

INNOVATIVE PRACTICE OF INTRODUCING TRADITIONAL HENAN NURSERY RHYMES INTO THE PRESCHOOL EDUCATION CURRICULUM SYSTEM

Shang Yongna^{*1}, Zhang Shanshan²

^{*1,2}Department of Music Technology, School of Music, Henan University

¹yongnashang@gmail.com

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Corresponding Author: *

Shang Yongna

Abstract

This paper explores the innovative integration of traditional Henan nursery rhymes into the preschool education curriculum, addressing the challenges and benefits of incorporating regional cultural heritage into early childhood education. The study identifies key obstacles, including students' limited understanding of traditional music, the marginalization of folk songs in contemporary curricula, and the lack of a structured framework for artistic practice. Despite the cultural richness of Henan's nursery rhymes, their pedagogical potential remains underutilized, primarily due to the dominance of popular music and insufficient institutional support. Through surveys and interviews with students and educators, the research reveals a widespread preference for modern music genres over traditional folk tunes, with many students lacking awareness of the historical and cultural significance of nursery rhymes. To overcome these barriers, the paper proposes a comprehensive system for integrating traditional music into preschool education, emphasizing the importance of clear learning objectives, teacher guidance, and a balance between theory and practice. Additionally, the study highlights the potential of digital media and cultural tourism to revitalize the dissemination of Henan folk songs, promoting their relevance in modern educational contexts. The proposed framework aims to foster a deeper connection with local culture, enhancing students' professional skills and instilling a sense of national pride. By bridging the gap between traditional music and contemporary preschool education practices, this research contributes to the broader effort to preserve intangible cultural heritage and cultivate application-oriented talents in the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

Today, amid the rapid development of globalization and **digitalization**, social progress increasingly demands application-oriented talents with innovative capabilities. Strengthening practical teaching is a crucial component in cultivating such talents. Its advantage lies in effectively promoting the integration of theory and practice, allowing students to selectively expand their practical application abilities according to

their interests and needs. With the continuous expansion of higher education, a prominent issue in talent cultivation is the disconnect between the professional theories mastered by college students and the practical demands of the workplace. After entering their jobs, students' actual work abilities vary significantly. Therefore, quality-oriented education and professional awareness have become important goals of higher education, and

research on practical teaching has become a key part of educational reform in colleges and universities. Practical teaching focuses on training students' fundamental skills and improving their professional competencies. Relying on abundant teaching resources and broad career prospects, it carries out a series of open-ended activities and, together with formal classroom instruction, forms a complete educational system. For music education within the preschool education major, introducing traditional Henan nursery rhymes into the artistic practice component helps enhance students' professional skills, enables the effective implementation of traditional music education in kindergartens, and fosters children's awareness of local culture.

I. Current Situation of Integrating Traditional Nursery Rhymes into Preschool Art Practice

Traditional nursery rhymes run through the entire process of music education in the preschool education major, and their most direct form of expression appears in the artistic practice component. At present, the integration of traditional nursery rhymes into artistic practice presents the following problems:

First, traditional music has a very low level of recognition among preschool education students, and traditional nursery rhymes occupy a marginalized position in artistic practice activities. The wave of globalization and the diversification of musical life have impacted people's entertainment preferences, especially the influence of popular music on traditional music. The author conducted a music survey among some students of the five-year preschool education program (Class of 2012) at Zhengzhou Preschool Teachers College and received 386 valid questionnaires. The results showed that more than 92.2% of students (356 students) preferred popular music, while only 10.6% (41 students) liked traditional music. Among these 41 students, 43.9% (18 students) had only a superficial understanding of folk songs and opera, 29.2% (12 students) knew two to three types of traditional music, such as Yu Opera, Qu Opera, and mountain songs, and 26.8% (11 students) did not know what traditional music was at all. Among the

songs already learned, 69.7% (269 students) could accurately distinguish traditional nursery rhymes, while 30.3% (117 students) could not.

The above data indicate that contemporary preschool education majors have an unsatisfactory understanding of traditional music. When asked about the reasons, most students expressed unwillingness to listen to traditional music, believing it to be less trendy than popular music and considering traditional nursery rhymes too simple, rustic, and unfashionable. The underlying cause of this phenomenon is that diversified development hinders the dissemination of traditional culture. Today's advanced technology and rapid media communication promote popular culture in every corner of society while creating a selective bias in musical culture. Traditional music has not boarded the fast train of modern media and therefore faces great barriers to acceptance. If a nation loses its traditional musical culture, it also loses its national spirit, which would be a frightening cultural disaster.

Second, students lack clear learning objectives regarding traditional nursery rhymes, and their participation in artistic practice is not optimistic. The survey found that many students feel conflicted about whether to participate in artistic practice and what type of artistic activities to join. Some students believe participation occupies their spare time and that extracurricular activities lack clear learning value and meaning. They are uncertain about their learning goals and do not understand the practical significance of traditional nursery rhymes. Others do not know how to choose artistic practice activities, believing they can simply select what they like and avoid what they dislike, without recognizing the guiding significance of artistic practice in reality. A small number of students, although participating in artistic practice activities, cannot find a clear direction for learning and improvement. They feel the experience is far from their expectations and therefore adopt a relatively negative attitude. The author believes that the main responsibility for these problems lies with schools and teachers: insufficient emphasis and promotion of artistic practice, as well as a lack of necessary top-level design and institutional development. At present,

in many schools artistic practice courses are taught by professional instructors who already carry heavy teaching loads in formal classes and therefore have limited energy to offer more activities favored by students. As a result, students have few choices and find it difficult to select courses and instructors suitable for their own development. Due to the characteristics of music art practice, students who choose these activities usually already possess strengths in a particular specialty. Consequently, activity courses in music education often involve a two-way selection process: students choose activities consistent with their strengths, and teachers prefer students who perform well in their courses. In this way, students can only “develop strengths” but have difficulty “remediating weaknesses,” making the goal of comprehensive development hard to achieve. For example, in one school, students enrolling in an elective guzheng activity course must already have a certain skill level. Those without a foundation may not be admitted by the teacher. Thus, although the guzheng course is an important channel for integrating traditional music into preschool education teaching, participation remains low, with only 20–30 students joining each year.

Third, different organizing departments of artistic practice activities lack communication and coordination. Some activities overemphasize publicity effects while neglecting that traditional music itself is one of the main purposes of the activity. Various cultural and artistic events organized by the school are often managed by departments such as the Student Affairs Office, Academic Affairs Office, Music Department, and Youth League Committee, each with different service targets and expected goals. As a result, the traditional music knowledge learned by students in music classes—especially knowledge of traditional nursery rhymes—cannot easily be applied in such competitions and performances. For instance, many universities offering preschool education programs hold themed choir activities every year to align with national publicity and social development needs. However, with changes in the times and the promotion of quality education, purely promotional performances can no longer stimulate students’ learning enthusiasm

or broaden their knowledge. Therefore, artistic practice activities must adapt to contemporary demands and gradually expand performance content and scope, particularly highlighting preschool education characteristics. The creative arrangement and performance of traditional nursery rhymes should naturally become an important component, presenting diverse styles that give students a refreshing experience.

Fourth, school management regulations concerning artistic practice lack flexibility and operability. By overemphasizing procedural standardization, they restrict the effective dissemination of traditional nursery rhymes. In the survey, the author conducted interviews and discussions with teachers to understand their views on integrating traditional nursery rhymes into the artistic practice component. For example, choir is a comprehensive art discipline. Students must have foundations in sight-singing and ear training, vocal technique, and cooperative awareness. Therefore, each rehearsal session should last at least three hours. However, in many schools, activity classes are scheduled for only two class periods, often causing conflicts with other activity courses and significantly reducing the effectiveness of artistic practice. In addition, some teachers pointed out that activity courses are generally organized independently by instructors, who often select students from their own classes. Because students’ abilities vary considerably, the overall standard and level may fail to meet expectations when participating in competitions and performances.

With society’s urgent demand for highly qualified talent, institutions offering preschool education programs can no longer rely solely on traditional instruction in the primary classroom to meet talent cultivation needs. It is essential to continue developing a “second classroom,” carry out diverse artistic practice activities, and strengthen campus cultural development. Continuous exploration is needed to broaden students’ knowledge structures, enhance their practical abilities, and promote diversified development, thereby providing a strong practical platform for cultivating application-oriented talent and achieving the mutual complementarity and

integration of classroom teaching and artistic practice.

Literature Review

The integration of traditional regional culture into preschool education has become a focal point of contemporary pedagogical reform. Scholars have increasingly recognized that nursery rhymes serve as more than mere musical entertainment; they are vital carriers of linguistic nuances, historical memory, and ethnic identity (Chen, 2025; Wu, 2023). In the context of globalization, the protection of intangible cultural heritage is no longer just a preservation effort but a necessary educational intervention to foster "local root" awareness in the next generation (Wang, 2024; Yang, 2024).

Traditional Music and Preschool Curriculum Reform

Recent research emphasizes that early childhood is the critical window for cultural enculturation. Studies suggest that integrating folk music into the kindergarten curriculum enhances children's rhythmic perception and emotional intelligence (Sun, 2025; He, 2024). However, the transmission of these traditions faces significant hurdles. Shang and Zhang (2026) argue that the cultural value of Henan traditional nursery rhymes lies in their ability to bridge the gap between regional heritage and modern educational programs. This aligns with findings by Zhou (2024) and Tan (2026), who advocate for curriculum adaptability that respects the rhythmic structures specific to the Henan region.

Digitalization and Modern Dissemination Channels

The "fast train" of modern media has historically marginalized traditional music (Huang, 2023), yet current scholarship explores how these same tools can be reclaimed. Shang (2026a) notes that the inheritance of Henan folk songs requires a strategic shift toward digital dissemination to reach younger demographics. This digital shift is supported by Liu and Zhao (2025) and Xu (2023), who explore how digital archives and interactive media can create new pedagogical horizons for the

"Alpha generation." Furthermore, Shang (2026b) highlights that the integration of cultural tourism provides a unique context for dissemination, turning folk music into a "living" heritage.

The Role of Higher Normal Education and Practical Teaching

The quality of preschool music education is linked to the professional competencies of pre-service teachers. Research has identified a persistent "theory-practice" gap in vocational training (Li, 2024; Guo, 2025). Shang (2026c) explores practical methods for preserving Henan folk songs within higher normal music pedagogy, suggesting that training must move beyond rote memorization. This is corroborated by Zhang (2023), who emphasizes the importance of fieldwork, and Ma (2025), who suggests collaborative models between universities and local cultural bureaus to provide authentic practice bases.

Research Gap

While existing literature extensively discusses the *importance* of cultural heritage (Yang, 2024) and the *potential* of digital media (Xu, 2023), there is a significant lack of empirical research regarding the systematic operationalization of these elements within the "artistic practice" component of preschool education majors. Most studies focus either on broad policy analysis or localized kindergarten activities. There remains a critical gap in understanding how to build a formal "Second Classroom" framework that includes rigid institutional guarantees and a scientific evaluation system (Song, 2026). This paper addresses this gap by proposing an innovative framework that bridges the divide between higher education artistic practice and actual kindergarten vocational demands.

II. Goal Orientation for Integrating Traditional Nursery Rhymes into Artistic Practice

Having clarified the important role of traditional nursery rhymes in artistic practice, it is also necessary to establish an artistic practice system suited to students' actual conditions and developmental needs, integrating traditional

nursery rhymes into it. First, the goals and positioning of traditional nursery rhymes within the artistic practice system must be clearly defined and refined, so as to construct a traditional music education model with local characteristics. In response to students' insufficient understanding of traditional nursery rhymes and unclear objectives regarding artistic practice, it is necessary to rationally build a traditional music education training system for the preschool education major. During the process of reform and innovation, institutions should follow the *Teacher Education Curriculum Standards* and the *Professional Standards for Kindergarten Teachers*, give full play to the important role of artistic practice activities in cultivating application-oriented talents, and focus on developing students' innovative capabilities. Through the regular implementation of artistic practice activities and the continuous integration of traditional nursery rhyme performance, traditional music can be comprehensively and effectively inherited and developed. This approach enhances preschool education majors' awareness of local culture and sense of national pride, guiding them to become qualified kindergarten teachers with a strong commitment to regional cultural heritage.

Integrating traditional nursery rhymes into the artistic practice system cannot be achieved overnight. With the full participation of teachers and students, it requires strengthened top-level design and policy guidance, beginning with institutional regulations to accelerate system construction. In this process, the following basic principles should be observed:

First, adhere to the principle of student-centered learning with teacher guidance.

Through the organization of artistic practice activities, Henan traditional nursery rhymes should be consciously incorporated, highlighting local characteristics and student participation. Students should clearly understand the significance of artistic practice and their learning objectives, and independently choose learning content and performance activities according to their actual conditions. Teachers mainly play a guiding role, leading students in the correct learning direction and providing timely reminders

and instructions throughout the learning process, thereby ensuring the effective integration of traditional nursery rhymes into students' artistic practice and promoting the inheritance and development of traditional music.

Second, adhere to the principle of combining theory and practice.

Effective artistic practice should be used to deepen the theoretical content of formal classroom instruction. Specifically, in the artistic practice of the preschool education major, various cultural and artistic activities can serve as the primary form, enabling students to present the traditional nursery rhymes learned in class—for example, organizing traditional nursery rhyme singing competitions and themed concerts. Purposeful and targeted artistic practice activities allow traditional nursery rhymes to gradually take root in students' minds and become part of their essential professional competence in future kindergarten music teaching.

Third, adhere to the principle of inheriting tradition while encouraging innovation.

The teaching and performance of traditional nursery rhymes should both preserve their original ecological characteristics so that students can experience their artistic style, and also promote development through innovation. While learning traditional nursery rhymes, students should adapt and creatively compose them in close connection with the developmental goals of preschool teachers and contemporary trends. This approach helps students enjoy listening and learning, increases their interest, cultivates their creative abilities, and enables flexible application of traditional nursery rhymes in kindergarten music teaching practice.

III. Implementation of Integrating Traditional Nursery Rhymes into Artistic Practice

First, establish and improve regulations for artistic practice activities to provide a rigid institutional guarantee for integrating traditional nursery rhymes into artistic practice.

It is necessary to accelerate the establishment of systems for competitions, performances, and the

“second classroom,” and strengthen the organization and leadership of various artistic activities. All types of competitions, especially those related to traditional nursery rhymes, should clarify their goals and orientation, and priority should be given to students participating in second-classroom activities, providing them with a platform for artistic practice. Such activity systems can fully mobilize student’s enthusiasm for participating in second-classroom activities, enrich their knowledge of traditional nursery rhymes, and provide safeguards for artistic practice. In institutions offering preschool education majors, music artistic practice is generally organized mainly by the music department, with cooperation

from other administrative units. During activity courses involving vocal music, traditional instrumental music, and choir, students should independently choose the course instructor and practice content. Teachers may select students through assessment, and course evaluation should be based on performance practice of traditional nursery rhymes. In relevant cultural and artistic activities, publicity should be strengthened to encourage participation across the entire school. Professional teachers conduct screening and selection, choosing outstanding students’ campus-wide and determining practice content according to student’s specialties.

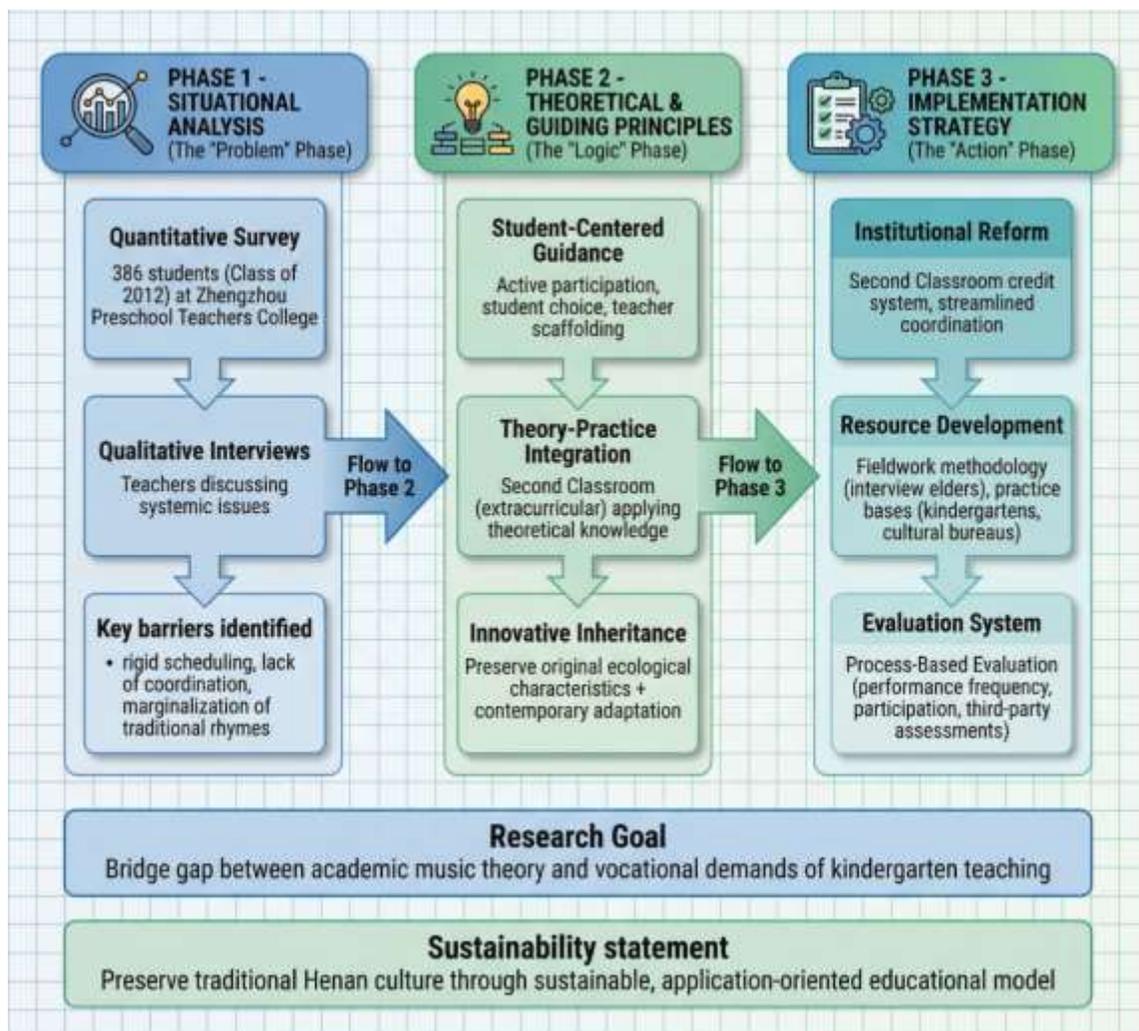


Figure 1: Framework Diagram

Second, create traditional nursery rhyme practice bases to enhance students' understanding of traditional music.

The training objective of music teaching in the preschool education major is to prepare students for kindergarten music education, and nursery rhymes therefore occupy an important position. However, current second-classroom activities contain little traditional nursery rhyme content, especially insufficient collection of folk nursery rhymes, resulting in limited materials. As the primary front of preschool music education, practice bases for traditional nursery rhymes should be established to conduct professional field investigations and systematic research. Students can return to their hometowns during winter and summer vacations to conduct fieldwork and collect local traditional nursery rhymes, focusing particularly on interviews with elderly people to obtain firsthand materials. At the same time, cooperation should be developed with kindergartens, cultural bureaus, and community arts centers to establish teaching practice bases, share traditional nursery rhyme resources, and regularly carry out teaching and performance activities to promote the inheritance and development of traditional Henan music.

Third, establish a comprehensive evaluation system for artistic practice, strengthening process supervision, feedback effectiveness, and corrective mechanisms.

In addition to strong organizational support, artistic practice activities require effective supervision throughout the entire process and timely feedback to identify and address problems. Therefore, according to activity objectives, a comprehensive evaluation system should be established from both student and teacher perspectives. Students' learning outcomes in formal classes are mainly reflected through examinations, while assessment in artistic practice should be based on factors such as participation in second-classroom learning, level of performances, frequency, and effectiveness; some institutions also count this toward academic credits required for graduation. Teacher evaluation is mainly conducted through the performance outcomes of

students they supervise, and third-party evaluation agencies may also be introduced to assess the effectiveness of teacher's artistic practice instruction.

The popularization of traditional nursery rhymes should be implemented and embodied within the field of preschool education. At present, strengthening the teaching of traditional nursery rhymes in preschool music education is particularly urgent. To cultivate application-oriented talents suited to the needs of the times, the inheritance and development of traditional nursery rhymes must be extended through artistic practice. This requires a sound management mechanism, enriched disciplinary development, and a scientific evaluation system to provide strong support for teaching and performance. By carrying out artistic practice activities with rich content and diverse forms and emphasizing the practical application of traditional nursery rhymes, students' artistic horizons can be broadened, free space for development can be provided, and students' creativity and innovative awareness can be cultivated. Meanwhile, the second classroom offers a broader platform for effectively integrating traditional music (including traditional nursery rhymes) into the preschool education system and for deepening curriculum reform.

Conclusion

The integration of traditional Henan nursery rhymes into the preschool education curriculum represents a vital step toward preserving regional cultural heritage while enhancing the quality of early childhood education. This study highlights the significance of incorporating local music traditions into educational frameworks, as they offer unique opportunities to foster emotional intelligence, rhythmic perception, and cultural awareness among young children. However, the research also identifies significant barriers to the effective implementation of this integration, including students' limited exposure to traditional music, the dominance of popular culture, and the lack of structured institutional support. The findings underscore the importance of bridging the gap between theory and practice in preschool music education, particularly by introducing a

more systematic approach to artistic practice. By aligning traditional nursery rhymes with clearly defined learning objectives and embedding them within the broader curriculum, educators can promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of local culture. The study advocates for a student-centered approach, where teachers guide students to discover and engage with traditional music, making it a meaningful and enjoyable learning experience.

Moreover, the paper emphasizes the potential role of digital media and cultural tourism in revitalizing the dissemination of Henan folk songs. Modern tools, such as digital archives and interactive platforms, offer new ways to engage younger generations with their cultural roots, ensuring the continued relevance of traditional music in the digital age. The research suggests that universities, cultural bureaus, and kindergartens must collaborate to establish dedicated practice bases, conduct fieldwork, and create a robust evaluation system to ensure the effectiveness of artistic practice activities. Ultimately, the successful integration of traditional nursery rhymes into preschool education requires sustained efforts at the institutional level, combining cultural preservation with innovative teaching methods. This approach not only enriches the educational experience but also contributes to the broader goal of preserving intangible cultural heritage for future generations.

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