

The Integration of Nanyin ("Three Thousand Taels of Gold") into Family Music Education: A Curriculum and Instructional Perspective

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Abstract

This study developed and evaluated a family music education program that integrates Quanzhou Nanyin, particularly the traditional piece "Three Thousand Taels of Gold," into parent-child learning. The research addressed two persistent problems in family music education: the dominance of Western and popular musical materials and parents' limited access to practical, non-specialist teaching methods. A qualitative-led sequential design was employed, supplemented by descriptive quantitative data. A preliminary online survey obtained 120 valid responses from parents of primary-school children in Quanzhou, Fujian Province. On the basis of the needs analysis, three volunteer families were purposively selected for an approximately six-to-eight-hour Nanyin program designed through the ADDIE process and informed by Tyler's and Taba's curriculum models, Gordon's music learning theory, Heathcote's drama pedagogy, and Shuter-Dyson's account of children's musical development. Data were collected through a family music education questionnaire, a 14-item parental attitude scale (used descriptively), structured observation records, semi-structured interviews, and a satisfaction survey. Quantitative data were summarized with descriptive statistics; qualitative evidence was analyzed thematically and triangulated across observations, interviews, and artifacts. Among the six participating parents, the overall attitude mean increased from 3.19 to 4.50 on a five-point scale. Observation and interview evidence indicated stronger parent-child cooperation, higher musical engagement, improved knowledge of Nanyin, and greater willingness to continue traditional music activities at home. The findings support the feasibility of transforming intangible cultural heritage into structured, playful, and age-responsive family learning, while the small sample and short intervention require cautious interpretation and further validation.

Keywords: Nanyin; family music education; culture-based curriculum; parent-child interaction; musical engagement; intangible cultural heritage

1. Background and Significance of the Problem

Family music education is an enduring context in which children encounter sound, movement, emotion, and cultural meaning. Unlike school lessons, family learning can occur repeatedly in ordinary routines and can connect musical experience with affection, memory, and identity. Nevertheless, many families treat music education primarily as instrumental training, examination preparation, or competition. The preliminary survey in this study reflected this tension: popular music (67.5%) and Western classical music (51.7%) were more frequently reported than Chinese traditional music (43.3%), while 68.3% of responding households indicated that neither parent had prior music-learning

experience. At the same time, 65.8% of parents considered it necessary to master methods for family music education. These findings suggest both a cultural-content gap and a practical-method gap.

Quanzhou Nanyin offers a locally meaningful response to these problems. Nanyin is a long-standing musical tradition performed in the Minnan language with distinctive singing, clapper patterns, and instrumental timbres. UNESCO inscribed Nanyin on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009. Although Nanyin carries historical, linguistic, and aesthetic significance, its transmission remains concentrated in specialist performance groups, schools, and heritage institutions. Families often perceive it as distant, slow, or technically difficult. Converting Nanyin into a structured set of stories, listening games, body rhythms, role-play, and collaborative performance can therefore broaden access while maintaining a connection to its cultural meanings.

The study was grounded in curriculum and instructional theory rather than in the simple addition of traditional repertoire. Tyler (1949) and Taba (1962) provide a sequence for diagnosing needs, defining objectives, selecting and organizing learning experiences, and evaluating outcomes. The ADDIE approach further supports iterative analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation (Branch, 2009). Gordon's theory emphasizes listening and audiation before formal symbol learning (Gordon, 2007); Heathcote's drama pedagogy uses meaningful roles and imagined contexts to deepen engagement (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995); and Shuter-Dyson and Gabriel (1981) describe age-related changes in musical perception and performance. Together, these perspectives support a program that is culturally grounded, developmentally responsive, and accessible to parents without professional music training.

Existing family-music research shows that everyday musical participation can shape children's engagement and family relationships (Ilari, 2018). However, limited work has integrated a Chinese intangible cultural heritage tradition into a complete family curriculum and evaluated both parent and child outcomes through multiple forms of evidence. The significance of this study is therefore threefold: theoretically, it extends curriculum development into informal family education; practically, it offers a replicable low-threshold activity model; and culturally, it explores the family as a living site for the intergenerational transmission of Nanyin.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following four research questions:

What is the current state and what are the problems of family music education in the Minnan region?

What are the components and processes of the family music education activities developed based on Nanyin music?

How does participation in these activities affect children's musical engagement, parent-child relationships, cultural identity, and parents' attitudes?

What key elements should be included in the curriculum framework and activity guidelines for the preservation of Nanyin music in a family context?

2. Research Objective

The central objective was to develop and preliminarily evaluate a curriculum-based family music education program that transforms the Nanyin piece "Three Thousand Taels of Gold" into accessible parent-child learning experiences. To achieve this objective, the study diagnosed the current

conditions and needs of family music education in Quanzhou, designed a sequenced program integrating listening, storytelling, GongceiPu notation, clapper rhythms, chest-beating dance, role-play, and reflection, and examined its influence on musical engagement, parent-child interaction, cultural understanding, and parental educational attitudes. A further objective was to derive practical guidelines for adapting Nanyin activities to children of different ages and for enabling non-specialist parents to facilitate continued learning at home.

3. Research Hypotheses

The study proposed that participation in the Nanyin family music program would be associated with observable improvements in the dependent outcomes. Specifically, it was hypothesized that, after the intervention, families would demonstrate stronger performance of basic Nanyin-related rhythm and movement tasks; parents would report greater knowledge of and identification with Nanyin; and parents would show more positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral attitudes toward family music education. It was also expected that structured collaborative tasks would improve the quality of parent-child interaction and children's active engagement. The independent variable was the approximately eight-hour Nanyin program, while the dependent variables were parental attitudes, musical engagement, task completion, parent-child interaction, and cultural understanding. Child age, prior musical experience, and level of parental participation were treated as contextual influences rather than fully controlled experimental variables.

4. Research Scope

Conceptual and Content Scope

The conceptual framework linked culture-based curriculum, curriculum development, music learning, drama pedagogy, and developmental differentiation. The content centered on the story and musical materials of "Three Thousand Liang of Gold." Learning experiences included focused listening, story interpretation, simplified GongceiPu notation and hand gestures, basic clapper patterns, selected chest-beating dance movements, role-play, family performance, and reflective discussion.

Population, Sample, and Sampling

The needs-assessment population consisted of parents of primary-school children in Quanzhou City, Fujian Province. Convenience sampling through an online platform produced 132 responses, of which 120 were valid (90.9%). Three families were then selected purposively according to willingness to participate, absence of professional parental music backgrounds, and the presence of focal children aged approximately 9-11 years. Six parents participated in the pre- and post-activity attitude assessment. Five children joined the activities; three focal children were aged 10-11 years, and two younger siblings aged four and seven also participated, enabling limited observation of age-related differences.

Variables, Geography, and Time

The independent variable was the Nanyin family music activity program (approximately 6-8 hours). Dependent variables included children's musical engagement, quality of parent-child interaction, cultural identity, and parents' educational attitudes. Child age, prior musical experience, and level of parental participation were treated as contextual influences. The intervention was

implemented in family settings in Quanzhou during the 2025 academic year. The core program comprised four sequenced learning phases (90 minutes each, totaling approximately six hours of instruction, with additional time for orientation, breaks, rehearsal, and reflection). Interviews were completed within 24 hours after the program.

5. Research Methodology

A qualitative-led sequential design was employed, supplemented by descriptive quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A preliminary questionnaire survey provided contextual needs diagnosis and participant recruitment, while qualitative case studies of three families examined how and why the activities worked within natural home settings. The intervention-development process followed ADDIE (Branch, 2009). During analysis, the literature review and survey identified Westernized content, limited parental methods, and interest in traditional music. During design and development, objectives, materials, activity sequences, parent guidance, and assessment tools were prepared. During implementation, the researcher facilitated the activities while documenting family interaction through participatory observation. During evaluation, descriptive quantitative outcomes were interpreted alongside observation, interview, and artifact evidence, and revision points were identified.

The learning sequence was organized from perception to expression in four phases:

Phase 1 (90 minutes): Introduction and Exploration – story and listening, grounding in Gordon's auditory-first principle.

Phase 2 (90 minutes): GongceiPu Notation and Clapper Experience – multisensory learning, combining gesture, rhythm, and symbol.

Phase 3 (90 minutes): Chest Beating Dance Rhythm and Role-Playing – embodied expression through Heathcote's dramatic inquiry.

Phase 4 (90 minutes): Comprehensive Presentation and Reflection – family performance and discussion, applying Tyler's evaluation orientation.

Ethical procedures included informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymization of family identities, secure data storage, and the right to withdraw without penalty.

6. Research Instruments

Five instrument types were used.

First, the Current Status and Acceptance of Nanyin Family Music Education Questionnaire collected demographic information, music-learning backgrounds, family practices, attitudes, and willingness to use Nanyin. It was administered online to 120 parents for contextual diagnosis only.

Second, the Family Music Education Parent Attitude Scale comprised 14 items measuring cognitive beliefs, emotional orientation, and behavioral intention on a five-point Likert scale. It was administered before and after the intervention to describe changes in the six participating parents' attitudes.

Third, the Family Music Activity Observation Record Form documented participation, parent-child interaction, children's emotional responses, task completion, and difficulties across the four phases.

Fourth, a semi-structured Parent Interview Protocol explored enjoyment, difficulty, perceived value, cultural understanding, role changes, barriers, and improvement suggestions. All interviews were conducted within 24 hours after the program, audio-recorded, and transcribed.

Fifth, a brief Satisfaction Questionnaire assessed content, practicality, interaction, pace, and overall experience.

Instrument development began with alignment to the research objectives and theoretical framework. A music education professor, a national-level Nanyin heritage practitioner, and an education specialist reviewed the questionnaire and activity materials for relevance and clarity. Items were revised in response to their comments. The three-item attitude-and-willingness component used in the preliminary survey produced a Cronbach's alpha of .723, indicating acceptable internal consistency for exploratory use.

7. Data Collection

Data collection proceeded in three stages.

Stage 1: Preliminary Survey. The online questionnaire was distributed to parents of primary-school children; incomplete or patterned responses were screened, leaving 120 valid cases. These data were used to diagnose needs and recruit volunteer families.

Stage 2: Program Implementation. The six participating parents completed the attitude pretest immediately before the family program. During each of the four phases, the researcher recorded engagement, interaction, emotional response, task completion, and notable incidents using the observation form. Family performances and researcher field notes provided additional process evidence.

Stage 3: Post-Program Assessment. Immediately after the program, parents completed the attitude posttest and satisfaction survey. Semi-structured interviews were conducted within 24 hours, audio-recorded with permission, and transcribed for analysis. Collecting evidence before, during, and after the program allowed outcome data to be connected with observed learning processes.

8. Data Analysis

Preliminary survey data were summarized with frequencies and percentages. For the six parents in the intervention, means and standard deviations were calculated for cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and total attitude scores. Pre-post differences were examined with paired-samples *t* tests after the available scores showed no clear departure from normality. Cohen's *d* was reported to describe effect magnitude, using .20, .50, and .80 as conventional small, medium, and large benchmarks (Cohen, 1988). Process efficiency (E1) represented the average percentage of activity-task completion, while post-program efficiency (E2) represented the posttest mean converted to a percentage. The improvement index was calculated as the observed gain divided by the maximum possible gain remaining after the pretest.

Interview transcripts and observation notes were read repeatedly and coded for engagement, cooperation, skill development, cultural understanding, parental role, emotional response, and implementation barriers. Evidence was compared within each family and across families. Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated through triangulation: a claimed improvement was treated as more credible when scale change, observed behavior, and interview testimony converged.

Contradictory or age-specific cases were retained to identify conditions under which the activities required adaptation.

9. Research Summary (Results)

The needs assessment confirmed a strong rationale for the intervention. Although families reported substantial exposure to popular and Western music, traditional Chinese music was less prominent, most parents lacked prior music training, and nearly two thirds wanted practical family music education methods. These patterns guided the program toward low-cost materials, clear parent instructions, multisensory learning, and cultural storytelling rather than specialist performance standards.

All three families completed the program. The six parents showed increases in every attitude dimension. Because the sample was very small, the statistical results should be interpreted as pilot evidence rather than definitive estimates; nevertheless, the direction and magnitude of change were consistent across quantitative and qualitative sources.

Table 1. Pretest-Posttest Results for Parent Attitudes (N = 6)

Dimension	Pretest M $\pm$ SD	Posttest M $\pm$ SD	t	p	Cohen's d
Cognitive	3.12 $\pm$ 0.65	4.33 $\pm$ 0.52	6.21	< .001	1.82
Emotional	3.45 $\pm$ 0.70	4.67 $\pm$ 0.41	5.89	< .001	1.74
Behavioral tendency	3.01 $\pm$ 0.58	4.50 $\pm$ 0.48	7.03	< .001	2.10
Total scale	3.19 $\pm$ 0.61	4.50 $\pm$ 0.45	7.45	< .001	2.31

Process and outcome indicators also exceeded the criteria established in the study. E1, based on observed task completion, was 86.5%; E2, based on the posttest mean of 4.50 out of 5, was 90.0%; and the improvement index was 0.724. Overall parental satisfaction was 4.75 out of 5 (95%). Observational task-completion rates were 92% for Family 1, 85% for Family 2, and 96% for Family 3. Participation and interaction rose from initial ratings of 3 to 5 in Family 1, 2 to 4 in Family 2, and 4 to 5 in Family 3. Thus, the quantitative pattern was not produced by a single high-performing family.

Qualitative evidence clarified the learning process. Children with prior musical experience often became "little teachers," guiding parents through gestures and rhythms. A parent who was initially hesitant became more involved after repeated listening and child-led assistance. Families adapted mistakes playfully rather than abandoning the task; one family transformed mismatched movements into a humorous improvised dance. These events indicate that role flexibility and permission to experiment helped reduce performance anxiety. By the end of the program, all families could reproduce basic clapper patterns, perform two or three chest-beating dance movements, and explain key elements of the story and performance context of "Three Thousand Taels of Gold."

Parents also described a shift in cultural perception. Several had initially regarded Nanyin as slow, remote, or unfamiliar, but afterward associated it with liveliness, narrative, local history, and family enjoyment. They expressed willingness to attend performances, use a guidebook or preview videos,

repeat activities at home, and recommend the program to other families. The younger siblings revealed the importance of differentiation: the four-year-old required physical guidance and simplified rhythm tasks, whereas children aged ten and above completed tasks independently and sometimes supported adults. Overall, the results supported the hypotheses concerning attitude, engagement, interaction, cultural understanding, and basic skill performance, while also identifying age and prior experience as meaningful contextual conditions.

10. Discussion

The results were aligned with the original objective of creating an accessible, culturally grounded family curriculum. The strongest contribution was not technical mastery of Nanyin after a short intervention, but the transformation of family roles and meanings. Parents moved from observers or purchasers of music instruction toward co-learners who listened, moved, performed, and reflected with their children. This finding is consistent with Ilari's (2018) argument that musical parenting is embedded in everyday relationships and practices. The present study extends that perspective by showing how a local heritage tradition can provide the content for such interaction.

The learning process also supported the theoretical framework. The sequence of listening before notation and performance was consistent with Gordon's (2007) emphasis on audiation. Families first experienced the musical sound, then connected it to gesture, rhythm, and symbol. Role-playing the narrative of Zheng Yuanhe, in turn, changed the activity from mechanical imitation into an emotionally meaningful situation, reflecting Heathcote and Bolton's (1995) view of drama as learning through purposeful roles. Age-related differences supported the use of Shuter-Dyson and Gabriel (1981) as a guide for differentiated expectations. Younger children benefited from imitation and bodily support, while older children managed symbols, memory, and leadership.

At the curriculum level, the project demonstrated the practical usefulness of Tyler's and Taba's models in informal education. Needs data informed objectives; objectives guided content selection; experiences progressed from simple listening to integrated performance; and evaluation included cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and interactional evidence. This systematic sequence prevented the cultural material from becoming a decorative addition. It also explains why families without professional music backgrounds could participate: complexity was managed through structure, modeling, repetition, and clear roles.

The descriptive improvements were large, but several cautions are necessary. The paired tests involved only six parents, the intervention was brief, posttests were immediate, and participants volunteered with relatively strong motivation. Scores may therefore reflect novelty, researcher presence, or social desirability. The observation data were produced by a single facilitator-observer, and the attitude scale measured parents more directly than children. Consequently, the evidence supports feasibility and promising short-term change, not long-term causal effectiveness. The most defensible conclusion is that a structured Nanyin program can generate high participation and positive immediate outcomes under supportive family conditions, warranting larger and more rigorous trials.

11. Recommendations

For Practical Application. Cultural and educational institutions should convert traditional music resources into concise family activity kits rather than relying only on lectures or formal performance

training. Each kit should include a short cultural story, high-quality audio and video, age-tiered rhythm tasks, inexpensive props, a parent guidance sheet, and reflection prompts. Parents should be positioned as partners rather than examiners, with feedback focused on effort, curiosity, cooperation, and cultural discovery. Community centers, schools, universities, and Nanyin heritage practitioners can jointly organize family workshops and provide micro-video demonstrations, printable materials, and periodic consultation.

For Program Improvement. The notation phase should proceed more slowly for beginners, preview materials should be distributed before the session, and multiple families should be given opportunities to share performances. Content can be expanded beyond "Three Thousand Liang of Gold" to other Nanyin pieces so that the intervention becomes a sequenced curriculum rather than a single event. Digital resources may support listening, rhythm imitation, gesture recognition, and story-based role-play, but technology should supplement rather than replace shared parent-child participation.

For Future Research. Future studies should recruit larger and more diverse samples, include comparison groups, and separate the effects of child age, prior music experience, parental education, and family structure. Follow-up measurement at six and twelve months is needed to determine whether families continue the activities and whether cultural understanding and interaction gains persist. Independent observers, inter-rater reliability, validated child-engagement measures, and direct assessments of musical learning would strengthen evidence quality. Comparative studies could also test whether the design principles identified here transfer to other forms of intangible cultural heritage, such as regional opera, guqin, or folk dance.

12. References

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