

Developing Cangzhou Laozi Folk Dance Course to Enhance Cultural Awareness of Senior High School Students

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This study designed, validated, and evaluated a 16-lesson Cangzhou Laozi folk dance course to enhance local cultural awareness among senior high school students. Grounded in the Cultural Iceberg Model and Multiple Intelligences Theory, the 8-week curriculum systematically guided students from surface cultural execution to deep cultural values. Five experts confirmed high content validity, yielding Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) scores of 1.0 for curriculum design items and 0.8 to 1.0 for survey items. Pre- and post-test administrations of the 20-item Cangzhou Laozi Cultural Awareness Questionnaire demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = 0.903$ and 0.902). A quantitative evaluation involving 50 students from Cangzhou No.3 High School revealed significant improvements in overall cultural awareness, with total mean scores increasing from 2.93 ($SD = 0.79$) to 3.70 ($SD = 0.74$, $t(49) = 11.26$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.60$). Cultural cognition scores rose from 3.01 to 3.79 ($d = 1.54$), and cultural understanding scores grew from 2.84 to 3.60 ($d = 1.51$). The post-course correlation between cognition and understanding strengthened significantly ($r = 0.82$, $p < 0.001$), confirming synchronized learning growth. Post-intervention interviews with 12 students supported these findings: 100% reported a deepened understanding of folk culture, 83.3% connected dance movements to Cangzhou's martial arts heritage, and 75% expressed intent to transmit local cultural traditions. Overall, the structured dance curriculum proved highly effective in fostering regional intangible cultural heritage awareness.

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Introduction

In an era of globalization and rapid social change, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)—particularly performing arts and folk dance—serves as a vital foundation for reflecting a nation's identity, collective memory, and cultural character. UNESCO (2003) has emphasized the importance of safeguarding and transmitting cultural heritage through education. This aligns with international perspectives in art and education, which view folk dance not merely as a physical skill but as a crucial tool for fostering cultural awareness, understanding diversity, and instilling pride in one's roots (Lobo, 2024; Avşar, 2023).

For the People's Republic of China, with its long history, ICH has become a valuable resource for education aimed at cultivating national spirit and pride. In 2021, the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council jointly issued the "Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage," mandating the integration of ICH content into the education system at all levels.

1.1 Issues and Gaps in Cultural Heritage Learning

Although national policies emphasize integrating cultural heritage into educational institutions, teaching intangible cultural heritage in secondary schools faces several challenges: (1) Low levels of student awareness and understanding—most students lack genuine knowledge of their own local cultural heritage. For instance, a survey on "Ansai Waist Drum" found that only 17.9% of students claimed to "understand it well." (2) Limitations in the teaching and learning process—instruction often relies on superficial imitation of movements without a structured curriculum that systematically integrates historical knowledge, values, and aesthetics (Zong et al., 2025; Zhao, 2025).

"Cangzhou Laozi" is a valuable folk performing art from Hebei Province designated

as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage of China in 2008. While systematic curricula exist at university and primary school levels in Cangzhou, a significant gap remains at the senior high school level, creating a discontinuity in cultural transmission among adolescents.

1.2 Research Hypothesis and Objectives

It is hypothesized that participating in the 16-lesson Cangzhou Laozi folk dance course will significantly improve senior high school students' local cultural awareness across both cultural cognition and cultural understanding dimensions. The research objectives are: (1) to design and develop a systematic 16-lesson Cangzhou Laozi folk dance course based on the Cultural Iceberg Model and Multiple Intelligences Theory; and (2) to compare changes in students' cultural cognition and cultural understanding before and after course implementation, and verify the effectiveness of the course.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

Intangible Cultural Heritage represents the wisdom achievements of human civilizational development, embodying both the cultural creativity and historical memory of a nation. In 2003, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, establishing the core status of ICH in maintaining cultural diversity and advancing sustainable development (UNESCO, 2003). The official implementation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China in 2011 solidified the strategic role of ICH in national cultural development.

2.2 Cangzhou Laozi Folk Dance

Tracing its roots to the "Lotus Fall" begging chants of monks during the Tang and Five Dynasties periods, Cangzhou Laozi evolved into a livelihood for beggars before combining with operas, spring songs, martial arts, and folk customs during the late Qing Dynasty. Added to the national ICH list in 2008, it is categorized into Literary Laozi and Martial Laozi, employing

props such as fans, bamboo boards, and the overlord whip.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Cultural Iceberg Model (Weaver, 1986): Splits culture into visible surface culture (language, behaviors, costumes) and hidden deep culture (beliefs, values, attitudes). Ho (2009) merged this model into a five-stage pedagogical pathway guiding learners from surface to deep cultural understanding.

Multiple Intelligences Theory (Gardner, 1983): Defines intelligence as a bio-psychological potential activated within cultural contexts. Warburton (2008) noted that dance education actively engages bodily-kinesthetic, musical, spatial, and interpersonal intelligences, fostering holistic physical, cognitive, and emotional growth.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a one-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design combined with Research & Development (R&D) principles. The design is represented as: $O_1 \rightarrow X \rightarrow O_2$, where O_1 represents the pretest measurement, X represents the 16-lesson intervention, and O_2 represents the posttest measurement.

3.2 Participants

The target population comprised senior high school students from Cangzhou No.3 High School, Hebei Province, China. A total of 50 tenth-grade students who had no prior formal instruction in Cangzhou Laozi dance participated in the study.

3.3 Course Development (16 Lessons)

The curriculum was structured into four sequential 4-lesson modules: Module 1 (Lessons 1–4): Orientation and Surface Exploration—history, traditional tunes, basic props, and elementary postures. Module 2 (Lessons 5–8): Movement Mastery and Stylized Form—Literary and Martial Laozi combinations and overlord whip techniques. Module 3 (Lessons 9–12): Deep Cultural Interpretation—connections to opera

and martial arts, regional symbolism, and folk values. Module 4 (Lessons 13–16): Creative Synthesis and Mediation—group choreography, peer evaluation, and final performance showcase.

3.4 Instruments

Two primary evaluation tools were developed: (1) Cultural Awareness Questionnaire (CAQ)—a 20-item, 5-point Likert scale measuring Cultural Cognition and Cultural Understanding; and (2) Performance Assessment Rubric—evaluating practical mastery of dance movements, prop handling, and expressive performance. Content validity was established through expert review by five specialists ($IOC \geq 0.80$). Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.903 (pre-test) and 0.902 (post-test) confirmed high internal consistency.

3.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) summarized pretest and posttest scores. Paired-samples t-tests determined statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between pretest and posttest scores. Cohen's d was calculated to measure effect size. Pearson correlation analysis examined the relationship between cultural cognition and cultural understanding subscales.

4. Results

4.1 Course Validity (IOC Evaluation)

Expert review by five specialists confirmed high content validity. All 15 curriculum design items received IOC scores of 1.0, indicating complete expert agreement. For the questionnaire, 18 out of 20 items received IOC scores of 1.0, while two items (Items 14 and 16) scored 0.8. Based on expert feedback, historical stories and prop origin backgrounds were incorporated into basic movement lessons (Lessons 3, 7, 11) and the costume unit (Lesson 15).

4.2 Quantitative Results

Overall Cultural Awareness: Total mean scores increased significantly from 2.93 ($SD = 0.79$) at pre-test to 3.70 ($SD = 0.74$) at post-test

($t(49) = 11.26, p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.60$). Cultural Cognition Subscale: Mean scores improved from 3.01 (SD = 0.73) to 3.79 (SD = 0.70) ($t(49) = 10.83, p < 0.001, d = 1.54$). Cultural Understanding Subscale: Mean scores increased

from 2.84 (SD = 0.86) to 3.60 (SD = 0.79) ($t(49) = 10.57, p < 0.001, d = 1.51$). Post-test standard deviations decreased across both subscales, indicating reduced learning gaps.

Table 1
Pre- and Post-Test Results of Cultural Awareness (N = 50)

Dimension	Pre-test M (SD)	Post-test M (SD)	t(49)	Cohen's d
Overall	2.93 (0.79)	3.70 (0.74)	11.26***	1.60
Cultural Cognition	3.01 (0.73)	3.79 (0.70)	10.83***	1.54
Cultural Understanding	2.84 (0.86)	3.60 (0.79)	10.57***	1.51
Cognition–Understanding r	$r = 0.68^{***}$	$r = 0.82^{***}$	–	–

Note: *** $p < 0.001$

4.3 Key Item Improvements

Props Recognition (Item 10) achieved the largest gain in the cognition subscale ($\Delta M = 0.83$), driven by hands-on interaction with fans, bamboo boards, and whips. Regional Culture Connection (Item 17) achieved the highest gain in the understanding subscale ($\Delta M = 0.78$), reflecting effective instruction linking movement style to Cangzhou's local martial arts heritage. Heritage Preservation Awareness (Item 19) improved from a low baseline ($M = 2.67$) to 3.45 ($\Delta M = 0.78$).

4.4 Qualitative Interview Insights

Post-course interviews with 12 representative students provided further verification: 100% confirmed that the course deepened their understanding of local folk culture; 83.3% articulated connections between dance movements and Cangzhou's martial arts heritage; and 75% expressed interest in studying other regional folk traditions and sharing Cangzhou Laozi with family and friends.

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Results

The quantitative and qualitative results consistently confirm that the 16-lesson Cangzhou Laozi folk dance course significantly

enhances senior high school students' cultural awareness ($p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d > 1.5$). The synchronous improvement across both cultural cognition and cultural understanding is directly attributable to the hierarchical pedagogical structure grounded in the Cultural Iceberg Model. By utilizing observable surface cultural elements as initial cognitive anchors, the curriculum progressively guided learners toward analyzing deep cultural connotations, avoiding "superficial learning" (Zupan & Gadpaille, 2015).

The most pronounced gains occurred in prop-related cognitive items, stemming from the curriculum's emphasis on tactile, experiential learning, which activates bodily-kinesthetic intelligence and connects sensory experience to cognitive retention—reflecting Warburton's (2018) assertion that dance education integrates multiple cognitive domains to drive holistic learner development.

5.2 Comparison with Existing Research

This study expands existing literature on ICH integration into formal school curricula. Previous studies (e.g., Li, 2022) examined pedagogical paths for folk dance in high school art modules but remained focused on macro-level policy promotion rather than systematically evaluated curricular intervention. This study bridges the gap at the senior high school level by

implementing a dual-theory curriculum validated through quasi-experimental design, expert review, and qualitative interviews. International studies (Zhao, 2025; Zong et al., 2025) similarly confirm that structured, multi-dimensional curricula are essential for sustainable cultural confidence among youth.

5.3 Theoretical and Practical Significance

Theoretically, this study expands literature on ICH integration into secondary education, advances application of the Cultural Iceberg Model and Multiple Intelligences Theory in art curriculum design, and clarifies the construct of cultural awareness by operationalizing it into two validated dimensions. Practically, it provides a complete, adaptable 16-lesson course blueprint for secondary schools in Cangzhou, offers a workable strategy for integrating local ICH into secondary art programs aligned with national curriculum standards, and supports the long-term vitality of Cangzhou Laozi by engaging high school students as prospective heritage advocates.

5.4 Research Limitations

Four limitations should be acknowledged: (1) Sample scope—50 students from a single school limits generalizability; (2) Intervention duration—only short-term gains were evaluated without longitudinal tracking; (3) Assessment scope—reliance on self-reported questionnaires without objective performance metrics; and (4) Curriculum integration—limited interdisciplinary connections and no differentiation based on baseline dance experience.

6. Conclusion

This study successfully designed, validated, and evaluated a 16-lesson Cangzhou Laozi folk dance course grounded in the Cultural Iceberg Model and Multiple Intelligences Theory. The course demonstrated high content validity (IOC = 1.0 for all curriculum items) and strong internal consistency ($\alpha > 0.90$). Quantitative findings confirmed significant improvements in both cultural cognition ($d = 1.54$) and cultural understanding ($d = 1.51$), with qualitative interviews corroborating deepened cultural engagement among students. The strengthened post-course correlation between cognition and understanding ($r = 0.82, p < 0.001$) confirms synchronized learning growth. This structured dance curriculum provides an empirically validated, replicable model for integrating regional intangible cultural heritage into senior high school education, contributing to sustainable cultural transmission and the preservation of Cangzhou Laozi for future generations.

Future Research Directions

Future research should: (1) expand sample size and diversity across multiple schools and grade levels; (2) conduct longitudinal evaluations (6–12 months post-intervention) to track score retention and cultural participation; (3) enhance assessment systems with objective performance rubrics and behavioral tracking; (4) optimize interdisciplinary design connecting Cangzhou Laozi with history, music, and fine arts; and (5) strengthen school-inheritor partnerships to enhance cultural authenticity and establish sustainable campus heritage programs.

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