system, specifying elements such as project type, technical complexity, duration, and student capacity. Universities will then match these projects with students based on their training plans and skill levels. Special funds should be allocated to cover students' on-site expenses including transportation, accommodation, and insurance, ensuring financial accessibility for participation. Safety management protocols must define students' operational boundaries, authorization levels, and protective requirements at construction sites, with designated personnel overseeing safety supervision. A regular tripartite consultation mechanism should be implemented, where all three parties hold joint meetings each semester to update on project progress, share training experiences, and resolve coordination issues, thereby maintaining long-term stable partnerships. Several exemplary projects should be developed into model teaching bases, equipped with essential facilities like testing equipment, document rooms, and workspaces, creating replicable collaborative education models <sup>[5]</sup>.

(3) The design of a practical training system that runs through the whole process of training and progresses step by step

Practical training is not a concentrated semester-long internship, but rather an integrated part of the entire educational process from enrollment. In the early years, students undertake foundational tasks like surveying ancient buildings, conducting damage assessments, and collecting documentation to develop observational and hands-on skills. During middle years, they participate in comprehensive projects such as conservation planning, restoration design, and construction supervision to cultivate problem-solving abilities. In advanced years, they take on independent responsibilities including leading small-scale conservation projects and serving as technical supervisors, thereby developing coordination and decision-making capabilities. The training content progresses from simple to

complex, from supportive to leading roles, and from imitation to innovation, forming a spiral progression in skill development. A practical training portfolio is established to document project types, assigned tasks, achievements, and areas for improvement. Mentors provide personalized guidance based on these records, ensuring targeted and continuous practical training.

(4) Reform of evaluation mechanism based on dual standards of theoretical literacy and practical ability

Reform the graduate education quality evaluation system by establishing practical competencies as equally crucial assessment criteria alongside theoretical knowledge. Develop a comprehensive evaluation framework covering field investigation, defect diagnosis, proposal formulation, technological innovation, project management, and teamwork, with each competency defined by specific evaluation standards and grading levels. Thesis topics may originate from real-world conservation projects, with research content focusing on engineering solutions to technical challenges. Evaluation criteria should extend beyond academic rigor and theoretical depth to include practical value and application potential. Implement a multi-stakeholder assessment system involving university supervisors, industry mentors, project clients, and peer experts to holistically evaluate students' capabilities. Reform credit recognition policies by converting participation in practical projects and their quality into corresponding credits, ensuring hands-on training remains an integral part of the education system rather than being marginalized.

## epilogue

The development of architectural heritage conservation urgently requires interdisciplinary professionals with both solid theoretical foundations and rich practical experience, a demand that graduate education must address. The dual-track education model, through the parallel advancement and deep integration of theory and practice, breaks through the limitations of traditional education models, providing students with opportunities to learn and grow in authentic conservation scenarios. The effective implementation of this model necessitates systematic reforms across curriculum systems, training platforms, practice systems, and evaluation mechanisms. More importantly, it demands a fundamental shift in educational philosophy—transitioning from knowledge transmission to competency cultivation, from classroom teaching to practice-oriented education, and from single-dimensional assessment to diversified evaluation. Only by establishing an educational model that truly integrates theory and practice can we cultivate professionals capable of shouldering the heavy responsibility of architectural heritage conservation.

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**ARTICLE**

# Beyond Redistribution: Rethinking Educational Equity for Racially Minoritised Learners through Deficit Thinking, Affirmative Action, and Inclusion

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**ABSTRACT**

Persistent racial inequities in education reveal the limits of redistributive approaches that focus narrowly on access and resources. This paper argues that genuine educational equity requires a plural conception of justice encompassing material, cultural, and political transformation. Drawing on Fraser's (1995) model of redistribution, recognition, and representation, it re-examines three interconnected frameworks—deficit thinking, affirmative action, and inclusion—as distinct but complementary responses to racial inequality. Deficit thinking exposes misrecognition within dominant cultural hierarchies; affirmative action addresses redistributive injustice through structural redress; and inclusion seeks representational reform by transforming belonging and institutional culture. Through a critical synthesis of these perspectives, the paper develops a Plural Equity Framework that reconceptualises educational justice beyond compensatory or tokenistic measures. It concludes that advancing racial equity demands coordinated action across policy, pedagogy, and institutional practice to affirm and empower racially minoritised learners within education systems

**Introduction**

‘Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future, and renders the present inaccessible.’ (Angelou, 2008). Despite ongoing international initiatives to advance justice and inclusion in education, racial minority students still experience severe and enduring inequalities. These racial disparities take many different forms in diverse contexts and are not limited to a single nation or educational system. Educational equity, unlike equality, does not imply treating all students the same. Rather than that, it recognises that individual students require different kinds of support, recognition, and opportunity in order to achieve just outcomes (Ainscow, 2020). However, many

traditional approaches to eliminate the educational racial inequality focus only on redistributing educational goods such as access to schools or other educational resources without challenging the deeper roots of system issues underpinning in racial inequality (Kolluri and Tichavakunda, 2022). In other words, reforms frequently tackle who gets in rather than how knowledge, value, and belonging are defined once inside.

This paper argues that achieving racial equity in education requires a shift from redistribution alone to a plural conception of justice encompassing material, cultural, and political dimensions. Drawing on Fraser's (1995) tripartite model of redistribution, recognition, and representation, the discussion re-examines three interrelated frameworks:

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The deficit thinking demonstrates how minority students are blamed for their own marginalisation in the educational system. Then comes affirmative action, which provides redistributive policies to address structural disadvantages. Furthermore, inclusion challenges education's dominance as the sole measure of value or success. Finally, compare these three concepts to investigate which is a more effective and transformative approach to reducing racial inequality in the educational system.

## Theoretical Background: Reframing Educational Equity

Educational equity has long been a central topic in debates on justice and inclusion. However, its meanings and applications are varied across different contexts. In many education systems, equity is defined primarily based in a

redistributive lens. It focused on providing resources or opportunities to historically marginalised groups. While redistribution is essential, it is insufficient for addressing the deeper cultural and institutional process that reproduce inequality. As Fraser argues, justice requires not only the redistribution of material resources but also recognition of cultural difference and representation within decision-making processes. These dimensions reveal how inequity is sustained not just through funding or access gaps within education system. It also sustained through different hierarchies and exclusion from political power.

This article is based on Fraser's tripartite model. It positions the deficit thinking, affirmative action, and inclusion as representing different but interconnected approaches to educational justice. Each approaches corresponds onto one of Fraser's dimensions of justice:

Framework	Justice Dimension	Core Focus	Limitations
Deficit Thinking	Recognition	How minoritised learners are perceived and valued within dominant cultures	Reinforces cultural misrecognition and symbolic violence
Affirmative Action	Redistribution	Expanding access and opportunity through structural redress	Operates within meritocratic systems without redefining success
Inclusion	Representation	Transforming participation, belonging, and institutional culture	Risks superficial diversity without structural reform

Thus, rethinking educational equity requires more than adding compensatory measures. It requires a whole fundamental reconsideration of what counts as knowledge, success, and participation in education. By critically analysing their intersections, this article seeks to develop a more integrated and transformative understanding of educational justice.

## Deficit Thinking and Racialised Failure

Deficit thinking refers to a potential theory which explains the educational inequality. This suggests that schools and institutions attribute the failure of the students to their internal characteristics such as lacking of learning ability, motivation, and family support rather than the systematic inequality issue that exists within the educational institutions. This is supported by Valencia (2012), who defined deficit thinking as a harmful ideological model that falsely assumes that minority ethnic learners are inherently less capable than their peers. Since they are 'deficiencies' in the culture, family, and behavior backgrounds and are accountable for their academic struggles in the institutions. This conceptual model is not only utilised for explaining the inequities in education but also misguided policies for the continuation of avoiding the systemic inequality failure for educators (Davis and Museus, 2019).

Historically, deficit thinking has served as a clear ex-

ample of racialised forms. According to Valencia (2012), in the 1920s, Mexican American students in the United States were often allocated into special classes or even inferior schools due to their limited English proficiency. These language barriers for minority ethnic groups served to cover the racist assumption about intellectual inferiority and attempts to exclude the minority systematically from high-quality education. Although the discrimination of minority ethnic groups has become less socially acceptable in the modern educational context, deficit thinking continues to play an implicit role in many educational institutions. According to Cabiles (2024), the research found that many minority students experience deficit thinking in an Australian primary classroom. As a result, they feel ashamed of their mother language and cultures due to past experiences of discrimination and school practices like 'English-only' norms. Educators and administrators may describe the minoritised students as lacking discipline, passive learning and lack of family support. Therefore, it reinforces the idea that the problem lies within the student rather than the design and functioning of educational institutions.

Additionally, the deficit thinking is also rooted within the neoliberal education reform. According to Brathwaite (2016), neoliberal education reform is driven by market-based logic, which includes school choice, institu-

tional accountability, and competition. It seeks to enhance educational quality through approaches like standardised examinations and performance-based sanctions. However, learners are expected to demonstrate excellent outcomes under certain assessments, and those who do not perform well are labelled as ‘underachieving’ or ‘at-risk’. (Sharma, 2016). As a result, minoritised learners will often face systematic barriers in the educational system, including lack of access to high-quality schools, discriminatory disciplinary practices, and under-represented curricula. Thus, they are considered educational failures without any recognition of systematic issues that limit their academic success.

Institutions and educators attempt to challenge the deficit thinking by advocating the approach for asset-based frameworks that recognise students’ cultural wealth, linguistic resources, and community knowledge. Rather than focusing on what students lack such approaches focus on what students bring. However, Wallace (2023) indicates that asset-based models can be co-opted if they are not accompanied by institutional transformation. Recognising students’ strengths is important, but it is insufficient if schools continue to reward only dominant forms of knowledge and performance.

### **Affirmative Action as Structural Remedy**

If deficit thinking blames racially minorised learners for their educational underachievement, affirmative thinking is a type of policy that aims to correct the systematic inequality issue of minoritised learner in educational context. According to Holzer and Neumark (2006), affirmative action refers to a set of strategies including the race-conscious admissions or contextual offers to improve the opportunities and outcomes for historically marginalised groups.

Affirmative action directly addresses racial inequality by reforming the allocation of opportunities in educational admission. It responds to the racial disadvantage that minoritised students are experiencing. Institutions value their ability and potential in addition to their academic preparation. This is also supported by Tierney (1997), the racial inequality in higher education is not incidental. It occurred and is embedded structurally in how merit, excellence, and success are defined and rewarded. He also criticises the idea that institutions systematically prioritise white and middle-class norms. From this perspective, affirmative action becomes more than a compensatory policy to minoritise group students and is applied as an approach for institutional transformation.

One of the most important benefits of affirmative action against racial inequality is that it creates more inclusive

models of academic admission and evaluation. Rather than selecting the merit students through standardised examination, affirmative action allows institutions to evaluate students holistically, recognising context, characteristics, and diverse forms of excellence. It facilitates extra opportunity for entry of racially minoritised students into competitive institutions which they have long been excluded from. In addition, Crosby et al. (2003) argue that the diverse learning environment could foster a positive interaction between the groups and also provide an inclusion and fairness signal to minoritised students. Moreover, these contextual and race-conscious approaches challenge institutions to interrogate their biases and expand their academic value so that they resolve the systematic issues of racial inequality.

However, affirmative action has its limitation. One significant critique is that it operates competitive logic within the existing educational system. Rather than rethinking what counts as academic success. It still focuses on enabling more minoritised students to participate in a flawed admission. BOBO (1998) demonstrates that because affirmative action only validates success when minority students are able to “compete” on dominant terms, it tends to promote the very meritocratic values it aims to correct. Additionally, public views of such policies vary widely according to Crosby et al. (2003). It is often influenced by the perceptions of fairness, group membership, and beliefs in meritocracy. As a result, affirmative action can create stigma when it is not supported by open communication or unambiguous standards, leading to the assumption that minority students are less competent or “deserving” of their position.

### **Inclusion: Addressing Racial Educational inequality**

Inclusion is best understood as a multi-dimensional concept that encompass the social, epistemological and structural dimension of education. According to Oca, Agaton and Villote (2021), inclusion should be rooted in social justice. It requires not only the integration of the students from diverse racial and socio-economic backgrounds, but also a shift in the foundational values, practices, and power in relation of educational institutions. Inclusion should not be a superficial approach to reduce racial inequality, it needs to take away symbolic diversity and dismantle of systemic racism and exclusion (Stentiford and Koutsouris, 2022).

Inclusion is not only about curricular representation. It is also about transforming education institutions’ cultures and practices. The gap between formal inclusion and the actual sense of belonging from institutions. This is sup-



ported by Seamster and Charron-Chénier (2017), they introduce the concept of ‘predatory inclusion’ to describe how access to education may appear progressive and fair. However, it actually sustains racial inequality through approaches such as student debt and assimilationist expectations. Their analysis of the wealth gap highlights how inclusion becomes a form of exploitation when the structural support or institutional reform. For instance, Black students are more likely to enrol in for-profit colleges. It usually takes on more expensive private loans, both of which contribute to increased debt burdens. Therefore, many racially disadvantaged people, especially Black students, have better access to higher education. Nevertheless, the conditions of that access are often unfair and make racial inequality worse instead of better.

Inclusivity as a transformative approach in education has its clear benefits. Initially, it could enhance minoritised student belonging and engagement. When racially minoritised students encounter materials, teaching styles and institutional values that affirm their identities, they are more likely to participate, succeed, and feel connected to the institutions (Gray, Hope and Matthews, 2018). Also, an inclusive environment could allow students greater autonomy in how and when they engage referring to Hayvon (2025). This setting provides a flexibility space for minoritised students to express themselves without being defined by stereotypes or assimilation into main cultural norms.

Additionally, inclusive education could also be applied as an approach to structural and systematic exclusion in the education system. According to Gale, Molla and Parker (2017), they found out inclusive education exposes that an individual’s ability and achievement could be influenced by the educational context for minoritised students. This reframing enables a deeper understanding of how educational inequality is produced not by students’ deficit thinking but by systemic barriers such as inaccessible curriculum, inflexible pedagogy, or cultural discrimination. It is essential for minoritised students with academic struggles, as this shift can be transformative. According to Chanicka and Logan (2021), it breaks the assumption that underachievement by minoritised students reflects cultural or personal failure and replaces equity as a matter of institutional responsibility and systematic design.

Despite its benefits in solving racial inequality in education, inclusivity still faces persistent implementation challenges that affect its effectiveness for racially minoritised learners. A major challenge is that deficit-orientated mindset for teacher’s education on inclusion. According to Siuty (2019), many teacher preparation programmes still rely on the traditional frameworks that perceive inclusion

as a policy for addressing the student problems instead of considering the systemic barriers for minoritised students. It reinforces the belief that racially minoritised students must be ‘fixed’ or assimilate in order to become a part of mainstream settings. As a result, educators and instructors may unconsciously consider inclusion as an act of accommodation instead of realising the systemic change of perception on students (Tiwari, Das and Sharma, 2015).

## Conclusion

This essay has examine how deficit thinking, affirmative action, and inclusion offer distinct but interconnected approaches to address te racial inequality in education. Deficit thinking reveal how racially minoritised students often found struggle with cultural failure, which covering the systematic racial inequality issue in educational institutions. Even though it highlights how racism is normalised in educational context, it does not itself offer solutions.

Affirmative action responds through redistribution and providing a greater opportunities of accessing for minoritised students. However, it still operates within meritocratic frameworks without reforming systematically.

Inclusion offers the most diverse approach by seeking the systematic and cultural transformation. It redefines educational success through recognition, belonging and curricular relevance. However, its impact is limited when it only stays on superficial diversity initiatives.

In conclusion, these concepts together demonstrate that educational equity cannot be achieved through single policy. Instead of this, it requires multiple policies apply together to address the racial inequality issues. Thus, the minoritised students could be not only included, but also affirmed and empowered within education system.

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**ARTICLE**

# A Brief Analysis on the Conflict Between Chinese and Western Cultures in the Film *The Treatment*-- Based on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

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**ABSTRACT**

*The Treatment* is an excellent film that reflects the cultural differences between China and the United States. The film tells the story that Dennis' grandfather, who was brought to the United States from China, uses traditional Chinese Gua Sha to help his grandson, Dennis, when he is sick. But then the couple Datong is subsequently charged with child abuse, and conflicts arising from the fact that the cultural differences between the United States and China, and Western doctors are unable to understand this traditional Chinese treatment. Using Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, this paper analyses the contradictions and conflicts between Xu Datong's family and the American children's welfare agency after Gua Sha, reveals the deep-rooted reasons for the differences between the Chinese and American cultures in the six dimensions of individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, long-term orientation/short-term orientation, and indulgence/restraint, and explores cross-cultural communication strategies to achieve better communication.

**1. Introduction****1.1 Brief introduction the film *The Treatment***

*The Treatment* is a Chinese-American film directed by Xiaolong Zheng, starring Jiahui Liang and Wenli Jiang. It depicts a Chinese-American family thrown into crisis when the father's use of the traditional Chinese therapy Gua Sha on his son is mistaken for child abuse by American authorities. The film explores the profound conflicts and misunderstandings arising from the clash of Eastern and Western cultures.

Culture is one of the most popular and widely used words. Google lists half a billion searches for culture,

more than for politics, money, or sex (Taras, Steel, & Kirkman, 2012). It is important to keep in mind that Hofstede's work measured cultural dimensions at a national rather than individual level, which means that his value dimensions characterize that dominant cultural in that society (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2017, P. 111). Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory provides a framework for this, identifying six value dimensions (individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity/femininity, long-term/short-term orientation, and indulgence/restraint) that characterize national cultures. In particular, various circumstances such as technological improvement, travel and tourism, growing immigration and cross-cultural marriages have led to increased com-

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monality in the world's culture (Minkov & Hofstede, 2012).

This theory has been widely applied to analyze cultural comparisons in various fields. For example, the corporate culture values and development trends of Chinese Huawei and American Apple are analysed in detail from the dimension of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (Ji, 2021), the differences in the forms of humorous discourse used in Chinese and American talk shows are analysed (Lin, 2018), exploring the salient features embodied in Chinese and American college admissions promos and website profile sections (Zhang, 2023), comparing differences in the concepts of family education and their causes reflected in Chinese and American, Chinese and Russian famous family dramas etc (Wang, 2021).

This paper will use Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to analyze the Sino-Western cultural conflict in *The Treatment* and propose suggestions for managing such conflicts.

## 2. Introduction of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is a good tool for understanding and analyzing cultural differences, which can be divided into following six parts.

### Individualism vs. Collectivism:

Individualistic cultures, such as those in the United States and the United Kingdom, emphasize personal rights, freedom, and self-expression. In contrast, collectivist cultures like China and Japan prioritize group harmony, loyalty, and shared interests.

### Uncertainty Avoidance:

This dimension reflects the extent to which members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous situations. Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, such as Japan, tend to rely on rules and structure to minimize ambiguity, whereas those with low uncertainty avoidance, like the United States, are generally more open to change and comfortable with uncertainty.

### Power Distance:

Power distance measures how a society handles inequality. In high power distance cultures, there is a strong respect for hierarchy and authority. Conversely, in low power distance cultures, such as many Nordic countries, people strive for equality and are more likely to question authority.

### Masculinity vs. Femininity:

Masculine cultures, including Japan and Mexico, value achievement, competition, and material success. On the other hand, feminine cultures, such as Sweden and Norway, emphasize care, quality of life, and cooperation.

### Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation:

Cultures with a long-term orientation, like China and South Korea, focus on future rewards and value perseverance and thrift. In contrast, short-term oriented cultures, such as the United States and Egypt, place greater importance on tradition and fulfilling present social obligations.

### Indulgence vs. Restraint:

Indulgent societies, including the United States and Mexico, allow relatively free gratification of desires and prioritize personal enjoyment. However, restrained societies, such as China and India, regulate such gratification through stricter social norms.

In summary, these six dimensions offer a systematic approach to analyzing cultural differences and potential conflicts in various contexts.

## 3. Cultural Conflicts Analysis in the film *The Treatment* based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory

### 3.1 Individualism vs. Collectivism:

The film highlights this dimension through key conflicts. Firstly, the grandfather's use of GUA SHATO to treat his grandson exemplifies Chinese collectivism, emphasizing family duty and collective well-being. The American medical and legal system's interpretation of the marks as child abuse reflects an individualistic culture prioritizing individual rights and legal evidence.

Secondly, Datong Xu's actions demonstrate collectivist values. He conceals from his father that Dennis was taken by child services to prevent family worry, showcasing the primacy of family harmony and collective interests over individual disclosure.

In contrast, the American child welfare agency's immediate legal intervention reflects individualism, focusing solely on protecting the child's individual rights without considering familial context or cultural differences.

Furthermore, the conflict between Datong Xu and his wife, Jane Ning, underscores this clash. Jane prefers resolving the issue through legal avenues, aligning with American individualism's emphasis on individual rights. Datong, however, seeks to preserve family harmony through sacrifice, reflecting Chinese collectivism.

### 3.2 Uncertainty Avoidance:

The conflict over GUA SHATHERAPY illustrates this dimension. American doctors and child services, unfamiliar with the practice, immediately interpreted the marks as child abuse and intervened legally. This reflects a high uncertainty avoidance culture, which relies on established rules, laws, and scientific evidence to eliminate ambiguity.



and ensure safety.

In contrast, Datong Xu's insistence on using the traditional treatment, despite knowing it might be misunderstood, demonstrates low uncertainty avoidance. It shows trust in traditional experience and methods, even without modern scientific validation.

This clash is further evident in the courtroom. American judges and lawyers, embodying high uncertainty avoidance, demanded scientific proof of Gua Sha's efficacy. Datong's defense based on cultural tradition failed to convince them, highlighting a cultural preference for accepting tradition over strict evidence.

### 3.3 Power Distance

The film contrasts high power distance in Chinese culture with low power distance in American culture. Datong Xu's father exercising authority to use Gua Sha reflects the high power distance in Chinese culture, emphasizing elder authority, which clashes with America's low power distance value of individual equality.

Datong's courtroom decision to take blame for his boss, John, to "save face" further demonstrates high power distance—showing respect and obedience to authority. In contrast, the American legal system, where judges and lawyers equally scrutinize Datong, embodies low power distance, asserting that all are equal before the law and authority can be challenged.

Thus, Datong's initial attempt to resolve the issue through explanation rather than confrontation highlights a cultural inclination to respect authority, unlike the American emphasis on legal equality and open questioning.

### 3.4 Masculinity vs. Femininity

The film illustrates the contrast between masculine Chinese culture and more feminine American norms. Datong Xu's career drive and role as family provider reflect the masculine emphasis on achievement, material success, and responsibility. Similarly, his father's authority in using traditional treatment embodies masculine respect for elders. In court, Datong takes blame for his son to protect his boss's "face," showing masculine loyalty and hierarchy, while his American boss values personal responsibility and equality—a feminine trait. Additionally, Datong makes parental decisions unilaterally, reflecting masculine hierarchy, whereas his wife Jane Ning prefers equal discussion, illustrating feminine cooperation. Thus, Chinese culture is portrayed as masculine, valuing authority, loyalty, and success; American culture leans feminine, prioritizing care, equality, and quality of life.

### 3.5 Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation

The film illustrates the contrast between a long-term oriented Chinese culture and a short-term oriented American perspective.

Chinese Long-term Orientation is demonstrated through: (1) Valuing long-term benefits, as seen in the grandfather's use of Gua Sha—a traditional method trusted for long-term health over immediate appearance; (2) Emphasis on familial responsibility as a sustained commitment; and (3) Acceptance of delayed gratification, where short-term discomfort is tolerated for the child's future well-being.

American Short-term Orientation is reflected in: (1) A focus on immediate results, preferring quick medical fixes over traditional methods; (2) Prioritizing individual rights and freedoms in the near term, leading child services to intervene based on visible marks without full cultural context; and (3) Strict adherence to rules and procedures, applying them uniformly without accounting for cultural differences.

The Gua Sha incident thus becomes a clash between a culture that values tradition, future outcomes, and collective duty, and one that emphasizes immediate evidence, individual protection, and procedural compliance.

### 3.6 Indulgence vs. restraint

For Chinese culture, it is full of restraint, which can be reflected from the following aspects. In order to maintain the overall harmony of the family, Cosmos Xu's family is willing to sacrifice personal comfort and convenience by moving out to live and enduring misunderstanding and pressure from social service agencies. This reflects the importance placed on collective interests in Restraint culture, where individual needs and feelings often need to be conceded for the sake of a greater goal.

However, in American culture, it emphasizes indulgence, which pays attention to personal freedom and happiness. In *The Treatment*, American social service agencies and social workers are more concerned with the Dennis's immediate feelings and comfort, and consider any behaviour that may cause the child discomfort or pain (e.g., Gua Sha) to be unacceptable. This attitude reflects the high value placed on personal freedom and pleasure in American culture, i.e., a child should be protected from any form of physical or psychological pain.

## 4. Resolution Strategies for Cultural Conflict

Although the film displays certain conflicts between Chinese and American cultures, it reflects only a part of



real-world cultural discrepancies, as greater differences exist in daily life. Therefore, the following cross-cultural communication strategies are essential to alleviate conflicts and promote mutual understanding.

First and foremost, it is important to cultivate cultural awareness by understanding and respecting others' backgrounds, values, and behaviors. Additionally, stereotypes and ethnocentrism should be avoided, and one should remain open to individual and cultural differences. Furthermore, developing adaptability through learning and practice is necessary to function effectively in different cultural environments. Moreover, patience and an open-minded attitude are key, as misunderstandings and frustrations are often encountered in cross-cultural communication. Ultimately, the foundation of successful intercultural interaction lies in respecting and understanding diverse cultures.

## 5. Conclusion

Employing Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, this paper has analyzed the Sino-American cultural differences depicted in *The Treatment*. This analysis aids in understanding divergent communicative behaviors within distinct cultural contexts, thereby facilitating cross-cultural exchange and integration. In an era of globalization, it is crucial to adopt a broader outlook, resist ethnocentrism, and foster the mutual dissemination and enrichment of diverse cultures to achieve genuine coexistence and shared prosperity.

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## ARTICLE

# Principles of the Educational Reform in China

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### ABSTRACT

The principles of the educational reform which come from the theories and the practice of the educational reform in China has fundamental importance. The principles are the ideas, thoughts and theories of the country and may borrow from other countries. The principles can make the educational reform successful, so a lot of educators and specialists on education are working hard on the principles. We hope the educational reform will succeed due to the principles, therefore this article shows some secrets and requirements of the principles of the educational reform in China.

## I. Introduction:

The principles of the educational reform in China come from the social practice and the hard work of the educators, specialists on education and teachers in China. These principles can show the requirements of the society and the interests, desires and requirements of the students in this country. We are very concerned about the principles which can surely have fundamental success in educational field. These principles are the base of the educational reform. Where do the principles come from? They come from many ideas, thoughts and theories of China and the other countries. All the achievements are the success of the society and the world.

Why is educational reform necessary? What are its purposes and significance? By answering these questions, the significance of this educational reform becomes clear.

The impetus for educational reform stems from the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution in China and the evolving social landscape, marking a significant transformation following political and economic reforms. With political and economic reforms underway, educational reform was also inevitable, with the primary goal of enhancing educational quality and advancing the country's educational endeavors. This reform has had a profound impact, starting with Deng Xiaoping's decision to restore the college entrance examination system and continuing to the present day.

Quality education emerged in the early stages of educational reform, which was crucial to its success. It addressed both theoretical and developmental issues, leading to the success of the educational reform. The criticism of exam-oriented education led to the emergence of quality education, which is a rejection of the former. Society is always evolving and advancing. People's social practices

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are becoming increasingly sophisticated, with the goal of fostering all-round development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor. The primary focus is on moral education, followed by intellectual education, while also paying attention to aesthetic and labor education.

Due to the reform of political and economic systems, educational reforms have also been inevitable. This reform has not only changed the system, such as the emergence of numerous private schools, but also transformed methods, such as the introduction of quality education requirements. Teaching methods have been improved, with a greater emphasis on students learning status and interest cultivation, and the introduction of research-based learning methods. In addition to traditional rote teaching methods, many heuristic teaching methods have been adopted, such as focusing on generating questions in class. Teaching methods across all subjects have been enhanced, leading to the success of educational reforms. In terms of educational management, competitive management methods have been introduced, and a distribution system based on performance and merit has been implemented, which has boosted teachers' enthusiasm and creativity.

## II. Literature review

The principles of educational reform in China have deep social and historical roots. These principles also originate from ancient Chinese society, such as the practical theories of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming, and Confucius's teachings of teaching according to individual aptitude and education for all, which continue to play a crucial role today. These ancient educational theories form the foundation of these modern educational principles, shaped by the country's socialist historical system.

The goal of education is to promote social development and create a better life. (Cheng, 2025) Schools should update their educational philosophies, shifting from traditional exam-oriented education to quality education, focusing on the all-round development of students and emphasizing personalized growth. (Wang, 2025) By aligning with students' interests and abilities, schools aim to stimulate their enthusiasm and initiative in learning, promoting their physical and mental health and all-round development, thus laying a solid foundation for cultivating high-quality talents who excel in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor skills. (Song, Li, 2025) Quality education emphasizes the cultivation of students' innovative spirit and practical abilities, aiming to nurture individuals with unique personalities and comprehensive qualities. (Tan, 2025)

As society develops and educational philosophies evolve, traditional knowledge-based education is increasingly unable to meet the demands of the modern era. The educational philosophy is gradually shifting from a focus on imparting knowledge to promoting all-round development. The core of this shift lies in cultivating students' moral and ethical qualities and their understanding of social responsibility, guiding them to develop a scientific worldview, outlook on life, and values. (Xu, 2025) The essence of quality education is personalized education. Personalized education is the direction for the advancement of the education sector, emphasizing the cultivation of students' individual traits and interests to promote their comprehensive growth. Implementing personalized education helps to stimulate students' interest, unlock their potential, and ensure that each student achieves comprehensive, harmonious, and sustainable development, thereby nurturing innovative talents for society. (Li, Tian, 2025)

What is the fundamental purpose of education? Why is it important to return to this core purpose? What does this return reveal? It reveals that some educators are puzzled by the question 'Why do we need education?' They seek clarity on these fundamental questions: what kind of people should education cultivate, for whom does education serve, and how can it serve them? These questions aim to address the root issues of education.

Teachers should act as facilitators, not mere knowledge dispensers. They should help students develop good learning habits and master effective learning methods, laying a solid foundation for their lifelong development. Teachers should focus on the individual development of students. The student-centered educational philosophy respects students' personalities and interests, encouraging them to choose learning content and development paths based on their own interests. A variety of teaching models are adopted to provide platforms for students to showcase themselves and develop their specialties, ensuring that each student's unique qualities can be nurtured. This approach allows students to gain emotional value and satisfaction while acquiring knowledge. The evaluation system under the student-centered educational philosophy emphasizes that evaluations should serve the comprehensive development of students, shifting the primary function of evaluation to promoting students' progress and improvement. This means that evaluation is not just a simple assessment of students' learning outcomes but should be a dynamic and ongoing process aimed at identifying students' strengths and weaknesses and providing targeted guidance and suggestions to help them continuously improve. (Peng, 2025)

### III. Background:

The growth of students is a process, and the role of teachers is also evident. The quality of education ensures the order of education, and no aspect of educational work can be overlooked. Some believe that educational philosophies are difficult to implement, but in reality, it has been proven that even the most lofty and unrealistic educational philosophies can be realized and succeed. Educational philosophies guide educational practices, making them purposeful and rapid. China's educational reforms have embraced numerous educational philosophies, which are rooted in the Chinese context, reflecting Chinese characteristics and tailored to China's national conditions. Of course, these philosophies may also be influenced by foreign educational theories, such as the theory of all-round development, proposed by Marx. By adopting and introducing these theories, the goal is to enhance the quality of education in China.

Why is it necessary to update educational philosophies to keep pace with the times? I believe that updating these philosophies represents progress, development, and success. Updating educational philosophies indicates that society needs to evolve, and can these philosophies indeed drive social progress? Yes, they can. Where do these educational philosophies come from? They are developed by educators, experts, and teachers. These philosophies stem from practical explorations and theoretical research. They are highly valuable and serve as a guiding force. Educational philosophies are both guiding principles and theories that guide educational practices. Where do these philosophies originate? Generally, they are the contributions of educators. Many of these philosophies are derived from extensive reading and practical experience. These philosophies are innovative and creative, reflecting people's intelligence, diligence, and hard work. They embody the integration of theory and practice, the result of social development, and the advancement of educational practices. When these philosophies are fully realized, the educational mission is accomplished. These guiding principles are invaluable; without them, educational efforts would not succeed. They serve as clear and practical guides for educational practices.

Can the educational reform succeed? The answer is yes, it will. We have already achieved significant success, and this time it will be successful again. We have also studied foreign educational theories and practices, which are crucial for China's educational development. These advanced foreign educational theories have inspired our thinking and guided our progress, ensuring the success of the educational reform. The success of this reform is due

to the correctness of its theoretical and practical approaches. The impact of this educational reform is profound. The changes and advancements in teaching methods are key to the success of the reform. The rapid progress in the 1990s can be attributed to the introduction of foreign educational theories and practices.

### IV. Principles:

#### 1. Questions about training objectives and direction of running schools:

What kind of people should be cultivated? How should they be cultivated? For whom are they being cultivated? These questions are among the most significant educational principles, addressing the core objectives of education. Solving these fundamental issues is crucial. There are numerous discussions on educational work, and this definition makes educational efforts more purposeful and practical. Cultivating builders and successors for the socialist cause, which means nurturing socialist citizens and social individuals, is a critical task. This definition underscores the importance, urgency, challenges, and complexities of student cultivation. We believe that these goals are challenging, but they can be achieved in China's environment. The principles concerning the objectives of cultivation include: cultivating builders and successors for the socialist cause, providing education that satisfies the people, and promoting comprehensive and individualized development.

Concerning moral education, many people have shown significant interest, leading to the concept of cultivating virtue and nurturing talent. Many believe that moral education is crucial, as a person's moral character significantly influences their future prospects. Moreover, it is believed that once a person's moral character is established, they are more likely to succeed in life. Moral education is highly regarded, and together with quality education, it has become a primary focus in primary and secondary schools, as well as universities.

#### 2. Issues related to equity in education:

Regarding educational equity, the principles include: equitable and high-quality education. Educational equity does not conflict with educational efficiency. When educational equity is achieved, educational efficiency naturally follows. Without educational efficiency, achieving educational equity is impossible. In recent years, there have been issues in discussions about educational equity and efficiency, with some believing that efficiency means there is no equity, and equity means there is no efficiency. However, these views are incorrect. Education without dis-

crimination is a form of fair education, and education for all is a form of fair education. When education is for all, educational efficiency naturally improves. The era of mass education differs from the elite era; in the mass education era, everyone has the opportunity and right to education. This is due to social development, which has reached a point where everyone has the opportunity to receive education. Everyone can have the chance to succeed, and the ideal of the free and comprehensive development of individuals can be realized. The educational ideals of Marx and others were also realized in this mass era. For example, the theory of all-round development, including moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor development. These educational concepts serve as guiding principles and are therefore very important theories.

Balanced development is a crucial educational principle, but we believe that this balance must be of high quality and should not stifle others' growth. There are differences among individuals, and I believe these differences contribute to social stratification, which is both normal and justified. People are inherently different, and a uniform standard of one hundred percent can stifle the development of outstanding students, push some students too hard, and eliminate their unique talents and interests. Therefore, the one-size-fits-all approach has been widely criticized. This exam-oriented education system goes against human nature and human rights, and thus is not a viable approach.

### 3. Related education quality issues:

Quality education has always been a priority, and the quality of education has consistently been a focal point of concern. How to measure educational quality? We believe that examination scores are an indicator of educational quality. While focusing solely on scores is not entirely accurate, examination scores are a relatively straightforward method to assess the quality of education. I do not understand why there is opposition to examinations. I support examinations, as they are effective for students. For example, college entrance examination results are one of the key indicators of the quality of high school education. Is an examination equivalent to exam-oriented education? In fact, exams are inevitable. Does having exams equate to exam-oriented education? Not exactly. Examinations are part of the teaching process and a component of the educational system. How to measure educational quality and how to improve educational evaluation? Research in these areas has largely settled, indicating that exams cannot be abolished. Exams are effective and appropriate methods. Measuring educational quality through examination scores is one of the correct approaches.

### 4. Questions relating to teaching methods:

Research on teaching methods has been well conducted, and there is a wealth of experience. For instance, the requirement to cater to all students addresses the issue of educational equity. The practice of loving students also prohibits the arbitrary use of corporal punishment. These conclusions are valid, reflecting the progress in education and the basic principles that should be followed. As teachers, it is essential to love their students, which is the bare minimum of professional ethics. These educational philosophies define and standardize educational practices, guiding the policies and specific approaches of educational institutions. It's also a guiding principle, so it's very useful.

Innovation is not only a teaching method but also a specific approach. Without innovation, society cannot progress. The rote learning method is insufficient; it is only suitable for some students. Each person is suited to different teaching methods, and new methods need to be developed. For society to remain innovative, it must embrace innovation.

### V. Conclusions:

Educational philosophy must not be wrong; anything that is wrong will certainly have a detrimental effect. If people misunderstand the nature of educational work, they are likely to propose flawed educational philosophies, which is very concerning. I believe that these guiding principles of educational philosophy are essential; otherwise, the educational work would not be ideal. A lack of educational philosophy is unacceptable, and it is through the correct educational philosophies that progress can be made. Educational philosophy is also an educational theory and thought, and it is the result of many people's wisdom and efforts. After reading numerous books and teaching many students, some educational philosophies emerge. The educational philosophies of educators are all developed this way, and the combination of theory and practice has produced many educational philosophies.

Theory must be grounded in practice, and educational theory must be integrated with educational practice. Teacher candidates must engage in practical training; otherwise, the integration of theory and practice cannot be achieved. Becoming an educator is not a simple task; an educator cannot afford to lack frontline experience or theoretical exploration. Currently, Zhejiang Province and the entire country place significant emphasis on frontline practice, but they often overlook the importance of theoretical research and neglect the writing of educational papers. I believe this situation is very concerning. Practice



without theory is immature and slow to progress. This is also problematic. Frontline teachers must read frequently to integrate theory with practice and stay current. Teachers must also learn to develop themselves over their careers, which requires continuous reading and learning. Writing papers is not difficult; as long as one reads regularly and thinks about issues, these papers can be produced. Teachers who do not write papers are incomplete.

Why are there so many educational philosophies in China? This highlights the unique nature of our educational system and reflects the progress of our education. While Dewey and others have had a significant global impact, ancient Chinese society also had numerous educational ideas that remain relevant today. These profound educational philosophies can greatly guide educational practices. We look forward to the emergence of more educational philosophies that will significantly promote and assist educational reforms. With the efforts of these educators, more and better educational philosophies will continue to emerge, aiming to enhance the quality of education in China.

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**ARTICLE**

# **Fun Chinese App: Platform Development and Application Based on Generative Artificial Intelligence Technology**

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**ABSTRACT**

With the continued advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative, overseas Chinese-funded enterprises commonly face challenges such as insufficient Chinese communication skills, lack of intercultural competence, and inadequate knowledge of Chinese professional terminology. To address this predicament, there is an urgent need to establish a digital platform through the “Internet Plus” model and build a remote education system integrating “Chinese language + professional skills.” However, existing Chinese learning applications often suffer from content homogenization, weak cultural dissemination, and insufficient relevance to professional fields. In response to this, the present study aims to design a Chinese language learning app that focuses on enhancing language proficiency, promoting Chinese culture, and targeting professional knowledge. Based on mobile learning theory, constructivist learning theory, and autonomous learning theory, and guided by principles of practicality and personalization, the app integrates gamified incentive mechanisms and AI-driven interactive features. It constructs a three-dimensional model of “level-based learning + cultural immersion + real-time PK (competition),” achieving a deep integration of linguistic knowledge, intercultural communication skills, and industry-specific expertise.

**1. Introduction**

At the 2024 National Education Conference, General Secretary Xi Jinping noted that building a strong nation in education has long been a cherished aspiration of the Chinese people. On January 19, 2025, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the Outline of the Plan for Building a Strong Education Country (2024–2035), which calls for comprehensively constructing an international cooperation system characterized by openness and mutual learning. As globalization deepens, Chinese enterprises have achieved notable success in internationalization; nevertheless, lan-

guage and cultural differences and the shortage of bilingual and bicultural human resources have become major obstacles to their overseas expansion. Consequently, providing language services to support Chinese enterprises abroad and maximizing the economic value of Chinese language education have become important directions in international Chinese language education. At the 2025 National People’s Congress and Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (the Two Sessions), Representative Yang Xianjin argued for coordinated promotion of the integrated development of international Chinese education and the globalization needs of Chinese enterprises, jointly constructing a Chinese-education system

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oriented toward serving international capacity cooperation to accelerate enterprise globalization. To date, more than two thousand Chinese-learning applications exist; however, mobile Chinese apps that combine “Chinese + profession” remain relatively scarce. Most existing apps (e.g., HelloChinese, ChineseSkill, trainchinese) exhibit content homogenization, weak cultural dissemination, and insufficient vocational relevance. Survey data indicate that most respondents strongly desire a profession-related Chinese-learning application, underscoring the urgency of developing a “Chinese + profession” mobile learning app. Accordingly, this study analyzes the shortcomings of current Chinese-learning apps and, drawing on multiple theoretical perspectives including mobile learning, autonomous learning, and constructivist theories, and adhering to principles such as practicality, personalization, and entertainment, proposes an internal mechanism for constructing multimodal resources within a “Chinese + profession” app. The goal is to design a learner-centered app that renders vocational Chinese learning widespread, convenient, and efficient. A prototype developed in this research has been piloted with employees of a Fortune Global 500 company and received unanimous approval. Based on that feedback, full-version development will be accelerated to provide tailored learning resources and practical tools for Chinese learners across industries, enabling more efficient and engaging acquisition of Chinese and paving a sustainable path of “learning for application and application to promote learning.”

## 2. Literature Review

A review of the literature shows that while a variety of apps for teaching Chinese as a foreign language have emerged, their quality varies and content is often homogenized. Language-skill-oriented apps emphasize comprehensive training, whereas specialized-content apps are mainly HSK-oriented; overall, many apps tend to be general-purpose and lack cultural dissemination. Thus, “Chinese + profession” mobile learning apps remain a market gap, with only a few platforms making breakthroughs in this domain (e.g., Chinese Union). In the era of rapid digital and AI development, “Chinese + profession” mobile learning apps possess substantial growth potential.

### 2.1 Predominance of Language-Focused Apps and Lack of Cultural Dissemination

Advances in educational technology have given rise to numerous learning apps, including many for Chinese learning. Wu Yinghui et al. (2021)<sup>[1]</sup> reported that, as of September 2021, 272 Chinese-teaching apps were availa-

ble on the market. Guo Jing et al. (2021)<sup>[2]</sup> analyzed global digital resources for international Chinese education and classified the aforementioned 272 apps by content into five categories: language elements, language skills, specialized content, specialized functions, and others. Their analysis indicated that resources are mainly language-oriented, with cultural resources notably lacking. Cheng Juan and Lu Yuan (2020)<sup>[3]</sup> categorized extant apps into examination-oriented, tool-type, interactive, and entertainment categories; based on a survey of 500 international students they recommended strengthening development of culture-oriented apps and reinforcing the link between language and culture, giving equal attention to teaching Chinese and disseminating outstanding traditional Chinese culture.

### 2.2 Content homogenization and lack of vocationally oriented apps

With the continued development of the Belt and Road Initiative, overseas Chinese-funded enterprises require many local managers and employees who are both proficient in Chinese and professionally competent. Guo Jing et al. (2021) found that current digital-resource construction tends toward generic, general-purpose formats: most language-skill apps are comprehensive in scope, and the majority of specialized apps are HSK-related (accounting for 98.45% of specialized apps). “Chinese + profession” apps are virtually absent. Sheng Sai (2017)<sup>[4]</sup> sampled and analyzed Chinese-learning apps and surveyed their use among international students, finding that many apps focus on elementary Chinese and particular language-skill training; content suitable for advanced learners is limited and app quality is uneven with a high degree of homogenization.

### 2.3 Research on Artificial Intelligence Technologies in International Education

Artificial intelligence (AI), as technology that simulates human intelligent behavior, encompasses domains such as machine learning<sup>[5]</sup>, natural language processing<sup>[6]</sup>, and computer vision<sup>[7]</sup>. In recent years, AI’s application in education has become increasingly extensive. Through Text-to-Speech (TTS)<sup>[8]</sup> technologies, AI can convert text into high-quality speech, assisting learners in improving listening comprehension and pronunciation<sup>[9]</sup>. Image-generation techniques based on latent diffusion or Stable Diffusion Models<sup>[10]</sup> can produce visual images from text descriptions, enhancing learners’ intuitive understanding of vocabulary and sentences<sup>[11]</sup>. In workplace Chinese instruction, virtual simulation technologies create realistic

occupational scenarios that enable interactive learning and simulate workplace dialogues and behaviors, thereby improving applied language abilities<sup>[12]</sup>. Moreover, personalized learning recommendation systems<sup>[13]</sup> analyze learner behavior data to tailor content, effectively improving learning efficiency. Recently, large language models (LLMs)<sup>[14]</sup> built on Transformer<sup>[15]</sup> architectures have further expanded AI's potential in education: given keywords, LLMs can automatically generate example sentences and images to help learners grasp vocabulary usage in context.

### 3. Theoretical Foundations and Design Principles of FunChinese App

The app developed in this study is named “FunChinese” and targets overseas learners and international students who already possess a certain foundation in Chinese (minimum recommended: HSK level 3).

#### 3.1 Theoretical Foundations

##### 3.1.1 Mobile Learning Theory

Mobile learning (M-learning), also termed ubiquitous learning, is an outcome of integrating internet technologies with digital education. Early mobile-learning research traces back to Carnegie Mellon University's Wireless Andrew project in 1994. Desmond Keegan famously articulated the progression “from d-learning to e-learning to m-learning,” a view widely endorsed by scholars. Mobile learning is characterized by learning convenience, instructional personalization, rich interactivity, and contextual relevance; it represents an important new learning modality in the context of lifelong learning and a knowledge-economy society. This app, as a practical implementation of mobile learning, leverages internet, mobile network, and mobile terminal technologies to allow learners to engage in profession-related Chinese learning anytime and anywhere.

##### 3.1.2 Constructivism Learning Theory

Constructivism posits that learners actively ascribe meaning to information and construct their own knowledge through interaction between new experiences and prior knowledge. It emphasizes active construction, social interaction, and contextuality in learning: learners build their knowledge systems through interactions with people and environments. The constructivist emphasis aligns naturally with the “Internet + education” environment. Accordingly, the app incorporates interaction design elements—such as friend leaderboards and ranking lists—to

enable learner interaction and discussion. A “wrong-answer collection” function encourages learners to actively collect and reflect on errors, assess weaknesses, and make targeted improvements.

##### 3.1.3 Autonomous Learning Theory

Autonomous learning, contrasting with passive reception-based approaches, refers to a modern learning mode in which the learner acts as the learning subject and achieves learning goals through independent analysis, exploration, practice, and creation. Henri Holec (1981) defined autonomous learning as “the ability to take charge of one's own learning.” This ability manifests in learners' setting goals, organizing content, planning, regulating learning processes, and self-assessing outcomes.

The app provides features for goal setting and learning planning to support individualized study; system reminders help learners monitor progress, and practice tests support self-evaluation. Moreover, the entertaining nature of learning materials can subvert learners' autonomy.

#### 3.2 Design Principle

##### 3.2.1 Practicality Principle

Practicality is central to developing a “Chinese + profession” app: the software must provide content and functions that meet learners' real needs and offer an efficient, user-friendly experience to achieve desired learning outcomes.

The app's learning content should closely match learners' actual vocational needs so that knowledge and skills learned can be applied in work and life. This requires developers to conduct field research and consult industry experts to identify professional needs, employ AIGC technologies to generate content, and build a professional knowledge base through iterative quality assurance and feedback.

##### 3.2.2 Personalization Principle

Personalization is crucial because learners differ in cultural background, ability, level, and needs. The app must therefore allow individualized content design.

First, personalized learning paths: because professional roles demand different Chinese proficiency levels, developers should enable learners to customize learning trajectories rather than forcing a single, official path. Many existing apps require learners to progress sequentially from the first level onward, causing unnecessary time expenditure on already-mastered materials. In contrast, FunChinese permits learners to bypass levels (e.g., a “skip”

button that can be used multiple times to jump ahead).

Second, personalized modules: each vocational module should offer content at different difficulty tiers (beginner/intermediate/advanced) so learners may choose according to their foundation.

Prior to entering the main interface, the system administers a Chinese proficiency test and recommends appropriately leveled learning plans. These personalization mechanisms enhance user experience and retention.

### 3.2.3 Gradual Progression Principle

Learners' cognitive processes follow an inherent regularity; instruction must progress from known to unknown and shallow to deep. Content organization should observe sequencing from easy to difficult and simple to complex, with repetitive exposure to vocabulary and sentence patterns to strengthen memory<sup>[16]</sup>.

Therefore, content design should conform to professional Chinese proficiency frameworks such as the Occupational Chinese Competency Standards and the Standards of Chinese Language Proficiency for International Chinese Education. The app's development references existing "Chinese + vocational skills" textbooks (e.g., New Silk Road "Chinese + Vocational Skills" series, Industrial Chinese) and strictly follows these standards to provide learners with a sense of achievement and sustained motivation.

### 3.2.4 Interest-driven Principle

Einstein once said, "Interest is the best teacher." The primary challenge for mobile learning software is sustaining user engagement. Second-language acquisition is demanding and learners face cultural differences and negative transfer; cultivating interest is therefore essential.

The app uses diverse content and functions to stimulate interest, including: (1) a "Daily News" section aimed at cultural dissemination, offering industry developments, Chinese corporate culture, and related content—areas that typically attract learners; (2) a "PK game" module with real-time ranking and virtual rewards to convert external incentives into intrinsic motivation; (3) targeted incentive schemes—e.g., for high-speed rail attendants learners' progress (number of levels cleared, consistent learning days, difficulty levels) maps to simulated promotions (intern → junior attendant → train captain → station supervisor → service director); for automotive engineers learners can collect parts to assemble a preferred car; (4) dedicated AI avatars and contextual learning backgrounds corresponding to different professions; learners can name avatars, and interfaces replicate workplace scenes to cre-

ate immersive learning environments.

## 4. Content and Structure of FunChinese App

The app is guided by Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and integrates AIGC technologies (text synthesis, translation, image generation) using human–AI collaboration to generate multimodal resources and to construct an internal mechanism for multimodal resource formation.

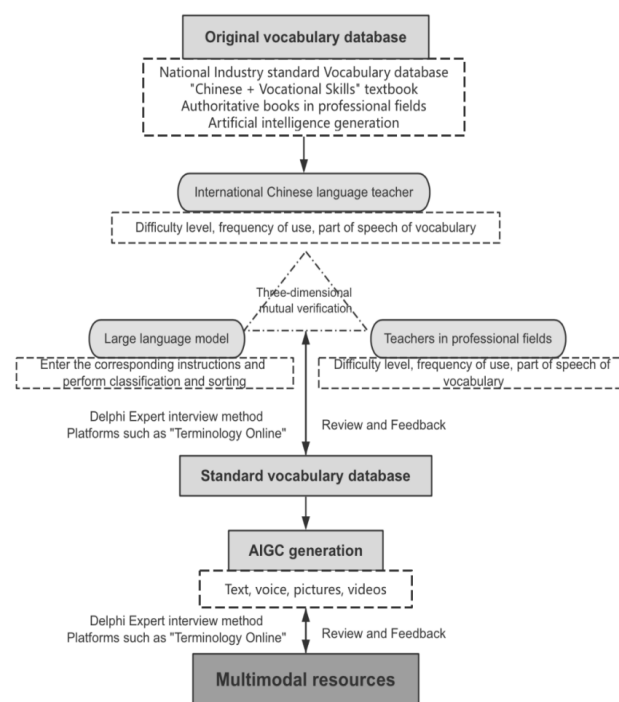


Figure 1

### 4.1 Original vocabulary bank

The original vocabulary bank is generated through multiple approaches: (1) extracting standardized terminology lists from authoritative national industry standards (e.g., railway authority glossaries such as "EMU Vocabulary Part 1: Basic Vocabulary," "Diesel Locomotive Vocabulary Part 1: Basic Vocabulary"); (2) consolidating lexical items from existing "Chinese + profession" instructional materials (e.g., Vocational Chinese, New Silk Road "Chinese + Vocational Skills" series, Industrial Chinese); (3) compiling terms from authoritative textbooks in relevant domains; (4) using AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, deepseek) to generate candidate vocabulary.

### 4.2 Standard vocabulary bank

After forming the raw vocabulary bank, a "three-dimensional cross-validation" process is applied to curate and audit entries, resulting in a standardized vocabulary



bank. Dimension 1: international Chinese instructors screen and categorize vocabulary by difficulty level, frequency, and part of speech, ordering entries from easy to difficult and by frequency. Dimension 2: LLM-based processing (e.g., instructing ChatGPT) is used to classify and rank the raw entries. Dimension 3: subject-matter experts in respective professional fields categorize and rank vocabulary by difficulty, frequency, and POS. The three categories of results (instructors, LLM, domain experts) are compared and further validated through Delphi-method expert interviews and platforms such as “Terminology Online,” producing the finalized standard vocabulary bank.

### 4.3 AIGC generation

With the standard vocabulary bank established, appro-

appropriate AIGC tools are employed to generate corresponding text, audio, images, and video. Textual resources may be generated via text AIGC tools (e.g., ChatGPT) to produce instructional materials; image resources can be created with AI-art tools (e.g., Stable Diffusion) to produce illustrations; video resources can be generated using AI-assisted video tools (e.g., Runway ML) to produce animations or vocational-skill tutorials. Generated content is reviewed and refined via Delphi expert consultation to ensure quality, ultimately producing multimodal instructional resources.

## 5. App Operational Logic, Interaction, and Interface Design

### 5.1 Operational Logic

The operational logic diagram of this APP (Figure 2) is as follows:

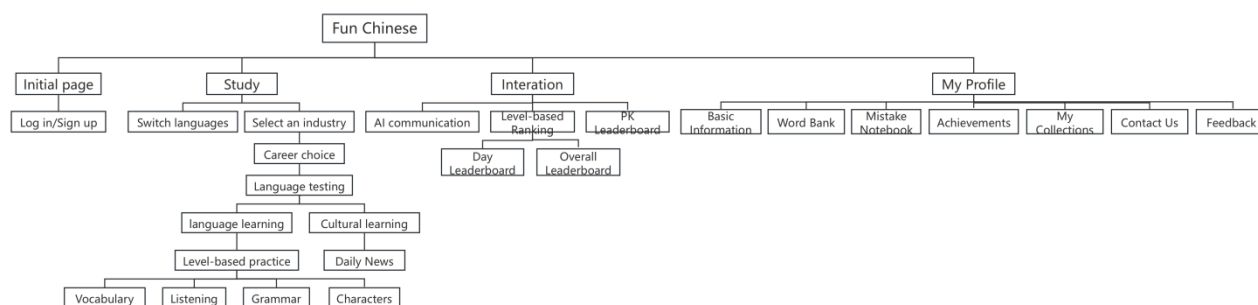


Figure 2: Operational Logic Diagram of the “Fun Insight Chinese” APP

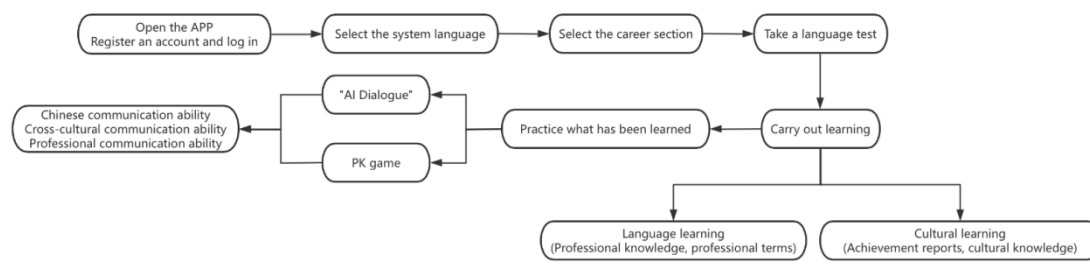


Figure 3: Operation Flowchart of the “Fun Insight Chinese” APP

The app’s operational logic consists of four primary modules: initial page, learning page, interaction page, and “My Profile” page, each containing various submodules.

On first use, users register and then enter the learning interface, select language settings, and choose a vocational module. Before beginning formal learning, users complete a Chinese proficiency assessment (to gauge occupational Chinese ability) enabling the app to provide level-appropriate content. The learning module comprises two parts: language learning (professional terminology) and cultural learning (industry-related Chinese news, cul-

tural knowledge, and traditional Chinese culture). After completing daily tasks, learners practice and consolidate learned items. Learners may also access interactive modules to converse with AI or participate in PK games.

### 5.2 Interaction Design

Interaction design addresses both visual and operational dimensions. Visually, consistency of visual elements (colors, typography, icons, spacing) is a primary principle; moreover, different vocational pages are assigned

distinct color schemes to deepen visual interest and highlight thematic content. Operationally, the design adheres to convenience and economy: nonessential features are pruned and navigation is simplified to minimize clicks and streamline user operation.

### 5.3 Functional Page Designs

#### 5.3.1 Splash / Login Screen

The splash screen facilitates login and registration and comprises an app icon, login fields, new user registration button, and “forgot password” function.



Figure 4



Figure 5

#### 5.3.2 Learning Module Interface

The learning module includes language switching and industry selection (Fig. 6), occupational position selection (Fig. 7), language test pages (Figs. 8–9), and the primary learning interface (Fig. 10). After selecting language and industry, learners choose a specific occupational role and complete a language test to enable personalized services. The main learning interface is highly personalized, featuring distinct avatars, backgrounds, and level buttons tailored to industry characteristics; the AI avatar’s dialogue text is profession-specific.

The learning interface comprises language learning and cultural learning. In language learning, each level presents characters, pinyin, audio, images, and bilingual example sentences (Fig. 11). Upon completion, learners enter challenge modes covering listening, speaking, reading, and writing, including a keyboard-entry-of-characters mode (Figs. 12–15). The “Daily News” button at the top leads to cultural learning, providing industry-related Chinese news and national hotspots; this section supports video or text-image study, with translation and analysis features (Figs. 16–18). Learners can take a “Daily News Challenge” (Fig. 19), a dubbing-style exercise that evaluates

pronunciation accuracy, precision, and fluency.



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

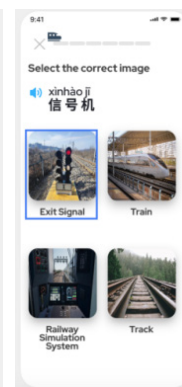


Figure 12

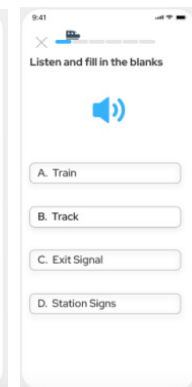


Figure 13

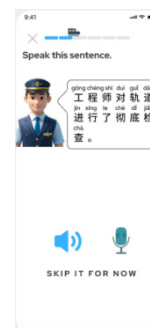


Figure 14

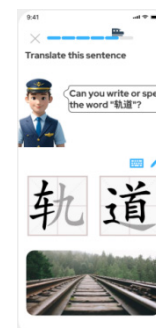


Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19

### 5.3.3 Interaction Module Interface

The interaction module comprises AI dialogue, level-ranking, and PK leaderboards. Clicking the AI avatar opens an interactive chat where learners can exchange via images, text, or voice; AI can answer language questions and simulate occupational scenarios for dialogic practice (Fig. 20). The level-ranking and PK leaderboards are presented together (Fig. 21): the level-ranking shows daily and overall rankings within a learner's industry and across the network. PK interaction enables learners to create rooms to compete with friends or matched opponents (Fig. 22); winners receive PK points. Daily and total rankings update in real time based on user activity.

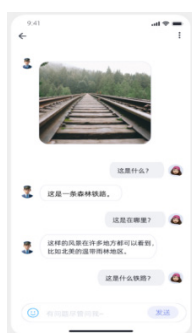


Figure 20

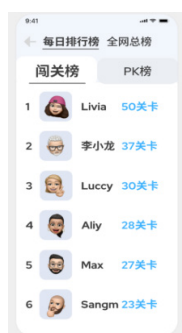


Figure 21



Figure 22

### 5.3.4 “My Profile” Interface

“My Profile” consolidates personal information and system settings, accessible by clicking the user icon at the top-right of the main page. Users can edit personal details, nickname, avatar, etc. Functions include “My Favorites” (saved exercises and cultural reading materials), “Word-book” (all vocabulary the user is studying), “Wrong-Answer Book” (collection of user errors for reflection and review), and “Achievement Feed” (professional-themed badges or titles earned during progression to stimulate self-efficacy). “Contact Us” allows users to email developers for feedback; “Feedback” supports emailing suggestions for desired features or improvements.



Figure 23

## 6. Conclusions

This paper reviewed the status of mobile learning software and AI applications in international Chinese education and conducted an in-depth discussion of development ideas for a “Chinese + profession” mobile Chinese-learning app. Drawing on mobile learning, constructivist, and autonomous learning theories and guided by content-based instruction, the study employed a “three-dimensional cross-validation” approach to design a novel, practical “Chinese + profession” mobile learning app—FunChinese. The principal contribution of this research lies in offering a new mobile learning model aimed at improving overseas learners' Chinese communicative competence, enhancing intercultural communicative ability, and boosting professional literacy. Additionally, the app presents constructive and feasible ideas for helping overseas Chinese enterprises accelerate internationalization and for China's broader engagement with global cultural initiatives.

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## ARTICLE

# The current situation of rural teacher resource allocation in western China Investigation and Research (Taking Jingning County of Gansu Province as an Example)

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## ABSTRACT

For China's western regions, rural education is key to promoting rural revitalization and achieving high-quality, balanced regional education development. The stability of the rural teaching workforce is even more crucial for ensuring educational equity and advancing the integrated development of regional education toward high-quality balance. Since 2020, when Gansu Province as a whole passed the national assessment for balanced compulsory education at the county level, it has implemented teacher recruitment policies such as the Special Post Program, "Three Supports and One Assistance" initiative, the Excellent Teacher Program, free normal students, and primary school all-round teachers to fully equip rural areas with teaching staff and stabilize the rural teaching workforce. However, under the current trend of intensifying urbanization, declining rural populations, and annual contraction of rural education, how is the allocation of rural teachers? Can the current status of the rural teaching workforce meet the new demands of social development on rural education? This paper takes Jingning County in Pingliang City, Gansu Province—a region bordering Ningxia, Gansu, Shaanxi, and Sichuan—as a case study to investigate the allocation and status of rural teachers in western China.

## Introduction

Article 29 of the Outline for Building a Strong Education Nation (2024-2035), jointly issued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, proposes to optimize teacher management and resource allocation.<sup>①</sup> Vigorously building a team of teachers with noble ethics, excellent qualities, and a willingness to take root in rural areas is not only a key move to achieve a strong education nation but also a fundamental prerequisite for improving

the quality of education in rural schools. In recent years, with the large-scale migration of rural populations from China's western regions to cities and the annual decline in birth rates, rural schools have also experienced structural changes characterized by a decreasing number of students. In response, rural schools have undergone mergers and adjustments, leading to current issues such as an overall sufficient number of teachers, shortages in specialized subject teachers and teaching assistants, and the loss of outstanding teachers. These problems have become the

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weakest link in consolidating the basic balance of compulsory education in regions and have also affected the overall advancement from basic balance to high-quality balance in regional education.

## 1. The proportion of rural teachers is still relatively high

In order to find out the actual situation of the allocation of the teachers in the western rural areas, the author has carried out a survey in 249 rural primary and secondary schools in Pingliang City and Jingning County.

The 2024-2025 academic year saw the county's student population distributed as follows: 50,533 students in total, including 26,474 in primary schools, 14,409 in junior high schools, 9,517 in senior high schools, and 133 in special education schools. Among primary school students, 8,050 were from rural areas, accounting for 16% of the total. Junior high school enrollment included 6,219 rural students (including those from five comprehensive high schools junior departments), representing 12.3% of the total. Senior high school students were 2,766 rural residents, making up 5.5% of the county's student population. Rural students totaled 17,035, constituting 33.8% of the county's student body, with this proportion expected to remain relatively stable from 2026 to 2030.

The 2024-2025 academic year saw a total of 5,561 teaching and administrative staff in the county's primary and secondary schools, including 2,619 primary school teachers, 1,803 junior high school teachers, 1,112 senior high school teachers, and 27 special education teachers. In terms of urban and rural distribution, urban schools had 2,657 staff members, comprising 1,188 primary school teachers, 673 junior high school teachers, 769 senior high school teachers, and 27 special education teachers, accounting for 47.8% of the total. Rural schools had 2,904 staff members, including 1,431 primary school teachers, 1,130 junior high school teachers, and 343 senior high school teachers, representing 52.2% of the total. Notably, rural schools accounted for over half of the county's teaching and administrative staff, making up 52.2% of the total.

In summary, in the economically underdeveloped provinces of western China, rural education still accounts for a significant proportion, and the allocation of rural education teachers remains higher than that in county urban areas, and this will not change significantly in the foreseeable future. This indicates that the rural teacher workforce in western China still plays a dominant role in regional education, serves as the main force in promoting educational equity, and is also an important guarantee for implementing the education safety net project in the revitalization of rural China.

## Second, the stability of rural teachers can be effectively guaranteed

In order to ensure a stable rural teaching staff, Jingning County in Gansu Province has made a coordinated effort in teacher supplementation, ability promotion and treatment guarantee.

First, a diversified mechanism for replenishing rural teachers ensures team stability. To address the shortage of specialized teachers in subjects like English, science and technology, information technology, labor, physical education, and arts at rural primary schools and teaching points, Jingning County has, within the scope of higher-level policies, continuously recruited specialized teachers for rural schools since 2022 through methods such as hiring for scarce specialties, special post teacher recruitment, and provincial selection of volunteer teachers. The replenishment volume accounts for over 56% of the county's total annual teacher replenishment, fundamentally alleviating the weak faculty and structural shortages in rural schools.

Second, stable salary policies ensure teachers professional stability. Jingning County in Gansu Province has established comprehensive incentive mechanisms for schools, principals, and teachers. These include performance evaluation guidelines for school staff and a plan to enhance salary security for primary and secondary school teachers. The county government fully funds the implementation of policies such as tiered performance-based pay for rural teachers, class teacher allowances, township work subsidies, and rural living subsidies. Rural teachers earn 530-1,100 yuan more monthly than urban counterparts, enabling them to dedicate themselves to rural education.

Third, multi-tiered capacity-building training ensures high professional standards. Jingning County in Gansu Province, while rigorously implementing national, provincial, municipal, and county-level teacher training programs, has intensified school-based training. This focuses on training new teachers, basic subject teachers in classroom teaching reforms, and knowledge integration in scarce professional disciplines. Through activities like collective lesson planning, curriculum research, classroom teaching competitions, and symposiums, the county promotes practical achievements in new curriculum reforms and efficient classroom construction, thereby enhancing the overall educational quality of rural schools. Meanwhile, the "Internet + Teacher Education" initiative integrates information technology with teacher training, adopting a blended online-offline research and training model. This effectively addresses the lack of teaching research capabilities among rural school teachers, enabling

them to balance online teaching guidance with self-improvement through research, achieving mutual enhancement.

### III. Problems in the Allocation and Construction of Rural Teachers

Through the survey of the teacher-student ratio in Pingliang City, Gansu Province, especially the teacher allocation in 13 primary and secondary schools in 6 townships of Jingning County, the following prominent problems are found:

First, the issue of surplus teachers in rural schools is relatively prominent. Taking Pingliang City in Gansu Province as an example, during the 2024-2025 academic year, there were 41,116 students and 6,903 full-time teachers in rural schools at the compulsory education stage, with a student-teacher ratio of 1:5.9. Among them, rural primary schools had 30,192 students and 2,032 full-time teachers, with a student-teacher ratio of 1:14.8; rural junior high schools had 10,924 students and 1,946 full-time teachers, with a student-teacher ratio of 1:5.6. The student-teacher ratio in rural schools across the city is far higher than the national standard of 1:21. Taking Jingning County in Gansu Province as an example, there were 188 rural villages and teaching points with fewer than 100 students, with 1,624 students and 642 teachers, resulting in a student-teacher ratio of 1:2.5. There were 180 villages with fewer than 50 students, with 963 students and 472 teachers, resulting in a student-teacher ratio of 1:2. There were 175 villages with fewer than 30 students, with 749 students and 419 teachers, resulting in a student-teacher ratio of 1:1.8. There were 143 villages with fewer than 10 students, with 234 students and 197 teachers, resulting in a student-teacher ratio of 1:1.2. In Balia Town Junior High School, there were 25 teachers and 64 students, resulting in a student-teacher ratio of 1:2.5; in Balia Town Central Primary School, there were 21 teachers and 66 students, resulting in a student-teacher ratio of 1:3.1. The above data sufficiently illustrates that the overall surplus of rural education teachers in western China is relatively prominent. This phenomenon not only increases the difficulty of educational management but also leads to the waste of teachers, school buildings, and facilities.

Secondly, the structural shortage of specialized rural teachers is a pressing issue. In Jingning County, Gansu Province, the 1:23 teacher-to-student ratio for the 2024-2025 academic year indicates that while the county has sufficient teachers to meet basic teaching needs, there is a critical shortage of specialized instructors in subjects like music, physical education, information technology,

art, and science. Notably, 89.8% of these subjects in rural schools are taught by non-specialized teachers. For example, Weirong Comprehensive Middle School has 85 teachers, with only 9 (1%) specializing in music, physical education, or art. Similarly, the towns central primary school has 42 teachers, with merely 5 (1.2%) qualified for these specialized subjects. This structural shortage results in courses that are either nominal or of poor quality, severely hindering the holistic development and core competency enhancement of rural students.

Thirdly, rural high school teachers generally possess lower academic qualifications. Annual statistics from Jingning County, Gansu Province reveal that among the three rural comprehensive high schools in the county, only 8% of faculty members hold postgraduate degrees, are state-funded normal students, or participate in the Excellent Teacher Program. Furthermore, teachers recruited through the Special Post Program or the Provincial Three Supports Program (a provincial-level teacher recruitment initiative) often lack practical training in basic education materials and teaching methodologies, as their institutions only offer general knowledge courses. This disconnect between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice results in weak professional competence and overall low teaching quality, which directly impacts both classroom instruction and students holistic development. Consequently, rural high schools face significant challenges in adapting to the new college entrance examination reforms and improving teaching standards, making it difficult for them to compete with urban high schools in county-level cities.

In light of the above, the research data from Jingning County, Gansu Province, profoundly reveals the deep-seated contradictions faced by the construction of rural teacher teams in western China during the “post-equilibrium era.” The current issue is no longer limited to a shortage of teachers but has evolved into a complex situation of “overall surplus coexisting with structural shortages.” On one hand, small-scale schools lead to the “idle” and wasteful use of staffing resources; on the other hand, the structural shortage of specialized teachers and their relatively low educational qualifications severely hinder the improvement of educational quality. This necessitates moving beyond traditional teacher allocation thinking. By deepening the “county-managed, school-hired” reform to activate existing resources, implementing “targeted training” to optimize new hires, and adopting multiple measures to promote the high-quality transformation of rural teacher teams from “quantity” to “quality,” we can lay a solid educational foundation for rural revitalization.

#### 4. We must make a targeted effort to improve the allocation and construction of rural teachers

Teachers are the foundation of education and the source of education.<sup>②</sup> Maintaining a stable and professional rural teacher workforce is a crucial task in ensuring educational equity, promoting rural revitalization, and achieving a strong education nation by establishing education rooted in China. According to a survey on the teacher allocation and development in Jingning County, Gansu Province, it is essential to optimize the dynamic adjustment mechanism of staffing from the top-level design and intensify targeted supplementation of teachers in scarce disciplines to truly achieve the revitalization of rural education.

The first measure involves upgrading the qualifications for special post teachers. By offering preferential living wage policies, we aim to attract and incentivize government-funded normal university students, participants in the Excellent Teacher Program, and outstanding graduates from teacher-training programs to join rural teaching teams. The recruitment requirements for rural special post teachers will now mandate a bachelors degree or higher in teacher education, raising the entry threshold for rural school educators. This initiative seeks to fundamentally improve the academic qualifications and professional expertise of rural teachers, injecting fresh vitality into rural education and addressing the core issue of insufficient professionalization.<sup>③</sup>

Second, fully utilize the targeted training policy for primary school general education teachers. Education authorities at all levels, including the Ministry of Education, provincial education departments, and municipal/county education bureaus, should annually conduct comprehensive assessments of rural teacher workforce conditions and specific needs—particularly the demand for primary school general education teachers. Through systematic customized training programs, they should cultivate a group of versatile teachers who are “capable of fieldwork, retention, and effective teaching,” thereby stabilizing rural school teaching teams and addressing the structural imbalances in some rural schools.<sup>④</sup>

Third, we will continue to implement teacher support and exchange programs. Under the “county-managed, school-hired” policy framework, urban schools will leverage their experienced teachers to address rural schools shortages in key subjects and specialized courses. These teachers, including subject leaders and master teachers, will rotate to rural schools for teaching support and professional exchanges. Meanwhile, township-level music, art, and IT specialists will conduct mobile teaching at vil-

lage primary schools and teaching points. This initiative aims to resolve the lack of qualified teachers and improve teaching quality in rural areas, ensuring students receive authentic instruction in music, physical education, and arts.<sup>⑤</sup>

Fourth, we will advance urban-rural school integration in a proactive yet measured manner. A school consortium model will be established, where urban schools serve 2-3 rural schools. Through teacher rotation, joint teaching research, special needs teacher deployment, and on-the-job training, this model will establish a rational mobility mechanism for core teachers, a teacher training system, and an integrated curriculum teaching system, thereby promoting professional development. Outstanding core teachers will receive greater recognition, making their flexible mobility the new norm. By leveraging the mentorship of master teachers, we aim to achieve deep integration and mutual benefit in urban-rural educational resources.

In summary, the case of Jingning County in Gansu Province profoundly reveals that the current construction of rural teacher teams in western China is at a critical transition point. We must not only confront the resource waste caused by the “inverted student-to-teacher ratio in small-scale schools,” but also address the structural staffing shortages resulting from “teaching unrelated to students actual needs.” More importantly, we must focus on enhancing the professional competence of rural high school teachers to meet the challenges of the new college entrance examination system. This is not merely a simple issue of personnel allocation, but a profound transformation involving educational philosophies, resource allocation mechanisms, and talent cultivation models. In pursuit of Chinas goal of building a strong education nation, we must clearly recognize that the quality of rural education directly determines the foundation and success of rural revitalization. In the future, governments at all levels, education administrative departments, and all sectors of society must continue to make efforts: to replenish the source of vitality through more precise “order-based” training, to activate existing resources through more flexible “county-managed school-hired” and “itinerant teaching” mechanisms, and to retain outstanding talents with more generous benefits and broader development opportunities. Only by truly establishing a high-quality, professional rural teacher team that “goes down, stays, and teaches well” can the sunshine of educational equity shine in every corner of the countryside, laying the most solid foundation for building a strong education nation.

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## ARTICLE

# Research on the mutual contribution of higher arts education to rural cultural revitalization

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### ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of national strategies for smart village development and rural cultural revitalization, this study focuses on the fundamental role of higher arts education. Rural literacy, as an indicator of improved cultural literacy, has expanded its scope to encompass a multidimensional cultural perception that embraces audiovisual and experiential dimensions. Drawing on the artistic practices of popular culture, this article explores how higher education in the arts can transcend the traditional transmission of knowledge and economic empowerment. It examines how such education can respond profoundly to the spiritual nourishment needs of rural residents on their path to material prosperity, particularly through the transmission and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) skills. The central research question is: in the context of smart villages and expanded rural reading initiatives, how can higher education in the arts achieve aesthetic healing and functional social reconstruction of rural communities through popular artistic practices, thereby realizing a dual revitalization of material and spiritual dimensions?

The research methodology employs field surveys in the ancient town of Yongning and case studies of participatory practice course activities. Drawing on ethnosociology, the theory of strangeness, and the theory of aesthetic healing, the study examines three dimensions: the social field, innovative methodology, and fundamental objectives. Using the practice of the ancient city of Yongning as a case study, it addresses how higher education in the arts can achieve deep reciprocity in rural cultural revitalization through aesthetic healing pathways. This research aims to reveal the unique value of higher education in the arts in promoting mental well-being within rural communities, repairing social relationships, and rebuilding cultural identity. It also provides theoretical foundations and practical guidance for creating sustainable models of rural cultural revitalization.

## Introduction

The integration of rural reading with the arts is not only a fundamental means of raising the cultural literacy of villagers, but also the cornerstone for building a spiritual

homeland parallel to the material world<sup>[1]</sup>. This process places unprecedented demands on the functions of art and art education, transforming it from a mere embellishment of life to a central force that reshapes the social fabric of rural communities, unites hearts and minds, and stimu-

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lates endogenous development. At the intersection of the aesthetics of ICH and the contemporary logic of knowledge production, understanding how higher education in the arts can support rural revitalization has become a topic of profound contemporary relevance. However, a review of current research reveals that, although the field of “art theory education promoting rural revitalization” has produced substantial results, its research dimensions remain relatively concentrated, leaving room for further expansion.

This study focuses primarily on the subjectivity of rural “people,” addressing in particular deficiencies in mental well-being, social relationships, and community identity. It innovatively proposes “aesthetic healing” as a new dimension of research. Three sub-questions are explored: 1) How can the resources of higher arts education, applicable to rural cultural revitalization, be reexamined and integrated from a “healing” perspective? 2) How can specific methods of higher arts education to give back to rural areas embody healing functions at the psychological, social, and ecological levels? 3) How can a long-term “localized” feedback mechanism focused on “aesthetic healing” be built, integrating curricula, platforms, talent, and dissemination?

## 1. Theoretical foundations and conceptual definitions for higher arts education in rural cultural revitalization

This study will draw on three theoretical frameworks—ethno-socio-aesthetics, the theory of strangeness, and the theory of aesthetic healing—to clearly define the fundamental concepts (rural cultural revitalization, higher arts education).

### 1.1. Rural cultural revitalization and higher education in arts studies

Rural cultural revitalization is a multidimensional concept. It encompasses not only the preservation and transmission of traditional culture, such as the excavation of ICH such as the “bamboo horse game” in the ancient city of Yongning<sup>[2]</sup>, but also means an endogenous capacity for cultural regeneration.

Higher education in arts studies is considered a key external variable and an enabling agent for achieving rural cultural revitalization. It serves not only as a cradle for the training of professional artistic talents, but also as a comprehensive platform that integrates knowledge production, social service, and cultural leadership. Its role in rural revitalization has evolved from the traditional one-way model of “bringing culture to the countryside” to a mod-

el of deep interaction characterized by “residency-based creation,” “participatory design,” and “collaborative co-construction.” As a result, its paths of reciprocity have become more complex and profound.

### 1.2. Ethnic-social art studies and popular cultural fields

Professor Liang Jiu, founder of “Aesthetic Criticism Studies,” offers a fundamental theoretical perspective through his framework of ethnic-social art studies to understand artistic activities within the specific social field of the countryside (Liang Jiu, 2020). This theory emphasizes that all artistic phenomena are deeply rooted in the social structures and cultural contexts of their respective communities. Art is not just an individualized aesthetic expression, but rather a vehicle for social relations, group identity, and cultural memory.

In the case of the ancient town of Yongning, this implies that we cannot consider the “bamboo horse game” solely as an art form. Instead, it must be understood as a vital practice that sustains the historical memory and social interactions of the Yongning community. Through rehearsals and performances, villagers not only perpetuate an art form, but also revisit shared histories and reaffirm neighborhood ties. This creates an intriguing dialogue with Fei Xiaotong’s theory of the “differential social model.” Traditional rural societies formed interpersonal networks according to this model, linked by kinship and locality. However, under the impact of modernization, this structure has gradually loosened. Studies on the arts of ethnic communities prompt us to reflect: can public artistic practices rooted in popular culture, such as the collective staging of Bamboo Horse, Green Plum, organized with university teachers and students, create new “community bonds”? Can they establish a “community of shared aesthetic experience” or a “community of artistic connection” beyond traditional hierarchical structures? This provides a theoretical basis for understanding how art can repair and rebuild rural social relations.

### 1.3. The “Verfremdungseffekt” and innovative approaches to revitalizing ICH

The theory of the “alienation effect” (Verfremdungseffekt), originally proposed by German playwright Bertolt Brecht to break theatrical illusion and stimulate critical engagement by the audience, produces unexpected value when creatively applied to the revitalization of rural ICH. For the villagers of Yongning, the “bamboo horse game” is such a common and taken-for-granted cultural tradition that its very familiarity may have diminished its vitality

for analysis and appreciation.

Higher education intervention in artistic studies aims precisely to cultivate a “defamiliarized” perspective. For example, when theater arts students adapted this folk custom in the light comedy *Bamboo Horse, Green Plum* <sup>[3]</sup>, they used modern dramatic narrative structures, character development, and theatrical techniques. By placing familiar elements in a new context, they rediscovered the aesthetic value, cultural significance, and relevance of bamboo horse theater. Similarly, digital media students who document bamboo horse activities through the lens “defamiliarize” an everyday productive activity, giving it ritual significance and aesthetic value. This “defamiliarization” in artistic practice is a fundamental methodological approach to stimulating endogenous innovative vitality within rural culture. It avoids the simple replication of tradition, instead activating the capacity for reflection and recreation of villagers as cultural agents through creative “alienation”.

#### 1.4. Aesthetic healing and reconstruction of spiritual homelands

This study aims to construct and apply a basic theoretical framework. As mentioned above, drawing inspiration from Guo Xiao’s interview with Cao Xiaoqiao (Guo Xiao, 2024), this research introduces the concept of “art therapy.” It comprises three levels. First, individual psychological healing. Artistic creation activities target specific groups within rural communities (such as the elderly and children left behind). For example, participation in theatrical performances provides an emotional outlet, helping them to build self-confidence, combat loneliness, and discover a sense of self-worth. This directly responds to the spiritual “nurturing” needs of rural society. Secondly, healing community relationships. Participatory and collaborative artistic practices are organized to address issues such as the erosion of neighborhood ties and the decline of community life within rural societies, resulting from population migration and changing lifestyles. For example, the Mid-Autumn Lantern Festival “Dushān Night Moon” sees villagers collectively crafting lanterns and participating in garden performances—a process that itself serves as a “bonding agent” for community relations. Third, cultural identity healing. Addressing the potential cultural inferiority and identity crises rural residents may face amid globalization and urbanization, Through artistic education, local cultural resources—such as Yongning’s bamboo horses, tofu, and Great Wall heritage—undergo aesthetic refinement and value reassessment. Presenting these through high-quality artistic works—like stage plays, design products, and documentary films—signifi-

cantly boosts villagers’ cultural pride and identity. When residents witness their culture being respected, appreciated, and creatively revitalized, a profound healing of cultural identity unfolds.

## 2. Resources and pathways for higher arts education in the service of rural cultural revitalization

Higher arts education and rural cultural revitalization, though seemingly distinct, are inextricably linked in contemporary development. Higher education institutions have specialized faculty and academic resources that enable systematic field investigations, historical verification, and theoretical interpretations of rural cultural heritage. In the case of the ancient town of Yongning, faculty and students from the art academy first immersed themselves in the field. Through interviews, archival research, and visual documentation, they comprehensively traced the historical origins, performance rituals, and current state of transmission of the “bamboo horse game.” This academic examination not only provided solid material for subsequent artistic creation, but more significantly, it conferred academic legitimacy and elevated the cultural value of this folk tradition. It transformed what was once considered a simple “country pastime” into a cultural treasure worthy of academic study and preservation.

### 2.1. Pathways for excavating and revitalizing cultural heritage: transforming “resources” into “capital”

In the case of the ancient city of Yongning, students and teachers from the performing arts program adapted the static, ritualized bamboo horse game into the light comedy *Bamboo Horse · Green Plum*. This adaptation not only aligns with the aesthetics of contemporary audiences, but also breathes new life into ancient ICH. After conducting research, digital media students transformed Yongning’s tofu production techniques and elements of the Great Wall cultural belt into visual symbols such as brand logos and cultural and creative products. Others digitally disseminated ICH narratives through documentary filmmaking, animation production, and game development. This not only expanded cultural dissemination channels but also attracted greater youth engagement, creating conditions for intergenerational transmission.

The essence of this approach lies in the use of artistic skills to transcend the “original” form of ICH. Through design, storytelling, and media recoding, it gives these traditions contemporary meaning, form, and value, thus achieving the transformative leap from “cultural resource”

to “cultural capital.”

## 2.2. The path to empowerment and added value of industrial integration: from “works of art” to “products”

Rural cultural revitalization provides practical foundations for higher arts education, enriches teaching resources, and stimulates creative inspiration. For cultural revitalization to be sustainable, it must find points of convergence with economic development. In this process, higher arts education plays the role of “designer” and “connector,” driving deep integration between culture and industry to achieve value multiplication.

Rural tourism is one of the most direct ways to monetize cultural assets. However, low-level rural tourism often remains confined to the “farm stay” stage. Artistic intervention can significantly elevate the quality and experiential value of rural tourism.

In Yongning, the 2024 Mid-Autumn Lantern Festival “Dushān Yèyuè” is a prime example. It was not simply a lantern exhibition, but an immersive cultural event that organically blended historical legends (such as the figure of Consort Wan) with lantern art, folk performances, and various other elements. Effective design not only enhances the visual appeal of a product, but also tells its underlying cultural narrative, thereby improving its added value and competitiveness in the market. This represents a fundamental step in extending arts education from “creating works” to “making products.” Technological advances have catalyzed new synergies between art and rural communities. Some examples:

- “Virtual city tours” developed using digital media technology
- Virtual cultural spaces built on game engines (e.g., the cultural impact of “Black Myth: Wukong” on Shanxi’s heritage)
- Sale of ICH handicrafts integrated with e-commerce livestreaming

## 2.3. Pathways for integration and educational collaboration: from “ivory towers” to “rural fields”

The countryside offers the broadest and most vivid practical basis and creative source for arts education. The summer practice program at the ancient city of Yongning is an exemplary initiative. This “localized” teaching not only provides students with knowledge and skills that go beyond textbooks, but, crucially, cultivates their deep understanding and sincere affection for rural China. This reciprocity should not be one-sided. While universities export talent and intellectual resources to rural areas, they

should also actively “import” wisdom from the countryside. For example, appointing inheritors of rural ICH and folk artists as guest lecturers or practical mentors allows their “mastery” and “orally transmitted” wisdom to enrich academic knowledge systems. At the same time, the creation of start-up support funds encourages and helps graduates to engage in rural cultural revitalization.

## 3. Examination of the current state of higher arts education contributing to rural cultural revitalization

In addition to the three traditional paths of cultural heritage revitalization, industrial integration, and education system alignment, this study proposes a new dimension of “aesthetic healing.” The aim is to focus attention on deeper and more fundamental aspects of rural revitalization: the health of people’s spiritual world and social relationships. Fieldwork in the ancient town of Yongning revealed numerous “symptoms” beneath the surface prosperity, where artistic practice inadvertently takes on the role of “healer.”

### 3.1 Practical challenges identified in the survey

Through in-depth interviews and participatory observations with villagers, we identified the following symptoms that require urgent “healing”: First, spiritual “emptiness.” A student from the Yongning area candidly observed: “Many elderly people remain in the ancient town of Yongning,” as young people predominantly seek work elsewhere, resulting in a loss of vitality in the village. These elderly people left behind face prolonged loneliness, a sense of diminished self-worth, and alienation from modern society. Their spiritual world, much like the emptied village, shows signs of “emptiness.” Material improvements cannot fully compensate for this spiritual emptiness. The second is relational fragmentation. Another local student observed, “Some villagers harbor conflicts they don’t know how to resolve.” This reflects how the strong kinship ties and geographic networks of traditional rural society have weakened or fragmented under the pressure of modern individualization and atomization. The estrangement between neighbors and the decline of public spirit have diminished community cohesion, making it increasingly difficult to resolve traditional conflicts. A third issue is cultural “loss of voice.” Despite possessing ICH such as the “Bamboo Horse Play,” many villagers, especially the younger generations, show little awareness of or identification with these traditions. Traditional culture has been gradually marginalized in daily life, existing in an awkward state where it “has stories to tell but cannot tell

them.” This cultural “loss of voice” directly manifests a decline in cultural confidence and is the main cause of the generational crisis in cultural transmission.

### **3.2 Artistic practice as a means of psychological healing: nourishing the spirit**

In Yongning’s initiatives, this healing manifests itself through empowerment and the restoration of values, emotional expression and catharsis, experiences of flow, and the cultivation of positive psychology.

When older adults are invited to rehearse bamboo horse performances or serve as “cultural mentors” for student research, recounting the history of the ancient city, they cease to be passive recipients of care and instead become “experts” possessing unique knowledge and experience. This reversal of roles significantly elevates their sense of self-worth and dignity. Artistic practice provides them with a stage to showcase themselves and earn the respect of society. Artistic creation serves as a safe emotional “container.” For older adults who struggle to articulate their inner feelings or children oppressed by school pressures, role-playing in theatrical performances or focused engagement in crafts allows them to express and release emotions such as loneliness, anxiety, or joy in a constructive way, thus achieving psychological catharsis and balance. Whether learning a traditional craft or participating in group dances, people immersed in creative activities easily experience a state of “flow.” This increased concentration and enjoyment effectively counteract negative emotions, cultivate positive psychological qualities, and nourish the spirit with invaluable sustenance.

### **3.3 Participatory arts as catalysts for community healing: mending social networks**

If individual healing represents a timely restoration, community healing constitutes a reconstruction at the surface level. Participatory arts create public spaces for interaction, generate collective memories and shared experiences, and foster dialogue and understanding between groups. They have powerful functions in repairing social relationships and building community identity. For example, public art projects such as rehearsals for theatrical performances with bamboo horses or preparations for mid-autumn lantern festivals provide villagers, who would otherwise lead separate lives, with a “pretext” and a “place” to come together and interact. These shared experiences of collective creation become valuable collective memories. University staff and students, local villagers, young people returning home, and visiting tourists: these diverse groups meeting and collaborating within an

artistic space inherently constitute a form of intercultural dialogue.

### **3.4. Local aesthetics as a path to healing cultural identity: reawakening “dormant” cultural confidence**

The healing of cultural identity represents the highest level of aesthetic therapy. It concerns the way a community perceives itself and narrates its own history. The intervention of higher education in artistic studies can, through a perspective of “alienation,” help villagers rediscover and appreciate the value of their indigenous culture. Teachers and students specializing in art and design can distill the natural landscapes, architectural features, and folk customs of the ancient city of Yongning, elements of local aesthetics, into visual symbols and artistic works imbued with contemporary aesthetic sensibilities. Whether it is set designs for theatrical productions or models for cultural and creative products, this represents a “trendy” reinterpretation of local aesthetics. This allows villagers to recognize that their culture is not only “traditional”, but can also be “modern” and “beautiful.” Through theatrical productions, documentaries, and branded storytelling, artistic intervention has equipped the ancient city of Yongning with a contemporary “grammar” to articulate its cultural identity. This renewed narrative not only allows the local population to reconnect with their history, but also enables outsiders to understand and appreciate the area’s heritage. When a community is able to articulate its history to the world with clarity, confidence, and elegance, the healing of its cultural identity is largely accomplished.

## **4. Rebuilding the path: establishing a long-term mechanism for mutual enrichment based on aesthetic healing.**

University programs serve as models for talent development and as a starting point for mutual enrichment initiatives. It is essential to promote the transformation of the curriculum system from “classroom-centered” to “field-centered” and from “knowledge-based” to “problem-based” and “healing-based.”

### **4.1. Localized integration and healing orientation**

An interdisciplinary course cluster entitled “Research and Practice of Cultural Ecology in Ancient Cities” could be developed, integrating modules from design studies, theater and film studies, fine arts, and art theory. The design courses would undertake branding projects in Yongning; the theater courses would stage community theater productions; the theory courses would conduct oral histo-



ry research within the locality. Teaching, practical work, and assessment would all take place within this locality, achieving a deep integration between education and local development.

Course design could consciously incorporate “aesthetic healing” objectives. For example, in a “Community Arts” module, assessment criteria would go beyond the artistic merit of the final works to include social indicators such as the improvement of community relations during the project, the breadth and depth of villager participation, and positive impacts on specific groups (e.g., neglected elderly people). In the “Design Ethics” module, students could be guided to consider how their designs can avoid the pitfalls of consumerism, genuinely respect local cultural contexts, and meet community needs to achieve “therapeutic design.”

#### **4.2. Creation of practical “integrated” and “symbiotic” platforms**

Short-term summer internships or field trips struggle to generate a lasting impact. Existing designated institutions, such as “bases for party-building activities” or “bases for study tours,” could undergo structural improvements. By renting or renovating an unused courtyard within the village, a “university-community art workstation” or “rural aesthetic education workshop” could be created that integrates teaching, creation, exhibition, and exchange. This space could be managed on a rotating basis by graduate students or young teachers, regularly hosting art workshops, film screenings, and reading groups for villagers, thus becoming the village’s ever-active cultural center. In addition, the workstation could collaborate with village committees and local cultural tourism companies to undertake the design and planning of cultural projects, using the proceeds from the projects to support the platform’s daily operations and public utility activities. At the same time, the station could serve as an incubator and point of sale for students’ cultural and creative products, with a portion of the proceeds returned to participating villagers, fostering a virtuous circle of “cultural economy.”

#### **4.3. Talent development: focusing on “two-way empowerment” and “value recognition”**

People are at the heart of the feedback mechanism. We must dismantle the one-way mindset that “universities give and villages receive” and establish a talent development and interaction mechanism based on mutual empowerment and shared growth. For example, students could be tasked with producing an in-depth interview with an inheritor of ICH or independently organizing a community

event involving villagers. Witnessing firsthand how their efforts bring positive change to the village or community and seeing the smiles on the faces of the villagers gives a sense of accomplishment and purpose that cannot be achieved through classroom teaching alone. Higher education institutions should strongly emphasize the value and honor of dedicating oneself to rural revitalization through award ceremonies, publicity campaigns, and career guidance. This will guide students to align their personal development with national needs and social progress, considering service to rural communities as a meaningful and valuable life choice.

#### **4.4. Balancing “empowerment” and “reflection” in digital communication**

When spreading Yongning culture through new media platforms such as Douyin and Video Accounts, the emphasis should not be placed on students producing high-quality videos. Rather, the focus should be on teaching villagers how to use these tools, enabling them to become storytellers and ambassadors for the culture of their hometown. This empowerment through digital literacy has greater vitality than any promotional effort undertaken on their behalf. Digital dissemination risks making cultural symbols superficial and homogeneous. For example, the presentation of ancient towns in various regions on short video platforms is becoming increasingly similar. Higher education institutions need to integrate critical media theory into teaching, guiding students and villagers to reflect collectively: does our communication authentically reflect the cultural essence of Yongning? Is there an overly spectacular or entertainment-oriented approach to attract traffic? How can digital tools be leveraged for deeper and more distinctive cultural expression? This capacity for reflection serves as a counterweight that prevents rural culture from losing its identity in the digital tide.

### **5. Conclusion**

Building on existing research on “art theory education promoting rural revitalization,” this study systematically reviews the underlying literature to identify four main research dimensions: cultural heritage revitalization, integrated industrial development, reflection on the education system, and macro-strategic implementation. Based on this, the study keenly identifies the insufficient attention of existing research to the actions of individuals, particularly the health of their spiritual world and social relationships, in rural revitalization. It creatively proposes “aesthetic healing and social construction” as a new dimension for examining the issue.



The findings reveal that higher education in arts studies can contribute far beyond the revitalization of ICH and the development of cultural tourism industries. Ultimately, to ensure that the concept of “aesthetic healing” takes root, this study proposes fundamental pathways for establishing a long-term reciprocal mechanism.

In summary, this research not only provides theoretical support and practical guidance on how higher education in the arts can serve the national rural revitalization strategy in a more profound and effective way, but also offers a solution centered on “beauty” as a path and “healing” as a goal to safeguard and rebuild our nation’s spiritual homeland during modernization. Future research could build on this foundation by developing an evaluation system that combines quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the effectiveness of “aesthetic healing,” along with comparative studies of artistic intervention models in different types of rural communities.

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