Localizing A/R/Tography in Chinese Higher Music Education: Pedagogical Transformation, Systemic Constraints, and a Framework Informed By Indigenous Practice

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ABSTRACT

A/r/tography, an arts-based research methodology integrating the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher, has developed over two decades largely in North American and other Western contexts; its viability in Chinese higher music education, where technique-first training, jury-based assessment, and hierarchical classroom norms prevail, remains empirically untested. This study explored the significance of A/r/tography for music teachers' pedagogical practice, the challenges encountered in its implementation, teacher and student perceptions, and the components of a framework tailored to Chinese higher music education. A qualitative single-case study with a phenomenological orientation was conducted at the School of Music of Southwest University in southwest China. The corpus comprised 47 data items: interviews with eight early-career teachers and 12 students, eight classroom observations, and 19 documents. Data were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis, supported by independent double coding (inter-coder reliability 0.821), triangulation, and member checking. The analysis identified a six-dimensional transformation of pedagogical practice achieved around, rather than through, institutional support; an interlocking eight-dimension constraint system; and informed, conditional endorsement differentiated by year, major, and ability. Participants' proposals converged into a seven-cluster localized framework permeated by a localization positioning. The study further argues that kouchuan-xinshou (oral transmission and heart-to-heart instruction) shares important structural affinities with A/r/tography, offering an indigenous point of anchorage for the method, while differing from it in its orientation toward fidelity to lineage rather than critical inquiry. Because the evidence comes from one institution and rests largely on self-report from participants already exposed to the method, the findings are offered as analytically, not statistically, generalizable, and the framework's phased pathway is presented together with a proposed pilot design.

Keywords: A/r/tography; music education; higher education in China; localization; oral transmission; kouchuan-xinshou

INTRODUCTION

Chinese higher music education is currently pulled between two competing logics. On one side, national policy has made creativity, innovation, and the quality of undergraduate teaching explicit reform priorities. The Ministry of Education's "Double Ten-Thousand Plan" for first-class undergraduate programs (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [Ministry of Education], 2019) and the 2020 guidelines on school aesthetic education (General Office of the CPC Central Committee & General Office of the State Council, 2020) frame arts education as a vehicle for creativity and cultural confidence, and the 2020 evaluation reform calls on institutions to reduce their reliance on publication counts when judging teachers (Central Committee of the CPC & State Council, 2020). On the other side, the pedagogical culture of Chinese music schools remains organized around technical proficiency, structured repertoire transmission, and measurable performance outcomes, a formation that research on Chinese music education has repeatedly identified as privileging technical mastery over creative expression (Ho, 2018, 2023). The resulting tension falls most

heavily on university music teachers, who are charged with cultivating creative capacity within institutions that assess, allocate workload, and promote them according to a technique-first grammar.

A/r/tography, conceptualized by Irwin and de Cosson (2004) as an arts-based form of living inquiry, is a candidate methodology for working within this tension because it does not ask music educators to abandon artistry for pedagogy or scholarship. Instead, it integrates the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher into a single, fluid practice in which each role recursively informs the others (Springgay et al., 2005; Irwin, 2013). Its emphasis on reflective, process-oriented, relational inquiry aligns closely with the creative capacities that Chinese reform documents call for (Leavy, 2020). Yet A/r/tography was developed in North American art education, under institutional conditions (flexible curricula, process-based assessment, autonomous faculty) that cannot be presumed in Chinese higher music education (Irwin, 2004; Ho, 2023). Whether and how the methodology can take root in a Chinese music school is the empirical question this study addresses.

Empirical evidence for A/r/tography in Chinese music education remains thin. Chinese scholarship has concentrated on theoretical introduction and visual arts education (Zheng & Yi, 2015; Zhang, X., 2018), with teacher-education treatments largely conceptual (Zhang, X., 2022; Cheng et al., 2024). The most relevant empirical exception, Liu and Wang's (2021) application of A/r/tography in a Chinese university teacher-education course, was confined to a single classroom and a single cohort. No published study has examined the methodology as it is understood, enacted, and constrained across a Chinese music-school ecology: across teachers and students, classrooms and curricula, and the documents that regulate them. The misalignment is, moreover, likely to be structural rather than incidental. Institutionally, jury-based performance assessment and promotion criteria reward discrete outputs over integrative, teaching-centered practice; professionally, the roles of performer, researcher, and teacher are administratively separated; and culturally, a long tradition positions the teacher as the authoritative transmitter of knowledge, in tension with the role-blurring, student-centered inquiry at A/r/tography's core (Watkins & Biggs, 1996; Ho, 2018). The problem this study addresses is therefore twofold: an evidence gap concerning A/r/tography's significance, challenges, and reception in Chinese music education, and an unresolved question of what a localized, as opposed to merely imported, A/r/tographic practice would require.

The study pursued four research questions within a qualitative single-case study of the School of Music at a comprehensive university in southwest China (hereafter Southwest University, SWU): the significance of A/r/tography for music teachers' pedagogical practice, the key challenges encountered in its implementation, teacher and student perceptions of its use, and the essential components of a framework for applying the method in Chinese music education.

Drawing on a 47-item corpus (interviews with eight early-career teachers and 12 students, eight classroom observations, and 19 curricular and instructional documents), the study makes four contributions. First, it provides an empirical account of A/r/tography distributed across one Chinese music school's teaching ecology, extending beyond the single-classroom design of the closest prior Chinese study (Liu & Wang, 2021). Second, it documents a six-dimensional pedagogical transformation together with an interlocking, eight-dimension constraint system, showing that the method's effects were produced around, rather than through, institutional support. Third, it examines the relationship between A/r/tography and kouchuan-xinshou (oral transmission and heart-to-heart instruction), the long-standing pedagogy of Chinese traditional music, identifying both the affinities that make the latter a plausible indigenous anchor for the method and the differences that caution against treating them as equivalent. Fourth, it distills participants' proposals into an empirically traceable seven-cluster localized teaching framework, together with a proposed design for piloting its implementation pathway. Because the study is a single case and relies substantially on self-report, these contributions are offered as analytic propositions for testing in other settings rather than as generalizations about Chinese higher music education as a whole.

The paper reviews the literature, details the methodology and its limits, reports findings for each research question, discusses their theoretical significance, presents the localized framework and its implications, and concludes with limitations and directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review is organized thematically; each thread moves from foundational work to the limitation motivating the present research.

A/r/tography: Origins and Core Commitments

A/r/tography emerged in the early 2000s at the University of British Columbia as an arts-based research methodology that renders the self through arts-based living inquiry (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). Its defining move is to treat the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher not as discrete identities but as a fluid triad in which making, inquiring, and teaching continuously inform one another (Irwin, 2004; Springgay et al., 2005). Three commitments follow. First, inquiry is living: recursive, emergent, and resistant to the linearity of conventional research designs (Irwin, 2013). Second, knowing is relational and embodied, located in the in-between spaces of roles, disciplines, and texts (Irwin & O'Donoghue, 2012; Sarreshtehdari et al., 2024). Third, the creative process is itself a mode of inquiry and representation, not merely an illustration of findings produced elsewhere (Leavy, 2015, 2020). These commitments align A/r/tography with arts-based research's broader challenge to positivist detachment and objectivity (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Sinner et al., 2006). This foundational literature was developed largely through visual arts practice and first-person inquiry in North American settings, leaving its portability across art forms and institutional cultures under-examined.

A second phase has shifted emphasis from the solitary a/r/tographer to collaborative and ecological configurations. Brooke et al. (2025) conceptualize collaborative A/r/tography as fostering creative ecologies that enhance generalist primary teachers' agency in arts education; Østern et al. (2025) document a professional learning community of dance educators restructuring a bachelor's program in dance pedagogy around A/r/tography; and teacher-education studies show student teachers negotiating artist, researcher, and teacher identities within examination structures (Karlsson Häikiö & Hellman, 2024). The turn has also become transnational. A meta-synthesis of A/r/tography studies in Türkiye documents its adaptation in a non-Western context (Yılmaz & Kır, 2025); an A/r/tography research center has been established at Hangzhou Normal University (University of North Texas College of Visual Arts and Design, 2023); and Irwin's (2023) keynote in Taiwan revisited the origins and development of the methodology for Chinese-speaking audiences. What remains unexamined is how these collaborative, ecological aspirations fare where the surrounding institution is neither flexible nor supportive, the condition this study addresses.

A/r/tography in Music Education

Gouzouasis (2006) staked the earliest claim for A/r/tography in music research, arguing that artistic practice should function as a source of theoretical insight for pedagogy rather than as its object. Gouzouasis et al. (2013) extended this into teacher education, showing that engagement in a community of artistic inquiry enabled teacher candidates to interrogate and revise their pedagogical assumptions, a process they term "becoming pedagogical." More recently, Tullberg and Sæther (2024) proposed "axes of resonance" to describe how music educators' artistic experiences can be aligned with pedagogical intent, and Güler (2021) demonstrated, through an a/r/tographic project in which students visualized sound, that musical engagement can reorganize perception and metaphorical thinking across art forms. Their limitation is contextual: all were conducted in Western or Turkish institutions whose assessment and workload regimes differ sharply from those of Chinese music schools.

A parallel strand addresses professional identity and student experience. Aliyu's (2022) doctoral inquiry traced the coalescence of artist, researcher, and teacher identities in music, underscoring the role of narrative self-reflection in identity formation. López-Íñiguez and Burnard (2022) showed that critical reflection shapes musicians' professional learning pathways, complicating linear models of development. On the student side, A/r/tographic pedagogy has been associated with enhanced creative engagement and reflective depth (Güler, 2021; Tullberg & Sæther, 2024). Yet this literature rarely interrogates the institutional conditions under which identity integration is expected to occur: role fragmentation, workload intensification, and assessment mismatch are acknowledged anecdotally but not analyzed systematically. A study that treats the constraint system as data is therefore needed.

Chinese Higher Music Education: Structures and Resistance

Research on music education in mainland China points to three institutional mechanisms relevant to this study. First, assessment is dominated by examinations and standardized outcome measures, leaving little room for process-oriented or inquiry-driven pedagogy (Ho, 2018, 2023). Second, the one-to-one, master–apprentice model of instrumental and vocal tuition, common in conservatoires internationally, tends to concentrate interpretive authority in the teacher and to limit student autonomy (Gaunt, 2008). Third, teacher evaluation has historically privileged countable outputs, such as publications and titles, over integrative teaching practice; national reform now explicitly seeks to reduce this reliance, but incentive structures change more slowly than policy texts (Central Committee of the CPC & State Council, 2020). National reform documents articulate creative ambitions (Ministry of Education, 2019; General Office of the CPC Central Committee & General Office of the State Council, 2020), but the conditions under which teachers actually work have been slower to change (Ho, 2023).

Cultural analyses add further pressures. Technique supremacy, the historical privileging of technical mastery over creative expression, remains the default standard of musical value in conservatoire-style training (Ho, 2018). The authority of the teacher, rooted in long-standing conceptions of the teacher as the transmitter of knowledge, can discourage dialogic, student-centered formats, although research on the "paradox of the Chinese learner" cautions against equating such norms with passive or superficial learning (Watkins & Biggs, 1996). Less examined is a third pressure: a tendency to regard kouchuan-xinshou, the embodied, relational, process-centered pedagogy of Chinese traditional music, as unscholarly relative to score-based Western methods. This tendency is theoretically significant because the tradition it discounts displays several features (embodied transmission, relational knowing, attention to process) that the A/r/tographic literature associates with pedagogies of embodiment and relation (Irwin & O'Donoghue, 2012). Whether these resemblances amount to equivalence, however, is a question the existing literature has not examined; the Discussion takes it up directly.

Chinese engagement with A/r/tography began with theoretical introduction (Zheng & Yi, 2015) and moved toward analyses of its action-based, interdisciplinary character (Zhang, X., 2018) and its potential for reconstructing art teacher education (Zhang, X., 2022). Empirical work remains scarce: Liu and Wang's (2021) teacher-education classroom study is the closest precedent, and Zhang, X. (2022) proposed a programmatic, non-empirical reconstruction of art teacher education on A/r/tographic principles. Chinese scholars consistently conclude with a call for localized models attuned to domestic institutional and cultural realities (Zhang, X., 2022; Cheng et al., 2024). What remains missing is an empirically grounded localization: built from Chinese music classrooms, accountable to the constraint system documented above, and in dialogue with indigenous pedagogy.

Theoretical Framework

The study reads its data through four complementary lenses. Arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Leavy, 2020) legitimates artistic process as a means of generating and representing knowledge, grounding the analysis of A/r/tographic practice itself. Social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) frames musical understanding as co-constructed through interaction, directing attention to the relational texture of lessons and to teacher–student knowledge-building. Reflective practice (Schön, 1983; Burnard & Hennessy, 2006) supplies the vocabulary for examining how teachers interrogate their own strategies and artistic choices in and on action. Transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) orients the analysis toward perspective shifts: moments where teachers or students revise prior assumptions about what music teaching is. Together, the four lenses allow the study to analyze significance, challenge, perception, and framework design within one coherent interpretive architecture. Against its closest predecessors (Gouzouasis et al., 2013, in Western teacher education; Liu & Wang, 2021, in a single Chinese course; and Zhang, X., 2022, at a programmatic, non-empirical level) the study adds ecological scope within one institution, systematic constraint analysis, and an examination of indigenous pedagogy grounded in observed practice.

Research Questions

The study pursued four research questions within a qualitative case study of the SWU School of Music:

- RQ1. What is the significance of the A/r/tography method in enhancing the pedagogical practices of music teachers at SWU?
- RQ2. What are the key challenges encountered by music teachers when implementing the A/r/tography method in their teaching practices at SWU?
- RQ3. What are the perceptions among music teachers and students of using the A/r/tography method at SWU?
- RQ4. What are the essential components of a new framework for applying the A/r/tography method in music education, specifically tailored for music teachers in China?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative single-case design with a phenomenological orientation to investigate how A/r/tography is understood, enacted, and constrained within one Chinese school of music. The case-study logic was appropriate because the research questions concern a bounded, contemporary phenomenon whose dynamics cannot be separated from the institutional and cultural context in which they unfold (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2018). The phenomenological orientation, following van Manen (1990), directed attention to participants' lived experience and to the meanings they ascribe to that experience. Because A/r/tography involves the integration of artistic, research, and teaching roles, the experience of that integration is inherently subjective and accessible largely through participants' own accounts (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004); phenomenology provides the warrant for treating such subjective meaning-making as data (van Manen, 1990).

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at the School of Music of Southwest University, a comprehensive university in southwest China offering undergraduate programs in music performance, musicology, composition and music technology, and music education, with a curriculum accommodating both Western and Chinese musical traditions. This internal diversity made the site information-rich, allowing the method to be observed across studio, classroom, and ensemble formats within a single assessment regime.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, supplemented by convenience sampling for the student group. Teacher eligibility required active involvement in teaching undergraduate music courses; experience with, or expressed openness to, integrating A/r/tography into teaching practice; an age under 35 years; and, collectively, disciplinary coverage of performance, theory, composition, and music education. The age criterion was deliberate: the study sought teachers whose pedagogical routines were still forming and who were therefore likely to be willing to experiment with the method. This criterion, together with the requirement of openness to A/r/tography, means that the teacher sample was intentionally favorable to the method; its implications are discussed below. Eight teachers (T1–T8) met the criteria. Twelve undergraduate students (S1–S12) were recruited across all four years and the performance, musicology, composition, and education tracks; every student had direct, recent experience of at least one A/r/tography-informed course. Table 1 profiles both groups.

Table 1 Participant Profiles (Teachers, n = 8; Students, n = 12)

Code	Gender	Age	Position and course taught	Teaching experience (years)
Panel A. Teacher participants				
T1	Female	34	Lecturer in Vocal Performance	5

T2	Male	34	Lecturer in Piano Performance	4
T3	Female	31	Lecturer in Music Theory and Solfège	3
T4	Male	34	Lecturer in Composition and Music Technology	6
T5	Female	33	Lecturer in Chinese Traditional Instruments (Guzheng)	5
T6	Male	30	Lecturer in Music Education, School of Music	2
T7	Female	34	Associate Professor of Musicology	3
T8	Male	32	Lecturer in Violin and Orchestral Training	3
Panel B. Student participants (final column: year of study)				
S1	Female	—	Music performance (vocal)	2
S2	Male	—	Music performance (piano)	3
S3	Female	—	Music performance (guzheng)	1
S4	Male	—	Music performance (violin)	4
S5	Female	—	Music performance (piano)	2
S6	Male	—	Musicology (composition focus)	3
S7	Female	—	Musicology (teacher-education track)	3
S8	Male	—	Musicology	2
S9	Female	—	Musicology	4
S10	Male	—	Musicology	1
S11	Female	—	Music performance (erhu)	3
S12	Male	—	Music performance (vocal)	4

The teacher group is evenly divided by gender and spans two to six years of experience across Western performance, Chinese traditional instruments, theory, composition, musicology, and music education; the student group is likewise gender-balanced and covers all four years and both tracks (Table 1).

Data Collection

Three complementary methods were used: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis; the full corpus comprises 47 data items (Table 2). Twenty one-on-one semi-structured interviews constituted the primary data source: teacher interviews lasted 45–90 minutes and student interviews 25–40 minutes, with the guide organized around the research questions and using open-ended prompts and follow-up probes. All interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English with consistent terminology. Eight classroom observations (O1–O8) were conducted between April and May 2025, one complete lesson per participating teacher, documented through time-stamped field notes. Nineteen documents were collected: the eight course syllabi of the observed courses, including the official grading standards (DG1–DG8); the eight corresponding lesson plans, including the

teachers' post-lesson reflective notes (JA1–JA8); and three samples of student work produced under A/r/tography-informed teaching (Z1–Z3).

Table 2 Composition of the Data Corpus (47 Items)

Data type	Quantity	Codes	Description
Semi-structured interviews (teachers)	8	T1–T8	45–90 minutes each; audio-recorded; verbatim transcripts
Semi-structured interviews (students)	12	S1–S12	25–40 minutes each; audio-recorded; verbatim transcripts
Classroom observations	8	O1–O8	One full lesson per teacher; time-stamped field notes
Course syllabi	8	DG1–DG8	Including official grading standards
Lesson plans	8	JA1–JA8	Including post-lesson reflective notes
Student work samples	3	Z1–Z3	Listening notes/journal; composition project with process log; practicum reflection portfolio
Total	47	—	All items coded independently by two coders in NVivo

The corpus enables corroboration at the level of the individual course: for each teacher it contains an interview, an observation, and the syllabus and lesson plan of the observed course. The syllabi (DG1–DG8) stipulate the assessment rules against which accounts of institutional constraint were checked; the post-lesson reflective notes (JA1–JA8) document teachers' reasoning about their own practice, although, because they were written by teachers who knew they were participating in the study, they cannot be treated as wholly unelicited.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the six-phase thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006), supported by NVivo software. The researcher moved through familiarization with the full corpus (Phase 1); systematic generation of initial codes, supplemented by in vivo codes (Phase 2); collation into categories (Phase 3); synthesis of candidate themes connected to the research questions (Phase 4); review and iterative refinement against the entire dataset (Phase 5); and final definition and naming of themes, reported with verbatim extracts (Phase 6). Four themes resulted, each answering one research question. All 47 data items were coded independently by two coders, yielding an inter-coder reliability coefficient of 0.821, above the 0.80 threshold conventionally accepted in qualitative research; discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. Analytic memos tracked evolving interpretations, and NVivo's query functions supported comparison across participant groups and data types.

Trustworthiness and Ethics

Several strategies supported trustworthiness. Member checking was conducted with all twenty interviewees, each of whom judged the draft findings to be accurate or generally accurate; two participants offered minor wording clarifications that were incorporated. Two peer experts familiar with A/r/tography reviewed the coding framework and thematic structure. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal documenting how the researcher's own position, simultaneously artist, researcher, and teacher, might shape interpretation, and an audit trail recorded all analytic decisions. Threefold triangulation was applied systematically: data-source triangulation (interviews, observations, documents), participant-group triangulation (teachers and students), and methodological triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The study was approved by the institutional ethics review board of SWU. All participants signed informed consent forms explaining the study's purpose,

procedures, and the voluntary nature of participation, including the right to withdraw at any time; particular care ensured that student participation could not affect academic standing. All names and identifying details were replaced with the codes reported above; all data were stored in password-protected files on encrypted devices, accessible only to the primary researcher and two confidentiality-bound coding assistants. Participants' creative work was treated with the same confidentiality and was used only with explicit permission.

Limitations of the Design

Two features of the design limit the claims the study can support, and they are stated here so that the findings can be read accordingly.

Single-case design. The study examines one school of music in one comprehensive university. Case-study findings of this kind support analytic generalization, that is, the development and refinement of concepts and propositions that can be tested elsewhere, rather than statistical generalization to a population (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2018). SWU's profile (a comprehensive rather than conservatory setting, a western rather than coastal region, and a curriculum that combines Western and Chinese traditions) may shape both the constraints observed and the forms of adaptation teachers developed. The six-dimensional transformation, the eight-dimension constraint system, and the seven-cluster framework should therefore be read as propositions about how A/r/tography may operate in comparable settings, not as a description of Chinese higher music education in general. Transferability to other institutions depends on readers' judgment of contextual similarity, which the thick description provided here is intended to support (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Self-report and selection. Twenty of the 47 data items are interviews, and the observations and lesson plans, while independent of interview talk, also cannot reveal teachers' and students' inner reasoning directly. Interview accounts are subject to recall error, to participants' wish to present themselves and their teachers favorably, and to social desirability effects that may be heightened when the interviewer is an insider who shares the participants' professional world. The sample amplifies these risks: teachers were selected partly for their openness to A/r/tography, and all students had experienced A/r/tography-informed courses taught by participating teachers. The data are therefore likely to over-represent favorable experiences and under-represent the views of skeptical colleagues and students who never encountered the method. In addition, each teacher was observed only once, so observer effects and lesson-to-lesson variation cannot be ruled out, and translation from Mandarin to English may have altered nuance in some quotations. Triangulation against syllabi and grading standards, independent double coding, and member checking mitigate but do not remove these limitations. Claims about the method's effects on teaching and learning should accordingly be read as participants' reported and observed experience, not as measured outcomes.

Findings

Quotations are reproduced verbatim from the translated transcripts, field notes, and documents, with source codes in parentheses; an ellipsis (...) marks omitted material. Dialogue with the wider literature is reserved for the Discussion section, and the Findings section reports evidence without restating it there. Four themes resulted, reported below in research-question order.

RQ1: A Six-Dimensional Transformation of Pedagogical Practice

RQ1 asked what significance A/r/tography holds for enhancing music teachers' pedagogical practice at Southwest University. Participants described that significance along six interconnected dimensions, each multiply sourced.

First, the method installs a self-evidence mechanism: recordings and journals relocate diagnostic authority to the learner ("The phone says it once and I believe it, because it's me"; S2, interview; same rationale in O1) and restructure the lesson's starting point, with students arriving with problems half-diagnosed (T1, interview).

Second, teachers integrated the artist–researcher–teacher triad they had experienced as fragmented: "Before I felt like three people fighting for the same 24 hours the performer was dying, the teacher was exhausted, the

researcher was fake. ... Now my vocal preparation has become a space for research" (T1, interview). Integration also took a pragmatic form one teacher called pedagogical bilingualism: designing the living lesson in class while representing it in the official language of the standardized lesson plan, since "the official format is not the enemy" (T6, interview; corroborated in JA6). Five of eight teachers described such integration (T1, T2, T4, T6, T7).

Third, teaching relationships were restructured as interpretive rights shifted toward students (O1, observation) and intervention was delayed. When a student conductor erred gesturally in rehearsal, the teacher "stood at the back of the orchestra, silent throughout," and the student told the orchestra, "My gesture was too small, let's do it again" (O8, observation). This "no rescue" principle, observed in four classrooms (O1, O3, O4, O8), let student leadership develop inside authentic problem-solving.

Fourth, the method diffused horizontally beyond timetabled teaching: peers adopted the recording task in dormitories (S2, interview), senior colleagues "quietly" requested the diary prompts (T1, interview), and an inter-school WeChat troubleshooting group functioned as a self-organized professional learning community (T3, interview). Norms crossed cohorts through procedures recorded in no syllabus: "The method passes itself on — that's the part nobody put in any document" (S4, interview).

Fifth, the method's core instructional logic places meaning before technique, a sequence prescribed in lesson plans (JA1) and enacted in observed lessons (O1, observation). One student described the effect: "Once the phrase became my mother getting smaller on the platform, I didn't need to think about phrasing at all. You don't 'phrase' the shrinking figure of your mother. You just sing it" (S12, interview). In oral-transmission lessons, the folk master taught "using only bodily metaphors ... no musical terminology" (O5, observation), images traveling "directly from the body to the fingers" (T5, interview).

Sixth, reflective tools matured from compliance artifacts into professional habitus. Once internalized, reflection became protection ("A single remark from a mentor can crush a twenty-year-old. The journal is armor"; S7, interview) and transferred professionally: a diary-based account of teaching philosophy in a job interview drew the panel's verdict "You think like a teacher" (S12, interview). This developmental trajectory is documented most fully for two of the twelve students (S3 and S7), and should be read as illustrative rather than typical.

RQ2: An Interlocking System of Constraints

RQ2 asked about the key challenges teachers encounter when implementing A/r/tography at SWU. The challenges proved to be interlocking components of a systemic dilemma rather than isolated difficulties, unfolding across eight dimensions: institutional, curricular, professional, cultural, student-adaptive, material, generative-AI-related, and dissemination.

Institutionally, the end-of-term jury renders the method invisible: "I've been doing this for three years, but the end-of-term jury is completely indifferent to all of this ... even the reflective work doesn't count" (T1, interview). The syllabus confirms institutional stipulation, not individual reluctance: jury weighting, number of pieces, and grading rubric are "governed by the college's uniform regulations and are not subject to individual faculty adjustment" (DG1, syllabus). The added labor is likewise uncounted: an orchestra with sectional rehearsals, student conducting, and log-keeping still registers as one course (T8, interview). Personnel categories also cannot accommodate traditional-music inheritors: "The application form asked for his professional title. He has none. Fifty years of singing in the mountains is his title" (T5, interview).

Curricularly, reflection and the mandated repertoire load stand in a zero-sum relationship ("I now teach fewer pieces. The syllabus calls for eight pieces per semester; I'm currently covering six or seven"; T1, interview), and, with examinations set uniformly at department level (T3, interview), teachers operate a dual-track classroom: "Class is class, exam is exam I won't let you lose points on the exam paper" (T3, quoted in O3, observation).

Professionally and culturally, two shortages intersect. Across six years, one teacher had received "not a single hour of training in reflective practice or arts-based methods. Everything has been self-taught" (T3, interview),

while promotion criteria discount teaching-integrated inquiry (T7, interview). Eroded authority breeds anxiety among students habituated to verdicts (T1, interview), and oral transmission itself meets prejudice as "taking a step backward" (T5, interview; also T2, S5). Because workload accounting and promotion rules are teacher-facing institutions, this strand rests on teacher testimony.

Adaptation difficulties stem from the paradigm transition: "In twelve years of schooling, every question had one correct answer ... Now the teacher says 'there's no single right answer,' and I honestly don't know what to do with that sentence" (S10, interview). First-years in oral-transmission learning pass through a documented panic phase that teachers frame as transitional (S3, interview; T5, quoted in O5, observation), and peer assessment raises fairness concerns on both sides (S8, interview; T3, interview).

Material conditions are chronically short, with practice rooms and equipment in scarce supply (S2, interview; T4, interview), behind a deadline no administration can extend: "The elderly song masters can't wait. He's seventy-one" (T5, interview). Two challenges were unanticipated. Generative AI erodes reflective writing's authenticity ("AI-written diaries, copy-and-paste reflections. Everyone knows"; S12, interview; also T1, interview), prompting assignment redesign around verifiable process (T4, interview). Dissemination faces structural contradictions, with teachers asking "are we training teachers for the system that exists, or for the system that should exist?" (T6, interview). Students did not independently raise dissemination as a challenge, so this strand rests on teacher testimony.

Taken together, these challenges form a single chain. The jury renders reflective work invisible (T1; DG1), so reflection must be purchased with repertoire time (T1; JA2); examinations are uniform and stakes high (T3), so students abandon reflection in jury month (S1); adaptation is uneven (T1, T3), so reflection acquires a peer reputation as "for education majors" (S2, interview); and promotion rules discount precisely what the method produces (T7), so its sustainers act against their own career interests (T1).

RQ3: Informed, Conditional Endorsement

RQ3 asked how teachers and students perceive the method. Perceptions are diverse: alongside strongly positive views, both groups articulate the costs, and perceptions vary systematically with year, major, and ability. Given that all student participants had been taught by participating teachers, the positive views reported here should be read with the selection effects described above in mind.

The most consistent perception across both groups concerns autonomy and ownership: "It makes practice mine. Before the diary, I practiced like ... completing a shift. Now I practice like I'm chasing something" (S1, interview). Most consequentially, mistakes became collectible content rather than a source of shame ("the shame dropped out of the room. People started trying"; S8, interview), a shift materialized in the ear-training course's anonymous "Mistake Wall" (S8, interview; corroborated in O3, observation).

Attitudes toward the tools evolve from skepticism to trust, though incompletely. Residual burden persists ("I understand the idea. But ... it's one more assignment"; S5, interview) and tracks the institutional calendar, with jury month reinstating reflection as dispensable, subordinated to pure repetition (S1, interview; also S2, S5, S7).

Perceptions differ systematically. By year: "First- and second-year students complain about the journal. Most third- and fourth-year students defend it. The method's reputation improves as graduation approaches" (S12, interview). By ability: "Strong students thrive on this. Weaker students need more structure" (T1, interview), and postgraduate-examination candidates view "an open-ended research project as a luxury I cannot afford" (S9, interview).

Both groups hold bounded views of where the method belongs: "As a small, optional, well-designed component yes. As a requirement, as a system no" (S2, interview), with suitability varying by course type (S6, interview). Students of Chinese traditional music framed the method as familiar rather than foreign: "Oral transmission and heart-to-heart instruction are our tradition to begin with. This method isn't an import; it's a homecoming" and "the method is older than its name" (S11, interview). This sense of familiarity gave the method a legitimacy that participants felt no Western citation could provide (T4, T7; S3, S5, S6, S11).

RQ4: Components of a Localized Framework

RQ4 asked what components a framework for applying A/r/tography in Chinese higher music education must contain. The elements below integrate the failure modes reported under RQ2, the perceptual requirements reported under RQ3, and practices piloted in the eight observed courses, deriving from all teacher interviews (T1–T8) and student interviews (S1, S5, S8, S9, S10). They organize into seven clusters, the seventh (a localization positioning distinguishing the framework from Western antecedents) permeating all others. Table 3 summarizes the clusters, core elements, and primary supporting evidence.

Table 3 The Localized Framework: Seven Clusters, Core Elements, and Primary Supporting Evidence

Cluster	Core elements	Primary supporting evidence
1. Assessment and institutional	Embed process evaluation within existing grading discretion; public rubrics "shown on day one"; process verification (version histories, decision logs, oral defense); formal recognition of student leadership	T1, T3, T4, T7, T8; DG1; S1
2. Curriculum and content	Reform by addition, not replacement; mandated local materials; institutionalized oral transmission; differentiated intensity by course type	T1, T3, T4, T5; O1, O3; S1, S5, S6
3. Pedagogical	Meaning before technique; embodied description; description-first feedback with the composer speaking last; three-question reflection protocol; delayed intervention ("no rescue"); institutionalization of error (Mistake Wall)	O1, O3, O4, O5, O8; T3, T4, T6; JA1, JA6; S12
4. Teacher development and support	Communities of practice formalized within teaching-and-research meetings; experiential (not expository) training; teacher self-research; formal channels for traditional-music inheritors	T1, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7; JA5
5. Resources and environment	Low-tech tools (phones, free platforms); circular spatial arrangement; use of existing institutional structures; real audiences	T3, T5, T8; S3, S6
6. Student adaptation and differentiated support	Micro-tasks and unannounced entry; normalization of the panic phase; diverse reflective formats (voice, video, writing); explicit alignment of tasks with examination skills	T1, T5, T6, T8; O5; S1, S3, S8
7. Localization positioning (permeating)	Coexistence with the examination system; anchoring in indigenous traditions (kouchuan-xinshou); Chinese exemplars and case libraries; low-barrier entry materials	T1, T4, T6, T7; S3, S9, S11

Each cluster answers a documented failure mode rather than a design preference. Cluster 1 answers jury invisibility and the generative-AI threat, with process verification requiring students to "show the disposing" (T4, interview); Clusters 2 through 6 answer, respectively, the zero-sum curriculum tension, the demand for transferable pedagogical moves, the training vacuum, chronic material scarcity ("no budget, no excuse"; T3, interview), and the panic phase and fairness concerns. Participants saw the seven clusters as interdependent: removing any one, they argued, would leave its corresponding failure mode unaddressed.

The seventh cluster permeates all others and defines the framework's difference from Western A/r/tography. First, the method must coexist with institutional realities: "Any method that wants to survive in this system must shake hands with the exam, not pretend it can ignore it" (S9, interview; echoed by T6). Second, it should anchor in China's own kouchuan-xinshou heritage (S11, interview). Third, exemplars should be Chinese:

"Videos of real lessons from our universities, not from Vancouver" (T1, interview). Fourth, teachers need low-barrier entry materials: "Offer an entry point, not a cliff" (T6, interview).

DISCUSSION

This section interprets the findings in relation to the literature. To avoid repetition, it refers back to evidence reported above rather than re-quoting it.

Discussion 1: A Real Transformation, Achieved Around the Institution

The first theme suggests that A/r/tography's pedagogical significance can survive translation into a Chinese music school, while specifying the manner of that survival. The six dimensions are theoretically legible in the A/r/tography literature: the self-evidence mechanism and the integration of the triad correspond to living inquiry and to the rendering of self through practice (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Springgay et al., 2005), and the "no rescue" principle and the diffusion of norms through peer networks echo the collaborative, ecological turn (Brooke et al., 2025; Østern et al., 2025). What distinguishes the SWU case is that these effects were produced around the institution rather than through it, sustained by low-cost tools, informal networks, and pedagogical bilingualism. Significance and constraint are therefore better understood as one finding than as two: the transformation shows what the method can do under adverse conditions, while the constraint system shows the discretionary cost of doing it and the ceiling that cost imposes. Where prior Chinese work documented a single classroom (Liu & Wang, 2021) and Western accounts presupposed institutional flexibility (Gouzouasis et al., 2013), this case suggests a boundary condition: the method can work in a Chinese music school, but the system does not yet let it count. Because the evidence is drawn from teachers and students predisposed toward the method, this should be read as a demonstration of possibility under favorable participant conditions, not as evidence of typical effects.

Discussion 2: Constraints as a System, Not a List

At the component level, the constraints reported under RQ2 are consistent with what the literature on Chinese music education leads one to expect: examination-dominated assessment and technique-first values (Ho, 2018, 2023), teacher-centered transmission (Gaunt, 2008), and incentive structures that policy is only beginning to reform (Central Committee of the CPC & State Council, 2020). The study's contribution lies in their configuration. Prior accounts typically present such barriers in parallel; the chain reported under RQ2 suggests that they are causally linked, so that the invisibility of reflective work in assessment makes its hours uncounted, uncounted labor makes reform discretionary, and discretion leaves it culturally vulnerable to being dismissed as "fun" rather than rigorous (T3, interview). The practical implication is that interventions addressed to any single node are likely to be absorbed or defeated by the others, which is why the framework is designed as an interdependent set of clusters. This causal reading is an interpretation of participants' accounts and the documents that corroborate them; it is a proposition to be tested, not an established mechanism.

Discussion 3: From Welcome to Calibrated Prescription

Liu and Wang (2021) reported Chinese students welcoming A/r/tography as "a breath of fresh air." The present findings are consistent with that welcome but suggest a more qualified judgment: participants endorsed the method as a small, optional, well-designed component rather than a requirement or a system. This is not resistance in the sense usually diagnosed in reform literature, but a calibrated assessment of fit, offered by learners who can name the institutional facts (the jury, kǎoyán [postgraduate entrance examination], and kǎobiān [teacher recruitment examination]) that bound the method's legitimate territory. The variation in perceptions by year, major, and ability is consistent with a Vygotskian (1978) view of dispositions as socially formed, with receptivity increasing as reflection becomes professionally consequential (López-Íñiguez & Burnard, 2022). It is also consistent with research cautioning against equating Chinese learners' responsiveness to examinations with passivity (Watkins & Biggs, 1996).

Discussion 4: Kouchuan-Xinshou and A/r/tography: Alignment and Difference

The study's most distinctive claim concerns the relationship between A/r/tography and kouchuan-xinshou. Students of Chinese traditional music experienced the method as a "homecoming" (S11, interview), and the observed folk-music lesson (O5) displayed embodied, metaphorical, terminology-free teaching. These data invite the conclusion that kouchuan-xinshou is an indigenous form of A/r/tography. That conclusion would, however, overstate the equivalence. A brief philosophical comparison clarifies where the two practices align and where they differ (Table 4).

Points of alignment. Both practices locate knowledge in the person of the practitioner rather than in a detachable text. In kouchuan-xinshou, the master is simultaneously performer and teacher, and what is transmitted (tone, phrasing, ornamentation, the "flavor" of a regional style) is largely tacit knowledge that "we know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1966) and that resists notation. The phrase itself pairs *kou* (mouth) with *xin* (heart-mind): learning proceeds through imitation, embodied correction, and an attunement between teacher and student that is relational before it is propositional. A/r/tography likewise treats knowing as embodied, relational, and enacted in practice (Irwin & O'Donoghue, 2012; Springgay et al., 2005), and it refuses the separation of artist from teacher. Both privilege process over product, and both treat the long-term formation of the person, not only the acquisition of skill, as the aim of education. These affinities explain why participants found the method familiar, and they make kouchuan-xinshou a credible point of cultural anchorage for localization.

Points of difference. The two practices nevertheless rest on different conceptions of the purpose of knowledge and of authority. First, kouchuan-xinshou is oriented toward *fidelity*: its aim is to preserve and pass on a lineage (*chuancheng*), and deviation from the master's model is, at least in early stages, treated as error. A/r/tography is oriented toward *inquiry*: it seeks to question, disrupt, and generate new understanding, and it values the openings created by uncertainty and rupture (Irwin, 2013). Second, authority in kouchuan-xinshou is vested in the master and in the hierarchical master–disciple relationship; A/r/tography distributes interpretive authority and positions teacher and student as co-inquirers. Third, A/r/tography includes an explicit research identity, with commitments to documentation, theorization, and public dissemination; kouchuan-xinshou carries no research imperative in the modern academic sense, and its knowledge typically remains within the lineage. Fourth, A/r/tography's reflexivity, the practitioner's critical examination of their own assumptions and position, has no direct counterpart in a tradition that prizes the student's trust in, and gradual internalization of, the master's way.

Table 4 Kouchuan-Xinshou and A/r/tography Compared

Dimension	**Kouchuan-xinshou**	**A/r/tography**
Locus of knowledge	Embodied in the master; largely tacit	Embodied and relational; generated in practice
Relation of roles	Master as performer-teacher	Artist, researcher, and teacher integrated
Primary aim	Fidelity: preservation and transmission of lineage	Inquiry: questioning and generating new understanding
Authority	Vested in the master; hierarchical	Distributed; teacher and student as co-inquirers
Research identity	None in the modern academic sense	Explicit: documentation, theorization, dissemination
Reflexivity	Trust in and internalization of the master's way	Critical examination of one's own assumptions and position
Relation to process	Long apprenticeship; process over product	Living inquiry; process as research

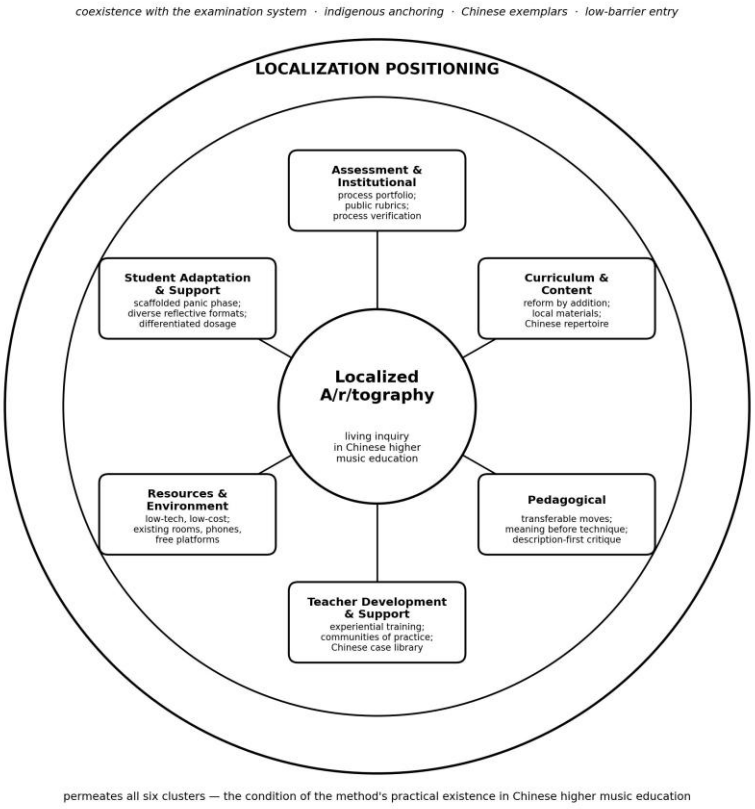
The relationship is therefore best described as one of *structural affinity with philosophical difference*. Kouchuan-xinshou is not A/r/tography under another name; rather, it supplies the embodied, relational, process-centered ground on which A/r/tographic inquiry can be built in Chinese music education, while A/r/tography supplies a reflexive, research-oriented stance that the tradition does not itself contain. Localization in this sense is neither the import of a foreign method nor the rediscovery of an identical indigenous one, but a deliberate combination in which each practice addresses the other's limits. The participants' language of "homecoming" is best understood as evidence of perceived cultural legitimacy, which matters greatly for adoption, rather than as evidence of conceptual identity. This reading also explains the study's model of *localization-as-coexistence*: the method survived at SWU by negotiating with examination structures rather than opposing them, and by drawing on a familiar tradition rather than displacing it. The finding extends the ecological turn in A/r/tography (Brooke et al., 2025; Østern et al., 2025) from the relational to the institutional level, where grading rubrics, workload accounting, hiring categories, and examination calendars are constitutive elements of the ecology rather than backdrop. Given that the evidence for this claim comes largely from one observed lesson and a small number of traditional-music students, it should be treated as a proposition for further philosophical and empirical examination.

Implications

Implication 1: A Seven-Cluster Localized Framework and Its Implementation Pathway

The findings point to a single design requirement: for the transformation of pedagogical practice to survive the interlocking constraint system, the method requires a supporting architecture rather than exhortation. The seven clusters in Table 3 and Figure 1 provide that architecture. The framework is deliberately conservative about institutional structure and ambitious about pedagogical relations: assessment and resource elements operate within existing grading discretion and schedules ("we don't need new money, just a new perspective"; T8, interview), while pedagogical elements redistribute interpretive authority, the right to err, and the ownership of evidence toward students. The localization positioning permeates all clusters rather than sitting as a separable component.

Figure 1 The Localized A/r/tography Teaching Framework: Seven Interdependent Clusters Permeated by the Localization Positioning



Note. Six clusters, each keyed to a distinct level of the teaching ecology, are connected to the method's core practice and stand in mutual dependence rather than in linear sequence. The outer band represents the localization positioning as a permeating condition rather than a separable seventh component, because demands for exam coexistence, indigenous anchoring, Chinese exemplars, and low-barrier entry recur within every cluster's evidence base.

The pathway is phased so that each phase remains feasible within the constraint system. Phase 1, teacher-level micro-adoption, requires no institutional permission: five-minute micro-tasks, phone-based recording assignments, sentence starters such as "Today, the high notes feel ___ because ___" (T1, interview), and an unannounced first week, because "announced reforms will meet resistance; rehearsals that go smoothly will be emulated" (T8, interview). Phase 2 consolidates practice at course and program level: process-portfolio modules within existing grading discretion, rubrics published on day one, and teaching-and-research meetings converted into communities of practice. Phase 3, institutional legitimization, addresses workload accounting, promotion criteria, and personnel categories. The phases are derived from participants' proposals and the practices observed at one institution; they have not yet been tested as a sequence, and their feasibility elsewhere is an open question.

Piloting the Implementation Pathway

Because the pathway is at present a reasoned proposal rather than a tested intervention, we outline how it might be piloted. A design-based pilot over two academic years would allow each phase to be tried, evaluated, and revised before progression to the next.

- **Setting and participants.** Phase 1 would be piloted in four to six volunteer courses at SWU spanning performance, theory, and education, ideally alongside a second institution with a different profile (for example, a conservatory or a coastal university), so that the pilot also begins to address the single-case limitation.

- **Duration and progression criteria.** Phase 1 would run for one semester. Progression to Phase 2 in a given course would depend on pre-specified criteria agreed with teachers, for example that most planned tasks were implemented as intended, that students' jury results did not decline relative to previous cohorts, and that teachers judged the workload sustainable.

- **Indicators and data.** The pilot would assess feasibility (teachers' time logs and implementation checklists), fidelity (observation of whether core moves such as description-first feedback and delayed intervention were enacted), acceptability (brief student and teacher surveys and interviews), and preliminary outcomes (comparison of jury results and analysis of reflective portfolios against a shared rubric). Including students and teachers who were not previously exposed to A/r/tography, and collecting non-self-report indicators, would directly address the selection and self-report limitations of the present study.

- **Phase 3 evidence.** Evidence from Phases 1 and 2 would be compiled into a short brief for school and university leadership, proposing one concrete institutional change (for example, a pre-approved composite grading option or recognition of reflective course design in workload accounting) to be trialed for one year and evaluated.

Such a pilot would turn the pathway from a plausible sequence into an evidence-based one, and would show which elements must be adjusted for institutions unlike SWU.

Implication 2: Low-Barrier Entry Moves for Music Teachers

For music teachers, the implication is to begin where participants began, with a recording task plus a short reflective prompt, since the practices with the largest reported effects required the least permission (T1, T3, interviews). Three low-cost moves appear transferable: meaning-before-technique sequencing (O1, observation); description-first peer feedback with the composer speaking last, in which "'Not bad' is a forbidden phrase" (T4, interview; enacted across approximately twenty-six peer comments in O4,

observation); and teacher self-disclosure of flawed drafts, which lowered the social cost of student imperfection (O4, observation; S1, interview). Two integrity threats also require design. Against jury invisibility, teachers can use the discretionary ten-percent module their syllabi already permit or negotiate a composite grade of "60% standardized exam, 20% portfolio, and 20% peer project" (T3, interview); against generative AI, they can shift assessment from product to verifiable process through version histories, decision logs, and oral defenses (T4, interview). These moves correspond to the pedagogical and assessment clusters of the framework (Table 3).

Implication 3: Making Innovative Labor Visible to Administrators and Policymakers

For administrators and policymakers, the most consequential implication is visibility. Reform labor is structurally uncounted (it "more than doubles the preparation work, yet it counts as just one course"; T8, interview), and promotion criteria discount it: "a CSSCI article is valued more than a recital plus a teaching reflection combined" (T7, interview). Workload accounting and advancement policy should register reflective course design and practice-based inquiry, a revision that the 2020 national evaluation reform already licenses (Central Committee of the CPC & State Council, 2020). Administrators can normalize composite grade options as pre-approved pathways rather than individual exceptions, and, given the age of many tradition-bearers (T5, interview), create non-standard employment categories and minimally bureaucratic fieldwork funding for traditional-music inheritors as heritage infrastructure. Because the constraints on workload, promotion, and hiring are institutional rules rather than individual reluctance, they cannot be relieved by teacher effort alone.

Implication 4: Experiential Professional Development and Curriculum Design

For professional development, training should be experiential rather than expository (T4, T7, interviews), placing teacher-participants inside the reflective tasks they will later assign. Programs can build on embryonic communities such as the inter-school WeChat group (T3, interview), credit teacher self-research (T6, interview), and invest in a library of ordinary Chinese classroom cases (T1, T7, interviews). Curriculum design should proceed by addition rather than replacement under the dual-track guarantee ("Class is class, exam is exam"; T3, quoted in O3), scaffolding the predictable panic phase, permitting diverse reflective formats such as voice notes (T5, S1, interviews), and aligning reflective tasks visibly with examination skills (S8, interview). In traditional-music courses, oral transmission should be recognized within formal assessment, and cost-free real audiences, such as the library-atrium exhibition (S6, interview), designed in. Consistent with Discussion 4, such courses should also add explicitly reflexive and inquiry-oriented components, so that localization draws on the strengths of kouchuan-xinshou without simply reproducing its hierarchy.

CONCLUSION

This study offers four contributions to research on arts-based pedagogy in Chinese higher music education: a six-dimensional transformation of pedagogical practice achieved around, rather than through, institutional support; an interlocking eight-dimension constraint system linking assessment, time, student adaptation, perception, and incentives; informed, conditional endorsement differentiated by year of study, major, and ability; and a seven-cluster localized framework with a phased implementation pathway and a proposed pilot design. It also argues that kouchuan-xinshou and A/r/tography share structural affinities but differ philosophically, so that localization is best understood as a deliberate combination rather than as either import or rediscovery.

These contributions must be read within the limits of the design. The study examined a single institution, and its findings support analytic rather than statistical generalization. The evidence rests substantially on self-report, from teachers selected partly for their openness to the method and from students who had all been taught by those teachers, and each teacher was observed only once. The findings therefore probably over-represent favorable experience, and they describe reported and observed practice rather than measured learning outcomes. Future research should (a) pursue cross-institutional comparison (conservatories versus comprehensive universities, coastal versus western, elite versus ordinary) to clarify which localization elements are pan-Chinese and which are context-specific; (b) include skeptical and unexposed teachers and

students; (c) combine interviews with sustained observation and non-self-report indicators such as assessment outcomes and portfolio analysis; (d) pilot the implementation pathway as outlined above; and (e) examine the philosophical relationship between kouchuan-xinshou and A/r/tography in greater depth. For one student of Chinese traditional music, the method felt "older than its name" (S11, interview); the task ahead is to test how far that sense of familiarity can support a practice that is both rooted in tradition and genuinely inquiring.

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