



Developing Entrepreneurial Music Curricula in Thai Higher Education: Toward Producing Graduates Equipped for 21st-Century Labour Market Demands

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Abstract

The global music industry has undergone profound transformation as digital technologies and changing patterns of cultural consumption disrupt conventional pathways into professional music careers. In contrast to earlier periods when orchestras and cultural institutions provided relatively stable employment, recent studies suggest that only a small proportion of music graduates secure full-time performance positions. Most graduates instead assemble portfolio careers that combine teaching, freelance performance, digital production, and, in many cases, work beyond the music sector.

Within Thai higher education, however, music curricula remain largely shaped by conservatoire traditions that prioritize either Western classical or traditional Thai repertoires, with limited systematic attention to these shifting professional realities. Responding to this gap, this article draws on an integrative review of literature on music entrepreneurship education, the FITA pedagogical framework, Kolb's experiential learning model, and outcome-based education to propose a curriculum development approach grounded in Thai institutional and cultural contexts.

The proposed framework integrates four interrelated dimensions: 1) music-specific business and marketing knowledge, 2) practical digital, networking, and collaborative competencies, 3) experiential learning through performances, internships, and industry engagement, and 4) the development of adaptability, creative risk-taking, and psychological resilience. Rather than positioning entrepreneurship as an add-on subject, the article argues for its integration across the curriculum, accompanied by a reconceptualization of instructors' roles from guardians of technique to mentors of emerging professional identities. The analysis suggests that successful implementation depends on institutional commitment, pedagogical reorientation among faculty, and sustained partnerships with the music and creative industries. Graduates shaped by such curricula are more likely to combine artistic depth with professional agency, enabling meaningful participation in Thailand's evolving creative economy.

Keywords: Music Entrepreneurship Education, Curriculum Development, Music Careers, Portfolio Careers, Thai Higher Music Education, Experiential Learning, Outcome-Based Education

Introduction

Over the past several decades, the professional landscape confronting emerging musicians has undergone a transformation that few higher music education systems were designed to anticipate. Advances in digital technologies—particularly streaming platforms, social media, and accessible recording tools—have reshaped how music is produced, distributed, and monetized. More importantly, they have altered how musicians access professional opportunities and sustain working lives. Career pathways once structured around relatively stable institutional positions, such as orchestral employment or permanent teaching posts, now account for only a small proportion of outcomes for music graduates.

Research across multiple national contexts has consistently documented this shift. Studies of graduate destinations indicate that only a minority of musicians secure long-term, full-time performance roles, while the majority assemble what have become known as portfolio careers, combining teaching, freelance performance, project-based work, and activities beyond music itself (Bennett, 2016; Bartleet et al., 2019). López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2021) further argue that sustaining such careers depends less on technical mastery alone than on



the capacity to adapt, self-manage, and continually renegotiate professional identity. These findings suggest a widening gap between the expectations cultivated during formal study and the conditions graduates encounter upon entering the labour market.

This gap has particular significance for music programs shaped by conservatoire traditions. Historically, conservatoires emerged within nineteenth-century European contexts that assumed graduates would progress into orchestras, court ensembles, or other stable patronage systems (Ford, 2010). Pedagogical priorities developed accordingly, with intense emphasis on instrumental technique, repertoire mastery, and performance preparation. While these priorities remain central to musical excellence, their dominance has proven increasingly misaligned with contemporary employment realities.

In Thailand, the persistence of this model reflects both global inheritance and local specificity. Music programs in higher education commonly emphasize either Western classical traditions or traditional Thai music, each grounded in distinct pedagogical relationships and cultural expectations (Chandransu, 2010). Although institutions such as the Mahidol College of Music and a small number of others have introduced popular music or business-oriented pathways, research suggests that entrepreneurial competencies remain marginal rather than structurally integrated within most curricula (Chandransu et al., 2020; Boonno et al., 2025). As a result, students often graduate with strong artistic identities but limited preparation for the practical, self-directed work that increasingly defines professional musical life.

Evidence from Thailand and the wider region echoes these international findings. Work on Thai classical music curricula has drawn attention to the need for clearer competency alignment between what programs teach and the demands graduates later face (Laovanich et al., 2022). In neighbouring Malaysia, Ghazali and Bennett (2017) found that music graduates required a broad set of generic and employability skills, among them self-management, communication, and business awareness, that performance-centred training did not consistently provide. Read alongside international studies, these accounts point to a recurring gap between conservatoire-style preparation and the self-directed, digitally mediated character of contemporary musical work. Expectations formed during study, frequently centred on obtaining a secure institutional position, collide with labour markets characterised by competition, precarity, and project-based employment. These dynamics are further shaped by local factors, including cultural preferences for stability and hierarchy, the continued prestige of government-affiliated music positions, and the growing influence of regional ASEAN integration on artistic labour markets.

Over the past two decades, music entrepreneurship education has emerged internationally as one response to these conditions. Rather than positioning musicians as passive applicants for limited opportunities, this body of work emphasises the development of skills and dispositions that enable graduates to generate and sustain their own professional activity. Scholars have highlighted the importance of business literacy, legal and contractual knowledge, digital marketing, and, critically, the cultivation of entrepreneurial mindsets that support resilience and adaptive capacity (Beckman, 2007; Toscher, 2019). However, the direct transfer of Western entrepreneurship models into non-Western contexts raises important questions about cultural relevance and pedagogical fit.

This study addresses those questions by developing a curriculum framework specifically attuned to Thai higher music education. Drawing on an integrative synthesis of literature in music entrepreneurship education, experiential learning theory, outcome-based education, and research on portfolio careers, we propose an approach that balances international theoretical insights with local educational realities. Central to this framework is the FITA model, which distinguishes learning for, in, through, and about entrepreneurship, alongside Kolb's experiential learning

cycle as a mechanism for integrating reflection and practice within musical training (Hoppe et al., 2017; Kolb & Kolb, 2012).

The aim is not to prescribe a uniform curriculum or to diminish the importance of artistic excellence. Rather, the framework offers a flexible structure through which Thai institutions might embed entrepreneurial capabilities across existing programs, supporting students in developing professional identities that reflect the realities of contemporary musical work. The sections that follow examine the theoretical foundations of this approach, analyse the specific conditions of Thai music education, and outline the proposed framework together with its implications for curriculum design, pedagogy, and policy.

More precisely, this article pursues three objectives. First, it draws together literature on music entrepreneurship education, experiential learning, outcome-based education, and portfolio careers into a coherent conceptual base. Second, it examines how these ideas intersect with the institutional and cultural conditions of Thai higher music education, where Western classical, popular, and traditional Thai pedagogies coexist. Third, it proposes four curriculum dimensions, together with indicative learning outcomes, activities, and assessment approaches, that curriculum designers, music educators, and policymakers can adapt to their own settings.

What distinguishes this contribution from earlier conceptual work is its explicit grounding in the Thai case. Rather than importing an international model wholesale, the framework is built around the coexistence of Western classical, popular, and traditional Thai music within the same institutions, and around the professional conditions created by Thailand's creative economy and by wider ASEAN labour mobility. It is this regional and cultural specificity, applied to the design of an entrepreneurial music curriculum, that the article adds to the existing literature.

Methodological Approach

This article adopts a conceptual and integrative literature-based approach rather than a systematic review. Its aim is not to map every study in music entrepreneurship education, but to bring together theoretically and contextually relevant work that can inform a curriculum framework for Thai higher music education. The discussion therefore moves analytically, from the reviewed literature toward a set of design principles, rather than through a formal search-and-screening protocol.

Literature was drawn from four areas: music entrepreneurship education and portfolio careers; experiential and work-integrated learning; outcome-based curriculum design; and higher and music education in Thailand and comparable Southeast Asian settings. Within these areas, sources were selected for their conceptual relevance to curriculum design, their bearing on graduate employability and professional identity, and their applicability to Thai or regional conditions. Peer-reviewed studies were prioritised, supplemented where useful by policy-related material on the creative economy and employability.

The selected literature was read thematically to identify recurring concerns, points of tension, and design principles. Three themes proved central: the mismatch between conservatoire-style training and portfolio careers; the pedagogical value of experiential and reflective learning; and the need to adapt international entrepreneurship models to local cultural and institutional conditions. These themes inform the four dimensions of the framework proposed below. Because the approach is interpretive rather than exhaustive, its conclusions are offered as a conceptual contribution to be tested empirically, a point taken up in the limitations.



Theoretical Framework and Related Concepts

Efforts to integrate entrepreneurship into higher music education have drawn upon multiple theoretical traditions, reflecting the complexity of preparing musicians for contemporary professional life. Rather than constituting a single, unified body of theory, music entrepreneurship education sits at the intersection of entrepreneurship studies, learning theory, and research on musicians' careers. This section outlines the key conceptual foundations that inform the proposed curriculum framework, with particular attention to their relevance for higher music education in Thailand.

Entrepreneurship Education in Music Contexts

Entrepreneurship education has traditionally focused on venture creation within business and management disciplines. However, scholars have increasingly argued that its principles extend beyond start-up formation to include broader capacities such as opportunity recognition, self-directed learning, and adaptive professional behaviour (Beckman, 2007; Toscher, 2019). Within music education, this shift has been accompanied by growing recognition that musicians rarely operate as conventional employees. Instead, they function as independent or semi-independent professionals whose careers involve continual negotiation between artistic, economic, and social demands.

Early work in arts and music entrepreneurship education emphasised the need to demystify business practices and challenge romanticised notions of artistic careers (Beckman, 2007). Subsequent studies have expanded this focus to include identity formation, agency, and resilience, highlighting entrepreneurship as a way of thinking and acting rather than a narrow set of commercial skills. This perspective aligns closely with research on portfolio careers, which conceptualises professional success not as linear progression but as the capacity to sustain meaningful work across shifting contexts (Bennett, 2016; Bartleet et al., 2019).

The FITA Framework: Modes of Entrepreneurial Learning

One influential contribution to entrepreneurship education theory is the FITA framework, which distinguishes learning *for*, *in*, *through*, and *about* entrepreneurship (Hoppe et al., 2017). Learning *for* entrepreneurship emphasises preparatory knowledge and skills, such as understanding markets, contracts, and financial management. Learning *in* entrepreneurship focuses on participation within entrepreneurial environments, where learners engage with real or simulated professional contexts. Learning *through* entrepreneurship highlights experiential processes, in which learners develop competencies by undertaking projects that involve uncertainty and responsibility. Finally, learning *about* entrepreneurship involves critical reflection on entrepreneurial activity as a social and economic phenomenon.

For music education, this framework offers a way to conceptualise entrepreneurial learning as embedded within artistic practice rather than appended to it. Rather than positioning entrepreneurship as a discrete subject area, FITA supports the integration of entrepreneurial dimensions across performance, composition, pedagogy, and ensemble work. Importantly, it also accommodates variation across institutional and cultural contexts, allowing programs to emphasise different modes depending on local conditions and educational priorities.

Outcome-Based Education and Curriculum Alignment

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) provides an additional structural framework for integrating entrepreneurial learning into higher music education. OBE emphasises the articulation of clear learning outcomes that reflect the knowledge, skills, and dispositions graduates are expected to demonstrate (Spady, 1994). Within music



programs, outcomes have traditionally focused on technical proficiency and artistic interpretation. While these remain essential, they capture only part of the competencies required for contemporary professional practice.

Applying OBE principles allows institutions to make entrepreneurial and employability outcomes explicit and assessable without displacing artistic goals. Research in Thai higher education suggests that outcome-based approaches offer flexibility for curriculum redesign, particularly in professional fields where graduate destinations are diverse and evolving (Sumpowthong, 2022). When aligned with experiential and entrepreneurship education frameworks, OBE can support coherent curriculum design in which artistic, professional, and personal development outcomes reinforce rather than compete with one another.

Integrating Theoretical Perspectives

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives suggest that effective music entrepreneurship education requires more than the transmission of business knowledge. It involves creating learning environments in which students encounter uncertainty, reflect on experience, and gradually develop professional identities capable of sustaining portfolio careers. The FITA framework provides a structure for conceptualising different modes of entrepreneurial learning; experiential learning theory explains how such learning unfolds over time; and outcome-based education offers mechanisms for embedding these processes within formal curricula.

These perspectives also underscore the importance of contextual adaptation. Models developed within Western higher education systems cannot be assumed to translate seamlessly into Thai music education, where pedagogical traditions, labour markets, and cultural values differ in significant ways. The framework proposed in this study therefore draws selectively on international theory while remaining attentive to the specific institutional and cultural conditions that shape music education in Thailand.

Thai Music Education Context and Structural Conditions

Thai higher music education has developed through the convergence of multiple historical and institutional trajectories, resulting in a landscape that is both diverse and internally stratified. Contemporary programs typically draw upon two dominant traditions: Western classical music education, shaped by European conservatoire models, and traditional Thai music pedagogy, rooted in master-apprentice relationships and culturally embedded performance practices (Chandransu, 2010). Although these traditions differ substantially in repertoire, technique, and pedagogical form, both share an underlying emphasis on performance mastery as the primary indicator of professional competence.

This emphasis has long been reinforced by institutional and labour-market structures. For much of the twentieth century, professional success for Thai musicians was closely associated with stable positions in state-supported institutions, including military bands, government agencies, and educational institutions. These positions remain highly prestigious and continue to shape student aspirations, despite their limited availability relative to the number of graduates entering the field each year. As a result, curricular priorities within many programs continue to reflect assumptions about professional pathways that only a small proportion of students will ultimately access.

In recent decades, Thai higher music education has expanded significantly in scale and scope. Universities have introduced new degree programs, diversified admissions pathways, and responded to growing student demand across classical, traditional, and popular music genres. Notably, institutions such as the Mahidol College of Music have played a leading role in incorporating popular music studies, music technology, and aspects of music business into formal curricula. However, existing research suggests that these developments have remained uneven and,



in many cases, peripheral to core degree structures rather than fully integrated across programs (Chandransu et al., 2020; Boonno et al., 2025).

Empirical studies of Thai music graduates indicate that this structural configuration creates persistent challenges during the transition from study to professional practice. Research on Thai classical music curricula has emphasised competency alignment as an ongoing concern (Laovanich et al., 2022), while broader employability research in the region reports that graduates often enter the labour market without structured preparation in self-promotion, digital engagement, project management, and financial planning (Ghazali & Bennett, 2017; Isbah et al., 2023). These competencies are now routine requirements for sustaining professional activity, yet they are often acquired informally, after graduation, rather than through structured learning during degree programs. This pattern mirrors international findings but is intensified in Thailand by strong cultural expectations surrounding educational authority and occupational stability.

Cultural factors play a significant role in shaping how entrepreneurship is perceived within Thai music education. Hierarchical teacher–student relationships, particularly within traditional Thai music pedagogy, can discourage experimentation and risk-taking—qualities often associated with entrepreneurial activity. Moreover, the concept of entrepreneurship itself may be interpreted narrowly as commercialism, creating resistance among faculty and students who fear that economic considerations will undermine artistic or cultural values. These concerns are not unfounded; however, research in music entrepreneurship education suggests that entrepreneurial learning need not be incompatible with artistic integrity when framed as professional agency rather than profit maximization (Toscher, 2019).

At the policy level, Thailand’s promotion of the creative economy has introduced new discourses and opportunities for musicians, particularly in areas related to tourism, cultural heritage, and digital content creation. Government initiatives have encouraged higher education institutions to align programs with employability and innovation agendas, while outcome-based education frameworks have provided mechanisms for articulating such goals within curriculum design. In practice, however, the translation of policy rhetoric into coherent curricular reform has proven inconsistent. Institutional capacity, resource constraints, and differing interpretations of entrepreneurial education have resulted in fragmented implementation across the sector.

Regional dynamics further complicate this landscape. ASEAN integration has expanded mobility and competition for musicians, exposing Thai graduates to broader professional networks while also intensifying pressures to differentiate themselves within crowded markets. These conditions amplify the importance of transferable competencies, adaptive professional identities, and the capacity to operate across cultural and institutional boundaries. Yet current curricular structures often remain oriented toward national rather than regional or global professional horizons.

These pressures are not unique to Thailand. Across Southeast Asia, higher education systems have been asked to align arts and music programs with fast-growing creative economies while contending with uneven institutional capacity. Malaysian reforms have pushed music curricula toward generic and employability skills (Ghazali & Bennett, 2017), and Indonesian universities have responded to graduate-transition pressures by adding entrepreneurship courses and strengthening career-development units (Isbah et al., 2023). Thailand shares much of this terrain, including expanding creative industries, cultural tourism, digital platforms, and growing ASEAN mobility, which suggests that a curriculum response developed for the Thai case may also speak to comparable regional settings, even as local pedagogical traditions differ.

Taken together, these factors highlight the need for a curriculum framework that is sensitive to the specific historical, cultural, and institutional conditions of Thai music education. Approaches that simply import Western entrepreneurship models risk overlooking deeply embedded pedagogical practices and professional expectations. The framework proposed in this study responds to this challenge by seeking points of alignment between international theory and local realities, emphasizing integration rather than replacement, and professional agency rather than commercial conformity.

Curriculum Framework for Entrepreneurial Music Education in Thailand

The curriculum framework proposed in this study is designed to respond directly to the structural conditions outlined in the preceding sections. It does not assume a single ideal pathway for music graduates, nor does it privilege entrepreneurial activity as a substitute for artistic excellence. Instead, the framework conceptualises entrepreneurship as a set of capacities that enable musicians to sustain professional practice across diverse and shifting contexts. Drawing on entrepreneurship education theory, experiential learning, and outcome-based education, the framework is organised around four interrelated dimensions that can be embedded across existing music curricula.

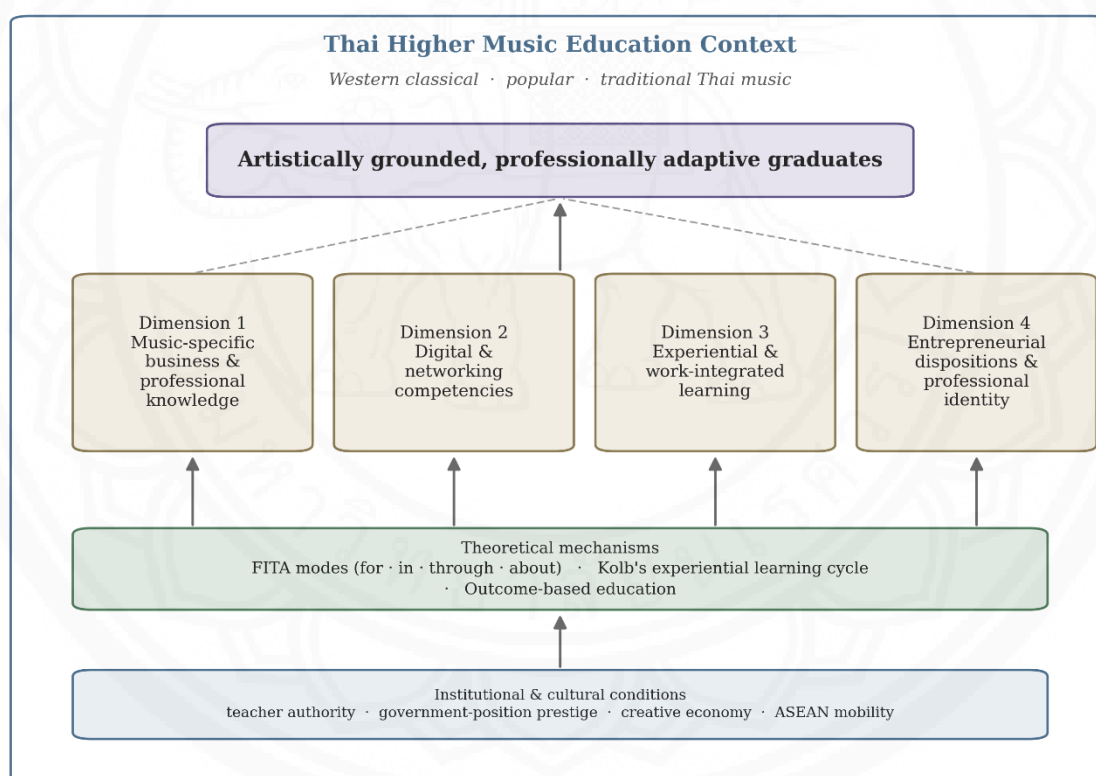


Figure 1 Integrated framework for entrepreneurial music curriculum development in Thai higher education.

Music-Specific Business and Professional Knowledge

The first dimension focuses on foundational business and professional knowledge contextualised specifically for musical practice. Unlike generic management courses, this component emphasises areas directly relevant to musicians' working lives, including copyright and intellectual property, contracts and negotiation, financial planning, and basic marketing. Research consistently indicates that such knowledge is critical for musicians



operating within portfolio careers, yet is often acquired informally and unevenly after graduation (Bennett, 2016; Bartleet et al., 2019).

Within Thai higher music education, this dimension can be integrated through existing courses and learning activities rather than introduced as stand-alone subjects. For example, applied performance projects may incorporate discussions of contractual arrangements, budgeting, and audience development, making explicit the professional dimensions that already accompany artistic work. Framing business knowledge in this way reduces resistance by positioning it as a support for, rather than a threat to, artistic practice.

In concrete terms, a learning outcome at this level might ask students to explain the basics of copyright, contracts, budgeting, and audience development for a specific project. Suitable activities include preparing a project budget, analysing a sample performance contract, and drafting a short funding or project proposal, assessed through the budget itself, a mock contract analysis, and a brief reflective memo.

Digital and Networking Competencies

The second dimension addresses the digital and relational competencies that now shape access to professional opportunities. Contemporary musicians are expected to engage with online platforms for promotion, distribution, and collaboration, while also maintaining professional networks that extend beyond local institutional contexts. These competencies involve not only technical skills but also strategic judgement, ethical awareness, and an understanding of how digital visibility intersects with artistic identity.

For Thai music students, digital competencies are particularly significant given the role of tourism, cultural industries, and online media in expanding professional opportunities beyond traditional institutional employment. Integrating digital engagement into curriculum activities—such as documenting performances, managing project-based online releases, or collaborating across institutions—allows students to develop these skills through practice rather than abstract instruction. Importantly, this dimension also emphasises critical reflection on digital labour, avoiding uncritical narratives of visibility or self-branding as guaranteed pathways to success.

A corresponding outcome might require students to build a professional digital portfolio and plan a simple online release. Activities such as assembling an electronic press kit, designing a short social-media or streaming-release strategy, and completing a collaborative online project can be assessed through the portfolio, a campaign analysis, and structured peer or industry feedback.

Experiential and Work-Integrated Learning

Experiential learning constitutes the third dimension of the framework and serves as the primary mechanism through which entrepreneurial capabilities are developed. Building on Kolb's experiential learning cycle, this dimension foregrounds learning through action, reflection, and adaptation within authentic professional contexts (Kolb & Kolb, 2012). In music education, experiential learning may take the form of concerts, community engagement projects, internships, collaborative productions, or student-led initiatives that involve real audiences and external stakeholders.

What distinguishes this dimension from traditional performance training is the explicit recognition of uncertainty, responsibility, and decision-making as learning opportunities. Students are encouraged to engage with the practical constraints of professional work—time, resources, audience expectations—while supported by structured reflection facilitated by instructors. In the Thai context, partnerships with cultural institutions, tourism sectors, and local creative industries offer particularly relevant sites for such learning, provided that these collaborations are sustained and pedagogically framed rather than ad hoc.



Here a learning outcome might ask students to plan, run, and evaluate a real music project with an external audience. A community concert, an internship, a student-led production, or an industry mentorship provides the setting, assessed through a project report, a reflective journal, and stakeholder feedback.

Entrepreneurial Dispositions and Professional Identity

The fourth dimension focuses on the development of entrepreneurial dispositions and professional identity. Research on musicians' careers increasingly highlights the importance of psychological resilience, adaptability, and a sense of agency in sustaining long-term professional engagement (Hietanen & Ruismäki, 2021). These qualities are not easily taught through formal instruction alone; they emerge through repeated encounters with challenge, feedback, and reflection.

Within the proposed framework, entrepreneurial dispositions are cultivated through deliberate pedagogical design. Students are encouraged to articulate personal goals, reflect on setbacks, and recognise multiple forms of professional success beyond narrowly defined performance outcomes. Faculty play a critical role in this process, shifting from gatekeepers of technical standards toward mentors who support students in negotiating professional identities that are both artistically grounded and realistically aligned with contemporary labour markets.

An outcome at this level might ask students to articulate a professional identity and a realistic career strategy. Career-narrative writing, structured reflection on setbacks, mentorship dialogue, and portfolio-career mapping support this work, assessed through a reflective essay, a career-development plan, and a short oral presentation.

Although presented separately for analytical clarity, the four dimensions are intended to operate in concert. Business knowledge gains meaning when applied within experiential projects; digital competencies are developed through real-world engagement; and entrepreneurial dispositions are reinforced as students navigate the successes and failures inherent in professional practice. This integrated approach aligns with the FITA framework's emphasis on learning *for, in, through, and about* entrepreneurship, while remaining compatible with outcome-based curriculum design.

Table 1 Proposed curriculum framework for entrepreneurial music education in Thai higher education

Curriculum Dimension	Theoretical Basis	Indicative Learning Outcomes	Sample Learning Activities	Assessment Methods	Thai Contextual Adaptation
Music-specific business and professional knowledge	Learning for and about entrepreneurship (FITTA); outcome-based education	Explain copyright, contracts, budgeting, grant writing, and audience development for a music project	Project budget; mock contract analysis; music project or funding proposal	Project budget; reflective memo; business or professional plan	Local cultural institutions, university ensembles, government-affiliated music work, and cultural events
Digital and networking competencies	Learning in and through entrepreneurship (FITTA); experiential learning	Build a digital portfolio and electronic press kit; plan an online release; map a professional network	Digital portfolio; social-media strategy; streaming-release plan; collaborative online project	Digital portfolio; campaign analysis; peer and industry feedback	Tourism, local creative industries, and ASEAN-facing digital visibility



Table 1 (Cont.)

Curriculum Dimension	Theoretical Basis	Indicative Learning Outcomes	Sample Learning Activities	Assessment Methods	Thai Contextual Adaptation
Experiential and work-integrated learning	Kolb's experiential learning cycle; learning through entrepreneurship	Design, deliver, and evaluate a real music project with external stakeholders	Community concert; internship; student-led production; industry mentorship	Project report; reflective journal; stakeholder feedback; performance documentation	Partnerships with schools, temples, cultural centres, local festivals, and creative-economy agencies
Entrepreneurial dispositions and professional identity	Portfolio careers; entrepreneurial identity formation; reflective learning	Articulate a professional identity, a career strategy, and a plan for resilience	Career narrative; reflection on setbacks; mentorship dialogue; portfolio-career mapping	Reflective essay; career-development plan; oral presentation	Balancing respect for teacher authority with student agency and self-directed development

The four dimensions are analytically distinct but operationally interdependent: business knowledge is exercised within experiential projects, digital competencies develop through real engagement, and entrepreneurial dispositions are reinforced as students meet the successes and setbacks of professional work. Across all four, the FITA modes of learning for, in, through, and about entrepreneurship supply the pedagogical logic, Kolb's cycle provides the mechanism of action and reflection, and outcome-based education makes the resulting competencies explicit and assessable.

Crucially, the framework is designed to be adaptable rather than prescriptive. Institutions may emphasise different dimensions depending on their resources, traditions, and student populations. For some programs, integration may begin with modest curriculum adjustments; for others, more substantial restructuring may be possible. What matters is not uniform implementation but coherent alignment between educational intentions and the professional realities graduates are likely to face.

Adapting the Framework to Traditional Thai Music Programs

The framework is not intended solely for Western classical or popular music tracks. Its application to traditional Thai music, however, calls for care. In these programs learning is organised around master-apprentice relationships and the transmission of repertoire and values across generations, and entrepreneurship framed narrowly as commercial activity sits uneasily with those commitments. The more useful reading of entrepreneurship here is professional agency: the capacity to sustain and extend a musical practice while respecting cultural transmission, teacher authority, community expectations, and artistic integrity.

Understood this way, entrepreneurial learning can be adapted rather than imposed. Student-led Thai ensemble projects, community-based performances, and lecture-concerts for cultural tourism or public education give students responsibility for real events without displacing the teacher's role. Digital documentation of repertoire, audience development for traditional forms, and collaborations with temples, schools, cultural centres, and local festivals extend a tradition's reach while building practical skills. Project-based work of this kind can preserve the respect owed to master musicians while adding structured reflection and professional planning.

Framed as an extension rather than a replacement, the approach lets students in traditional Thai music develop career capabilities alongside artistic and cultural depth. This is also where the article's contribution is clearest: an entrepreneurial curriculum that takes seriously the coexistence of Western classical, popular, and traditional Thai music within Thai institutions, rather than assuming a single model of professional practice.



Conclusion

This study began from a structural tension that has become increasingly evident in contemporary music education. While higher music education continues to operate within curricular models shaped by assumptions of stable institutional employment, evidence from multiple contexts suggests that such career pathways now represent the exception rather than the norm. Most music graduates instead construct portfolio careers that demand a broader range of competencies than traditional conservatoire training has typically emphasized (Bennett, 2016; Bartleet et al., 2019).

In the Thai context, this mismatch is compounded by the coexistence of Western classical and traditional Thai pedagogical traditions, both of which continue to prioritize performance mastery as the core indicator of professional success. Previous research has shown that, although certain institutions have introduced business- or popular-music-oriented tracks, entrepreneurial capabilities remain peripheral within most programs (Chandransu et al., 2020; Boonno et al., 2025). As a result, graduates often encounter significant challenges when transitioning into professional environments that require self-direction, digital engagement, and financial literacy.

The curriculum framework proposed in this article responds to these conditions by articulating four interrelated dimensions: music-specific business knowledge; digital and networking competencies; experiential learning embedded in authentic professional contexts; and the cultivation of entrepreneurial dispositions such as adaptability, creative risk-taking, and resilience. Rather than advocating the addition of isolated entrepreneurship courses, the framework emphasizes integration across existing curricula. This approach aligns with established perspectives in entrepreneurship education that view professional capability as emerging through situated practice and reflective experience rather than through decontextualized instruction (Hoppe et al., 2017; Kolb & Kolb, 2012).

Implications

These arguments carry practical implications, and several first steps are realistic without wholesale reform. Institutions and curriculum designers can begin by mapping existing courses to identify where entrepreneurial competencies already appear, then pilot one or two entrepreneurship-integrated modules before attempting broader change. Faculty benefit from development in experiential teaching, mentoring, and the assessment of professional competencies, and from support in aligning entrepreneurial learning outcomes with existing outcome-based education requirements. At the assessment level, rubrics for digital portfolios, project budgets, and reflective professional-identity work make the new outcomes concrete and gradable. Policymakers and institutions can, in turn, build durable partnerships with cultural institutions, creative-industry organisations, tourism agencies, and local communities, so that experiential learning has stable sites rather than ad hoc ones.

Implementing such integration, however, presents substantial challenges. Institutional structures, resource constraints, and entrenched pedagogical cultures may limit the extent to which curricula can be reconfigured. Faculty trained within traditional conservatoire paradigms may be cautious toward approaches that appear to dilute technical rigor, while students' expectations—often shaped by longstanding narratives of artistic success—may conflict with early exposure to career uncertainty. These tensions highlight that curriculum reform in music education is not solely a technical matter but also a cultural and organizational one.



Despite these constraints, there are grounds for cautious optimism. The increasing adoption of outcome-based education frameworks within Thai higher education provides conceptual space for articulating entrepreneurial and employability outcomes alongside artistic ones. Moreover, the expansion of Thailand's creative economy, coupled with regional dynamics within ASEAN, creates professional environments in which graduates who possess both artistic depth and adaptive capability may find new forms of opportunity. Research on entrepreneurial identity formation further suggests that graduates who develop agency and resilience during their studies are better positioned to sustain long-term engagement with musical work in uncertain conditions (Hietanen & Ruismäki, 2021).

Finally, it is important to recognize the limits of educational intervention. Curriculum reform alone cannot resolve structural issues surrounding the valuation and remuneration of musicians' labour. Broader cultural policy, funding mechanisms, and labour protections remain essential to the sustainability of musical professions. Nevertheless, higher music education retains a responsibility to prepare students for the professional realities they are most likely to encounter. Graduates who combine artistic excellence with business awareness, digital competence, and psychological resilience are better equipped to navigate those realities—not as passive recipients of opportunity, but as active participants in shaping Thailand's evolving musical landscape.

Limitations

This article has clear limitations. It is conceptual and literature-based, and the proposed framework has not been empirically tested. No interviews, surveys, or classroom implementation informed its design, so its claims about feasibility and effect remain provisional and require validation with students, faculty, employers, and policymakers. The literature base is also uneven: relevant Southeast Asian scholarship remains limited and unevenly indexed, and language and access constraints mean some regional work may be underrepresented here. These constraints shape what the framework can currently claim.

Future Research

Several directions follow. The most immediate is empirical validation of the framework, including pilot implementation of one or more modules and evaluation of their effect on student learning and career readiness. Interviews with Thai music graduates and needs analyses with employers and other stakeholders would test the framework's assumptions against professional experience, and a Delphi study with educators and industry figures could refine its dimensions. Comparative work across Southeast Asian music programs, together with longitudinal tracking of graduate outcomes and closer evaluation of digital portfolios and work-integrated learning, would show how well the approach travels and how durable its effects are.

Ethical Considerations

This article is a conceptual and analytical study that synthesizes existing literature and policy-related documents to propose a framework for entrepreneurial music curricula in Thai higher education. The study does not involve human participants, personal data, interviews, surveys, experiments, or any form of interaction with individuals or identifiable groups. All materials analyzed in this research are derived from publicly accessible secondary sources.



Accordingly, the study does not fall under the category of human subjects research and is exempt from Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and Certificate of Ethical clearance. The research was conducted in accordance with internationally accepted academic and ethical standards for conceptual and literature-based studies.

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Conflict of Interests

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Author Contributions

Vich Boonrod: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Thirawat Weravittayan: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – review & editing.

Piriyaporn Lekatarakorn: Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Google Gemini to improve language, grammar, and readability. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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