

태국 고등 교육 기관의 음악 석사 논문 질 향상을 위한 방법과 실천

Methods and Practices for Enhancing Music Dissertation Quality in Thai Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract This study explores methods and practices for enhancing the quality of music dissertations in higher education institutions across Thailand. A qualitative research methodology was employed, grounded in phenomenology, to investigate this subject. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with 12 distinguished music professors, specializing in both Thai and Western music, all of whom have at least five years of experience as primary thesis advisors at the graduate level. The findings are organized into three key paradigms: (1) improving student characteristics, including admissions, academic presentations, research sponsorship, and the role of research assistants; (2) supporting the dissertation process, with a focus on raising student awareness, enhancing the roles of advisors, and developing support mechanisms; and (3) elevating the quality of music dissertations, divided into five categories: musicology, music education, Western music performance, Western composition, and Thai traditional music composition.

Key words: higher education, improvement paradigm, music dissertations, music study programs

초록 본 연구는 태국의 고등 교육 기관의 음악 석사 논문의 질을 향상시키기 위한 방법과 실천을 모색하였다. 이를 위해 현상학적 접근을 기반으로 한 질적 연구 방법론이 활용되었다. 연구대상은 태국 음악과 서양 음악에 모두 전문성을 갖춘 저명한 음악교수 12명으로, 이들은 대학원 수준에서 최소 5년 이상 논문 지도 경험을 가지고 있었다. 연구 데이터는 이들과의 심층 인터뷰를 통해 수집되었다. 연구결과는 다음 세 가지로 요약할 수 있다. 첫째, 입학, 학술 발표, 연구비 지원, 연구 보조원의 역할 등을 포함한 학생 역량 강화, 둘째, 학생의 인식을 높이고 지도 교수의 역할을 강화하며 효과적인 지원 메커니즘을 개발하는 데 중점을 둔 논문 과정 지원, 셋째, 음악 석사 논문의 질을 향상시키는 것으로, 이는 음악학, 음악 교육, 서양 음악 공연, 서양 작곡, 태국 전통 음악 작곡의 다섯 가지 범주로 구분된다.

주제어: 고등 교육, 개선 패러다임, 음악 석사 논문, 음악 연구 프로그램

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I . Introduction

Music has long been recognized as a vital component in enhancing quality of life. Reflecting this, the study of music was first introduced into higher education in Thailand in 1961, under the elective course “Music Appreciation” at the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University (Charoensook, 2007). In 1974, the College of Music at Payap University launched the Bachelor of Arts degree in music, which is regarded as the first BA in music in Thailand (Jaikum, 2014). The introduction of a master's degree program in music followed in 1989 at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia (RILCA), Mahidol University (Trimas, 2012), and in 2005, the College of Music, Mahidol University, began offering a doctoral degree in music (Lawwanitch, 2013). Currently, 24 graduate programs in music are available at higher education institutions in Thailand, comprising 17 master's programs and 7 doctoral programs. A thesis is a mandatory requirement for graduation in all these programs (Bureau of Higher Education Standards and Evaluation, Thailand, 2018).

The thesis requirement significantly impacts the more than 300 students enrolled in these programs, as they must engage in research as part of their degree completion. This high enrollment indicates a robust demand for graduate music degrees in Thailand. The higher education institutions offering these programs are governed by the Standard Criteria for Graduate Programs B.E. 2558 (2015), which mandate that students complete a thesis, demonstrating their ability to generate new knowledge independently. For master's programs, students are expected to acquire a deep understanding of knowledge production and apply this knowledge in professional and social contexts. Doctoral students, in contrast, are required to conduct research that contributes new knowledge or innovations with tangible benefits for their careers and society (Royal Gazette of Thailand, 2015).

Despite the formal criteria, the content of music dissertations is not strictly regulated and often depends on the discretion of individual advisors. Students have reported that the most significant challenge they face is selecting an appropriate research topic, which they find discouraging (Saibunmi & Trakarnrung, 2016). To address these challenges, this study introduces specific paradigms that incorporate Thailand's unique cultural and educational norms, which are seldom addressed in international literature. The lack of clear guidelines for developing research ideas and practices can negatively affect the quality of the research and, consequently, jeopardize graduation. Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the paradigms that can enhance the quality of music dissertations in Thai higher education institutions. Specifically, the research

seeks to (1) explore how student characteristics influence dissertation quality, (2) examine the support mechanisms available during the dissertation process, and (3) analyze the methods and practices used to improve the overall quality of music dissertations across various subfields, , utilizing a culturally contextual approach that differentiates these paradigms from more generic educational models seen in global research.

II. Literature Review

1. Music education in Thailand

According to the Bureau of Higher Education Standards and Evaluation (2018), Thailand has 120 music programs at the higher education level, including 96 undergraduate programs and 24 graduate programs. These programs span several subfields of music studies, including (1) musicology, (2) music education, (3) music performance and composition, and (4) Thai and traditional music studies (Jaikum, 2020). The structure of music education within the Thai educational system is divided into two main categories: (1) theoretical subjects, which focus on knowledge acquisition and the cognitive domain, and (2) academic practice subjects, which primarily address the affective and psychomotor domains of musical development. This dual focus is reflective of the Thai emphasis on holistic education, which integrates cognitive and emotional learning, a distinctive aspect often absent in Western models. The teaching and learning outcomes in music education are categorized into three areas: (1) music aptitude tests, (2) music achievement tests, and (3) preference inventories (Jaikum, Chanteyoon, & Subphasri, 2022). These align with the objectives of the Higher Education Act on Higher Education Management, which emphasizes knowledge creation, knowledge transfer, innovation application, and human resource development to support both academic pursuits and high-level professional work. In addressing the unique paradigms for improving music dissertation quality in Thailand, this research builds on the established frameworks and introduces culturally specific factors that influence how dissertations are guided, evaluated, and improved.

In the context of graduate education, a thesis is a critical component of academic completion. Students are required to independently conduct research under the guidance and assessment of thesis advisors and experts. According to regulations, primary thesis advisors must be regular faculty members with a doctoral degree or equivalent. Those without a doctoral degree must hold

at least a master's degree or equivalent and have achieved the rank of Associate Professor. Advisors are also required to have produced a minimum of three academic works within the past five years, including at least one research publication that meets the standards for academic appointment (Royal Gazette of Thailand, 2015).

Research on music theses in Thailand has been extensively explored in the works of Chiengchana (2007), Pithuphumnak (2014), and Boonyam (2017). Chiengchana (2007) employed mixed methods to analyze the content of 169 music education theses, including both master's theses and doctoral dissertations. This extensive dataset offers a unique lens into the evolving priorities and methodologies within Thai music education, reflecting broader educational reforms and cultural shifts. The study identified seven dominant research areas within music education theses: (1) the historical approach to music and music pedagogy, (2) music psychology and music appreciation, (3) music learning, (4) music curriculum development, (5) music learning assessment, (6) music management and supervision, and (7) music careers. These areas highlight the diverse interests in Thai music research and underscore the influence of Thailand's rich cultural heritage and its impact on music education strategies. The study further revealed that descriptive research is the most frequently employed method in these theses, followed by qualitative and evaluation research. However, Chiengchana's study takes a broad approach to the analysis of music education, encompassing various variables for a holistic understanding of the field. This approach reflects the integrative nature of Thai music education which often combines theoretical knowledge with traditional music practices, aligning well with the general educational philosophy in Thailand that emphasizes the integration of knowledge and cultural values. The analysis of music education theses is treated as a partial component of this broader examination, with the discussion often focusing on thesis classifications based on specific issues.

Another significant study on music theses in Thailand is the work of Pithuphumnak (2014), which focuses on ethnomusicology. Pithuphumnak employed coding analysis to examine master's theses on Lanna music, an ethnic music tradition from Northern Thailand. His analysis of 36 theses in music and cultural studies identified four primary domains of focus: traditional musical instruments, traditional vocal music, traditional ensembles, and the history of Lanna music. Within these domains, Pithuphumnak further categorized 15 key research topics, including sound systems, ensembles, musical analysis, musical performance, the role and function of music, the history and evolution of music, the physical models of musical instruments, musical genres, content analysis, musical adaptation, the transmission of music, musician biographies, context and belief, and music collection and notation. This study offers a comprehensive overview of the scope

of research in Lanna music, contributing to the understanding of ethnomusicology's development in Thailand.

In contrast to Chiengchana and Pithuphumnak, Boonyam (2017) focused her study on the research methodologies employed in 218 master's theses and doctoral dissertations in music from 2005 to 2014. Boonyam found that qualitative research methods were predominantly used, followed by quantitative research employing descriptive statistics. The research in these theses was primarily grounded in musicology and music education concepts and theories, followed by cultural concepts, and music and social theories. However, analytical concepts and theories from other disciplines, such as anthropology and psychology, were less commonly applied.

When comparing Thai music theses with those from other Asian countries, such as Japan and Singapore, noticeable differences emerge. In Japan, the fields of study in music theses are more diverse and performance-oriented, covering areas such as (1) musical arts, including instrumental music, vocal music, theatre studies on performing arts, Western and Japanese theatre, and cross-cultural studies of music; (2) composition and conducting; (3) musicology, which includes the study of musical cultures, comprehensive musical activities, music aesthetics, music theory, ethnomusicology, and the history of Western, Japanese, and Asian music, as well as folk and traditional music; (4) music education; and (5) music and arts management, which also encompasses music therapy (Kyoto City University of Arts, 2021; Osaka University, 2021; Showa University of Music, 2021; Tokyo College of Music, 2021).

In Singapore, music theses display diversity across various subfields of music studies, research methodologies, and methods. The primary classifications of these studies can be summarized as follows: (1) Musicology, which includes topics such as music and post-colonialism, music and gender, comparative studies, historical music studies (Tan, 1998), music appreciation, musicianship, and active music-making; (2) Music Education, which covers areas such as the implications of music in curriculum development and learning abilities (Suradi, 2005; Wu, 2003; Yee, 2003), as well as policy analysis and the implementation of music curriculum policies (Kesevamoorthy, 2011); and (3) Composition and Music Skills, focusing on factors influencing and developing musical skills (Lim, 2007; Lu, 2001; Tan, 2005; Tan, 1997; Tan & Cain, 2018; Teo, 1998).

When comparing music theses from Thailand and Singapore, while single case studies are more prevalent in Thailand, Singaporean theses often employ multi-method approaches beyond traditional qualitative and quantitative methods. These include practitioner research (Goh, 2006), experimental methods (Sem, 2006), and mixed methods (Chan, 2007; Suradi, 2005). Additionally, Singaporean theses frequently incorporate cross-disciplinary theoretical analysis within a

well-structured research framework. For instance, Sem (2006) utilized psychological theory to study composition skills, while Leong (2005) conducted a comparative study using criterion-based methods and consensual assessment to evaluate music composition skills.

In comparison to music theses from other regions, particularly the United States, the research scope and methodologies applied in American music theses are notably diverse and comprehensive. Theses in the U.S. typically cover six primary fields: composition, music education, musicology and theory, music performance, music therapy, and ethnomusicology, including cross-cultural studies within these fields (Bowman, 2014; Brophy, 2005). The methodologies employed in these theses often involve cross-disciplinary research (Chiang, 2008; Phan, 2004; Shuler & Wells, 2010; Yeo, 1990) and comparative studies, offering a contrast to the more uniform application of qualitative and quantitative methods observed in Thai music theses (Boonyam, 2017).

2. The paradigm concept

The term paradigm has two primary interpretations: (1) a cognitive framework, which refers to an approach to problem-solving shared by individuals within the same field, encompassing shared beliefs, values, methods, and attitudes; and (2) a worldview or perspective held by a group, such as academics, regarding the world or a particular phenomenon (Potisita, 2016). Within a social group, a paradigm encompasses the process of analytical thinking, practices, and ways of life, including the development of individuals and society. A new paradigm typically emerges when the existing one becomes inadequate for addressing problems or fostering development (Ketanon, 2022). Consequently, effective educational management requires a shift in thought patterns and approaches that emphasize innovative problem-solving and the enhancement of educational practices.

In the context of music education and this study, the interpretivism paradigm is particularly relevant. This paradigm, which falls under the broader category of “post-positivism,” posits that phenomena or events are the outcomes of complex interactions between individuals and society (Kijkuakul, 2018). Given that humans possess minds, biases, perceptions, and relational understandings, human cognition is seen as a stage of intelligence derived from comprehension. Thus, human knowledge comprises both theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge. This approach is commonly observed in phenomenological, ethnomethodological, and qualitative studies. These perspectives contribute to the constructivist belief that reality is “constructed” rather than inherently existing or explained solely by objective truths. In this view, individuals construct

their understanding of reality based on their experiences, which are influenced by socio-cultural contexts (Chaisuparakul, 2015).

In applying the interpretivist paradigm to this research, particular attention was given to how personal and social experiences influence music educators' perceptions and practices. This influenced the selection of research subjects, focusing on experienced music professors who have interacted extensively within different cultural and educational frameworks. Their unique experiences offer a rich source of data through which the complex nature of music education's development in Thailand can be understood. The interpretivist approach also guided the interpretation process, emphasizing the subjective meanings that these educators attach to their experiences and how these meanings shape their academic and pedagogical practices. This was particularly evident in how conclusions were drawn from the data; rather than seeking objective truths, the study looked for patterns of meanings across different narratives to understand the prevailing paradigms in music dissertation quality.

III. Method

The central research question guiding this study was: What are the paradigms of music dissertation improvement in higher education institutions in Thailand? To address this question, a qualitative research approach grounded in phenomenology was selected. This approach was chosen to capture the personal experiences, insights, and reflections of experienced music scholars who have played a significant role in shaping these paradigms. The phenomenological method facilitated an in-depth exploration of the subjective perspectives of these scholars, aiming to uncover the underlying structures and paradigms that inform the judgment and evaluation of music dissertations in Thai higher education.

The research process began with a comprehensive documentary research and literature review, which established the conceptual framework and informed the development of the research instruments. Key sources included relevant academic texts, journal articles, and official documents related to higher education and music dissertation standards in Thailand. A purposive sampling method was employed to select twelve distinguished music scholars who have extensive experience in advising and evaluating graduate-level theses in Thai higher education institutions. These scholars were chosen based on their significant roles as primary thesis advisors or chairs of thesis committees, with a minimum of five years of experience. The criteria for selection

were aligned with the objectives of the Standard Criteria of Higher Education Curriculum, B.E. 2548, ensuring that the participants were well-qualified to provide informed insights into the paradigms of dissertation improvement. The selected participants, representing both Thai and Western music traditions, and all informants provided informed consent to be included in the investigation:

- ① Assoc. Prof. Dr. Manop Wisuttiapat, Srinakharinwirot University - Specializing in Musicology.
- ② Assoc. Prof. Dr. Chalernsak Pikulsri, Khon Kaen University - Expert in Musicology.
- ③ Assoc. Prof. Dr. Saran Nakrob, Kasetsart University - Expertise in Musicology.
- ④ Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yoothana Chappanrat, Chulalongkorn University - Specializes in Music Education.
- ⑤ Asst. Prof. Dr. Somchai Trakarnrung, Mahidol University - Focused on Music Education.
- ⑥ Asst. Prof. Dr. Sakchai Hiranrak, Bangkokthonburi University - Specializes in Music Performance and Composition.
- ⑦ Prof. Dr. Natcha Pancharoen, Chulalongkorn University - Expert in Music Performance and Composition.
- ⑧ Prof. Dr. Narongrit Dhamabutra, Chulalongkorn University - Expertise in Music Performance and Composition.
- ⑨ Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vibul Trakulhoon, Rangsit University - Specializes in Music Performance and Composition.
- ⑩ Prof. Dr. Bussakorn Bintasan, Chulalongkorn University - Focused on Thai and Traditional Music.
- ⑪ Asst. Prof. Dr. Sanong Klangprasri, Mahidol University - Specializes in Thai and Traditional Music.
- ⑫ Asst. Prof. Dr. Noppakun Sudprasert, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute - Expert in Thai and Traditional Music.

The primary method of data collection was in-depth interviews, conducted in the participants' respective institutions to provide a comfortable and familiar environment. To facilitate clear and effective communication, the interviews were conducted in Thai. The interview process was structured around a protocol consisting of questions categorized into two main areas: (1) Questions as a thesis advisor and (2) questions as chairman of a thesis defense examination committee. Upon analysis, the findings were divided into three categories for analysis: (1) paradigms for improving student characteristics, (2) paradigms for supporting the dissertation process, and (3)

paradigms for enhancing the quality of music dissertations. Each interview was recorded with the participants' consent, and detailed notes were taken to ensure accuracy in capturing the key points and insights provided by the participants. Below is a summary of the interview questions:

As a main thesis advisor:

- How do you have a pattern or approach to diagnosing these issues?
 - The possibility of the topic or issue that the student wishes to study.
 - Considering the education topic scope of students by degree level.
 - Recommendations for the selection of research methods for students.
 - The quality development of thesis.
- Any other comments or suggestions?

As Chairman of the Thesis Defense Examination Committee:

- How do you have a pattern or approach to diagnosing these issues?
 - Judgment and evaluation of the validity of the research methodology.
 - Judging and evaluating in content accuracy.
 - Judgment and Evaluation of Thesis's quality.
- Any other comments or suggestions?

Following the interviews, the recordings were transcribed verbatim. The data analysis process involved a thorough reading of the transcripts, during which initial codes were applied to the text to denote significant phrases, ideas, or concepts as expressed by the participants. These initial codes were then reviewed and refined in a second pass of the transcripts to ensure consistency and relevance to the research questions. Following this manual coding process, a content analysis was then performed, allowing for the identification and categorization of recurring themes across the interviews. The distribution of these themes was meticulously recorded, noting the frequency and context of each coded instance to maintain a systematic approach to data aggregation. These categories were aligned with the study's objectives to ensure coherence in the analysis and to address the central research question. The analysis was further informed by relevant theories in education measurement, evaluation, and the philosophy of higher education, as well as the “5 Spiral Theory” of knowledge development. To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, the researcher employed triangulation techniques, including the cross-validation of data through consultation with thesis advisors and additional interviews where necessary. Triangulation also involved mapping the interrelationships among themes to validate their interconnectedness

and relevance to the overarching study objectives. This process helped to verify the accuracy and completeness of the data before moving to the final stages of analysis. The synthesized data were then used to develop a model for the assessment of master's theses in music, which considers the practical and academic requirements for high-quality dissertations in Thai higher education.

IV. Results

1. The paradigm of improving students' characteristics

Several higher education institutions in Thailand that offer graduate-level music education do not impose strict requirements for student admissions. For example, some programs accept graduate students without a background in music education at the bachelor's level, offering intensive music courses to compensate. However, this lack of foundational knowledge often hinders these students' ability to engage in advanced analysis and synthesis in their studies. To address this issue, some institutions have implemented core syllabus courses in music at the undergraduate level alongside graduate education, ensuring that students develop the necessary foundational skills before advancing to more complex topics.

The primary goal of graduate music education is to cultivate music scholars. Providing students with opportunities for academic engagement is therefore essential. It has been observed that music students often hesitate to challenge conventional knowledge. To encourage intellectual growth and confidence, courses should be designed to support academic work on contemporary issues. For instance, students could be encouraged to write academic papers for presentation at national and international music conferences. This exposure would not only build their confidence in presenting their work publicly but also help them learn to accept and integrate feedback from others for further improvement.

In Thailand, the field of music is often perceived as less critical compared to other disciplines that are seen as directly contributing to national development. Consequently, funding for music research is limited, with the majority of resources allocated to well-known professors from prestigious institutions. In contrast, students receive significantly less financial support for their research. To foster a more balanced approach to education, the government should prioritize funding across all fields, recognizing that the development of both the sciences and the arts

is essential for national growth.

Many music students aspire to excel in research, a skill they can develop by serving as research assistants. However, opportunities for such positions are rare within Thailand's music education sector. This scarcity may be linked to the limited availability of research funding, which has led many professors to focus on other academic activities instead of research. To mitigate this issue, educational institutions should implement clear policies that support cost-effective research for all faculty members. Additionally, it would be beneficial to require each instructor to oversee a proportionate number of research assistant positions relative to student enrollment in the program. This approach would be particularly effective in providing students with valuable research experience, especially as they work on their theses.

2. The paradigm of supporting the process of conducting dissertations

The process of conducting research can be particularly challenging for music students, whose primary focus is often on the practical aspects of musical performance. Given this, it is crucial to provide substantial support in guiding students through their dissertation work. Enrolling in one or two research courses alone is insufficient preparation for the demands of thesis research. Many students enter graduate programs without a solid foundation in research methodologies, making it difficult for them to complete their research within the time constraints imposed by the education system. To address this gap, more comprehensive research courses should be integrated into the curriculum. In addition to separate courses on quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, institutions should offer specialized courses on music research methodology and seminars to foster a research-oriented mindset among students.

A critical component of research education is the adherence to research ethics, particularly given the nature of music research, which often involves human subjects through interviews, musical experiments, and cultural studies. Researchers must strictly adhere to ethical guidelines, respecting the dignity and safety of all participants, whether they are directly or indirectly involved in the research process. This ethical conduct aligns with the principles set by the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT), which emphasizes respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (NRCT, 2019). As Worakham (2016) notes, if a study poses any potential harm, discomfort, or ethical concerns for participants, the researcher must critically assess whether the study should proceed.

The role of the advisor is pivotal in guiding students through the research process, with a

focus on ensuring the correctness of research methodology, content accuracy, and the overall quality of the research, as per academic standards. Music research often requires interdisciplinary knowledge, compelling advisors to continuously broaden their expertise beyond music to provide comprehensive guidance. The promotion of the advisory role is also tied to the faculty's responsibility to conduct research that meets the criteria set by the Office of the Higher Education Commission. Advisors not only offer methodological and content-related guidance but also play a crucial role in shaping the academic credibility of the thesis. They help navigate research directions, provide strategies to overcome obstacles, and support students in achieving research success. It is essential for music students to work closely with experienced advisors who can offer practical, research-oriented mentorship.

Given the varying levels of knowledge among students, it is essential to implement support mechanisms that assist students throughout the research process, particularly in preparing for a successful thesis defense. These mechanisms can help students maintain continuity and positivity in their research endeavors. Key support initiatives might include:

- Organizing Placement Tests: Conduct placement tests at the end of each semester for each chapter of the thesis to monitor progress and provide timely feedback.
- Research Camps: Establish research camps focused on revising and improving students' theses. During these camps, students receive close guidance and constructive feedback on their work.
- Training Sessions on Academic Publishing: Offer training sessions on writing and preparing academic articles for publication in national and international journals. This prepares students to present their research to a broader academic audience and helps them meet the requirements for graduation.

A significant challenge for music students is the publication of their research in academic journals, which is often a prerequisite for graduation. Many students successfully defend their theses but face delays in graduating due to the requirement of publishing their results in international journals. The limited number of journals specializing in music further exacerbates this challenge. Therefore, it is crucial that the evaluation of theses considers not only the validity of the research methodology and content but also the potential for the research to meet the rigorous standards required for academic publication. Ensuring that students are equipped to achieve this goal is vital for their academic and professional success. In line with Trakarnrung's (2009) findings, the assessment of doctoral dissertations in music education should encompass

not only the depth and originality of the research but also its practical contributions and adherence to rigorous research methodologies. This approach ensures that the research not only meets academic standards but also provides significant value to the field of music education and broader societal development.

3. The paradigm of improving the quality of music dissertations

This study identifies two primary types of music theses: those oriented toward the liberal arts, which focus on academic implications, such as theses in musicology and music education, and those oriented toward the fine and applied arts, including theses in music performance, music composition, and Thai traditional music. The latter category emphasizes the practical aspects of music. Despite their differences, all types of theses share a common foundation in the application of scientific thinking and research methodologies. This adherence to research practices is mandated by the Standard Criteria for Graduate Programs of 2015, which requires that all dissertations be conducted with a robust research methodology, enabling students to discover new knowledge and integrate their musical expertise with cross-disciplinary insights. The study categorizes the dissertations into five branches, reflecting the structure of music education at the graduate level in Thai higher education institutions.

Musicology dissertations often focus on the musical works of individuals who possess notable talent and fame, or on cultural or ethnic groups. A critical aspect of these dissertations is the clear justification for selecting a particular subject for study. The data collection process should be conducted in the field, directly engaging with the cultural and societal contexts of the sources. This process typically involves three key elements to ensure the validity, accuracy, and currency of the data: (1) observation, (2) interviews, and (3) participation. A crucial consideration in musicology research is the need to balance the analysis of musical elements with the cultural contexts, as these dissertations are often evaluated based on their cultural relevance.

Music education dissertations generally aim to prove or disprove theories related to social impacts within the educational sphere. These works often engage with broad societal connections, making the social implications of the research a central focus. Analyzes within these dissertations should align with frameworks such as Bloom's Taxonomy or extend beyond it. Recommended areas of focus include philosophy, curriculum development, pedagogy, psychology, assessments, personal identity, history, and technology. The analysis can be conducted on two levels: (1) micro-studies that involve intensive, detailed analyzes and (2) macro-studies that encompass a

broader range of analyzes. The selection of theoretical frameworks should be guided by rationality and appropriateness to the research questions being addressed.

Research on Western music performance emphasizes the rational and individualized processes undertaken by artists. The methodology generally follows these steps: (1) data collection, (2) analysis, (3) synthesis, (4) integration, (5) review, and (6) conclusion. The final element of this process involves presenting the knowledge gained through an interpretation of the music performed during an artist's concert. This may include examining the reasons behind specific performance choices, such as the tempo, any modifications or additions to the original score, the selection of techniques, and the variations in rehearsal approaches, as the same piece of music may be rehearsed differently by different artists. The scope of such dissertations typically requires a focus on substantial works, such as sonatas or more complex forms, appropriate for graduate-level study.

For dissertations in Western music composition, the creation of entirely new music is essential; rearranging existing compositions is not considered sufficient. However, drawing inspiration from folk music is acceptable. The scope for graduate-level compositions generally includes works for a quartet or larger ensembles, and the music must be intended for performance in Western musical settings. The dissertation may explore different aspects of the composition process, including: (1) the explanation of the inspiration or ideas behind the composition, (2) a detailed interpretation of the choice of notes, sounds, chorus arrangements, and other technical aspects, and (3) a discussion of how the student's work relates to the ideas, theories, and techniques of established composers.

Thai and traditional music dissertations often focus on the unique and evolving styles of individual artists, making them highly independent studies. The research should address aspects of Thai and traditional music that have not yet been thoroughly explored, seen, or understood. The core of these studies is practice-oriented rather than purely academic. Typically, 80% of the learning process involves studying the music itself, with the remaining 20% devoted to understanding the broader contexts. For effective data collection, it is advisable for researchers to immerse themselves in the environment where the music is practiced. In many cases, Thai and traditional musicians live in music houses, where rituals such as paying homage and offering services to the professor are still observed. These practices underscore the deep cultural significance of the music, with professors passing on their knowledge as though the students were their own children.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the multifaceted approaches needed to enhance the quality of music dissertations within Thai higher education institutions. The findings emphasize the importance of addressing the foundational gaps in student knowledge through more rigorous admission criteria and the integration of comprehensive research courses that build upon students' existing skills. By improving student characteristics, such as their research competencies and critical thinking, and concurrently supporting the dissertation process through structured advisor engagement and process-oriented support mechanisms, the study demonstrates a synergistic effect that significantly enhances dissertation outcomes. Equally, by fostering a research-oriented mindset and ensuring adherence to ethical standards, students are better prepared to navigate the complexities of dissertation work. The role of advisors is crucial, as their interdisciplinary expertise and guidance are key to shaping the academic rigor and credibility of student research. Additionally, the implementation of robust support mechanisms, including placement tests, research camps, and training in academic publishing, is essential for maintaining continuity and ensuring that students can successfully defend their theses and meet publication requirements. The study also delineates the distinct approaches required for different types of music dissertations, whether in musicology, music education, Western music performance, composition, or Thai traditional music. This interplay between improving student characteristics and supporting the dissertation process fosters a holistic educational environment that facilitates not only the completion of theses but also their innovative and scholarly contribution to the field. Despite the diversity in these fields, all share a common need for rigorous application of scientific thinking and research methodologies, underscoring the significance of cross-disciplinary integration in advancing both academic and practical aspects of music education. Ultimately, these paradigms collectively aim to elevate the standards of music dissertations, ensuring that students are equipped with the necessary tools to contribute meaningful and innovative research to the field. Education today is increasingly aligned with international standards, particularly in institutions offering graduate programs in music. These institutions are achieving international quality benchmarks through the adoption of foreign language texts, the requirement of English proficiency examinations, the writing of theses in English, and the publication of research findings in national or international academic journals. This aligns with Trakarnrung's (2007) assertion that graduates must be equipped to apply their expertise on an international level, reflecting the expectation that they should contribute effectively to global academic and professional communities. In this context, the evolving

landscape of music education in Thailand, which now encompasses a wide array of programs across 120 institutions (Bureau of Higher Education Standards and Evaluation, 2018), reflects a significant shift towards integrating international standards with local academic practices.

The scope of music dissertations should not be constrained by rigid, issue-based approaches but rather should embrace a diverse range of subfields. The inherent fluidity of music, which intertwines with various aspects of the arts, humanities, social sciences, and even sciences, necessitates a broad and integrative approach to research. As highlighted in studies such as those by Chiengchana (2007) and Pithuphumnak (2014), the range of subfields - from musicology and ethnomusicology to music education and performance - demonstrates the necessity for a holistic approach that considers the complex interplay of cultural, psychological, and pedagogical factors in music research. Unlike traditional, narrow issue-based frameworks, a holistic, cross-disciplinary approach offers a more comprehensive understanding of music, revealing its connections to broader contexts. This perspective not only enriches the study of music but also mirrors its true nature as a discipline interconnected with its surrounding environment. Adopting such an approach fosters “big picture” thinking in researchers, enabling them to explore their subjects in a more literate and nuanced manner.

However, significant challenges remain in the dissertation process. Saibunmi and Trakarnrung (2016) highlight the difficulty students face in selecting an appropriate topic, often finding it hard to narrow down their interests to a specific focus. This challenge is compounded by the evolving demands in music education, where students must not only grasp theoretical knowledge but also navigate practical domains, as identified by Jaikum et al. (2022) in their categorization of music education outcomes into cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Further complications arise when changes in advisors or committee members disrupt the continuity of the research process, leading to disarray. The evolution of music theses in Thai higher education institutions reveals that, while music research shares similarities with other disciplines, the application of research methodology to translate the abstract nature of music into an objective form is a unique challenge faced by music students. Research methodology is crucial in shaping the core of the dissertation, guiding the researcher towards producing a quality piece of work. This process requires the application of scientific thinking to gather empirical evidence and uncover truths specific to each subfield of music studies. As noted by Boonyam (2017), the reliance on qualitative research methods in Thai music theses underscores the need for a more structured approach that integrates quantitative methods and cross-disciplinary theories, similar to the diverse methodologies employed in other Asian contexts like Japan and Singapore. While traditional

dissertations remain the dominant format, there is growing awareness of alternative approaches, such as project-based dissertations, which are gaining interest among doctoral students in music education, despite limited familiarity and adoption among faculty (Sims & Cassidy, 2016).

As the scope of studies continues to evolve, adapting to various areas of exploration, a new paradigm has emerged in the context of music education and dissertation development in Thailand. As Khuana (2018) suggests, the shift from traditional paradigms to holistic learner development is essential for effective 21st-century education. This shift aligns with the broader trend of integrating interdisciplinary perspectives into music education, as seen in the international examples provided by institutions in Japan and Singapore, where musicology, performance, and composition are studied through lenses that include cultural and psychological theories (Kyoto City University of Arts, 2021; Showa University of Music, 2021). Similarly, Thuntawech and Trakamrung (2017) argue that no single teaching style can be universally effective. Instructional approaches in music education must be well-balanced, incorporating mixed methods that consider the unique dynamics between instructors, students, and the nature of the subject matter. This adaptability in teaching and research methods is crucial for fostering a comprehensive and robust educational environment that supports the development of well-rounded, globally competent music scholars.

To further validate and operationalize the paradigms identified in this study, it is proposed that pilot programs be initiated within selected Thai higher education institutions. These pilot programs would involve implementing specific interventions based on the paradigms of improving student characteristics, supporting the dissertation process, and enhancing dissertation quality. For instance, a pilot study could involve a targeted approach to integrate more rigorous admission criteria and comprehensive research courses, and measure the subsequent impact on dissertation quality over a three-year period. Additionally, experimental studies could be conducted to test the effectiveness of these paradigms in real-world educational settings, providing empirical data that could lead to broader implementation across all music education programs in Thailand.

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