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INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL CHINESE MUSIC INTO PRIMARY SCHOOL MUSIC CURRICULUM: A STANDARDS-BASED APPROACH TO ARTS EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how Traditional Chinese Music (TCM) can serve a primary school music programme within a standards-based school system. Despite the rich culture and history, TCM has yet to gain much presence in primary classrooms, and it looks like a spectacle compared to Western musical traditions. The current qualitative case study explores how TCM can be relevantly and sustainably incorporated in the teaching of music under the national standards. Using semi-structured interviews carried out with five primary school music teachers of varying backgrounds, the study has identified key themes to include limited formal inclusion of TCM, knowledge and confidence gap among teachers, resources and time limit, perceived cultural and musical value, and long-term integration strategies. Results show that although teachers have noted the cultural significance of TCM, they experience difficulties regarding training, curriculum provisions, and availability of required materials. The teachers promote proper curriculum alignment, professional growth, utilisation of digital tools and resource packages to improve implementation. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Constructivist Learning Theory give the study its context, arguing that inclusive, student-centred, and culturally based teaching practises are required. The study makes a valuable contribution to the discussion of culturally inclusive education and proposes viable directions in which TCM should be incorporated into music curriculums. It demands institutional changes to sustain culture and identity making in primary education to date.

KEYWORDS: Traditional Chinese Music, Music Education, Primary Schools, Curriculum Standards, Teacher Perceptions, Cultural Heritage, Pedagogy.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Integration of cultural heritage in formal education has been long accepted as a tool of cultural continuity and holistic learning. As Yang (2023) says, traditional forms in music education add value to artistic development of students and enhance their cultural identity. Holding an important place in the intangible cultural heritage of China is Traditional Chinese Music (TCM) with its unique tonal models, instruments, and philosophical foundations. However, in most contemporary schools, the primary music curriculum generally focuses on Western tonal traditions, and does not allow much room to explore cultural diversity. Additionally, according to Tu (2022), this imbalance has led to complaints about the loss of cultural awareness among younger generations and the necessity to introduce traditional arts into school curriculum in a more systematised way. Primary school is a formative period in the intellectual and social growth of a child. The implementation of TCM on this level can offer children chances to gain aesthetic sensitivity, creativity, and intercultural competence. Furthermore, Miao (2024), underlined the idea that exposure to traditional instruments like the guzheng, erhu or dizi, folk songs and territorial melodies can help to appreciate the rich musical heritage of the country. Moreover, interaction with the cultural and historical background of these types enables students to relate music to larger historical, values, and social identity perspectives. Such incorporation is consistent with the world learning objectives that focus on cultural diversity and preservation of intangible heritage via formal learning systems.

A curriculum-based model of arts education offers a systematic structure of imbibing traditional content in the curriculum. Standards of education formulate learning goals, testing standards, and skills, so that integration turns out not to be an ad hoc event, but rather a well-coherent and quantifiable event. National curriculum standards in music in the Chinese context focus more on aesthetic education, creativity and cultural inheritance that provides a rationale to incorporate TCM (Li, 2024). Nevertheless, there are still practical problems, such as readiness of teachers, availability of resources, and a balance between traditional and up-to-date content when the instructional time is limited. Through its framing, educators are in a position to mitigate these challenges and remain consistent with overall educational reforms, which place greater emphasis on quality and equity (Gunther, 2024). Researchers

and educators around the world have exercised an emphasis on the significance of culturally responsive instruction as a way of ensuring that personal experiences of students are transformed into academic content. Including TCM in the primary school curriculum is quite consistent with this perspective, as it does not only create music ability, but also a sense of self and culture. Finally, the possibility of inquiring the systematic principles of integrating TCM holds the potential of inclusive education and cultural survival that renders the antique practises viable and healthy to future generations.

1.2. Problem Statement

Despite the rich history of Traditional Chinese Music (TCM) and its high culture relevance, it is not prominently represented in primary school curricula where teaching relies heavily on Western music traditions. This imbalance risks undermining the awareness of children about their cultural background and chances to promote aesthetic consciousness and cultural identity are missed at early stages (Shi, 2025). Although national curriculum standards in China emphasise cultural heritage and creativity, more practical problems such as the lack of training, the insufficient amount of material, and the absence of systematic frameworks hamper the successful integration of TCM (Wang and Webb, 2024). There are grave risks in the extinction of that knowledge and an inability to convey it to other generations in the future, unless new traditions connected to TCM are established, embedded within a standards based education, and unless much research is done to concentrate on how this can be achieved within the primary music education programme.

1.3. Research Objectives

- To examine how Traditional Chinese Music (TCM) can be effectively integrated into the primary school music curriculum through alignment with existing educational standards.
- To explore teachers' perceptions, experiences, and challenges in implementing TCM within standards-based music education at the primary level.
- To identify practical strategies, resources, and pedagogical approaches that support the sustainable inclusion of TCM in primary school music teaching.

1.4. Research Questions

- How can Traditional Chinese Music (TCM) be

effectively integrated into the primary school music curriculum in alignment with existing educational standards?

- What are teachers' perceptions, experiences, and challenges in implementing TCM within standards-based music education at the primary level?
- What practical strategies, resources, and pedagogical approaches can support the sustainable inclusion of TCM in primary school music teaching?

1.5. Significance

This study is significant both regarding educational practise and the culture preservation. In studying the ways of integrating Traditional Chinese Music (TCM) into the school curriculum at the primary level the study establishes the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage as well as the cultivation of cultural identification and creativity among the students. The study will enlighten teachers and policy experts as well as curriculum makers of practical options that will undertake the loopholes that may arise in the resources and teacher preparedness as the means to fill the channels. The study concludes by embracing responsive pedagogies revolving within the cultures and it advocates the practise of application use of traditional cultures as being permanent in contemporary learning institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview

The chapter will review the literature regarding the cultural significance of Traditional Chinese Music (TCM), its implementation in primary school music curricula, the teacher factor and their encounters, pedagogical quality procedures, and the conceptual frameworks with the aim of presenting the gaps that will determine this research focus.

2.2. Integrating TCM into Primary Music Curriculum

The traditional Chinese Music (TCM) is rich in the cultural, historical, and artistic exude. In such a way, Zhou et al. (2024) analysed the potential of integration of TCM into the primary school music curriculum as the model that would give young learners a unique opportunity to learn about various musical cultures.

To successfully implement TCM, it is crucial to align it with other educational standards e.g. the national arts or music curriculum frameworks. This

integration makes TCM less marginal or part-time subject but an essential aspect of musical growth among students. Furthermore, He et al (2024), explained that effective integration starts with the mapping of TCM components, pentatonic scales, folk songs, traditional instruments, and performance practices to learning outcomes that address melody, rhythm, timbre, and cultural comprehension. CM can accommodate essential curricular objectives, such as listening and analysis, performance skills, composition, and intercultural understanding. Additionally, there is also an interdisciplinary connection to history, literature, and social studies. In particular, Jiao et al. (2025), concluded that investigating how ancient Chinese instruments were transformed or how folk songs reveal information about local cultures and cultures enriches musical and interdisciplinary learning. Learning and its enhancement can also be ensured by multimedia materials, interactive tools and cross cultural comparisons. The spiral approach would be relevant at the curriculum level; simplest in nature can be introduced in lower primary and increment in structure in the advanced grades. Additionally, there should be integration with inclusivity and diversity that will make all types of students relate and connect to the material.

2.3. Teachers' Perspectives and Challenges

The awareness of the perceptions, experiences and issues that the teachers face are also important to implementing Traditional Chinese Music successfully in primary music education. Educators play a pivotal role in curriculum delivery, and their attitudes, knowledge, and level of confidence towards TCM have a significant influence on its teaching and reception in the classroom. Multiple educators admit that adding TCM to education is valuable culturally and educationally, as it may expand the list of musical influences recognizing students and encourage them to develop intercultural understandings (West, 2019). Nevertheless, the excitement is often balanced by the practical limitations. A typical difficulty is a lack of formal training or exposure to TCM in teacher education.

A significant proportion of educators believe they are ill-equipped to teach traditional Chinese music instruments, melodic structures, or even musical principles, particularly those of a Western classical or contemporary music background. Another barrier is access to teaching resources (Wenglicki, 2020). The materials that are available to the teachers are often inappropriate; there is no access to the materials

adapted to the age and they are not relevant to the curriculum. The language barrier and the lack of notated music or recordings can also be a problem. Constant time pressure related to an already demanding curriculum and the pressure to deliver may also be obstacles to exploring less familiar musical territory (Lozada, 2018).

2.4. Strategies and Teaching Approaches

In the context of supporting sustainable incorporation of Traditional Chinese Music (TCM) into primary school music education, the strategies, tools, and instructional plans have to be found and adjusted to the reality of the primary school classroom. Furthermore, these approaches must be culturally sensitive and pedagogically competent to ensure effective teaching and learning outcomes as discussed by Zhikai *et al.* (2024).

These include curriculum embedding, where TCM is not taught as an independent subject, but is integrated within the rest of the curriculum throughout the year. Teachers can introduce students to Chinese folk music, musical instruments like *erhu* or *guzheng*, and musical styles during a unit on melody, rhythm, or world music inquiry. Moreover, Zeng *et al.* (2023) analyzed that this renders TCM a common feature of student musical experience.

Another effective strategy is experiential learning. Various practical activities which allow the students to touch the Chinese instruments, learn folk dances, make their exercises on pentatonic scales, etc. may involve them. Where instruments are unavailable, recordings or digital simulators may also be a source of exposure.

Furthermore, Ye (2024) concluded that the role of storytelling and cultural narratives about music can transfer the lessons into reality and create stronger bonds. Creating resource kits specific to primary educators; lesson plans, media, sheet music as well as assessment rubrics could greatly alleviate teacher load. Instruction can be enhanced by coordinating cooperative activities with music professionals, artists in the local area, or cultural organizations. Guest workshops or cultural exchange activity exposes students to authentic performance and practice.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) and Constructivist Learning Theory are two fundamental educational concepts that are applied in this manuscript to support the introduction of Traditional Chinese Music (TCM) into primary schools.

2.5.1. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP)

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy notes that teachers should consider integrating the cultural backgrounds of students into their instruction to ensure more meaningful and inclusive learning. RP advocates the position that schooling ought to embrace and acknowledge various cultural identities, allowing students to relate what they learn to their lives. In this particular investigation, CRP qualifies the addition of TCM to support student cultural roots, nurture self-identity, cultivate intercultural awareness. It is also consistent with the Chinese national curriculum objectives of promoting creativity, aesthetic education, and cultural preservation (Murff, 2020). RP is also a helpful framework to analyze the perceptions and problems of teachers as it gives importance to the role of educators as the mediators of the cultures and they need to be provided with the knowledge and sensitivity towards different traditions.

2.5.2. Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory, linked to theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky, proposes the belief that learners create their own knowledge through their experiences and interactions with the world. The following pedagogical strategies are supported by this theory: experiential learning, scaffolding, and student-centered instruction. Making constructivism practical to music education, it engages learners in direct interaction with music forms, instruments, and cultural stories. To illustrate, playing the pentatonic scale or singing folk songs can enable students to explore and practice musical concepts (Zajda, 2021). TCM and constructivism also support the use of spiral curriculum models, with TCM concepts being revisited and built upon over time.

Collectively, these theories form a comprehensive basis of this research. RC ensures the integration of TCM is culturally relevant and socially significant and constructivism ensures the learning process is participatory, engaging, and developmentally appropriate among primary learners.

2.6. Literature Gap

Although previous literature shows appreciation of the cultural value behind Traditional Chinese Music (TCM) and urges the practice to be incorporated in education it lacks specific guidelines on how this traditional music can be incorporated into primary school curricula via a standards based approach. Studies have not always offered the inside view of the experiences of teachers based on their real

lives, particularly their struggles with implementing, resource accessibility, and teaching practices. Moreover, not much is explored regarding ways in which TCM can be integrated sustainably into formal music education. This manuscript fills these gaps by considering TCM integration both in theory and in the classroom.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a qualitative research approach to understand ways in which Traditional Chinese Music (TCM) can be incorporated into the Primary School music curriculum by identifying the alignment with educational standards. A qualitative approach is suitable because it enables an in-depth study of the experiences, views and struggles of teachers; aspects that cannot be quantified by numerical data but through an open, descriptive data analysis. The research design employs a qualitative case study to examine the implementation of TCM in actual classrooms and experiences of a group of teachers in a given educational environment. The information was gathered using semi-structured interviews, where discussions are guided but free-flowing. Such an approach helps investigate the experience of participants and allows taking personal interests into consideration. Case study combined with semi-structured interviews provides depth, contextual comprehension, and indicates compliance with the exploratory aims of the study.

3.1. Research Design

Case study design is useful in studying a small group of respondents in a real-life learning setting. This structure will aid in the reflection of how TCM can be adapted in the classroom and how the national standards may impact the practise. It can also be useful to critically examine the sophisticated activity among the objectives of curriculum, pedagogical practises and cultural material.

3.2. Participants

The sample of the study consists of 5 respondents (music teachers in primary school) selected on the basis of purposive sampling. The respondents are selected on the basis of their background with regards to teaching music in the primary level and being exposed to any of the following: implementation or even an attempt to incorporate the TCM teaching in their instruction. The choice of a small group of a narrow scope choice is replaced by depth and richness of the qualitative research, and the guarantee of participants with convenient and accessible knowledge on the problem under study.

3.3. Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews are used to collect data, a process that consumes around 10-12 minutes. These interviews adhere to a flexible interview guide with open-ended questions about the fit of the curriculum, teaching practises in the school, and personal attitudes toward TCM and perceived difficulties and levels of support. The semi-structured arrangement enables uniformity in the interviews but also helps participants to share their own experiences and observations. All interviews would be conducted in a private and comfortable environment, either through video conferencing or face-to-face, at the discretion of the participants. The interviews are transcribed verbatim, which guarantees accuracy and allows thorough analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is employed to analyse interview data and the analysis follows the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation with the data, initial codes generation, theme search, review, theme definition and naming, and final narrative triage. Coding is done by hand and emergent themes are sorted to capture essential results concerning the introduction of TCM, teacher preparedness, perceived benefits and constraints and correspondence to national curriculum standards.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

This research is conducted with high ethical standards. The relevant institutional review board is approached to secure ethical approval. The participants are fully informed about the purpose and procedures of the study through a formal informed consent procedure. It is strictly voluntary, and every participant has the right to withdraw. All identifying data shall be anonymized with pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality, and data shall be stored in secure locations and also accessed by the researcher alone.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The chapter provides a thematic analysis of the qualitative data gathered in the form of five semi-structured interviews with primary school music teachers (T1-T5). The study will examine the concepts of TCM in primary school and look at how teachers perceive the teaching of TCM and the issues they faced and how the teaching of TCM can be sustained within the framework of a standards-based education system. Interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis as per the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This included

becoming familiar with the data, producing initial codes, exploring themes, refining and defining themes, and interpreting the findings. This exercise revealed five correlating themes that present the reality of teaching TCM in the primary classrooms. The five themes are

- Limited Formal Inclusion of TCM in the Curriculum
- Teacher Knowledge and Confidence Gaps
- Resource and Time Constraints
- Value of TCM for Cultural and Musical Development
- Strategies for Sustainable Integration

Each theme is elaborated below, with selected quotes from participants and extended interpretation of their implications for teaching practice and curriculum development.

Theme 1: Limited Formal Inclusion of TCM in the Curriculum One of the most common observations was that TCM is not formally or regularly integrated into the majority of schools' music programs. Although the national curriculum includes references to cultural heritage and aesthetic education, the practical application of TCM in the classroom tends to be superficial or reliant on the individual instructor.

T1, a senior teacher at an urban public school, described this marginal presence "TCM is only brought up during festivals or cultural weeks. The rest of the year, the curriculum focuses mostly on Western music; classical, pop, or instrumental training. There's no dedicated time or learning objectives tied to TCM."

This quote shows the inclination that is arising in the schools where TCM is just considered as a cultural activity instead of something that is taken seriously as part of school curriculums. TCM does not have classroom access and thus misses out on a chance to activate student interest in local cultural traditions and to help them to remain active with those traditions.

T2 also shared similar concerns: "It's not formally included in our lesson plans. I might play a traditional song during Chinese New Year, but there's no specific official structure or standard to follow... Although traditional music is nominally part of the curriculum, teachers often allocate only a few minutes; typically, 5 to 10 per class to cover traditional content." This minimal engagement is further compounded by a lack of pedagogical confidence or training, limiting the depth and effectiveness of instruction.

This explanation elucidates the greater issue of implementing curriculum: culturally relative

materials such as TCM are often marginalized until they can be connected with test protocols or state initiatives. Therefore, an educator may not be adequately motivated or even willing to dedicate their time to TCM in case of other curricular interests. Interestingly, T4, working at a private school introduced a contrasting example;

"Our school incorporates TCM into every grade. It's not just for special occasions; it's part of how we teach core concepts like rhythm, melody, and cultural appreciation. Students even perform traditional songs using virtual instruments or recordings."

This means that the motivation and strong school culture accommodating towards traditional arts would be required to fit TCM in a significant and systematic manner. The distances among schools as well reveal inequality in the provision of cultural education, ceiling on the type of school and the resources or priorities of the school. The overall focus on this theme has been on the way curriculum should be streamlined, in that TCM should not become an option or occasion but a routine appointment in the teaching programmes as an established part of the learning outcomes.

Theme 2: Teacher Knowledge and Confidence Gaps The second relevant theme is incompetence of the TCM teacher preparedness. Most participants were keen on the idea of incorporating TCM in their lessons though were found to lack confidence or felt insecure because of the personal aspect of not having been trained.

"T2 was blunt about this: I was never trained to teach TCM. I do not understand how the instruments work or how to describe Chinese scales or modes. Well, that makes me shyness to even attempt. I do not wish to teach a false thing."

It is one of the primary challenges: though they are well aware that TCM is a valuable information, the professional background; often based on the Western understanding of music theory and pedagogy; makes them inadequately equipped to deliver the traditional content in a confident voice.

T5, a newcomer to a rural school, had a similar view: "I am mostly guided by YouTube videos or my recollections as a student. However, I do not feel comfortable heading up a TCM lesson due to lack of background and resources."

This quote shows that the absence of official training and approved resources not only impacts the content of teaching but also can make teachers hesitant to pursue TCM at all. Lack of confidence leaks into avoidance, further marginalising traditional content. Even T1, who has over a decade

of experience, **admitted**

"I know a few traditional instruments, and I have a feel for the pentatonic sound, but I am not formally trained. I would not know how to plan a comprehensive unit on TCM that fits the curriculum."

This theme supports the significance of professional development, which directly addresses the classical fashions of music. Even seasoned teachers find it difficult to teach a culturally relevant and technically correct course on TCM without any formal education.

Theme 3: Resource and Time Constraints The respondents cited not only knowledge gaps, but also the lack of resources and time to incorporate TCM into their lessons. These obstacles were experienced tangentially across various schools. **T1 described material challenges**

"Had I wished to teach TCM, I lack the instruments. No CDs or audio samples. Traditional instruments are impossible, of course, too expensive and unavailable at such schools as our own."

Although every school has music textbooks containing traditional Chinese music pieces, many educators think these are inadequate alone. Boring texts in books, with no sound resources to go along with them, instructional aids, or instructions on how to be effectively instructional with the textbooks, teachers frequently face a challenge on how to effectively teach TCM to their students. This highlights the critical role that infrastructure and teaching aids have in influencing curriculum choices. Devoid of accessible resources, even well-designed curricula do not work in reality.

T3 highlighted the pressure of a crowded curriculum: The music curriculum is already full. We concentrate on performance preparation, rhythmic practise, and singing. Space to add something new is minimal unless it is already on the syllabus."

In this case, the teacher singles out an institutional limitation, which is frequently encountered in our schools; the emphasis on exam-driven material at the expense of cultural enrichment. TCM falters to fit in with regular instruction unless it is explicitly associated with exam preparation or performance evaluation.

T5 shared challenges specific to a rural context: "We don't have any TCM materials or even reliable internet to stream videos. Everything I do comes from personal effort. I'd include more if I had ready-made materials or a structured guide."

This quotation refers to local educational differences. Under-resourced schools are specially disadvantaged in their delivery of arts education that

demands specific tools or media. Overall, this theme highlights the importance of central and accessible resources and curriculum structure that can accommodate culturally diverse material. Unless such logistical challenges are resolved, the attempts to integrate TCM become symbolic gestures, without significant learning processes.

Theme 4: Value of TCM for Cultural and Musical Development Nevertheless, all teachers indicated that they believed strongly in the importance of TCM on holistic development of students. They explained the role of traditional music in nurturing not just musical talents but also cultural pride, historical knowledge and individual identity. T3 indicated the enrichment of the worldview of students with TCM:

"When I introduce even a short piece of traditional music, students ask questions. They become curious about where the sounds come from, what the instruments mean. It opens up conversations about culture, heritage, and values."

This indicates the potential of TCM to act as a facilitator of intercultural exchange and enhanced learning. It reaches further than aesthetics to relate students with historical, philosophical, and social aspects of music. T4 with frequent exposure to TCM observed:

"I've seen how students take pride when they recognize songs or instruments from their own background. They feel seen. It builds their confidence and encourages them to explore music more deeply."

Here TCM is put forth as a powerful tool of incorporation. It does not overlook the cultural subjectivity of the students and provides a counter-storey to an implicit focus of western music that is practised in the learning institution. T2 who was experiencing implementation issues did not drop the importance of TCM either:

"It's essential. By teaching Western music only, we are not presenting the students with fully fledged picture. We are missing their own traditions. TCM assists students in touching their identity and that is also education."

Such reactions bring the idea of TCM being the educational practise with transformational possibilities not only in terms of skills acquisition, but also learning empathy, cultural literacy, and self-esteem. These are sufficient reasons why it becomes a habitual acquisition of the music course.

The responses show that TCM has a chance to work as the transformative educational practise not only in the view of skill acquisition, but also in evoking empathy, cultural literacy, and self-worth. These are enough reasons why it must become a

regular standard of the music course.

Theme 5: Strategies for Sustainable Integration

The last theme is the proposed actions regarding the recommendation of the teacher on incorporating TCM. However, despite the challenges, the interviewees developed viable ways of making traditional music to be made more accommodating and viable in schools. **T1 demanded more transformation of the policies**

"There should be clear standards for TCM. If it's written into the national curriculum with learning objectives and assessment guidelines, teachers will have a framework to follow. It would also help justify using class time for TCM."

This underscores the significance of top-down support; curriculum systems must follow cultural values to be adopted at the classroom level. T2 underscored the importance of teacher training: "We need training—workshops, courses, anything that helps us understand how to teach TCM. If we had that support, more teachers would include it regularly."

This implies that even relatively modest interventions, such as short courses or peer-led training, could have a tremendous confidence-enhancing and implementation impact. T4 encouraged the adoption of technology:

"Interactive apps, video lessons, and virtual instruments can make traditional music more engaging, especially for younger students. Technology can bridge the gap between traditional and modern teaching."

Not only does the digitalization of the resources updated the information but also decreased the necessity to rely on tangible tools, making TCM more accessible to every school. T5 brought in a more practical approach:

"Even basic resource kits—like a lesson plan, worksheet, or audio file could make a big difference. Teachers don't always have time to create everything from scratch."

These results demonstrate that small-scale, teacher-ready resources have the potential to promote the more frequent and confident practice of TCM in the classroom.

4.1. Conclusion

This review shows that there is an existential mutual understanding among teachers of the importance of Traditional Chinese Music but institutional constraints impose restrictions on fully integrating it into curriculum. Although some schools, including some privately run schools or schools that emphasize a given culture, manage to

integrate TCM into their teaching, most are poorly equipped owing to the exclusion of affordable these teachings in the curriculum, inadequate teacher training on the topic, resource constraints, and insufficient time. Most schools do not teach TCM because of curricular neglect, between lack of preparation among the teaching staff, scarcity of materials, and time. Teachers do not resist change. Instead, they are receptive, thoughtful, and have a desire to incorporate TCM in a more meaningful way; with the right incentives and resources. The results indicate that a combined initiative of curriculum transformation, professional learning, and resource distribution is necessary so that TCM can be established as a sustainable and equitable element of music education.

5. DISCUSSION

Findings of the study report that Traditional Chinese Music (TCM) has been marginalised in the school music curriculum in primary schools and is commonly presented in cultural events or in festive occasions. The majority of teachers do not perceive TCM as a structured component of their instruction plan despite the directives of the national curriculum that promotes cultural heritage. This is consistent with other studies that identify the dominance of Western music in formal education, particularly in postcolonial or competitively globalised requirements (Wan and Zhu, 2024). Although the national standards in China do promote the use of cultural content, educators are not always guided on how to integrate these objectives in practical use (Li, 2024). There are no assessment rubrics or time allocation, which adds to the idea that TCM is not essential. Without being incorporating into the curriculum, as Zhe (2008) observes, traditional music is at risk of being marginalised. Further, the gap between publicly and privately or culture-driven schools, including the one depicted by T4, implies the unfairness in cultural education access. This confirms Smith and Von Glahn (2020) argued that the educational policy needs to be aligned with infrastructure and teacher's supports to provide equal opportunities in learning culture. Thus, the curriculum document can support TCM, but its effective implementation in practise remains mostly at the discretion of school leaders, the accessibility of resources, and the initiative of the teacher; aspects not always constant in various contexts of education.

The other important result is the great disparity between teacher training and professional confidence in the teaching of TCM. The majority preferred not to mention the level of their experience,

but most of the interviewees reported that the education in music training paid so much attention to Western theory and practise that they were not ready to teach traditional Chinese instruments, scales, or repertoire. This is consistent with previous studies by Campbell (2021), who observed that teacher education practises in China frequently focus on international norms of music education and disregard local content. Geneva Gay (2010) theory, *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*, focuses on providing educators with cultural knowledge to encourage the study of their cultural heritage about the past and themselves. However, according to this study, educators rarely get systematic opportunities to learn this expertise in TCM. Consequently, even lovers of the traditional music are timid of teaching it because they fear being uncompleteness or imperfect in their presentation. This deficiency of preparedness is part of a snowball of exclusion where teachers decline to teach TCM, thus they never build the confidence/skills required to teach it. Burton (2023) points out that successful curriculum reform does not involve merely changing what is taught; it should also include the idea of professional development. Without investment in teacher education, TCM risks to become more of a decorative, as opposed to a transformative, element of music education. Therefore, the policy-to-practise gap should be reduced by empowering teachers through training that is culturally contextualised and available.

The final theme identified in the current study refers to the hints at practical solutions, by which teachers refer to the alignment of curriculum, multimedia tools, and self-ready teaching kits as significant to promote sustainable integration of TCM. Participants, provided with access to a structured lesson plan, digital resources, or a nationally-aligned assessment tool, were prepared to teach TCM more frequently. This could be attributed to past research that suggests culturally inclusive programmes and materials (Han & Leung, 2017). Constructivist learning theory is another theory promoting hands-on and multimedia learning methods, which states that it stimulates active engagement of students in learning traditional tools, folk music, and musical narratives (Vygotsky and Cole, 2018). TCM can be modernised using modern digital tools (e.g., virtual instruments, recorded performances); this allows it to be more meaningful to younger learners and accessible in resource-limited schools. Besides, the spiral curriculum concept will be appropriate, which was introduced by some members, because it also aligns with the educational model suggested by Ozdem-Yilmaz and

Bilican (2025) where concepts will be reexamined and further elaborated after some period. Such measures confirm that TCM can be integrated in the future that is sustainable and welcome when offered a set of tools that are practically viable and pedagogically efficient. Li (2023) notes that systematic planning and empowering teachers cannot allow the integration of traditional music in formal learning spaces. This sentiment is reflected by the findings of this study which offer practitioner-based pathways in which TCM can integrate into primary music education as a critical factor.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this manuscript was to communicate on how TCM can be incorporated in a teaching of music in primary schools as a subject within a standards-based education system. Using qualitative case approach, based on interviews of five main teachers of music, the results revealed a deep contrast between policy intentions and classroom reality. TCM has been relegated to the curriculum but national standards emphasise cultural heritage and novel learning. Teachers also noted that TCM tends to be provided informally, usually based on special occasions, and is not consistently integrated into lesson planning or contrasted with standardised learning objectives. Weaknesses in teacher preparedness and self-efficacy were also identified by the research. The respondents mentioned lack of preparation, knowledge of TCM theory, and exposure to traditional instruments and practises. Deficiency in culturally appropriate teaching materials, assessment tools, and curriculum consultation also complicates the problem. Time and curriculum overload can lead to such problems, especially in under-resourced schools or in rural districts. The research also reported that educator level of awareness about the educational and cultural importance of TCM was high.

Educators were radiant that TCM was going to do a lot of good and help students feel more of who they are, learn about each other interculturally, and make music. They emphasised that with proper auxiliary support like digital resource, lesson-ready kits, and curriculum alignment; they would not only to use TCM more often but more conscientiously. It used the theory of *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* and *Constructivist Learning Theory*, as they were useful in situating the integration of TCM in terms of a culturally responsive, experience, and student-centred learning process. These informational foundations support the argument that TCM, when properly taught, cannot just preserve history, but

also sustain education itself. Lastly, this study identifies the need to narrow the gap between official policy of the curriculum and actual classroom implementation. Systemic support, teacher professional development, and practical materials are needed to guarantee the sustainability of Traditional Chinese Music in contemporary primary education. TCM is not a facade or a performance but a lasting element of a comprehensive art education that is culturally responsive and aware. With the further modernisation of the Chinese education system, having the Chinese rich musical tradition not just preserved but in some meaningful way transmitted to the young generation is an essential goal.

6.1. Recommendations

Based on the results of this research, the following recommendations are suggested

Implement TCM in the Curriculum at The National Level To maintain consistency internationally, TCM should be explicitly integrated in the curriculum standards, which stipulate learning requirements, instructional time, and assessment standards at the national level. This will justify its significance and make it systematically applicable.

Teacher Training Courses on Traditional Chinese Music Educational agencies must offer special courses on teacher training on traditional Chinese music. It should either include workshops, brief-course or web-based courses, or involve third-party cultural organisations, in providing information and confidence to the educators.

Supply of TCM Teaching Kits Education publishing agencies and Governments should start to design ready-made teaching packets comprising teaching plans, video recordings, instrumentation records and assessment rubrics; to be used by school children on grade levels. Such materials must be accommodative, present and flexible in different schools.

Showcase the Underlying technology to Learning TCM Schools ought to welcome the use of online platforms, such as recorded performances, playback music applications, and virtual

instruments. These tools will assist in making TCM more attractive and bridging the gaps where not all the schools offer these digital tools.

Encourage Cultural Student Liaisons in Schools

School/local musician, traditional learning of art organisation and cultural centre liaisons can introduce local cultural learning into the schools. The knowledge and appreciation of TCM in the minds of the students can be enhanced further through close interactions with TCM through activities like the guest workshops, performance, and living artist residency.

6.2. Limitations

This study has limited external validity due to the low sample size comprising 5 teachers. The sample was decentralised in various contexts, and the extracted data was unable to capture regional variation in China. The only method of collecting data was through interviews; there were no feedbacks of the students. Besides, the research is limited to teachers in music and will not encompass the perspectives of administrators and curriculum designers that can add further information on system wide convergence of TCM in primary education.

6.3. Future Research Directions

Further studies might examine the responses of learners towards TCM integration and illuminate information on learner activities and cultural identity building. Smaller studies enjoyed by additional provinces may analyse regional differences on access and implementation to TCM. It would also be advantageous to compare the school performance in both the urban and the rural schools. Moreover, longitudinal research would allow a deeper examination of the long-term implications of being constantly exposed to TCM on the musical development and cultural sensitivity of students. Lastly, the insights provided about the perceptions of school leaders and policymakers regarding the incorporation of TCM into an educational curriculum could guide further research and efforts in this aspect.

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