THE ROLE OF THE THAI DANCE CLUB AT PHATO WITTAYA SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT
The Thai Dance Club is a student development activity that plays an important role in preserving and transmitting Thai cultural heritage while promoting performance skills, responsibility, discipline, and teamwork. This article aims to examine the role of the Thai Dance Club at Phato Wittaya School. Data were collected through document analysis, interviews, observations, practical training, and the researcher's experiences. The findings were presented using descriptive analysis. The results revealed five key roles of the Thai Dance Club at Phato Wittaya School: (1) promoting self-confidence and self-expression; (2) supporting school activities; (3) participating in community activities; (4) preserving and disseminating Thai arts and culture; and (5) creating opportunities and generating income through performances. These interconnected roles contribute to students' development by fostering responsibility, discipline, teamwork, and creativity. Furthermore, the club helps enhance the school's reputation and positive image. The findings can serve as guidelines for improving the operation of the Thai Dance Club to maximize its benefits for students, the school, and the community.
Keywords: Thai Dance Club, Club Roles, Phato Wittaya School

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INTRODUCTION

Dance clubs in schools are considered learner development activities that provide students with opportunities to learn and practice Thai dance through rehearsals and performances on various occasions. These activities promote learning through hands-on practice and encourage students to participate in activities collaboratively. Furthermore, Thai dance clubs serve as spaces for learning about and disseminating Thai arts and culture through performances on various occasions (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2010). Participation in these activities not only helps students develop their Thai dance skills but also provides opportunities to cultivate responsibility, discipline, teamwork, and self-confidence through rehearsals and performances.

Thai dance is an integral part of Thai arts and culture that deserves to be preserved, continued, and disseminated. Learning and practicing Thai dance is one way to transmit knowledge and skills to ensure the continued existence of this cultural heritage. The continuation of Thai dance can be promoted through the transmission of knowledge and skills, the development of attitudes, and the dissemination of Thai dance (Saengsawat, Theppanya, & Charoensuk, 2014). Therefore, Thai dance clubs play an important role in preserving and continuing Thai arts and culture through rehearsals, performances, and the dissemination of performances on various occasions. At the same time, these processes contribute to student development by enabling students to apply their Thai dance knowledge and skills in collaborative activities.

Phato Wittaya School is a secondary school in Patho District, Chumphon Province. It was established on June 24, 1975, and is currently located at 127 Moo 8, Patho Subdistrict, Patho District, Chumphon Province. The school provides education at both lower and upper secondary levels and operates under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (Phato Wittaya School, n.d.). The school offers a Thai dance club as a learner development activity. The club conducts rehearsals and performances for various activities both within the school and in the local community. It also represents the school in ceremonies, traditional festivals, and activities organized by external agencies that request its participation.

Throughout its activities, the Thai dance club at Phato Wittaya School has participated in a variety of events, including National Mother's Day celebrations, school sports days, provincial events, student arts and crafts competitions, and performances on other important occasions. Such participation demonstrates that the club's role extends beyond dance training and performance. It also supports school activities, provides students with opportunities to demonstrate their abilities and develop self-confidence, strengthens school-community engagement, and serves as a means of preserving and disseminating Thai arts and culture.

An interesting aspect of the Thai dance club at Phato Wittaya School is that the roles arising from its activities are interconnected across several dimensions and cannot be clearly separated. A single performance may simultaneously promote students' self-confidence, support school activities, provide an opportunity to strengthen relationships with the community, and disseminate Thai arts and culture. However, information concerning the roles of the Thai dance club at Phato Wittaya School has not yet been systematically compiled and analyzed. This raises an important question regarding the roles the club plays in relation to students, the school, and the community, as well as its contribution to the preservation and dissemination of Thai arts and culture.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

1) School Club Activities

School club activities are part of learner development activities under the Basic Education Core Curriculum. They aim to promote the development of students' knowledge, abilities, skills, and experiences according to their individual interests and aptitudes. These activities provide opportunities for students who share similar interests to form groups, collaboratively

plan activities, and carry them out to achieve established objectives (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2010). This process promotes learning beyond classroom instruction while developing teamwork, responsibility, and the ability to live together in society.

From an educational perspective, school club activities can be linked to Structural Functionalism, which explains how different components of society perform interrelated functions that support one another. When applied to the school context, club activities serve as one component that supports student development and encourages participation in the school community. Furthermore, activities emphasizing hands-on learning, or Active Learning, and Cooperative Learning provide opportunities for students to exchange knowledge and experiences, support one another, and learn through group work, such as the transfer of knowledge from senior students to junior students (Intharawiphat et al., 2020).

Therefore, school club activities do more than promote students' specific interests. They also provide a learning process that develops social skills, responsibility, and teamwork. These skills form an important foundation for enabling students to apply their knowledge and experiences in everyday life.

2) Roles of Thai Dance Clubs

Thai dance clubs provide opportunities for students to learn and develop dance skills through practical experience. These activities range from learning Thai dance terminology and movement vocabulary, body movements, and dance memorization to rehearsing with others and presenting performances to the public (Phimphasen, 2022). Such activities reflect three important roles: student development, the preservation and continuation of arts and culture, and the promotion of relationships between educational institutions and communities.

First, in terms of student skill and potential development, participation in Thai dance clubs helps students develop movement skills, emotional expression, and the ability to communicate meaning through dance movements (Phimphasen, 2022; Ngaolamduan, 2017). In addition, rehearsals and collaborative work promote concentration, discipline, responsibility, and confidence in self-expression. Students also have opportunities to develop creativity and learn skills related to performing arts, such as makeup, costume preparation, and accessory making. These skills can be applied to creative productions and work in the performing arts.

Second, in terms of preserving and continuing Thai arts and culture, Thai dance clubs serve as learning spaces where students can experience and understand the value of Thai dance and performing arts that reflect local traditions and ways of life. Through practical training and performances, students have opportunities to recognize the importance of cultural heritage and participate in transmitting cultural knowledge to others (Department of Cultural Promotion, 2023).

Furthermore, incorporating local cultural capital into the creation of performances can be connected to the concept of cultural Soft Power, which emphasizes presenting cultural identity and values through creative works (National Research Council of Thailand, 2024).

Third, in terms of fostering relationships between educational institutions and communities, Thai dance clubs can serve as a link between schools and communities by participating in traditional ceremonies, festivals, and special events organized by various organizations. Such participation provides students with opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in real-life situations while gaining experience outside the classroom. At the same time, presenting Thai dance performances helps raise awareness of cultural heritage and the school's identity while promoting positive relationships between the school and the community.

Based on these three roles, Thai dance clubs can be regarded as activities that connect student development with cultural preservation (Thanaphaet & Thongkaem, (2016) and social participation. Therefore, studying the roles of Thai dance clubs in educational institutions

should consider students' learning processes, the implementation of activities within schools, and the application of Thai dance skills for the benefit of the community.

3) Thai Dance Club at Phato Wittaya School

Phato Wittaya School is located in Patho District, Chumphon Province. It is an educational institution that provides secondary education to students in the area. The school context is connected to local ways of life and cultural capital. Therefore, organizing arts and Thai dance activities is one approach that provides students with opportunities to develop specialized abilities while learning about and expressing the identity of their community. Panchan Saengsawat, Theppanya, P., & Charoensuk, A. (2014)

In the field of aesthetics, Thai dance is one area that reflects the school's distinctive characteristics. Cultural elements and local resources are incorporated into the creation of Thai dance performances. For example, the performance entitled "Rabam Coffee" uses coffee, an important economic crop in Patho District, as the central concept for creating a performance that conveys the area's identity through dance movements and artistic elements. This type of creative work demonstrates the connection between Thai dance and the local economic, social, and cultural context.

Within this context, the Thai dance club at Phato Wittaya School serves as a space for developing students' skills and potential, as well as applying their Thai dance abilities to support school activities and disseminate arts and culture to the community. Rehearsals and performances on various occasions enable students to learn through practical experience. Meanwhile, presenting works connected to local identity provides opportunities to communicate cultural values and make them more widely known.

Therefore, studying the roles of the Thai dance club at Phato Wittaya School is important for understanding how club activities operate within the school context. This includes student development, support for school activities, and the promotion of relationships with the community. The study also reflects how performing arts can serve as a means of preserving and disseminating local cultural identity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach. The participants comprised one teacher responsible for the Thai classical dance club and 20 student members of the club at Phato Wittaya School, totaling 21 participants. Data were obtained through document analysis, interviews with relevant individuals, and observations of performances, practical training, and performance organization. The study also incorporated the researcher's prior experience as a former member of the Thai classical dance club. The research instruments consisted of an interview guide, a behavioral observation form, and a data recording form. The research instruments and collected data were reviewed by the research advisor. The findings were analyzed descriptively and presented in accordance with the research objectives.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The study examined the role of the Thai classical dance club at Phato Wittaya School through interviews, observations, and an analysis of documents and photographs of club activities. The findings revealed that the club played an important role in supporting school activities and fostering community engagement. Its roles were identified in five key areas, as follows.

1) Promoting Self-Confidence and Self-Expression

The Thai classical dance club provided students with opportunities to prepare and present performances on various occasions. Students participated in rehearsals, performance preparation, and presentations before audiences at both school and community events. These activities provided a platform for students to express themselves and actively participate in public performances.

2) Supporting School Activities

The Thai classical dance club contributed to school activities by presenting performances on various occasions, including National Day, Wai Khru Day, National Mother's Day, school sports events, and receptions for distinguished guests. Through these activities, students applied their Thai classical dance skills in support of school events.

Figure 1 shows students in Thai classical dance costumes alongside school personnel during a National Mother's Day activity, while Figure 2 illustrates students' participation in a Wai Khru Day activity. Together, these figures demonstrate how the club's performances contributed to school activities beyond regular dance training and practice.



Figure 1 National Day Celebration
Source*:* Phich Salaipet (2026)



Figure 2 Wai Khru Ceremony Source*:* Phich Salaipet (2026)

3) Community Participation

The Thai classical dance club participated in local traditions and significant community events, as well as activities organized by government agencies and local organizations that requested its participation. One example was the Patho Rafting Festival and Free Food Event, as shown in Figure 3) The figure depicts performers on stage at a local festival, illustrating the club's participation in community activities. Figure 4 shows students in Thai classical dance costumes during an Open House event, which welcomed members of the public and students from other schools to visit the school. The performance provided an opportunity to introduce Thai classical dance to visitors and helped strengthen relationships between the school, the local community, and other educational institutions.



Figure 3 Long Pha Poet Mueang Kin Kin Free FestivalSource**:** Phich Salaipet (2026)



Figure 4 Open House EventSource**:** Phich Salaipet (2026)

4) Preservation and Dissemination of Thai Arts and Culture

The Thai classical dance club contributed to the preservation and promotion of Thai arts and culture through regular rehearsals and performances at various events within the school and in the wider community. Figure 5 shows students in Thai classical dance costumes participating in an Anti-Drug Day activity. This illustrates how Thai performing arts were incorporated into school activities and highlights the role of student participation and practice in passing on Thai classical dance traditions.



Figure 5 Anti-Drug DaySource**:** Phich Salaipet (2026)

5) Creating Opportunities and Income through Performances

The Thai classical dance club provided opportunities for students to apply their Thai classical dance knowledge and skills in performances supported by external organizations. The school supported students in participating in these performances as opportunities arose.

Figure 6 shows a Thai classical dance performance at the Patho Rafting Festival and Free Food Event. Participation in such events allowed students to gain practical experience in preparing for performances and working collaboratively. In addition, the income received from these performances was distributed equally among the participating students. This demonstrates the club's role in enabling students to apply their dance skills in practical settings and access opportunities to earn income through performances.



Figure 6 Performance at the Opening Ceremony of the Open City, Eat for Free Raft Festival in PathoSource**:** Phich Salaipet(2026)

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The study of the roles of the Thai Dance Club at Phato Wittaya School found that the club plays a role beyond developing performance skills. It also serves as a learning space that promotes student development in several areas, including self-expression, responsibility, discipline, teamwork, participation in school and community activities, and the preservation and dissemination of Thai arts and culture. The findings are presented as follows.

1) Promoting Self-Expression

A study on the use of Davies' practical skills instructional model in Thai dance education to promote self-expression among Grade 7 students found that Thai dance instruction can be used as a process for encouraging students to express themselves, particularly when learning takes place through hands-on practice (Kritsani Songsawat & Pantip Tulphan, 2018).

In the context of the Thai Dance Club at Phato Wittaya School, rehearsals are not intended solely to help students perform dance movements correctly. Rather, they provide a process through which students gradually build confidence by working with other club members before applying their abilities in actual performances in front of an audience. Therefore, self-expression develops through accumulated experience and continuous practice, contributing to both students' performance skills and personal development.

2) Supporting School Activities

Teamwork is related to the operation of learner development activities, and effective teamwork contributes to the efficient implementation of such activities in educational institutions (Kriangsak Somphanphae & Thaweesin Kulnapadol, 2022). Furthermore, studies of cooperative learning have found that collaboration helps students understand their roles and responsibilities and enables groups to achieve their goals more effectively (Intharawiphat et al., 2020). These findings are consistent with the operation of the Thai Dance Club at Phato Wittaya School, as every performance requires cooperation among all members, including rehearsing, preparing for performances, and fulfilling responsibilities on stage. The success of a performance therefore does not depend on the ability of any single individual but results from the collective efforts of club members.

Consequently, the Thai Dance Club serves both as an arts activity and as a learner development activity that allows students to practice responsibility, discipline, punctuality, and teamwork. These qualities can also be applied to everyday life and other areas of work.

3) Promoting Youth Participation in the Community

In non-formal education, performing arts activities provide opportunities for young people to participate in both the implementation and organization of activities (Kriangsak Somphanphae & Thaweesin Kulnapadol, 2022). Meanwhile, a study on developing secondary school students' knowledge of and appreciation for Lanna dance suggested that communities should support dance activities and provide students with opportunities to perform at the community level. Such opportunities help strengthen local identity and promote the continuity of arts and culture. In the context of Phato Wittaya School, the Thai Dance Club's participation in

community activities is not limited to presenting performances to the public. It also creates opportunities for students to demonstrate their abilities and learn about their roles as members of the community. At the same time, the school can use the club's activities as a means of fostering positive relationships with the community and promoting knowledge exchange between the school and the surrounding society.

4) Preserving and Disseminating Thai Arts and Culture

The concept of Thai dance instruction in the twenty-first century emphasizes student development alongside the cultivation of awareness of the importance of preserving and continuing Thai arts and culture. Thai dance education should enable young people to become familiar with, appreciate, and appropriately transmit the nation's artistic heritage in response to changes in society (Thanasit Chomchid et al., 2025).

In addition, the dance-related activities of the Bunditpatanasilpa Institute demonstrate that performances provide important opportunities for students to demonstrate their abilities, disseminate Thai arts and culture to the public, and gain practical performance experience (Bunditpatanasilpa Institute, 2026).

These concepts are consistent with the findings concerning the Thai Dance Club at Phato Wittaya School, which indicate that performances at various events serve both as a means of developing students' skills and as a channel for disseminating Thai arts and culture.

In this context, cultural preservation involves more than maintaining traditional performance forms. It also includes creating opportunities for students to learn, practice, transmit, and continuously disseminate cultural knowledge. Through direct experience, students develop an understanding of and appreciation for Thai dance and participate in preserving Thai arts and culture for future generations.

5) Creating Opportunities and Income through Performances

The Thai Dance Club provides students with opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in Thai dance by participating in performances commissioned by external organizations. The school supports these opportunities by arranging for students to participate in performances when such opportunities arise.

Through these experiences, students learn about actual work processes, including rehearsals, preparation, performance, and collaboration with others. In addition, students who participate in performances may receive compensation, with income allocated to those involved in the activities.

This role reflects the practical application of students' knowledge and skills in Thai dance, providing both work experience and opportunities to earn income. It also builds upon students' development of performance skills, self-expression, responsibility, and teamwork, enabling them to apply their abilities in real-life situations.

When the five roles of the Thai Dance Club at Phato Wittaya School are considered together, they are found to be interconnected and mutually supportive. The process begins with rehearsals and performance preparation, which provide an important foundation for developing students' Thai dance skills, self-expression, and self-confidence. Students then apply the knowledge and experience they have gained to support school activities and participate in performances organized by the community and external agencies.

Furthermore, presenting performances in different settings contributes to the preservation and dissemination of Thai arts and culture by making them known to wider audiences. Participation in performances organized by external agencies also provides students with opportunities to learn about real-world work processes, including rehearsals, preparation, performance, and collaboration. Depending on the nature of the activity and the arrangements for distributing income, students may also receive compensation. These experiences demonstrate how knowledge and skills in Thai dance can be applied in practical situations.

Therefore, the Thai Dance Club at Phato Wittaya School does not serve solely to develop performance skills. It is also a learner development activity that promotes personal qualities and experiences in several areas, including self-expression, self-confidence, responsibility, discipline, teamwork, and adaptability. In addition, the club supports school activities, strengthens relationships between the school and the community, and promotes the preservation and dissemination of Thai arts and culture.

In summary, the roles of the Thai Dance Club at Phato Wittaya School encompass three levels: the individual, the educational institution, and the community. At the individual level, students develop performance skills, personal qualities, and practical work experience. At the institutional level, the club supports school activities and enhances the school's profile in arts and culture. At the community level, the club provides students with opportunities to participate in the wider society, strengthens relationships between the school and the community, and disseminates Thai arts and culture to support their continued recognition and transmission.

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