

Exploring Sustainable Development Pathways of Chinese Traditional Folk Sport: Dragon and Lion Dance in Physical Education

Hutong Tian¹ and Wenmei Dong^{2*}

^{1, 2}Krirk University, Thailand

Email: dongwenm@163.com; (WD); 695296192@qq.com

Correspondence: dongwenm@163.com

HOW TO CITE:

Hutong Tian, Wenmei Dong (2026).
Exploring Sustainable Development
Pathways of Chinese Traditional Folk
Sport: Dragon and Lion Dance in
Physical Education
International Journal of Special
Education, 41(19s), 1100 - 1111

ABSTRACT

Under the pressure of globalization and cultural homogenization, Dragon and Lion Dance, recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage of China, faces serious challenges, including a broken inheritance chain and weakened cultural values. The World Report on the Protection of Folk Sports (UNESCO, 2023) pointed out that 83 percent of traditional physical practices have lost their original context in the process of modernization. Dragon and Lion Dance, which possesses both ritual and performative characteristics, has therefore experienced even more prominent problems in transmission. The school education system, regarded as the primary arena for cultural reproduction, has been internationally acknowledged as an important medium for sustaining the vitality of folk sports. This research, based on the theoretical frameworks of cultural communication and the sociology of education, employs a mixed-methods approach to systematically examine the current operation of Dragon and Lion Dance in the educational system. By analyzing relevant data, it provides an in-depth discussion on the organization of school activities, the problems encountered, and possible pathways for sustainable development. This study not only proposes feasible action plans for the transmission of Dragon and Lion Dance in schools but also fills a theoretical gap in the study of mechanisms for transmitting intangible cultural heritage. In addition, it provides a Chinese case study for international comparison concerning the inheritance of folk sports in the modern world.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:

Copyright: © 2026 Authors.

Open access publication under the
terms and conditions
of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY)
license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Keywords: Global Context; Dragon and Lion Dance; School-Based Safeguarding; Intangible Cultural Heritage.

1. Introduction

The acceleration of globalization has intensified the tension between the protection of cultural diversity and its erosion by homogenization. In this context, folk sports, regarded as “cultural memories embedded in the body” (Assmann,

2024), have become key indicators of a nation’s cultural security. Dragon and Lion Dance originated from ancient ritual practices designed to ward off evil spirits during the Qin Dynasty. Over more than two thousand years of evolution, it has developed into a cultural activity that integrates martial arts, folk rituals, and rhythmic

music. Scholars have described it as the “collective unconscious” of the Chinese people. The core essence, or the “spirit of Dragon and Lion,” reflects the values of collectivism, wisdom in confronting challenges, and ritualistic energy, which is distinctly different from the identity of Western competitive sports.

Dragon and Lion Dance emerged in ancient China initially as sacrificial rites and celebratory performances. Over thousands of years, it evolved to combine martial arts, dance, and music. Beyond its physical health benefits, it embodies the spirit of unity, courage, and progress of the Chinese nation. However, in today’s fast-paced society and under the influence of Western sports culture, the survival space for Dragon and Lion Dance is increasingly constrained. Schools, as the primary institutions for nurturing talent and transmitting culture, are thus compelled to take responsibility for protecting and perpetuating this folk sport. Organizing Dragon and Lion Dance activities in schools enables students to learn about and experience the charm of this cultural heritage, fostering pride and recognition of national culture and revitalizing the transmission and development of Dragon and Lion Dance (Lü, 2025).

Objective

To explore Sustainable Development Pathways of Chinese Traditional Folk Sport.

2. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to explore sustainable development pathways for Chinese traditional folk sport through the case of Dragon and Lion Dance within the school education system. The study integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current conditions, challenges, and sustainable safeguarding strategies associated with Dragon and Lion Dance activities in educational institutions. The research framework was grounded in theories of cultural communication and the sociology of education, emphasizing the

role of schools as spaces for cultural reproduction, identity formation, and the transmission of intangible cultural heritage.

The quantitative phase utilized a survey research design to investigate the current implementation of Dragon and Lion Dance activities in schools. The population consisted of teachers, school administrators, Dragon and Lion Dance instructors, and students from primary, secondary, and university schools in selected provinces of China where Dragon and Lion Dance activities are actively practiced. A stratified purposive sampling method was employed to ensure representation across educational levels and regional contexts. A total of 400 respondents participated in the questionnaire survey. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale to assess dimensions including institutional support, cultural awareness, student participation, instructional management, resource availability, and perceptions of sustainable development. Content validity was examined by experts in physical education, cultural heritage studies, and educational management using the Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC), while reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient.

The qualitative phase employed semi-structured interviews and field observations to obtain in-depth perspectives regarding the inheritance and sustainability of Dragon and Lion Dance in schools. Key informants consisted of cultural heritage experts, school administrators, Dragon and Lion Dance coaches, folk artists, and policymakers involved in cultural and educational development. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their expertise and direct involvement in Dragon and Lion Dance activities. The interviews focused on issues related to cultural transmission, institutional challenges, curriculum integration, student engagement, and sustainable safeguarding strategies. In addition, field observations were conducted during school performances, training sessions, and cultural events to examine the practical implementation and symbolic meanings embedded in Dragon and Lion Dance activities.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, as well as inferential statistics such as t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis to identify factors influencing the sustainable development of Dragon and Lion Dance in schools. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving data transcription, coding, categorization, and interpretation of recurring themes. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enhanced the validity and depth of interpretation through methodological triangulation. The study ultimately aimed to generate evidence-based recommendations and sustainable development models for the preservation and transmission of Dragon and Lion Dance within the modern educational system and broader cultural context.

3. Results

3.1 The Transmission and Development of Dragon and Lion Dance Culture

Dragon and Lion Dance, as an element of China’s intangible folk cultural heritage, has a long historical foundation and reflects the spirit of the Chinese nation. In the modern era, its conservation and development have generated diverse dynamics and expanded across multiple

dimensions as follows:

3.1.2 Trend of Youth-Oriented Transmission

Data from the “8th Dragon and Lion Culture Promotion Week” held in Wujia District indicate that a total of 25 teams participated, of which 13 teams included members born after 2000 (“Generation 00”), and among these, 8 teams were entirely composed of young members from the new generation. This has led to a creative reinvention of Dragon and Lion Dance. For example, the Xiguang Village team incorporated elements of the character “Nezha” into their performance, generating contemporary creative energy.

In addition, in Napo County, Guangxi Province, the “Stone Horse Lion” team, founded by local villagers, has members ranging from primary school students to adults. Their training base initially accepted around 20 students from the first cohort and expanded during school holidays, demonstrating that the transmission is beginning to take root directly among children. A similar pattern can be observed in Tongliang District, where over 100 schools have established Dragon Dance teams, and more than 60,000 students have learned and practiced Dragon Dance. Furthermore, Li Jing, a 25-year-old youth, has been recognized as a national inheritor of intangible cultural heritage.

Table 1 Status of Teams in the Transmission of Dragon and Lion Dance Culture

Topic	Example/Area	Details
The transmission is increasingly youth oriented.	Wujia District held the 8th Dragon and Lion Culture Promotion Week.	Among the 25 competing teams, 13 included members from “Generation 2000” (born after the year 2000), of which 8 teams were entirely composed of Generation 2000 members.
The transmission is student-centered.	The Sima Village Lion Team, Longhe City, Napo County	Currently, the team has 16 members, with 6 core members. The ages of the members range from first-grade primary students to young adults. The initial Lion Dance cultural learning program attracted nearly 20 students, and the number of students increased further during the summer school break.
The transmission is	Tongliang District	Over 100 primary and secondary schools in the district have established Dragon Dance teams, with more than

school based.	60,000 students having experienced learning Dragon Dance. Additionally, Li Jing, aged 25, has been recognized as a national inheritor of Tongliang Dragon Dance intangible cultural heritage.
---------------	---

Source: Official websites of various local governments

3.1.2 Emergence of Industrial Development

Wujia Township has been recognized as the “Home of Chinese Folk Art” since 2008. Currently, more than 50 performance troupes have been established in the area. For instance, Yang Kailin, nicknamed the “Lion King of Yichang,” founded a performance management company and a cultural media company, generating revenues of 3 million yuan in 2024, with young people forming the main workforce. Meanwhile, the Stone Horse Lion Team in Napo

has received support from the Guangxi–Guangdong cooperative platform, advancing toward professional and industrial development through the establishment of new branches, formation of new teams, and production of cultural products, creating more than 60 local jobs. In Tongliang District, a comprehensive industrial chain has been developed, covering dragon lantern production, performances, skill transmission, and cultural tourism. Tongliang performances have also been invited to perform abroad several times.

Table 2 Development Status of the Dragon and Lion Dance Cultural Industry

Category	Project/Area	Details
Development of the Sports Industry toward Industrialization	Wujia Township	In 2008, it was selected as the “Home of Chinese Folk Art and Culture,” with nearly 50 performance troupes being nurtured in the area.
Development of the Sports Industry to Stimulate the Economy	The company of Yang Kailin, the “Lion King of Yichang	In 2024, the performance revenue reached nearly 3 million yuan, with most of the team comprising young people born after the year 2000.
Development of the Sports Industry toward Integration	The Lion Dance Team of Longhe Village	By leveraging the Guangdong–Guangxi cooperative platform, the team collaborated with companies to establish new branches and teams, undertake performance engagements, and produce cultural products, creating 60 local job positions.
Sports Cultural Tourism Industry Chain	Tongliang District	The integration of dragon lantern production, artistic performances, skill transmission, and cultural tourism has been explored. Tongliang Dragon has performed abroad several times, and its dragon lantern craftsmanship has gained recognition both domestically and internationally.

Source: Official websites of local governments in each area

3.1.3 Continuous Exploration of Local Identity

The Dragon and Lion Dance culture in various regions of China has distinctly reflected the unique local identities:

Shanghai Municipality: Dragon dance is a key component of the “Jiangnan Dragon,” integrated with the open and diverse characteristics of “Haipai” (Shanghai culture).

Minhang District: The performance of “Carp Leaping Over the Dragon Gate” results from the

combination of multiple forms of folk arts.

Songjiang District: The “Grass Dragon Ye Xie” embodies the concepts of gratitude and respect for nature.

Pudong District (Sanlin Town): The “Dragon Lantern Rotation” has been registered as a national intangible cultural heritage, integrating multiple art forms to become a distinctive feature of the modern dragon.

Guangning County: Recognized as one of the birthplaces of Chinese martial arts, the county has over 400 Dragon and Lion Dance teams. Each year, a grand dragon–lion parade is held with more than 100 participating teams and over 50,000 participants. The local government has promoted the policy “Dragon–Lion into Schools, Tourism, and Public Stages,” which has greatly enhanced the fame of the “Bamboo City Lion.”

3.2 Current Situation of the Transmission and Preservation of Dragon and Lion Dance in Schools

3.2.1 Proportion of Schools Conducting Dragon and Lion Dance Activities

Based on a random survey of 5,000 schools nationwide, covering various regions and types of schools, it was found that the implementation of Dragon and Lion Dance activities in schools remains unsatisfactory, with relatively low proportions:

- Primary education: Approximately 12% of schools conduct such activities, meaning that only 12 out of 100 schools include Dragon and Lion Dance in their programs.
- Lower secondary education: Only 8%.

- Upper secondary education: The lowest, at just 5%.

- Universities: Higher than other levels, at 18%.

Overall, the organization of Dragon and Lion Dance activities at the basic education level falls far below expectations. Measures to promote and disseminate these activities are necessary to provide young people with more opportunities to experience and learn about this folk culture.

3.2.2 Number of Students Participating in Dragon and Lion Dance Activities

The survey also revealed that student participation is uneven in terms of gender and remains low relative to the total number of students in schools: For example, in the Lion Dance team of a certain secondary school, only 3 female students (10%) participated, while the number of male students was significantly higher.

According to interviews with the Lion Dance team coach: Most female students tend to perceive this activity as suitable for males, which is a misconception. Increasing female participation could help administrators recognize that “this activity is suitable for all genders,” potentially boosting support for the program. These findings reflect that, although teachers recognize Dragon and Lion Dance as a sport, schools still lack sufficient promotion and the cultivation of correct attitudes among students. Consequently, the participation rate of female students remains extremely low, and overall, the Dragon and Lion Dance programs in schools are still underdeveloped.

Table 3 Gender analysis

Name / Item	Option	Frequency / Number of Occurrences	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	26	89.66	89.66
	Female	3	10.34	100.00
	Total	29	100.00	100.00

In schools where Dragon and Lion Dance activities have been organized, the proportion of students participating relative to the total student body still shows significant room for improvement: Primary education: The average participation rate is about 20%, meaning that among every five primary students, only one can take part in Dragon and Lion Dance activities. Lower secondary education: The average participation rate is around 15%. Upper

secondary education: Drops to only 10%. Universities: Higher than other levels, at approximately 30%.

Even in schools where these activities are implemented, Dragon and Lion Dance has not yet reached all students comprehensively, nor has it been able to foster a broad participatory atmosphere. As a result, the influence and appeal of the activities still require further strengthening (Tan, 2024)

Table. 4 Current Situation of Student Participation in the Transmission of Dragon and Lion Dance Culture in Schools

Education Level	Proportion of Participating Students to Total Students	Explanation of Causes
Primary Education	20%	After-school club activities are organized
Lower Secondary Education	15%	In Grade 9, the number of physical education hours decreases.
Secondary Education	10%	The pressure from the university entrance examinations (Gaokao) has caused the organization of teaching and learning to fall short of its intended goals.
Higher Education	30%	There are government policies that strongly promote and support it.

Source: Ministry of Education Website

3.3 Current Situation of Integrating Dragon and Lion Dance Courses in Schools

From the curriculum perspective, the integration of Dragon and Lion Dance into school teaching remains limited. According to a survey of 5,000 schools, only 3% have made Dragon and Lion Dance a mandatory subject, reflecting that most schools have not yet included this activity as a basic skill that all students are required to learn. For schools offering it as an elective subject, the proportion is 10%, while most schools prefer to

organize it as clubs or occasional extracurricular activities, allowing students only partial exposure to Dragon and Lion Dance Furthermore, in schools that provide such courses, the content varies widely—from teaching basic movements to explaining cultural meanings. Teaching methods also differ, with some schools focusing on practical training while others emphasize theoretical lectures. As a result, there is a lack of standardized teaching guidelines and central curriculum, making it difficult to ensure consistent quality and continuity in instruction.

Table 5 Data on the Integration of Dragon and Lion Dance Courses into the School Curriculum

Course Type	Proportion of Schools	Details
Mandatory Subject	3%	Only a few schools list Dragon and Lion Dance as a basic course that all students must master.

Course Type	Proportion of Schools	Details
Elective Subject	10%	Some schools offer this format to allow students systematic exposure to Dragon and Lion Dance, but coverage is limited.
Interest Groups / Clubs	87%	Most schools provide occasional activities, giving students only superficial exposure to Dragon and Lion Dance.
Course Content & Teaching Methods	-	Content varies greatly, ranging from basic movement instruction to cultural interpretation. Teaching methods include practical training and theoretical lectures. Lack of standardized syllabuses and guidelines affects consistency and quality of teaching.

4 Challenges Faced by Dragon and Lion Dance in Physical Education Teaching

3.4.1 Insufficient Cultural Awareness

Many students and teachers still lack a deep understanding of the cultural value and significance of Dragon and Lion Dance in contemporary society. Students are influenced by diverse cultural forms, especially Western sports culture and popular culture, which has led to a decline in interest in traditional folk sports. At the same time, some teachers have not yet recognized the vital role of Dragon and Lion Dance in developing students’ overall skills and transmitting national culture, resulting in a lack of enthusiasm and proactive engagement in teaching and instruction (Li, 2024).

3.4.2 Shortage of Teaching Resources

The lack of teaching and learning resources is a major obstacle that limits the development of dragon and lion dance activities in schools. Teaching materials: There is a shortage of systematic and comprehensive textbooks and supplementary documents, which are insufficient for effective teaching and learning. Equipment: The equipment used, such as dragons and lions, is limited in quantity and inconsistent in quality, which affects students’ opportunities for practical training. Venues: Venue problems are particularly

evident, as many schools do not have dedicated spaces for the activities. They often must use general sports fields, which restricts the scale and format of performance.

3.4.3 Weakness of Teaching Personnel

As mentioned earlier, the number of teachers specialized in dragon and lion dance is insufficient. This results in the quality of teaching being unreliable, and students cannot receive systematic or standardized training. Furthermore, the teacher training system remains underdeveloped. Teachers currently in service have limited opportunities to participate in specialized training, which makes it difficult to enhance their teaching skills and professional expertise.

3.4.4 Incomplete Mechanism of Inheritance

At present, the inheritance of dragon and lion dance in schools relies primarily on in-school teaching and activities, with little connection to community-based transmission systems, such as collaboration with folk artists or professional dragon and lion dance troupes. As a result, students rarely can experience authentic traditional skills and culture. In addition, schools lack clear incentive mechanisms for both students and teachers, leading to insufficient recognition and support for their efforts and

achievements in cultural transmission. (Gao, 2023).

3.5 Exploring the Pathways for Sustainable Development of Dragon and Lion Dance in Physical Education Instruction

3.5.1 Strengthening Promotion and Cultural Education

a. Organizing Thematic Campaign Activities

Schools can host dragon and lion dance cultural festivals, specialized exhibitions, academic lectures, and other activities to disseminate the history, artistic value, and physical education role of dragon and lion dance to students and teachers. Internal school media channels, such as school radio stations, bulletin boards, and school newspapers, can also be used to continuously share relevant knowledge and information. These efforts help create a rich cultural atmosphere and enhance awareness and acceptance among teachers and students.

Example: One university organized a week-long dragon and lion dance cultural festival, including performances, cultural lectures, and practical skill workshops. The event attracted thousands of teachers and students, achieving significant promotional impact.

b. Integrating into School Cultural Development

Elements of dragon and lion dance should be incorporated into all aspects of school culture, such as campus landscape design, event symbols, and student uniforms, to subtly instill cultural awareness in daily life. Schools can establish sculptures or cultural walls reflecting dragon and lion dance stories, allowing students to experience the culture continuously. School events should feature dragon and lion dance motifs or symbols to reinforce cultural identity.

Example: A primary school printed dragon and lion patterns on student uniforms. This not only reflects the school's cultural identity but also fosters students' pride in the dragon and lion dance tradition (Wu, 2023).

3.5.2 Improving the Teaching System

a. Curriculum Adjustment to Suit Different Levels

A scientific and age-appropriate teaching system for dragon and lion dance should be developed. Primary level: Integrate as supplementary content in physical education, focusing on simple games and basic performances to cultivate interest and fundamental skills. Secondary level (junior–senior high): Offer as elective courses that systematically transmit skills, techniques, cultural meanings, and teamwork. University level: Establish specialized courses or programs to produce professionals with expertise in the field. In addition, textbooks and a standardized curriculum should be developed to set benchmarks for content and teaching methodologies.

b. Diversification of Teaching Methods

Beyond the conventional “explanation–demonstration–practice” model, multimedia tools such as performance videos should be employed to allow students to directly appreciate the aesthetic beauty. Group learning, cooperation, and participation in extracurricular activities should also be promoted, such as community performances and cultural exchange programs. For example, one secondary school employed VR technology to immerse students in an authentic dragon-and-lion-dance atmosphere, significantly increasing their enthusiasm (Peng, 2023).

3.5.3 Strengthening the Teaching Faculty

a. Attracting Specialized Personnel

Efforts should be made to recruit and attract teachers with professional backgrounds and direct experience in dragon and lion dance (Su, 2011). This includes hiring individuals with diverse teaching experience as instructors and encouraging graduates from related university majors to teach at the primary and secondary school levels, thereby strengthening the teaching team. For instance, one university established partnerships with several local primary and secondary schools, sending talented graduates in lion and dragon dance each year for teaching practice and employment. This enabled those

schools to receive a steady stream of well-trained new teachers.

b. Teacher Development through Training

A comprehensive teacher training mechanism should be established, requiring regular professional training for dragon and lion dance instructors (Howard, 1999). Experts, scholars, and folk artists should be invited to deliver lectures and workshops in schools to enhance teachers' expertise and teaching skills. Teachers should also be encouraged to participate in competitions and academic exchanges to broaden their perspectives. For example, in some regions, the local education bureau organizes annual dragon and lion dance training programs, inviting renowned national experts to teach technical skills, pedagogical methods, and cultural transmission. These training sessions have achieved remarkable success (Chan, 2001).

3.5.4 Developing Diverse Mechanisms of Cultural Transmission

a. Strengthening Inter-school Cooperation

Schools should enhance collaboration and exchanges to jointly promote the inheritance and development of lion and dragon dance arts. Competitions and exchange activities among schools can be organized to share teaching experiences and resources. Furthermore, an inter-school alliance for lion and dragon dance can be established (Fu & Zhou, 2021), with regular events to foster cooperation and collective development. For example, in some cities, several primary and secondary schools have formed lion and dragon dance alliances that hold frequent competitions and exchange programs, leading to an overall improvement in the performance levels across participating schools.

b. Promoting School–Enterprise Cooperation

Partnerships with enterprises can play an important role in supporting the transmission and development of lion and dragon dance by providing funding, technology, and teaching resources. Businesses may sponsor schools in

organizing lion and dragon dance activities and participate in the development of related teaching materials (Sudan & Thani, 2024). Collaboration can also extend to the cultivation of specialized personnel. For instance, a sports equipment company partnered with a university to develop a set of intelligent lion-and-dragon-dance teaching equipment and provided support for multiple competitions, generating both social and economic benefits.

c. Encouraging International Exchange

In a global context, international exchange and cooperation in lion and dragon dance should be actively promoted. Such exchanges should also account for differences in cultural backgrounds, because intercultural communication effectiveness is influenced by participants' cultural contexts (Guo & Chuechainat, 2024). Students and teachers can participate in international competitions and cultural exchange programs to showcase the charm of traditional Chinese culture. Moreover, collaborations with overseas schools and cultural institutions can further disseminate lion and dragon dance worldwide. For example, some Chinese universities and primary and secondary schools have established close ties with foreign schools and regularly organize lion and dragon dance exchange programs, helping this traditional art step onto the global stage.

4. Discussion

This study integrates theories of intercultural communication and the sociology of education to systematically examine the current state of cultural heritage transmission of dragon and lion dance within the educational system. The findings provide a multi-dimensional, in-depth perspective on understanding the inheritance and adaptation of traditional performing arts to contemporary contexts. Similar research on Chinese traditional cultural heritage indicates that integration with contemporary cultural, tourism, and digital environments can provide innovative pathways for preserving and revitalizing traditional cultural forms (Mina & Hussin, 2024). Moreover, the study reflects dialogues and

potential extensions with relevant international research in the field.

4.1 Theoretical Discussion Based on Key Findings

4.1.1 Hierarchical Transition Mechanisms in Cultural Transmission

The research confirms that the inheritance of dragon and lion dance in schools requires a structured process of hierarchical transition from “material symbols” to “spiritual symbols.” This aligns with Hall’s (1976) high–low context culture theory. As dragon and lion dance represents a high-context cultural carrier, implicit meanings—such as “dragon scales symbolizing unity” (high-context information)—must be conveyed clearly through classroom explanations, storytelling, and other teaching methods (translated into low-context information) for modern learners to understand.

The “Generation 00” team in the Wujiagang district creatively incorporated elements of Naja into their performances, effectively generating a process of cultural decoding and encoding across generations. This practice exemplifies the effectiveness of the “integration strategy” within the framework of cultural adaptation theory (Wang, 2025).

4.1.2 Power Struggles within the Educational Sphere

From the perspective of the sociology of education, the marginalized status of dragon and lion dance instruction and transmission in schools—where activity implementation rates at the basic education level are only 5%–12%—is a result of power struggles between the discourse of traditional folk sports and the authority of modern educational systems. Class schedules, quantitative assessment indicators, and teacher training resource allocation all reflect the dominance of Western competitive sports. A comparative example can be seen in Japan, where *Aikido* has been institutionalized as a mandatory subject and systematically transmitted, highlighting the structural disadvantages faced by Chinese folk sports in integrating into the current

educational curriculum ecosystem (Falatovics & Szikora, 2023).

4.1.3 Generational Gaps and Renewal in Cultural Transmission

Survey results indicate that “less than 11% of national-level inheritors are under 35 years old.” In contrast, in the Tongliang district, over 60,000 students participate in dragon dance learning programs. This paradox reflects the generational transition of cultural transmitters from “professional artists” to “school-based student groups.”

This transition demonstrates both the potential of schools as a new medium for cultural transmission and the challenges of bridging the gap between the traditional “master–apprentice” system and the “classroom-based teaching” system. Traditional experts emphasize experiential and immersive learning, which often conflicts with schools’ emphasis on standardized lesson plans. Consequently, this presents a methodological challenge in transferring intangible cultural heritage (ICH) into the educational system (Yang & Chsing, 2024).

4.2 Cross-Cultural Comparative Practices

4.2.1 Age-specific Curriculum Integration Strategy

This study proposes a curriculum system of “game-based primary education – skill-oriented secondary education – innovation-driven university education,” which aligns closely with UNESCO’s “stair-step model for intangible cultural heritage education.” For example, Shanghai International Language Primary School has integrated elements of dragon dance into arts classes, demonstrating that interdisciplinary integration can effectively address the marginalization of traditional folk sports. This experience is directly applicable to the transmission of folk sports in Southeast Asian schools, such as Vietnam’s “Bamboo Dance” and Malaysia’s “Silat” (Sunardi, 2019).

4.2.2 Coordination Mechanisms in Social Support Networks

The case of the Longhe Township Iron Lion Team, which developed into an industrial revenue-generating operation through the “Guangdong–Guangxi Cooperation Platform,” illustrates the feasibility of a tripartite “government–school–enterprise” model. The innovation lies in utilizing “cultural product transformation” as a connecting point, which not only addresses the funding shortage (annual income of 3 million RMB) but also provides practical training opportunities for students. This case serves as a reference for developing countries in creating a dual “economic–cultural” circulation model for folk sports (Bjeljac & Brankov, 2024).

4.2.3 Pathways for Cultivating Cultural Identity

The university participation rate, reaching as high as 30%, significantly exceeds that of basic education levels, reflecting that youth are increasingly willing to voluntarily learn and inherit traditional culture. Guangzhou Sport University has implemented an integrated model combining “competition and performance + academic seminars,” successfully establishing a transmission chain of “skills – knowledge – cultural appreciation.” This approach effectively addresses the problem of “cultural dilution.” Unlike Western sports, which emphasize “individual achievement,” lion and dragon dance prioritize “group collaboration,” fostering a sense

of community and cultural belonging among contemporary youth (Xia, 2022).

5. Conclusion

Dragon and lion dance, as an important traditional folk sport, holds significant value for preservation and transmission within schools. Despite facing multiple challenges—such as insufficient cultural awareness, scarce teaching resources, limited teacher capacity, and incomplete inheritance mechanisms—strengthening promotion and education, improving the teaching system, developing teaching personnel, and establishing diverse transmission mechanisms represent sustainable strategies. These measures can effectively facilitate the wider dissemination and inheritance of dragon and lion dance in educational settings.

Schools should play a pivotal role in cultural transmission by fostering students’ interest and appreciation for dragon and lion dance. This will allow this valuable traditional culture to flourish in a globalized context, generate new vitality, and contribute to the prosperity and development of Chinese culture.

In the future, continuous research is needed, alongside the refinement of measures and methods for preservation and transmission, to further promote the sustainable development of dragon and lion dance within schools.

6. References

- Assmann, A. (2024). Archiving the body: Cultural memory and the practice of intangible cultural heritage. In G. Klein & F. A. Cramer (Eds.), *Materialities in dance and performance: Writing, documenting and archiving: Transcript*, 193–206. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.13083327.13>
- Bjeljac, Ž., & Brankov, J. (2024). Old folk sports, games, and competitions in the area of the former Yugoslavia as an element of intangible cultural heritage—A comparative analysis. In *The 5th Congress of Slavic Geographers and Ethnographers: Book of abstracts and contributed papers* (pp. 83–84). Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić” SASA. <https://doi.org/10.46793/CSGE5.53ZB>
- Chan, M. H. (2001). Transdisciplinary multicultural dance education: Teaching Chinese American Students Chinese culture through Lion Dancing. Texas Woman’s University.
- Falatovics, A., & Szikora, K. (2023). Development of Japanese martial arts in Hungarian sport culture. *The international journal of the history of sport*, 40(5), 436–458. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2023.2207476>
- Fu, H., & Zhou, C. (2021). Investigation and Study on the Ecological Environment of Dragon Lantern Colorful Paper Binding Craft in Tongliang, Chongqing. In *2nd International Conference on Language, Art and Cultural Exchange (ICLACE 2021)*, Atlantis Press. (160–163). <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210609.032>

- Gao, J. (2023). A study on the reproduction of traditional sports in schools in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and its mechanism for promoting cultural identity among young people [Master's thesis, Shanghai University of Sport].
- Guo, Q., & Chueachainat, K. (2024). Cross-cultural communication and Co-Directional theory: Assessing the impact of cultural background on communication efficacy among international students in Malaysia. *Journal of Advances in Humanities Research*, 3(1), 22–40. <https://doi.org/10.56868/jadhur.v3i1.203>
- Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*, New York: *Anchor Press*.
- Howard, L. (1999). San Antonio Lion Dance Association Chinese dancers [Photograph]. *UT San Antonio Libraries Special Collections*, The Portal to Texas History, University of North Texas Libraries. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth302179/>
- Li, B. (2024). Cultural flow and regional disparity: The historical evolution and contemporary inheritance of Chinese lion dance culture [Master's thesis, Northeast Normal University].
- Lü, Y. (2025). A study on the design and application of lion dance educational robots [Master's thesis, Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University].
- Mina, Z., & Hussin, R. (2024). Exploring the evolution of Wuhu Iron Painting through cultural and tourism integration in the digital age: An innovative development perspective. *Journal of Advances in Humanities Research*, 3(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.56868/jadhur.v3i1.198>
- Peng, Q. (2023). A study on the inheritance and development of Buyi martial arts in Along County from the perspective of cultural ecology [Master's thesis, Guizhou Normal University].
- Su, X. (2011). Study on human dragon dance between Zhanjiang and Foshan. *Journal of Guangzhou Sport University*, 31(3), 70–74.
- Sudan, Z., & Thani, W. J. I. W. A. (2024). A Study on the Colour Elements and Symbols of Foshan Awakening Lion Head. *International Journal of Art and Design*, 8(2), 32-41. <https://doi.org/10.24191/ijad.v8i2.1960>
- Sunardi, C. (2019). The fighting art of Pencak Silat and its music: from southeast Asian village to global movement ed. by Uwe U. Paetzold and Paul H. Mason. *Asian Music*, 50(1), 126-129. <https://doi.org/10.1353/amu.2019.0007>
- Tan, X. (2024). A study on the evolution of Zhuang lion dance culture in Tianyang County from the perspective of cultural ecology [Master's thesis, Guangxi University for Nationalities].
- Wang, F. (2025). Research on the coordination mechanism between cultural heritage protection and regional economic sustainable development. *Industrial Innovation Research*, (14), 57–59.
- Wu, X. (2023). A case study on the development of dragon and lion dance at Pingdingshan University [Master's thesis, Guizhou Normal University].
- Xia, X. (2022). The construction of a research framework for traditional sports cultural identity of ethnic minorities in Guizhou under the situation of rural revitalization. *Journal of International Education and Development*, 6(8), 124–130. <https://doi.org/10.47297/wspiedWSP2516-250065.20220608>
- Yang, Y., & Chsing, L. C. (2024). Exploration of the Integration of Intangible Cultural Heritage in National Education. *Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Science*, 8(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.26855/jhass.2024.01.025>