

Preserving Heritage in the Modern Era: an Analysis of Cultural Value Integration in the Representation of Traditional Chinese Dance Education

*¹Xiangyun Qian, ²Muhammad Fazli Taib Saearani

^{1,2}Sultan Idris Education University

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Traditional Dance Education, Cultural Values, Cultural Heritage Preservation, Chinese Arts Curriculum, Cultural Integration in Education</p>	<p>This study explores the representation and integration of cultural values in traditional Chinese dance education through a comprehensive analysis of curriculum documents, arts education policies, and instructional materials. In the context of modernization and globalization, dance education faces critical challenges in preserving the depth of cultural meaning amid growing emphasis on performativity and competitive orientation. Employing a systematic literature review and document analysis, this research assesses the extent to which cultural values—including historical, philosophical, and socio-cultural dimensions—are embedded within the dance education system. Findings indicate that, despite notable integration efforts, the representation of cultural values remains limited and is often marginalized by a predominant focus on technical and aesthetic aspects. Key obstacles include resistance to pedagogical innovation and the dominance of performance-driven paradigms. Nonetheless, the study identifies innovative potential through interdisciplinary approaches and the utilization of digital technologies, which can revitalize the teaching and learning of traditional dance in a contextually relevant and adaptive manner. The pedagogical implications of effectively integrating cultural values include the reinforcement of students' cultural awareness and identity, and the sustainable preservation of intangible cultural heritage. This research recommends the development of a holistic curriculum, the empowerment of educators, and cross-disciplinary collaboration as key strategies to enhance the role of traditional dance education in cultural preservation and the formation of a national identity aligned with contemporary developments.</p>
<p>This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC license</p> 	<p>Corresponding Author: Xiangyun Qian Sultan Idris Education University 610387668@qq.com, fazli@fmsp.upsi.edu.my</p>

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, China has experienced complex developments in arts education, driven by rapid economic growth, the modernization of cultural policies, and increasing public awareness of the importance of artistic expression as a vital component in shaping national identity and character. Among the various disciplines, dance education—particularly for children and adolescents—has emerged as a significant platform for simultaneously cultivating artistic skills and instilling cultural values. According to Daxue Consulting (2021),

dance education accounts for over 30% of China's overall arts education market, on par with music education. This figure reflects strong enthusiasm for the performing arts as an educational medium that extends beyond cognitive and physical development to encompass character formation and cultural awareness.

As a multidimensional art form, dance relies not only on physical movement but also serves as a critical medium for cultural representation, historical symbolism, and the transmission of collective values. In the Chinese context, traditional dance occupies a particularly important role as part of the nation's intangible cultural heritage, encapsulating ethnic identity, classical philosophy, and Confucian values embedded in social and ritual practices. However, in the face of globalization and modernization, traditional dance confronts serious challenges. The modernization of the education system and the pervasive influence of Western aesthetics have shifted the focus of dance education from cultural values to technical competitiveness, performativity, and individual achievement. As a result, the cultural dimension—once central to traditional dance education—has become increasingly marginalized.

This shift in orientation is evident not only in training practices but also in formal curricula, teaching materials, arts education media, and state policies governing performing arts education in China. Previous studies have identified a trend toward the dilution of cultural meaning in the teaching of traditional dance, where historical and philosophical components are often underrepresented in instructional structures (Jianqiang et al., 2023). Traditional dance is typically presented in educational documents through an aesthetic and performative lens, with insufficient attention to its broader cultural and philosophical context. Consequently, students often acquire only a superficial understanding of dance as a technical skill, rather than as a process of cultural internalization and preservation.

Within this context, the preservation of traditional dance faces a fundamental dilemma: how to balance the need for adaptation amid globalization with the imperative to maintain the authenticity of cultural forms and values. Globalization not only introduces a diverse array of dance styles and formats but also reshapes the conceptual framework of art, often relegating local values to a subordinate position. Traditional Chinese dance, rich in symbolic meaning, spiritual values, and historical narratives, is at risk of marginalization under the dominance of contemporary, commercially-driven, and universalist trends.

A critical issue in this regard is the lack of pedagogical approaches that effectively bridge the need for cultural conservation with the demand for adaptive educational transformation. Although China's arts education curricula and policies have undergone several revisions, they continue to prioritize technical and competitive achievement, leaving limited space for the exploration of cultural values. Simultaneously, there remains considerable resistance to interdisciplinary approaches that integrate historical, cultural-anthropological, and critical pedagogical perspectives. Many educators and institutions, particularly those with conservative orientations, fear that pedagogical innovation may threaten the authenticity of traditional dance forms. However, contextualized approaches have the potential to revitalize meaning and enhance the appeal of traditional dance among younger generations.

Previous research provides a valuable foundation for understanding the dynamics of traditional dance preservation through education. Liu and Kalimyllin (2024) emphasize that dance education serves as a primary channel for preserving and transmitting Chinese cultural heritage to younger generations—a central focus of the present study. Wilcox (2018) explores the transformation of Chinese dance education through ideological and political frameworks, demonstrating how sociopolitical contexts shape curriculum development and instructional practices. This perspective underscores that dance education cannot be divorced from its surrounding political and socio-cultural environment.

Yang (2024) strengthens this argument by explicitly linking traditional cultural literacy with dance pedagogy, suggesting that the integration of cultural values is not merely supplementary but fundamental to the effectiveness of traditional dance education. Zhang (2023) and Xun (2023) highlight strategies for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and teaching ethnic dance in higher education institutions, providing insight into how educational policy and practice influence the sustainability of traditional dance. Ma (2023) presents an innovative approach by incorporating information technology into the preservation of ritual dance and minority cultures, offering important lessons for developing modern learning methods that remain grounded in traditional values.

From a more critical standpoint, Zhang, Lavagnino, and Ma (2024) examine the tensions and adaptations between Western ballet paradigms and Chinese ethnic dance, addressing both the opportunities and challenges of integrating Western methodologies into traditional Chinese dance curricula. Their study reveals the complexities of globalization in arts education, where acculturation and hybridity are inevitable processes. Cui (2023) further enriches the theoretical framework by investigating identity politics and hybridity in Chinese classical dance, linking the art form with broader processes of cultural construction and nationalism. Finally, research by Jin and Snook (2022) at the Beijing Dance Academy underscores the urgency of comprehensive and responsive aesthetic education reforms to strengthen dance education in line with contemporary developments.

Taken together, these studies affirm that traditional dance education must be grounded in a deep understanding of cultural values, both as a pedagogical foundation and as a strategy for the adaptive preservation of cultural heritage. Given the pressing need to integrate cultural values into dance education, a systematic investigation into how these values are represented within the traditional Chinese dance education system is both relevant and necessary.

This inquiry is not only significant from a cultural preservation perspective but also contributes to the development of a more inclusive, relevant, and sustainable arts education system. One viable approach is the analysis of various forms of educational representation such as curriculum documents, syllabi, textbooks, academic publications, and media narratives related to traditional dance education. Through this lens, it is possible to assess the extent to which cultural values are embedded within educational frameworks and how such representations shape students' perceptions and understanding of local cultural identity. The findings are expected to inform the development of pedagogical strategies that can strengthen the sustainability of traditional dance amid the challenges posed by modernization and globalization.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a documentary analysis method aimed at examining the representation of cultural values in traditional dance education in China. A qualitative approach was selected because the research focuses on understanding the cultural meanings and narrative constructions embedded in educational documents, rather than on quantitative measurement or statistical hypothesis testing (Oranga & Matere, 2023; Ugwu, Chinyere, N; Eze Val, 2023). The data analyzed are secondary data obtained from various official documents and publications related to traditional dance education in China, including curricula and teaching syllabi published by institutions such as the Beijing Dance Academy and the Ministry of Education of China, traditional dance textbooks published between 2015 and 2024, government policy reports on arts education, as well as academic articles and media narratives accessed through academic databases such as China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) and university digital libraries. Document selection was conducted purposively based on relevance and representativeness in reflecting how cultural values are integrated and represented within the traditional dance education system.

The data collection process involved systematic literature review and document retrieval from trusted sources, including CNKI, Wanfang Data, the official websites of the Ministry of Education of China (www.moe.gov.cn), Beijing Dance Academy (www.bda.edu.cn), as well as the digital libraries of Tsinghua University and Peking University. In addition, relevant international scholarly articles were gathered from journal databases such as Scopus and Taylor & Francis to strengthen the conceptual framework and support critical analysis of the representation of cultural values in Chinese traditional dance education. Each document meeting the relevance criteria was analyzed to extract content related to the representation of cultural values.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic content analysis techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Febriandiela & Fitriasia, 2023), following these stages: first, all documents were carefully read to understand the general context and identify main themes related to the integration of cultural values in dance education; second, relevant data were systematically coded using an inductive approach, allowing emergent themes to map how cultural values are represented explicitly and implicitly; third, interpretation of these themes was conducted by linking the analytical results with relevant theoretical frameworks and comparing them with previous research findings to strengthen the validity of the conclusions.

To ensure the validity of the data and analysis, the study employed source triangulation by comparing various documents from different origins to achieve a comprehensive understanding and avoid single-perspective bias. Furthermore, the analytical findings underwent critical review through internal peer review involving experts in arts education and cultural anthropology. An audit trail documenting the data collection and analysis processes was maintained to support methodological transparency and research consistency. This study utilized only publicly available secondary academic data and did not involve direct human subjects. Nonetheless, the researcher respected copyright regulations and ensured all sources were properly cited according to academic standards. The ethical use of documents

was upheld to support academic objectives and cultural preservation without causing harm to any parties.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Representation of Cultural Values in Dance Curriculum Documents and Arts Education Policies

Curriculum documents and educational policies play a central role in shaping the direction and content of dance education within formal institutions. In the context of arts education in China, the national curriculum functions not only as an academic framework but also as a vehicle for the transmission of ideological and cultural values. Therefore, analyzing how cultural values are represented in these documents is essential to understanding the state's positioning of traditional dance as part of its broader agenda for cultural preservation and national character development.

This study finds that national curriculum documents for arts education, particularly in the field of dance, explicitly acknowledge the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage as a key educational objective. However, such acknowledgments tend to be declarative in nature and are often not accompanied by structured pedagogical strategies that would substantively integrate cultural values into the teaching and learning process (Tan, 2023). For instance, in the syllabus for the “Ethnic Traditional Dance” course at the higher education level, cultural values such as harmony, ancestral reverence, and connection with nature are typically mentioned in the introductory section, but without concrete learning indicators or evaluative methods to guide the internalization of these values (Liu, 2023).

Moreover, arts education policies issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education following the post-2018 national aesthetic reform demonstrate a shift in emphasis—from the pursuit of individual aesthetic achievement to the cultivation of collective cultural consciousness and identity. Nonetheless, these policy shifts have yet to adequately bridge the gap between the cultural preservation ideal and prevailing pedagogical practices, which remain heavily oriented toward high-level technical competencies, particularly in the context of national and international dance competitions (Lyu, 2024).

Several official documents reviewed in this study reveal a tendency toward standardizing traditional dance forms within a uniform pedagogical framework. While intended to streamline instructional delivery, this approach can inadvertently reduce the diversity of local expressions that constitute China’s rich cultural tapestry. Standardization, though pragmatic from an administrative standpoint, risks cultural homogenization and weakens the contextual and ritual dimensions that are integral to regional dance traditions (Liu et al., 2024). For example, syllabi for Miao, Yao, and Dong ethnic dances at several local arts universities have been simplified into generalized movement patterns, disregarding the ritual functions or symbolic meanings embedded in the original cultural contexts (Heyang et al., 2023).

Another critical issue emerging from this analysis is the lack of collaboration between curriculum developers and local cultural communities. The absence of community participation in curriculum design results in cultural values being represented unilaterally by

educational institutions, with no mechanism for validation by the cultural bearers themselves (Luo, 2021). This disconnect fosters the risk of meaning dislocation and cultural decontextualization, wherein traditional dance is reduced to an aesthetic artifact, stripped of its cultural and spiritual depth.

Nonetheless, there are promising initiatives from several arts colleges in China's western and central provinces that have begun to develop culturally responsive curricula by involving traditional artists as teaching partners. Such innovations allow for a more authentic and contextually grounded integration of cultural values while strengthening the bridge between formal education and living cultural practices within local communities (Xun, 2023). This approach aligns with participatory pedagogical frameworks, which emphasize the importance of active community engagement in cultural education.

Overall, the findings indicate that while there is formal recognition of the importance of cultural values in traditional Chinese dance education, their representation in curriculum documents and policy remains largely normative and insufficiently operationalized. Achieving sustainable cultural preservation through education requires a more participatory and context-sensitive curriculum revision, along with policies that support pedagogical differentiation grounded in local cultural richness. In this way, dance education can transcend its role as mere technical training to become a vibrant cultural dialogue and a transformative educational space.

Cultural Representation in Traditional Dance Textbooks and Teaching Materials

Textbooks and teaching materials play a vital role as the primary medium for conveying curriculum content to students. In the context of traditional Chinese dance education, textbooks are expected to function not only as technical guides but also as vehicles for transmitting cultural narratives that deepen students' understanding of the historical, philosophical, and social backgrounds of the dance movements they learn. However, this study reveals that the representation of cultural values in most textbooks used in arts education institutions remains limited and inconsistent (Ma, 2022).

An analysis of several dance textbooks commonly used in higher education institutions shows that the content is predominantly focused on technical descriptions, including body positioning, movement sequences, training techniques, and choreographic structure. Meanwhile, contextual elements—such as the origins of the dance, its symbolic meanings, and its cultural significance—are often briefly addressed in introductory sections, without being meaningfully integrated into the teaching process (Mao, 2022). As a result, the cultural values embedded in traditional dance tend to be marginalized, failing to become an integral part of the educational experience.

Furthermore, many textbooks adopt a format-driven and technically unified approach, frequently overlooking the local or ethnographic specificity of dances originating from indigenous communities. This issue is particularly evident in the instructional materials for ethnic dances such as Uyghur, Tibetan, and Miao, which are often compiled into standardized and “domesticated” forms designed for stage aesthetics (Wilcox, 2018). Although these versions retain some visual elements of traditional dances, the social context and ritual

functions are largely omitted. This disconnect between form and meaning diminishes the role of dance as a medium for cultural internalization.

Another challenge identified in this study is the limited use of visual media and illustrations in textbooks, which tend to rely primarily on static images of dance poses or formal performance documentation. Most textbooks lack audiovisual materials that could depict dance practices within community or ceremonial settings—resources that would otherwise enhance students' cultural comprehension (Hu, 2023). Yet in arts education research, multimodal learning—which integrates text, images, video, and cultural narratives—has been shown to be effective in enhancing students' affective and cognitive engagement with cultural heritage (Peppler et al., 2022).

Despite these limitations, there have been progressive efforts at several higher arts education institutions in China to develop more contextually grounded, culturally responsive teaching materials. A number of instructors and cultural practitioners have reportedly created their own instructional modules that incorporate field documentation, interviews with tradition bearers, and collaborations with local arts communities (Liu, 2024). These materials emphasize cultural narratives and the value systems underlying traditional dances, while also encouraging reflective discussions on symbolic meaning and the social roles of specific movements.

Narrative-based and ethnopedagogical approaches such as these have proven effective in reinforcing the representation of cultural values in the teaching process. For example, in a module on Nuo dance from western Hunan, the ritual function of exorcising evil spirits and the spiritual relationship between the dancer and the community are explained and supplemented with documentary footage (Ma, 2023). This approach not only enriches students' cultural understanding but also fosters greater emotional engagement and respect for the traditions they study.

However, these initiatives remain sporadic and have not yet been institutionalized within national curriculum policies or official textbook standards. As such, institutional support is necessary to expand the adoption of more context-sensitive and culturally reflective teaching models. This includes providing training for dance educators to develop interdisciplinary competencies that span history, cultural anthropology, and participatory learning methodologies.

In conclusion, the representation of cultural values in traditional dance textbooks and instructional materials in China still requires substantial improvement. A transformation from a purely technical instructional approach to a meaningful cultural learning experience calls for a fundamental rethinking of content design, assessment methods, and the broader educational purpose of dance. If managed effectively, teaching materials can become powerful instruments for embedding cultural values that are not only remembered but actively lived by future generations.

The Role of Educational Institutions in the Preservation and Renewal of Cultural Meaning

The role of media in shaping public perceptions of culture is indisputable, particularly in the context of education and the preservation of traditional Chinese dance. Media—ranging

from television broadcasts and online news portals to social media and digital video platforms—plays a strategic role in disseminating cultural representations to the broader public, especially among younger generations. However, analysis of media narratives surrounding traditional dance reveals a prevailing trend toward commercialization, excessive aestheticization, and the reduction of cultural meaning, thereby diminishing the educational potential and preservation value of such representations (Wang & Zhao, 2022).

On numerous national television programs and competitive dance shows, traditional dance is presented in a highly theatrical format emphasizing visual spectacle and choreographic grandeur. While such representations may appeal aesthetically, they often strip the dances of their narrative, spiritual, and historical dimensions. For example, folk dances from specific ethnic groups are repackaged with dramatic lighting, synthetic music, and modern stage techniques that obscure their original meanings as collective expressions embedded within social practices (Dai et al., 2024). This mode of representation risks shaping public understanding—particularly among youth—to perceive traditional dance merely as performance art, rather than as a meaningful form of cultural expression.

In contrast, social media and digital platforms such as Douyin, Bilibili, and Weibo present a more complex dynamic. On one hand, these platforms host a wealth of creative content that reinterprets traditional dances through contemporary styles, serving as a form of generational expression. Some of these initiatives have successfully fostered broader appreciation for traditional arts and extended their reach beyond the audiences typically engaged through formal arts education. On the other hand, viral content often presents traditional dances without sufficient cultural context, and in some cases, accompanied by inaccurate or exaggerated narratives (Wong, 2024b). This raises concerns about cultural misrepresentation and the reinforcement of distorted visual stereotypes.

The public discourse on traditional dance in digital media also reveals a polarization between those advocating for the preservation of authentic forms and those promoting adaptive and innovative approaches. Several scholars and cultural practitioners have voiced concerns that excessive modification of traditional dances may result in the erosion of their essential values and communal context (Kim, 2023). Conversely, others argue that for traditional dance to remain relevant, it must adapt to new media and the aesthetic preferences of contemporary audiences. This tension between cultural conservatism and the drive for innovation reflects a broader discursive dynamic that shapes cultural representation in modern society.

From an educational perspective, the portrayal of traditional dance in mainstream media remains largely underutilized as a tool for cultural learning. The scarcity of educational programming that explicitly explains the historical context, philosophical underpinnings, or cultural values of traditional dance points to a limited commitment by media institutions to the agenda of intangible cultural heritage preservation (Luo, 2021). Yet, the integration of media and arts education holds significant potential for cultivating cultural literacy, especially in a digital era characterized by high visual content consumption.

Some positive developments have emerged through collaborations between arts education institutions and local broadcasting agencies, which have begun producing

community-based documentary content on traditional dance. These productions feature interviews with cultural practitioners, depictions of rituals and social contexts, and detailed explanations of the embedded cultural values (Hou et al., 2022). Although these materials have yet to gain widespread popularity, they represent a promising direction for the development of more educational and contextual media narratives in support of cultural preservation.

In this regard, media narratives play a dual role in shaping the representation of traditional Chinese dance. On one hand, media can be an effective vehicle for introducing cultural heritage to wider audiences; on the other, without critical and contextual narrative frameworks, it may also dilute or misrepresent the cultural significance inherent in traditional arts. Therefore, greater integration between arts education and the media industry is necessary to ensure that representations of traditional dance serve not only as consumable visual products but also as instruments for knowledge transformation and the sustainable preservation of cultural identity.

Media Narratives and the Social Representation of Traditional Dance Education

The integration of cultural values into traditional dance education in China encounters interconnected structural, pedagogical, and ideological challenges. Although national cultural policies endorse the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, in practice, arts education—particularly traditional dance—is still predominantly shaped by performative and technical approaches that leave limited scope for exploring cultural meanings (Chen, 2023).

A primary challenge lies in curriculum structures that are output-oriented, focusing on performances and competitions. Such emphases are reinforced by social and institutional pressures to produce graduates who are technically proficient and can excel in the performing arts industry. Consequently, teaching materials concentrate heavily on movement technique, rhythmic precision, and choreography, while cultural components—such as dance history, community context, symbolic meaning, and social function—are often relegated to supplemental status (Go, 2024).

Another major impediment is the lack of pedagogical training in interdisciplinary approaches within arts education. Many traditional dance instructors are practitioners or alumni of performance-based programs who lack sufficient critical pedagogy or cultural literacy training. As a result, learning processes remain repetitive and didactic, frequently neglecting reflective discussions on the cultural context or identity behind each dance form (Pidlypska et al., 2024). This issue is exacerbated by the scarcity of contextual teaching resources and easily accessible educational literature in local languages.

Further complications arise from ideological complexities in interpreting “tradition” within modern China. The term “traditional” is often narrowly defined as dance forms standardized by official institutions or passed down in nationally recognized formats. Local expressions that do not conform to national aesthetics or lack formal documentation are frequently regarded as unfit for instruction, despite being rich in authentic cultural value (Wei, 2023). This dichotomy between officially sanctioned heritage and community-based practice reinforces tensions between authorized heritage discourse and local cultural expression.

Globalization and Western aesthetic influences present additional challenges. While the integration of ballet techniques or contemporary dance methods into ethnic dance curricula introduces pedagogical diversity, it can also create tension between form and content. When Western body structures and performance techniques become the benchmarks of quality, local dance expressions that deviate from these norms may be seen as inferior or outdated (Zhang et al., 2024). This can diminish students' interest in traditional dance as a culturally meaningful heritage, instead shifting their preferences toward dances perceived as more modern or “international.”

On the policy front, cultural integration within arts education has been strengthened through official documents such as the “Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era.” However, implementation faces obstacles like budget limitations, regional disparities, and weak coordination between educational institutions and heritage preservation bodies (Safety Reminder for Extracurricular Training of Dance and Other Sports and Arts for Primary and Secondary School Students, 2023). Inconsistent application at national and local levels also leads to uneven quality in arts education across China.

Institutional resistance to pedagogical innovation—particularly from conservative bodies concerned that new approaches may undermine the authenticity of traditional dance—also persists. Nevertheless, participatory approaches, project-based learning, and cross-disciplinary collaborations can strengthen students' cultural understanding and ability to articulate the cultural meaning behind each performance (Goodnough et al., 2020). The slow diffusion of knowledge across institutions, due to sparse research and documentation of innovative practices, further stalls reform.

Considering these challenges, it is clear that integrating cultural values into traditional dance education in China cannot be achieved simply by adding curriculum content. Rather, systemic reform encompassing curriculum redesign, teacher training, teaching resource development, and a redefinition of “traditional culture” in contemporary contexts is needed. Dance education must be reframed not only as a means to develop artistic skills, but also as a critical space for cultural reflection, identity formation, and the preservation of historical meaning amid rapid social change.

Challenges and Innovative Potentials in Integrating Cultural Values into Dance Education

The integration of cultural values into traditional Chinese dance education faces both structural and conceptual obstacles, yet it also opens opportunities for innovative approaches that balance heritage preservation with modernization demands. The central concern is how to present philosophical, symbolic, and historical cultural values in a contextual and meaningful way within an education system currently dominated by technocratic and performative paradigms (Goethel, 2016).

One major obstacle is institutional resistance to transformative curriculum change. Many arts education institutions still rely on traditional, conservative pedagogies for teaching dance, with an emphasis on technical drills, visual aesthetics, and competition readiness (Jin & Snook, 2022). In such pedagogical models, there is minimal scope for exploring cultural

narratives, classical philosophy, or ethnic symbolism. This is further entrenched by performance-based evaluative frameworks that measure educational success through students' technical skills rather than their understanding of underlying values or cultural context.

Another challenge relates to the scarcity of teachers with interdisciplinary competencies. Many traditional dance educators possess high artistic skills but lack training or knowledge in cultural anthropology, Eastern philosophy, or social history—the foundations of traditional dance (Kyakuwa, 2020). As a result, instruction is often disconnected from the cultural values that should animate the dance forms. Enabling narrative, contextual, and reflective teaching requires educators who can act as cultural facilitators, not merely technical instructors.

Despite these issues, promising innovative potentials exist. One is the integration of information technology and digital media as pedagogical tools. Interactive digital platforms—such as cultural documentary videos, context-based dance learning apps, or virtual tours to traditional cultural centers—can enrich students' learning experiences and deepen their symbolic understanding of dance movements (Shen, 2024). Technology also supports the documentation and revitalization of endangered minority dance traditions and helps engage younger generations through familiar media channels.

Additionally, collaborative partnerships between arts education institutions and local communities offer significant potential for enhancing cultural value in dance education. Involving traditional artists, cultural figures, and ethnic communities in the learning process not only strengthens the legitimacy of local cultures, but also creates authentic spaces for intergenerational knowledge transfer (Rosala & Budiman, 2020). Such collaborations enable students to directly encounter cultural meaning through participatory practice rather than passive classroom observation.

Innovation can also emerge through curriculum redesign using culturally responsive pedagogy frameworks. Such curricula do not merely append cultural content; they embed local cultural principles into teaching strategies, assessment methods, and classroom dynamics (Ladson-Billings, 1995). For example, Confucian principles—such as harmony, ancestor reverence, and collectivism—can form the ethical foundation for dance learning, shifting the focus from individual achievement to a collective cultural responsibility.

Lastly, engaging students as active agents in cultural preservation is a key potential pathway. Project-based learning that invites students to create dance works based on research into local culture or interviews with tradition bearers can foster cultural ownership, reflective thinking, and creativity (Payne & Costas, 2021). Thus, students are not only taught to replicate movements but are guided to understand, contextualize, and reinterpret the cultural meanings embedded in each dance form.

Through these innovations, traditional Chinese dance education can transcend mere preservation of heritage forms to become a dynamic space for dialogue among generations, cultures, and educational paradigms. Establishing educational models that balance value conservation with adaptability to contemporary realities is central to responding to the pressures of cultural globalization. Going forward, the imperative to develop arts education

grounded in local culture will only intensify—not only as a heritage responsibility but as a strategic affirmation of identity in an era of rapid change.

Implications of the Findings for Arts Education and Cultural Heritage Preservation

The representation of cultural values in traditional dance education serves not merely as a vehicle for aesthetic transmission or information transfer, but plays a central role in shaping students' cultural identity. In the context of arts education in China, traditional dance is not merely taught as a repertoire of movements to be mastered, but as a cultural expression embodying philosophical values, historical symbolism, and the collective construction of both ethnic and national identity (Liu & Kalimyllin, 2024).

When these cultural dimensions are authentically represented in educational processes, students acquire not only technical proficiency but also a deeper understanding of their cultural roots. This is vital for cultivating reflective identity awareness, allowing learners to locate themselves within broader historical trajectories and sociocultural dynamics. Studies have shown that learning experiences rich in cultural content foster a strong sense of belonging to one's cultural community (Lobo, 2023), and strengthen an ethos of respect for cultural diversity.

Conversely, when cultural representation in dance education is superficial or merely decorative, it leads to the depoliticization and desubstantialization of cultural heritage. Students are likely to perceive traditional dance as an exoticized art form devoid of context or narrative significance. This fosters a disconnect between younger generations and their cultural heritage, potentially resulting in cultural alienation within educational institutions (Zhang, 2019).

The broader implication of such inadequate representation is the weakening of students' critical engagement with issues of cultural identity in the face of globalization. They become consumers of stylized art forms designed for aesthetic appeal or marketability, rather than participants in a living, evolving cultural discourse. This impedes the internalization of cultural values through dance education, thus limiting the potential of traditional dance to serve as a medium for character education, moral development, and social solidarity.

On the other hand, when cultural representation is reflective and participatory, students are encouraged to take an active role in the preservation and reinterpretation of their cultural heritage. Research indicates that students involved in meaning-making processes related to traditional dance exhibit higher levels of cultural awareness and develop critical perspectives on identity and cultural dynamics in contemporary society (Djafar & Djafri, 2024). This suggests that value- and meaning-oriented dance instruction makes a significant contribution to cultivating cultural citizenship.

Culturally grounded traditional dance education also enables students to develop creative hybrid identities—particularly in a modern Chinese society that exists at the intersection of tradition and modernity. Within such spaces, students are not rigidly positioned as “guardians of tradition,” but are invited to engage in dialogue between cultural heritage and their contemporary experiences. This process facilitates the emergence of new

forms of cultural expression that remain rooted in tradition while responding to the realities of the present.

Another critical implication is the strengthening of students' affective capacities. Participation in culturally based dance education affects not only cognitive and technical development but also nurtures empathy, social sensitivity, and emotional connection to cultural communities (Beauregard et al., 2020). Such capacities are increasingly essential in 21st-century education, where intercultural competence plays a pivotal role.

Therefore, strategies for cultural representation in dance education must align with the long-term objective of developing resilient, reflective learners who remain grounded in their cultural roots. The integration of cultural values into arts education must be consciously designed, structurally embedded, and contextually informed in order to generate transformative outcomes—both for individual students and society at large.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the integration of cultural values into traditional Chinese dance education through curriculum documents, arts education policies, and instructional materials. While some efforts to incorporate cultural values exist, such representations remain largely confined to technical and aesthetic dimensions, often at the expense of cultural depth. The prevailing focus on performativity and competition reduces opportunities for the internalization of cultural meanings that are vital to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Major obstacles include resistance to pedagogical innovation and the dominance of technically oriented education paradigms. Nonetheless, interdisciplinary approaches and the use of information technology present promising avenues for revitalizing the integration of cultural values in a more adaptive and contextual manner. When cultural values are reflectively integrated into dance education, they can enhance cultural awareness and foster the development of inclusive and dynamic student identities. In this context, traditional dance becomes a powerful tool for cultural empowerment and national identity formation. Therefore, curriculum development must allocate more space for the historical, philosophical, and sociocultural contexts of dance, while adopting holistic learning models that merge theoretical understanding with practical engagement. Empowering educators through interdisciplinary training is essential to equip them with the tools needed to convey cultural values effectively and meaningfully. Furthermore, leveraging digital technology and online learning platforms can improve accessibility and appeal among younger generations. Cross-disciplinary collaboration and stakeholder engagement are also critical to building an ecosystem that supports the sustainability of cultural heritage. To enhance both cultural integration and the effectiveness of traditional dance education, arts education policies should adopt a more inclusive and context-sensitive framework—one that accommodates diverse pedagogical approaches capable of bridging cultural conservation with contemporary realities. Involving cultural communities and traditional artists in the development of educational materials can enrich content with authentic perspectives. Additionally, ongoing evaluation and monitoring are necessary to ensure that traditional dance education does not remain limited to technical dimensions, but also fosters comprehensive cultural understanding

and appreciation. Through a holistic and collaborative approach, traditional dance can remain a vibrant, relevant, and empowering force amid the challenges of globalization—without losing its cultural essence.

REFERENCE

- Beauregard, C., Tremblay, J., Pomerleau, J., Simard, M., Bourgeois-Gu erin, E., Lyke, C., & Rousseau, C. (2020). Building communities in tense times: Fostering connectedness between cultures and generations through community arts. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 65*(3–4), 437–454. doi:10.1002/ajcp.12411
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Chen, C. (2023). Penetration of foreign dance culture and the evolution of its development in the Chinese education system. *Questions of History, 11*(1), 260–271.
- Cui, Z. (2023). *Dancing Chinese nationalism: An examination into the hybridity and politics of Chinese classical dance and ballet* (PhD dissertation).
- Dai, S., Xue, H., Giardina, M. D., & Newman, J. I. (2024). Hybrid choreographic femininities: DanceSport, physical culture, and performative corporeality in contemporary China. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 16*(4), 368–386. doi:10.1080/2159676X.2024.2313205
- Daxue Consulting. (2021). *China arts education market report: Focus on dance and music sectors*.
- Djafar, N., & Djafri, N. (2024). Cultivation of cultural literacy and creativity through traditional dance learning at Kabila Bone 1 Middle School as a form of object for the advancement of regional culture in the Tomini Bay area. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Ilmu Pendidikan, 1*(2), 08–22. doi:10.62951/prosemnasipi.v1i2.27
- Febriandiela, F., & Fitriasia, A. (2023). Implementasi Thematic Analysis Melalui Langkah Coding Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif Pada Ilmu Sosial. *FisiPublik: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Politik, 8*(1), 1–10. Retrieved from <https://journal.uwgm.ac.id/index.php/fisipublik>
- Go, C. (2024). Problems and countermeasures to solve them in the system of dance education in colleges and universities in China. *Scientific Research and Development. Socio-Humanitarian Research and Technology, 12*(4), 96–103. doi:10.12737/2306-1731-2024-12-4-96-103
- Goethel, A. M. (2016). *Culture on stage: Contemporary performances of the Chinese model ballets, 2000–2016* (Master's thesis). University at Buffalo, State University of New York.
- Goodnough, K., Arnold, C., Azam, S., Maich, K., Moghaddam, A., Penney, S., & Young, G. (2020). Cultivating a self-study community of practice: Reflections of faculty on issues of evolution and functioning. *Studying Teacher Education, 16*(2), 145–163. doi:10.1080/17425964.2020.1737928
- Heyang, T., Ma, X., & Liang, D. (2023). Change or not: Inheritance and development of the “three bends” in the teaching of traditional dances of the Dai people in China and

- Thailand: Based on the grounded theory of four teaching units. *Research in Dance Education*, 1, 1–15. doi:10.1080/14647893.2023.2209504
- Hou, Y., Kenderdine, S., Picca, D., Egloff, M., & Adamou, A. (2022). Digitizing intangible cultural heritage embodied: State of the art. *Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage*, 15(3), 1–20. doi:10.1145/3494837
- Hu, Y. (2023). Identity and preservation of traditional culture in the context of urbanization in China. *Studies in Art and Architecture*, 2(3), 86–89. doi:10.56397/SAA.2023.09.10
- Jianqiang, W., Li, X., & Zhang, Y. (2023). Cultural erosion in traditional dance education: Challenges and prospects in China. *International Journal of Performing Arts Education*, 18(1), 45–61.
- Jin, J., & Snook, B. (2022). Comprehensively strengthening and improving aesthetic education in a new era: An examination of the dance education major at the Beijing Dance Academy. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 11(3), Article 2212585X2211274. doi:10.1177/2212585X221127451
- Kim, S. I. (2023). The unreconciled dichotomy: Preservation and (re)creation of dance heritage in South Korea. *Dance Chronicle*, 46(1), 20–39. doi:10.1080/01472526.2022.2154504
- Kyakuwa, J. (2020). *A case study of two preservice elementary music teachers as culture-bearers* (Doctoral dissertation). Louisiana State University. doi:10.31390/gradschool_dissertations.5210
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159–165.
- Liu, W., Xue, H., & Wang, Z. Y. (2024). A systematic comparison of intercultural and indigenous cultural dance education from a global perspective (2010–2024). *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1493457. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1493457
- Liu, Y. (2023). *Teaching dance in intermediate schools in China* (Master's thesis). University of Auckland.
- Liu, Z., & Kalimyllin, D. (2024). Chinese dance education and culture path in the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage to the younger generation. *Research in Dance Education*, 1–14. doi:10.1080/14647893.2024.2331120
- Lobo, J. (2023). Protecting Philippine dance traditions via education of tomorrow's pedagogues: The role of individual interest and school engagement. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 10(1), 98–124. doi:10.29333/ejecs/1527
- Luo, Y. (2021). Safeguarding intangible heritage through edutainment in China's creative urban environments. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 27(2), 170–185. doi:10.1080/13527258.2020.1780463
- Lyu, M. (2024). Balancing academic and artistic merit: Equity concerns for dance students in China's college entrance system. *Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 8(11), 130–136. doi:10.26689/jcer.v8i11.8726
- Ma, Q. (2023). Integrating traditional ritual dance and minority culture of Western Hunan into dance instruction: Utilizing information technology to preserve China's intangible heritage. *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 38(2), 635–646. doi:10.1093/llc/fqac057

- Mao, N. (2022). Study on the aesthetic characteristics of Chinese traditional dance—Taking Chinese classical dance as an example. *International Journal of Education and Management*, 7(2), 255–257.
- Oranga, J., & Matere, A. (2023). Qualitative research: Essence, types and advantages. *OALib*, 10(12), 1–9. doi:10.4236/oalib.1111001
- Payne, H., & Costas, B. (2021). Creative dance as experiential learning in state primary education: The potential benefits for children. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 44(3), 277–292. doi:10.1177/1053825920968587
- Pepler, K., Dahn, M., & Ito, M. (2022). Connected arts learning: Cultivating equity through connected and creative educational experiences. *Review of Research in Education*, 46(1), 264–287. doi:10.3102/0091732X221084322
- Pidlypska, A., Gutnyk, I., Gorbatova, N., Pidlypskyi, A., & Bilash, O. (2024). Theoretical aspects of the formation of the individual styles of teachers of choreographers in the process of obtaining second-level educational and third-level educational and scientific degrees in higher education. *Multidisciplinary Reviews*, 6, 2023spe004. doi:10.31893/multirev.2023spe004
- Rosala, D., & Budiman, A. (2020). Local wisdom-based dance learning: Teaching characters to children through movements. *Mimbar Sekolah Dasar*, 7(3), 304–326. doi:10.17509/mimbar-sd.v7i3.28185
- Safety reminder for extracurricular training of dance and other sports and arts for primary and secondary school students (2023). http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/202311/t20231111_1090139.html
- Shen, F. (2024). Exploration of the communication path of Chinese traditional art and culture with Internet+ and VR interaction design. *Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences*, 9(1), 20240241. doi:10.2478/amns-2024-0241
- Tan, J. (2023). Optimizing the curriculum structure of training performance-oriented talents in national dance. *International Journal of Education and Humanities*, 11(3), 314–319.
- Wang, J., & Zhao, Z. (2022). Visual translation of traditional Chinese costume culture. *Frontiers in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(8), 159–162. doi:10.54691/fhss.v2i8.1675
- Wei, S. (2023). Chaoshan Yingge dance: Cultural identity of Chinese folk dance in the context of modern China (Master's thesis). Mahasarakham University.
- Wilcox, E. (2018). Revolutionary bodies: Chinese dance and the socialist legacy. *Asian Theatre Journal*, 35(2), 212–230. doi:10.1525/luminos.58
- Wong, N. (2024). Analyzing reasons for the aesthetic transformation of dance culture in Chinese Generation Z—Taking Otaku dance as an example. *Arts, Culture and Language*, 1(6). doi:10.61173/1fqf1e60
- Xun, L. (2023). Research on the integration teaching of dance-related intangible cultural heritage and the ethnic folk dance professional course in local universities. *Arts Education Research*, 1(2), 33–37.
- Ugwu, C. N., & Eze Val, H. U. (2023). Qualitative research. *IDOSR Journal of Computer and Applied Sciences*, 8(1), 20–35. Retrieved from www.idosr.orgAsuketal