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Teaching Culture and the Arts Across Contexts

A Systematic Qualitative Synthesis of Learner-Centered, Culturally Sustaining, and Adaptive Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Culture and arts education increasingly carries expectations to develop creativity, intercultural understanding, identity, inclusion, and critical participation. Yet instructional research remains dispersed across arts disciplines, educational levels, and national contexts. This study systematically synthesizes qualitative evidence on instructional practices in culture and arts education and proposes an integrated pedagogical framework. The source manuscript reported a 2021–2026 evidence corpus of 16 studies. To improve methodological coherence, the review process was reorganized according to PRISMA 2020 reporting, with the screening arithmetic reconciled to 3,000 identified records, 94 screened records, 28 full texts assessed, and 16 studies retained. Thematic synthesis produced three interrelated orientations: Pagtambayayong, emphasizing learner agency, dialogue, collaboration, and inclusive participation; Kabilin, emphasizing community-rooted knowledge, cultural identity, artistic meaning-making, and critical consciousness; and Kaugmaran, emphasizing digital expansion, contextualized resources, reflective teaching, and professional learning. The synthesis indicates that effective culture and arts teaching is strongest when these orientations operate together rather than as isolated techniques. The resulting framework positions learner participation, cultural situatedness, and adaptive instructional capacity as mutually reinforcing conditions for meaningful culture and arts education.

Keywords
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Introduction

Culture and arts education is increasingly treated as a core component of inclusive and future-oriented education rather than as an optional enrichment activity. The UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education places culture and the arts within the broader purposes of quality education, cultural diversity, creativity, participation, and sustainable development [1]. Its subsequent implementation guidance further stresses context-relevant curricula, stronger links between educational and cultural institutions, teacher capacity, and the responsible use of digital technologies [2]. These policy directions are consistent with recent research showing that arts education can support identity formation, critical reflection, social dialogue, and culturally sustaining learning when instruction moves beyond the transmission of canonical content [3]–[8].

Recent empirical studies illustrate three shifts that are especially relevant. First, arts teaching is increasingly learner-centered and dialogic. Culturally responsive arts programmes have shown how students and teachers can jointly interpret cultural experience, question dominant narratives, and transform curricula through dialogue and reflection [3], [6]. Second, culture is being treated as an epistemic resource rather than merely as subject matter. Research in Indonesia, Africa, and other multilingual contexts shows that local arts, community knowledge, language repertoires, and heritage can make instruction more authentic while strengthening identity and belonging [4], [5], [9]. Third, digital and multimodal environments are expanding access to artistic and cultural experiences, but they also require teachers to make careful pedagogical decisions concerning accessibility, meaning, and technological fit [10]–[12].

Despite these developments, the literature remains fragmented. Research is distributed across visual arts, music, language education, heritage education, early childhood, higher education, and community-based learning. Studies often describe particular strategies—such as inquiry, collaborative critique, translanguaging, digital immersion, local-material use, or arts integration—without showing how these practices relate to one another as a coherent instructional architecture. Teacher capacity is also uneven: culturally sustaining practice depends not only on materials and techniques but on professional learning, reflective judgment, and institutional support [13]. Recent Philippine evidence similarly shows that culturally

responsive teaching requires teachers to connect curriculum with local history, community knowledge, and students' lived realities [14], while systematic review evidence indicates that implementation is strengthened when professional development, inclusive curriculum design, and institutional support operate together [15]. This concern is especially relevant in Cebu, where earlier research documented the instructional potential of Cebuano cultural identities and localized cultural knowledge [16].

The source manuscript addressed this fragmentation through a qualitative meta-synthesis of 16 studies published from 2021 to 2026. However, its original presentation combined a broad literature review, heterogeneous evidence types, and internally inconsistent PRISMA counts. The present revision therefore retains the reported 16-study evidence corpus but reframes the work as a systematic qualitative evidence synthesis, reconciles the study-selection arithmetic, distinguishes the synthesis corpus from literature used only for contextual and methodological framing, and condenses the results around the three higher-order themes that were already generated from the source analysis.

Accordingly, this study asks: What recurring instructional practices characterize culture and arts education across the reviewed evidence, and how can these practices be integrated into a coherent framework for teaching? The contribution is twofold. Empirically, the synthesis consolidates dispersed instructional practices into three interdependent orientations. Conceptually, it proposes that effective culture and arts instruction depends on the alignment of learner participation, cultural situatedness, and adaptive instructional capacity rather than on any single method.

Material and Methods

This study used a systematic qualitative evidence-synthesis design. The revision follows PRISMA 2020 for transparent reporting of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion [17], while the interpretive synthesis draws on the principles of thematic synthesis described by Thomas and Harden [18]. The evidence corpus remains the 16 studies reported in the source manuscript; additional references introduced in this revision are used only to strengthen theoretical, methodological, and contextual framing and are not counted as newly included synthesis studies.

A. Search Strategy and Eligibility

The source review searched Google Scholar, Crossref, and OpenAlex through Harzing's Publish or Perish, using combinations of terms related to "teaching culture," "teaching arts," "culture and arts education," "pedagogical practices," and "instructional practices." The publication window was 2021–2026, and only English-language full texts were considered. Eligible records addressed teaching strategies, pedagogical approaches, instructional practices,

or learning experiences in culture and/or arts education and provided qualitative findings that could be interpreted thematically. Qualitative and mixed-method studies with extractable qualitative findings were prioritized. Practice-based or conceptual sources were retained only when they reported a sufficiently explicit pedagogical evidence base and analytic rationale. Purely quantitative outcome studies, non-educational articles, records without usable full text, and publications lacking sufficient methodological transparency were excluded.

B. Study Selection and Quality Appraisal

The numerical flow reported in the source manuscript contained an arithmetic inconsistency. Without changing the final included-study count, the flow was reconciled as follows: 3,000 records were identified; four duplicates were removed; 2,902 clearly ineligible or non-usable records were removed before formal title/abstract screening; 94 records were screened; 66 full texts could not be retrieved; 28 full texts were assessed; and 12 were excluded after eligibility and quality review, leaving 16 studies for synthesis. This corrected sequence is shown in Fig. 1.

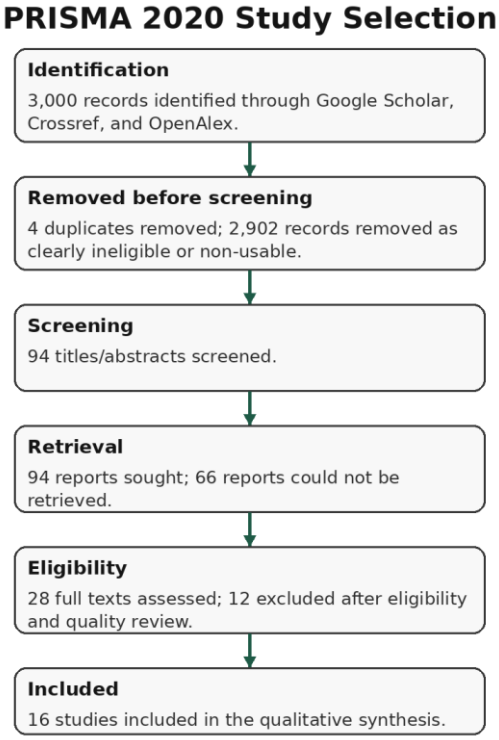

Fig. 1. Reconciled PRISMA 2020 flow of study selection.

The source manuscript reported use of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) qualitative checklist. In the revised method, CASP is retained for empirical qualitative components because it evaluates clarity of aims, appropriateness of methodology, recruitment, data collection, reflexivity, ethics, analysis, and value of findings [19]. Because the corpus included heterogeneous evidence types, non-empirical practice-based sources were not treated

as if they were conventional qualitative studies; instead, they were screened for explicit purpose, evidence base, analytic transparency, and direct relevance to instructional practice. This avoids applying a single checklist mechanically across incompatible designs.

C. Data Extraction and Thematic Synthesis

Data extraction focused on educational context, instructional practice, salient pedagogical finding, and the interpretive meaning assigned by the original authors. The source analysis generated 88 initial codes, which were organized into 26 descriptive categories, nine subthemes, and three higher-order themes. The revision preserves this analytic structure but clarifies the logic of theme development. Coding proceeded through repeated reading, descriptive coding, comparison of convergent and divergent practices, and interpretive grouping into broader pedagogical patterns. This procedure is consistent with thematic-analysis principles that emphasize systematic coding, iterative theme development, and continual checking against the underlying data [20], [21]. Disagreements among the six authors were resolved through discussion and consensus.

Results

The synthesis yielded three connected instructional orientations. Rather than representing mutually exclusive teaching models, the themes describe different pedagogical functions that recur across the evidence: redistributing participation, situating learning culturally, and sustaining instructional adaptation.

A. Pagtambayayong: Collaborative and Learner-Centered Meaning-Making

The first theme, Pagtambayayong, refers to cooperative partnership and captures a shift from transmission-oriented teaching toward shared construction of artistic and cultural meaning. Across the evidence, learners were positioned as interpreters, makers, discussants, and co-designers rather than passive recipients. This orientation contained three subthemes.

1. Pagtukib (Discovery)

   Pagtukib concerned learner-led inquiry. In arts and humanities settings, pedagogical imaginaries that foreground student voice challenge institutions to design learning around participation, experimentation, and future-oriented engagement [22]. Research on student-centered teaching further shows that student-centeredness is not simply reduced teacher talk; it involves deliberately transferring meaningful decision-making, inquiry, project responsibility, and reflection to learners [23]. The synthesis therefore interprets inquiry as a redistribution of epistemic authority: teachers retain responsibility for structure and scaffolding, but students assume greater responsibility for interpretation and creative exploration.

2. Bayanihan (Collective Cooperation)

Bayanihan captured collaborative artistic practice. Collaboration appeared through peer critique, co-created tasks, dialogue, community participation, and shared cultural interpretation. Community-informed curriculum development demonstrates how participation can broaden what counts as legitimate knowledge and increase curricular relevance [9]. Collaborative meaning-making is particularly important in culture and arts education because artistic interpretation is relational: understanding is often sharpened through comparison of perspectives rather than through a single predetermined answer.

3. Pagdawat (Acceptance)

Pagdawat described linguistic, cognitive, developmental, and cultural diversity as instructional resources. Intentional visual-arts teaching requires teachers to balance learner autonomy with purposeful scaffolding and to recognize that different learners need different forms of support [24]. In multilingual contexts, translanguaging can similarly reposition students' full linguistic repertoires from problems to resources for participation and knowledge construction [25]. The common principle is that inclusion is strongest when difference changes how instruction is designed, not when diverse learners are merely added to an unchanged lesson structure.

B. Kabilin: Community-Rooted Culture, Identity, and Critical Inquiry

The second theme, Kabilin, means heritage or inherited legacy. It reflects an understanding of culture not as decorative content but as a foundation for meaning, identity, and social interpretation.

1. Pagpahiuyon (Alignment)

Pagpahiuyon represented the alignment of instruction with community knowledge, local heritage, and lived experience. Recent work integrating Banyuwangi arts into elementary education shows how culturally resonant media and traditional arts can support motivation, identity, and character development [4]. Philippine research also demonstrates that local history, values, and community experiences can make culturally responsive instruction more meaningful [14], while earlier Cebuano research identified local cultural practices as a basis for culture-responsive pedagogy [16]. Across the synthesis, community-rooted teaching therefore functioned as a bridge between formal curriculum and learners' cultural worlds.

2. Kamugnaan (Creation)

Kamugnaan represented artistic meaning-making as inquiry. Arts-based learning invited learners to interpret symbols, images, stories, movement, language, and media rather than merely reproduce technical procedures. Demers showed how arts encounters can interrupt routine patterns of thought and support exploratory meaning-making [26]. Güler's

practitioner inquiry likewise found that visual-culture teaching can strengthen critical interpretation of everyday images, inquiry, and self-expression [27]. The synthesis thus treats artistic production and interpretation as epistemic processes: students do not only make art; they use artistic forms to investigate experience.

3. Pagpamukaw (Awakening)

Pagpamukaw concerned critical social consciousness. Culturally responsive arts education can invite learners to examine whose histories are represented, which identities are normalized, and how artistic forms communicate power and belonging. Recent studies of culturally sustaining arts-based pedagogy show that dialogue, Indigenous artistic practice, anti-racist curriculum work, and teacher reflexivity can reposition culture and arts education as a space for social critique rather than neutral appreciation [3], [5]–[8]. This does not imply that every arts lesson must become political advocacy; rather, it indicates that culturally meaningful teaching creates room for learners to question representation, exclusion, and social assumptions when these issues are embedded in the material being studied.

C. Kaugmaran: Adaptive Resources, Digital Expansion, and Teacher Learning

The third theme, Kaugmaran, means progress or development. It captures the adaptive capacity required to keep culture and arts education relevant under changing technological, curricular, and learner conditions.

1. Bag-ong Lantawan (New Horizon)

Bag-ong Lantawan concerned digital and immersive tools. The evidence suggests that technology is pedagogically valuable when it expands access, collaboration, visualization, or creative production rather than when it is adopted for novelty alone. Research on metaverse-based teaching highlights the potential of immersive environments for interaction and personalized learning while also identifying access, reliability, interoperability, and teacher-readiness constraints [10]. Digital cultural-heritage research similarly shows that virtual access can broaden engagement with heritage, although digitization must remain connected to interpretation and preservation goals [12]. Participatory online pedagogy further demonstrates the importance of multimodal production and collaborative digital literacy [28].

2. Galamiton (Tools)

Galamiton concerned instructional resources, especially locally available materials and context-sensitive media. In the synthesis, resources were not treated as neutral supports; their cultural origin and accessibility affected what learners could experience and understand. Locally sourced artefacts, recycled materials, community resources, digital archives, and culturally resonant media often reduced the distance between abstract curriculum and lived practice. This finding also explains why resource selection should be judged by pedagogical

purpose, cultural fit, accessibility, and sustainability rather than by technological sophistication alone.

3. Pamalandong (Reflection)

Pamalandong represented teacher beliefs, professional learning, and adaptive judgment. Teacher confidence and capacity determine whether learner-centered, culturally responsive, or technology-supported strategies become meaningful practice. Culturally sustaining professional-development research emphasizes critical reflection on teachers' own cultural assumptions and the need to redesign lessons, not simply add diverse content [3]. Recent teacher-capacity frameworks similarly argue that culturally sustaining practice requires observable routines, coaching, reflection, and institutional support [13]. The synthesis therefore places teacher learning inside the instructional framework rather than treating it as an external implementation issue.

Table 1 summarizes the relationships among the three themes, their subthemes, and their principal instructional functions.

Table 1. Thematic synthesis of instructional practices in culture and arts education.

Theme	Subthemes	Primary instructional function	Representative evidence
Pagtambayayong	Pagtukib; Bayanihan; Pagdawat	Redistributes pedagogical authority through inquiry, collaboration, and inclusive participation.	Student voice, intentional scaffolding, community co-construction, translanguaging [9], [22]–[24], [27]
Kabilin	Pagpahiuyon; Kamugnaan; Pagpamukaw	Situates learning in heritage, community knowledge, artistic interpretation, and critical consciousness.	Culturally sustaining arts, local heritage, visual culture, arts-based inquiry [3]–[8], [14], [16], [25], [26]
Kaugmaran	Bag-ong Lantawan; Galamiton; Pamalandong	Sustains adaptation through digital tools, contextualized resources, and reflective professional learning.	Immersive learning, digital heritage, participatory digital pedagogy, teacher capacity [10]–[13], [28]

Fig. 2 presents an integrated thematic framework for instructional practices in culture and arts education. It brings together three themes that describe how learners participate, how instruction draws on cultural knowledge, and how teachers adapt their practice. Pagtambayayong emphasizes learner participation and shared authority. *Pagtukib* gives learners opportunities to pose questions and pursue their own inquiries. *Bayanihan* supports collaborative artistic practice, while *Pagdawat* treats differences in learners' backgrounds and perspectives as resources for learning. Kabilin situates learning in the cultural life of communities. *Pagpahiuyon* grounds instruction in local knowledge and practices. *Kamugnaan* engages learners in making meaning through artistic expression, while *Pagpamukaw* encourages them to examine the social issues and assumptions that shape cultural practices. Kaugmaran describes teachers'

capacity to adapt instruction. *Bag-ong Lantawan* extends learning through digital tools, *Galamiton* emphasizes resources suited to local contexts, and *Pamalandong* supports professional learning through reflection on classroom practice. The arrows converge on the framework's central proposition that meaningful culture and arts education emerges when these dimensions are deliberately aligned. For example, teachers can adapt local materials and digital tools to support a collaborative art project in which learners investigate a community practice and reflect on its significance in their own everyday lives.

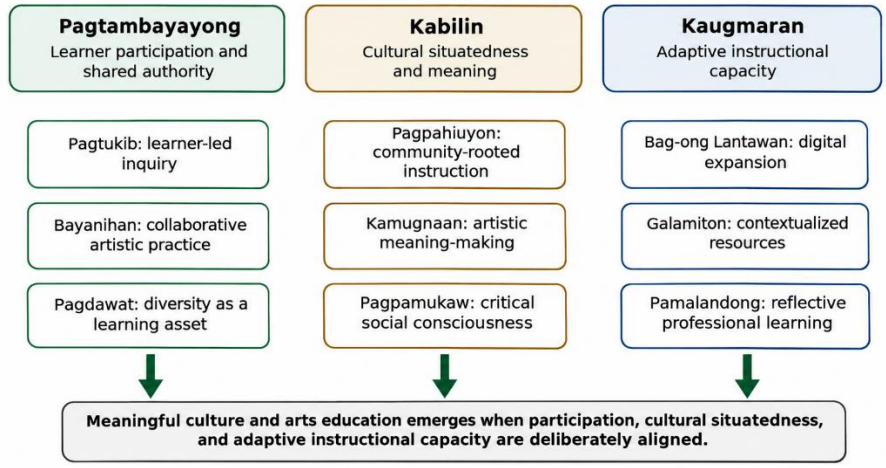

Fig. 2. Integrated thematic framework for instructional practices in culture and arts education.

Discussion

The synthesis suggests that effective culture and arts education is best understood as an alignment problem. Learner-centered techniques can become superficial if they are disconnected from culturally meaningful content; culturally rich content can remain passive if students have little interpretive agency; and both can become difficult to sustain if teachers lack resources, digital judgment, or professional support. The three themes therefore operate as mutually reinforcing conditions rather than as a menu of independent strategies.

This interpretation is consistent with contemporary culture-and-arts policy. UNESCO's framework and implementation guidance emphasize participation, cultural diversity, local and Indigenous knowledge, teacher capacity, and digital transformation as interconnected dimensions of educational quality [1], [2]. It also aligns with recent arts-education studies in which culturally sustaining practice depended on both curricular representation and changes in teacher–learner relationships [3]–[8]. The framework developed here adds an instructional organizing logic: Pagtambayayong addresses who participates and how authority is shared; Kabilin addresses what cultural knowledge and meanings organize learning; and Kaugmaran addresses how instruction remains resourced, reflective, and adaptable.

The findings also qualify simplistic claims that student-centeredness automatically produces culturally responsive learning. Student-centered activity can still reproduce narrow cultural assumptions if the materials, examples, and standards of interpretation remain disconnected from learners' communities. Conversely, culture-based content can become tokenistic if students are only asked to remember traditions. High-quality practice therefore requires both agency and cultural depth. The same caution applies to technology. Digital media, immersive environments, and online archives can enlarge access, but their educational value depends on whether they support inquiry, collaboration, interpretation, and cultural connection [10]–[12].

For teachers, the framework implies a practical sequence of design questions. First, where can learners exercise meaningful interpretive or creative agency? Second, whose knowledge, heritage, language, and lived experience are represented in the lesson? Third, what resources, technologies, scaffolds, and professional capacities are required to make that learning accessible and rigorous? For curriculum developers, the framework supports moving beyond lists of cultural content toward curriculum designs that specify participation structures and teacher-support requirements. For teacher-education institutions, it reinforces the importance of reflective practice, culturally sustaining pedagogy, community engagement, and digital-pedagogical competence as integrated rather than separate areas of preparation.

Several limitations should constrain interpretation. The source corpus contained only 16 studies and was heterogeneous in design, educational level, and national context. The original search relied heavily on open discovery systems rather than subscription bibliographic databases, and a substantial number of records were unavailable for full-text retrieval. The source manuscript also did not provide a protocol registration, inter-rater reliability statistic, or complete study-level appraisal table. These limitations reduce claims of exhaustiveness. The proposed framework should therefore be treated as an evidence-informed conceptual synthesis requiring further validation, not as a universal model. Future research should test the framework across specific arts disciplines, compare basic and higher education, examine implementation in Philippine classrooms, and investigate how the three orientations relate to observable student outcomes.

Conclusion

This systematic qualitative synthesis identifies three interdependent orientations in culture and arts teaching. Pagtambayayong emphasizes learner agency, dialogue, collaboration, and inclusion; Kabilin anchors learning in heritage, community knowledge, artistic meaning-making, and critical consciousness; and Kaugmaran emphasizes digital expansion, contextualized

resources, reflective practice, and continuing teacher development. The principal contribution is not a claim that one strategy is universally superior, but that effective culture and arts instruction emerges when participation, cultural situatedness, and adaptive instructional capacity are deliberately aligned. The framework offers teachers and curriculum developers a concise way to design culturally meaningful, participatory, and future-responsive learning while preserving the interpretive and creative character of culture and arts education.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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