

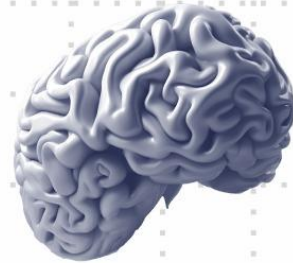


Journal of Advances in Humanities Research
Vol. 5, No.1, 2026

ISSN: 2948-4863



JADHUR



JOURNAL OF ADVANCES IN HUMANITIES RESEARCH

VOL.5, ISSUE.1, 2026



WWW.JADHUR.COM





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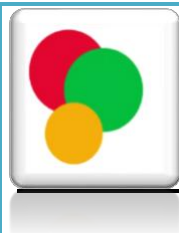
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Art Curriculum Management for Vocational Certificate Students: A Case Study of Baise City

Youjiang Art Secondary Vocational and Technical School, China

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Article Information

ABSTRACT

Article Type: Research Article

Dates:

Received: 11 January 2026

Revised: 10 February 2026

Accepted: 19 February 2026

Available online: 10 March 2026

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Secondary vocational schools in China are expected to develop students' technical competence and holistic growth, yet art curriculum management may be constrained by fragmented planning and limited learning resources. This study aimed to map the problems and needs of art curriculum management from students, teachers, and administrators at Baise City Youjiang Art Secondary Vocational and Technical School, and to develop guidelines. A mixed-method development design combined questionnaire surveys of 240 students, 40 art teachers, and 10 administrators with semi-structured interviews including three experts and five outstanding students. Quantitative data were analyzed with descriptive statistics. Semi-structured interviews with three experts and five outstanding students were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed thematically using manual coding. Overall problem levels were moderate. Learning Resources was rated the most problematic domain by both groups. Improvement needs were high. Students prioritized Instruction of Art Education, whereas teachers/administrators prioritized Learning Resources. Interview themes converged on interdisciplinary curriculum design, teacher capacity building, modernized pedagogy, and stronger practical/digital resource support. Seven guidelines were developed and expert-validated for suitability and correctness, providing an actionable roadmap to strengthen interdisciplinary integration, modernize instruction and assessment, optimize learning resources, and enhance support systems in secondary vocational art education.

Keywords: Art Curriculum Management, Secondary Vocational Education, Guidelines Development, Learning Resources

1. INTRODUCTION

Vocational education has become central to national human capital strategies in China. In 2019, China's State Council issued a comprehensive reform plan to build a high-quality vocational education system, targeting 50 high-level schools and 150 key majors by 2022, and continuing initiatives through 2027 to train over 30 million skilled workers (State Council, 2019). As a result, vocational schools have supplied more than 70% of new frontline workers in manufacturing, emerging industries, and services, producing nearly 10 million graduates annually to enhance productivity (Chen, Pei, Zhang & Wu, 2025). Specifically, China is seeking more high-quality, skills-oriented talents to support new economic reform. Secondary

vocational schools (VETs) are expected to deliver both technical competence and broader humanistic development, yet persistent challenges remain in arts education. Secondary vocational schools (VETs) are expected to deliver both technical competence and broader humanistic development, yet persistent challenges remain in arts education. For example, some students undervalue art courses, exhibit low motivation, and lack effective learning strategies. This disengagement is partly due to the absence of clear career pathways in the arts and limited integration between theory and practice (Chen, 2024). Additionally, interaction among students, teachers, and peers is often limited, which narrows interpersonal coordination and stifles student development (Pichkur, 2021). Resource constraints further hinder practical activities and feedback, due to a lack of funding, insufficient infrastructure, and inadequate teaching materials (Liao, 2016). All of these issues collectively affect student learning outcomes and hinder arts education's role in producing well-rounded vocational graduates (Yu, 2019).

The Ministry of Education of China released the "Art Curriculum Standards for Secondary Vocational Schools" in 2020, which frames art education with core competencies including artistic perception, aesthetic ability, artistic expression, and communication. According to the standard, art curriculum management is defined here as the systematic planning, organization, implementation, support, and evaluation of art learning in secondary vocational settings. It includes several key areas (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). First, it involves goal setting, which means aligning artistic, cultural, and employability outcomes. Second, it covers curriculum structure and content, sequencing creation, theory, and industry-linked practice. Third, instruction requires learner-centered, authentic, and innovative teaching methods. Fourth, teacher capacity is built through professional development and dual-skilled expertise. Fifth, learning resources encompass studios, instruments, digital platforms, and school-industry partnerships. Sixth, assessment must be diversified, performance-based, and formative. Finally, it involves robust support systems, such as mentoring, feedback, and collaboration. This framework for art curriculum management aims to foster holistic development and interdisciplinary integration. It also seeks to modernize teaching and optimize practical and digital resources. Furthermore, it focuses on building strong support structures. Recent commentary and policy scholarship repeatedly emphasize these specific conditions.

Existing discussions stress the value of art for creativity, cultural literacy, and employability, but they often 1) foreground ideals and policy missions over empirical mapping of on-the-ground problems; 2) examine single stakeholder groups rather than triangulating students, teachers, and administrators; and 3) under-specify management levers that translate into practical guidelines for secondary VET (Ren, and Liu, 2024). Using questionnaires to analyze data with descriptive statistics. Based on the research findings and in-depth literature review, this study ultimately aims to develop a set of actionable guidelines for art curriculum development, providing reference and insights for similar secondary vocational schools.

In summary, a clear gap remains in research on secondary VET art education. Most studies discuss policy goals and general value, but provide limited school-based evidence on what actually goes wrong in daily curriculum management. Many studies also focus on a single group (students or teachers) and rarely compare views among students, teachers, and administrators within the same school. Finally, few studies translate findings into practical, management-oriented guidelines that schools can apply. To address these gaps, this study explores the research questions: What problems in art curriculum management are perceived by Vocational Certificate students, teachers, and administrators at Baise City Youjiang Art Secondary Vocational and Technical School? Based on the evidence, what actionable guidelines can be

developed to strengthen art curriculum management in this school and similar secondary vocational institutions?

1.1 Research Objectives

(1) To investigate problems and needs of Art curriculum management encountered by students, teachers, and administrators.

(2) To develop the guidelines for art curriculum management for Vocational certificate students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents how the study applies art curriculum management across four focal domains: Art Courses, Skills for Art Education, Art Instruction, and Learning Resources, thereby forming practice-oriented guidelines for secondary VET.

2.1 Art Course

To remain relevant, the art curriculum must move beyond traditional boundaries. It should cultivate imagination and making, foster critique and aesthetic judgment, and intentionally link form, context, and expression to advance both personal and social aims (Eisner, 2022; Read, 2021). This integrated perspective is crucial because visual art functions less as a stand-alone subject and more as an "adhesive" for meaningful thematic, cross-subject integration across the curriculum (Blackshields et al., 2014). Consequently, modern vocational education and training (VET) must broaden its scope beyond narrow technical skills to strategically include the arts as a vital pathway for developing the multi-skilled, innovative talent that is responsive to dynamic market needs (Yang, 2024)

2.2 Skills for Education

Art education is fundamentally linked to both creativity and employability. Integrating the arts with vocational preparation not only produces skilled craftspeople; it also enhances students' creativity, aesthetic literacy, and overall workplace competitiveness, particularly in the design, media, and related industries (Zhiping et al., 2024). Furthermore, skill development in the arts is rooted in experiential skill formation. Artistic skills, such as image-making and aesthetic judgment, emerge through recursive experiential cycles. These cycles involve an ongoing process of internalizing practice and externalizing performance. This progression is often described as moving "from technology to Tao," signifying the journey from technical proficiency to internalized mastery (Wang, 2023). This process is essential for building a deep, core aesthetic and creative literacy.

2.3 Instruction of Art

Effective art instruction relies on clear design principles and a commitment to continuous improvement. Quality art teaching expertly balances appreciation, critique, and judgment with creation (Kalin, 2018). Rather than integration on the surface, this instruction must use authentic, concept-driven units collaboratively guided by teaching teams and feature diverse assessment methods to accurately gauge student learning (Johnson et al., 2023). Furthermore, pedagogical quality is enhanced by adopting an inquiry stance (Dickson & Clover, 2021). For example, Art-Based Educational Research helps teachers cultivate a deeper empathetic understanding and broaden their educational imagination, which, in turn, significantly enriches their teaching practices and overall pedagogy.

2.4 Learning Resources

Modern art education requires a shift toward ubiquitous, smart ecosystems for learning resources. These resources shouldn't be static; they must be generative, social, and adaptive (Shufang & Ping, 2020). This means they need to support context-aware, personalized learning that seamlessly bridges both physical and digital spaces (Xu, 2021). Crucially, these resources must have a strong fit with VET. Physical assets such as studios and instruments, as well as the various digital platforms used for learning, must be flexible. They need to evolve in tandem with learners' cognitive levels and their preferred media. The ultimate goal is to serve practice-rich, industry-linked art learning that directly prepares students for the vocational sector (Xu, 2021).

At the national level, China has strengthened aesthetic education as part of quality-oriented schooling, for example, The General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving School Aesthetic Education in the New Era (General Office of the CPC Central Committee & General Office of the State Council, 2020) and reinforced vocational education reforms through updated legal and system requirements that support clearer standards and stronger school-industry collaboration, for example, Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China (National People's Congress, 2022). These policy directions create a supportive macro-context for improving art curriculum management in secondary vocational schools, including localized implementation in Baise City.

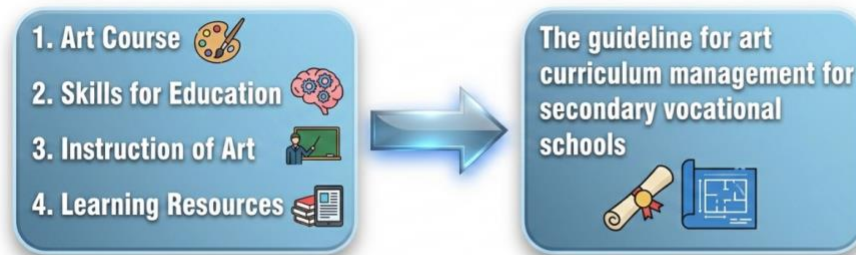


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: (Compiled by the author, 2025)

Figure 1 summarizes the study's conceptual framework. The four domains (Art Courses, Skills for Art Education, Art Instruction, and Learning Resources) were derived from the literature and used to (1) structure the review, (2) guide the development of the questionnaire and interview protocols for students, teachers, and administrators, and (3) organize the analysis into actionable guideline components. The framework, therefore, provides a clear line of linkage from prior scholarship to the study design and to the final set of seven guidelines, which were subsequently validated by experts for suitability and correctness.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study aimed to examine the problems and needs in art curriculum management within secondary vocational schools and to provide an empirical foundation for developing guidelines for vocational certificate students. The study employed mixed methods, including quantitative and qualitative approaches. First, the researchers developed a questionnaire based on the research objectives and relevant literature, which used a quantitative approach, served as the main instrument, and included three parts: general information, problems encountered in art curriculum management, and corresponding needs, with separate versions for students, teachers, and administrators. In addition, a semi-structured interview form was used as the qualitative method to gather supplementary qualitative insights from three experts and five outstanding students to support and enrich the development of the curriculum management guidelines.

3.2 Population

Participants were drawn from Baise City Youjiang Art Secondary Vocational and Technical School to match the school-based case design. The 240 students were selected using stratified sampling by grade/major to ensure representation, while all available art teachers (n=40) and relevant administrators (n=10) were included through purposive/total sampling based on direct responsibility for art curriculum management; potential selection bias from purposive sampling is acknowledged and mitigated by triangulating survey and interview evidence.

3.3 Research Instruments

(1) Questionnaires

The questionnaire consisted of three parts: general information, problems encountered in art curriculum management, and needs related to it. Separate versions were prepared for students, teachers and administrators. The development of the questionnaire items was guided by relevant literature emphasizing the alignment of vocational art curricula with practical skills and industry requirements. The research instrument uses a 5-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932), in which respondents indicate their level of agreement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

For the validity of the questionnaires, three experts examined all items using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). The experts were selected based on having a Master's degree or higher, at least 10 years of professional experience, and senior professional titles, ensuring strong subject-matter and vocational education expertise. The development of the questionnaire items was guided by relevant literature emphasizing the alignment of vocational art curricula with practical skills and industry requirements. Each expert independently rated every item for its congruence with the intended construct/objective (e.g., -1 = not congruent, 0 = unclear, +1 = congruent), and IOC (Item-Objective Congruence) values were calculated at the item level. The IOC values ranged from 0.67 to 1.00, indicating acceptable content validity.

For reliability, a pilot test with 30 respondents from the students' side, and 30 from the teachers/administrators' side was conducted. The instrument demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.70, a threshold commonly regarded as acceptable for research purposes (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). Following the pilot test, the questionnaire was revised for clarity,

including refinements to wording and re-organization of item arrangement to reduce ambiguity and improve respondent comprehension.

As a result of two pilot tests, the student-version questionnaire demonstrated strong internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.873$) based on 35 items from a 30-participant pilot sample. Likewise, the teacher/administrator version showed strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.862$) using the same 35 items.

The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSSPRO (an online statistical analysis platform), which was used to conduct descriptive statistics and related analyses reported in the Results section.

(2) Semi-structured Interview

A semi-structured interview form was used to gather additional qualitative information from three experts and five outstanding students, who were selected based on their top-five academic ranking in the previous semester. The interviews provided reflective thoughts on learning experiences and challenges in art education.

The qualitative interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis with manual coding. Interview recordings were transcribed and read several times to become familiar with the data. I then created initial codes by highlighting key statements and assigning short labels to their meanings. Similar codes were grouped into categories, and categories were merged into themes that addressed the research questions and aligned with the study framework. I kept a coding log and returned to the transcripts to check that each theme was supported by clear evidence (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.4 Data Collection

With permission from the principal and the head of academics, the researchers distributed the questionnaires in person on campus and collected responses from students, teachers, and administrators.

Administrative permission was then obtained from the principal and the head of academics at Baise City Youjiang Art Secondary Vocational and Technical School. The self-administered questionnaire was originally developed in Chinese and programmed on the online survey platform Questionnaire Star (www.wjx.com). The survey link was distributed to students, teachers, and administrators through the school's WeChat groups and direct WeChat messages. Before responding, all participants were informed of the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and reminded that participation was entirely voluntary.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three experts and five outstanding students via a Tencent Meeting room to obtain supplementary information on art curriculum management. Using the online meeting platform, the sessions were automatically recorded. The interviews were conducted in Chinese; after transcription and thematic analysis, the findings were translated into English.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the completed questionnaires were exported to an online package programme statistical software and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean (μ), and standard deviation (σ). For interpretation of the mean scores, the following criteria were applied: 4.51 -

5.00 represented the highest level of problems and needs; 3.51–4.50, a high level; 2.51–3.50, a moderate level; 1.51–2.50, a low level; and 1.00–1.50, the lowest level.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, data obtained from semi-structured interviews with three experts and five outstanding students were analyzed through content analysis to identify key themes and insights related to art curriculum management. Interview transcripts were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, moving from open coding to categories and themes to summarize students, teachers, and administrators' perspectives on art curriculum management. The integration of both data sources provided a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder concerns and informed the development of the curriculum management guidelines.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section reports findings aligned with the study objectives: (1) identifying key curriculum management problems, (2) clarifying their practical implications for curriculum planning, implementation, and support, and (3) summarizing priority improvement needs. Quantitative results describe perceived problem severity and needs, while qualitative evidence explains how these issues influence day-to-day curriculum management practices at the school.

4.1 The Results from the Survey

4.1 presents the descriptive results obtained from vocational students (N=240) and teachers and administrators (N=50) at Baise City Youjiang Art Secondary Vocational and Technical School. The findings encompass the demographic profiles of both respondent groups and their overall status regarding problems and needs in art curriculum management across four dimensions.

Table 1. Demographic Profiles of Students

Demographic Profiles		Total (N)=240	
		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	135	56.25
	Female	105	43.75
Total		240	100
Ages	Under 18 years old	223	92.92
	18-20	17	7.08
Total		240	100
Educational Level	First year	79	32.92
	Second year	86	35.83
	Third year	75	31.25
Total		240	100

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 240 student respondents, revealing a relatively balanced gender distribution with a slight male majority (56.25% male, 43.75% female), while the age distribution shows a strong concentration of adolescents under 18 years old (92.92%), with only a small proportion aged 18-20 (7.08%). In terms of educational level, students were fairly evenly distributed across the three years of study, with second-year students comprising the largest group at 35.83%, followed by first-year students at 32.92%, and third-year students at 31.25%.

Table 2. Demographic Profiles of Teachers and Administrators

Demographic Profiles		Total (N)=50	
		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	18	36
	Female	32	64
Total		50	100
Ages	21-25	7	14
	26-30	11	22
	31-35	15	30
	36-40	10	20
	41-45	5	10
	46 and above	2	4
Total		50	100
Education	Bachelor's Degree	40	80
	Master's Degree	6	12
	Doctoral Degree	4	8
Total		50	100
Years of working in the school	1-5	31	62
	6-10	7	14
	11-15	5	10
	16-20	4	8
	21-25	2	4
	26 and above	1	2
Total		50	100

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the 50 teachers and administrators, revealing a female-dominated workforce (64% female, 36% male) with a relatively young age distribution, predominantly

concentrated in the 31-35 age range (30%), followed by 26-30 years old (22%) and 36-40 years old (20%). Educational qualifications reveal that the majority hold Bachelor's degrees (80%), with smaller proportions holding Master's degrees (12%) and Doctoral degrees (8%). Regarding teaching experience, the sample is characterized by relatively new teachers and administrators, with 62% having worked at the school for 1-5 years, while only 14% have 6-10 years of experience, and very few (2%) have served for 26 years or more, indicating a predominantly early-career teaching staff.

Table 3. Students' Opinion on Current Problems of Art Curriculum

Items	N=240		Level of Problems
	μ	σ	
Art Course	3.04	0.65	Moderate
Skills for Education	3.25	0.83	Moderate
Instruction of Art	3.22	0.90	Moderate
Learning Resources	3.30	0.93	Moderate
Total	3.20	0.83	Moderate

Table 3 summarizes responses from 240 students and shows that perceived problems in art curriculum management were moderate across all domains (overall $\mu = 3.20$, $\sigma = 0.83$). Learning Resources recorded the highest mean problem level ($\mu = 3.30$, $\sigma = 0.93$), followed by Skills for Education ($\mu = 3.25$, $\sigma = 0.83$) and Instruction of Art ($\mu = 3.22$, $\sigma = 0.90$), whereas Art Course showed the lowest yet still moderate level ($\mu = 3.04$, $\sigma = 0.65$).

Table 4. Teachers' and Administrators' Opinion on Current Problems of Art Curriculum

Items	N=50		Level of Problems
	μ	σ	
Art Course	3.27	1.24	Moderate
Skills for Education	3.23	1.37	Moderate
Instruction of Art	3.15	1.33	Moderate
Learning Resources	3.36	1.30	Moderate
Total	3.25	1.31	Moderate

Table 4 presents responses from 50 teachers and administrators, indicating that perceived problems in art curriculum management were moderate overall ($\mu = 3.25$, $\sigma = 1.31$) and remained moderate across all domains. Learning Resources was rated as the most problematic area ($\mu = 3.36$, $\sigma = 1.30$), followed by Art Course ($\mu = 3.27$, $\sigma = 1.24$) and Skills for Education ($\mu = 3.23$, $\sigma = 1.37$), while Instruction of Art showed the lowest mean problem level ($\mu = 3.15$, $\sigma = 1.33$).

Table 5. Students' Opinion on Current Needs of Art Curriculum

Items	N=240		Level of Needs
	μ	σ	
Art course	3.64	0.93	High
Skills for art education	3.69	0.96	High
Instruction of art education	3.93	0.92	High
Learning resources	3.75	0.99	High
Total	3.75	0.95	High

Table 5 summarizes responses from 240 students and indicates that perceived needs to improve art curriculum management were high overall ($\mu = 3.75$, $\sigma = 0.95$) and remained consistently high across all domains. Instruction of art education showed the highest level of need ($\mu = 3.93$, $\sigma = 0.92$), followed by Learning resources ($\mu = 3.75$, $\sigma = 0.99$) and Skills for art education ($\mu = 3.69$, $\sigma = 0.96$), while Art course registered the lowest, though still high need level ($\mu = 3.64$, $\sigma = 0.93$).

Table 6. Teachers' and Administrators' Opinion on Current Needs of Art Curriculum

Items	N=50		Level of Needs
	μ	σ	
Art course	3.91	1.14	High
Skills for art education	3.64	1.19	High
Instruction of art education	3.88	1.20	High
Learning resources	4.14	1.25	High
Total	3.89	1.20	High

Table 6 reports responses from 50 teachers and administrators and shows that perceived needs for improving art curriculum management were high overall ($\mu = 3.89$, $\sigma = 1.20$) and remained high across all domains. Learning resources was rated as the highest priority need ($\mu = 4.14$, $\sigma = 1.25$), followed by Art course ($\mu = 3.91$, $\sigma = 1.14$) and Instruction of art education ($\mu = 3.88$, $\sigma = 1.20$), while Skills for art education showed the lowest—though still high—need level ($\mu = 3.64$, $\sigma = 1.19$).

Table 7. Comparative Analysis of Students vs. Teachers & Administrators on Current Problems

Item	Students (μ)	Teachers and Administrators (μ)	Δ (Teachers & Administrators - Student)	Key Observation
Learning Resources	3.3	3.36	+0.06	Both groups rank this as the highest problem area.
Art Course	3.04 (Lowest)	3.27	+0.23	Teachers and administrators perceive this as a significantly greater problem than students do.
Instruction of Art	3.22	3.15 (Lowest)	-0.07	Teachers and administrators rate this as the lowest problem, suggesting they feel more confident in their instruction compared to other areas.
Standard Deviation (σ)	0.83 (Overall)	1.31 (Overall)	N/A	Teachers' and administrators' perceptions show substantially greater variability than student perceptions, suggesting less consensus among teachers/administrators.

Table 7 compares mean ratings between students, teachers and administrators on current problems in art curriculum management and shows broad convergence with some notable gaps. Both groups identify Learning Resources as the most serious problem (students $\mu = 3.30$; teachers & administrators $\mu = 3.36$; $\Delta = +0.06$), indicating shared concern about resource constraints. However, teachers & administrators perceive Art Course issues as considerably more problematic as students do (students $\mu = 3.04$ vs. teachers & administrators $\mu = 3.27$; $\Delta = +0.23$), suggesting teachers & administrators see stronger structural or curricular challenges. In contrast, teachers & administrators rate Instruction of Art as the least problematic area (teachers & administrators $\mu = 3.15$ vs. students $\mu = 3.22$; $\Delta = -0.07$), implying comparatively higher confidence in instructional practices. Finally, the higher overall standard deviation among teachers & administrators ($\sigma = 1.31$ vs. students $\sigma = 0.83$) indicates greater variability and weaker consensus in teachers & administrators' perceptions.

Table 8. Comparative Analysis of Students vs. Teachers & Administrators on Current Needs

Item	Students (μ)	Teachers and Administrators (μ)	Δ (Teachers & Administrators - Student)	Key Observation
Learning Resources	3.75	4.14	+0.39	Teachers and administrators perceive the need for improvement in learning resources as the highest and most urgent, with the largest difference from student opinion.

Instruction of art education	3.93 (Highest)	3.88	-0.05	Students see this as the highest need, suggesting they most desire improvement in how they are being taught.
Art course	3.64 (Lowest)	3.91	+0.27	Teachers and administrators see a much higher need for change in the structure/content of the art course than students do.
Standard Deviation (σ)	0.95 (Overall)	1.20 (Overall)	N/A	Similar to the problems data, staff views show greater variation, reflecting less uniformity in their opinions on what is needed.

Table 8 compares students' and teachers/administrators' perceived needs for improving art curriculum management and reveals both shared priorities and meaningful divergences. Teachers & administrators rate Learning Resources as the most urgent need (teachers & administrators $\mu = 4.14$ vs. students $\mu = 3.75$; $\Delta = +0.39$), representing the largest gap and indicating stronger staff concern about resource enhancement. By contrast, students identify Instruction of art education as their highest need (students $\mu = 3.93$ vs. teachers & administrators $\mu = 3.88$; $\Delta = -0.05$), suggesting they prioritize improvements in teaching practices and learning experiences. Teachers & administrators also perceive a substantially greater need for changes to the Art course itself (staff $\mu = 3.91$ vs. students $\mu = 3.64$; $\Delta = +0.27$), implying staff see more room for reform in course design and content. Consistent with the problems comparison, teachers' and administrators' responses show higher overall variability ($\sigma = 1.20$ vs. 0.95), indicating less consensus among teachers/administrators regarding improvement priorities.

4.2 The Results of Interviews on Art Curriculum Management

Interviews with outstanding students showed that clear learning goals, self-discipline, time management, and the ability to connect art with their professional subjects were key factors in their success. Students mentioned challenges such as abstract theory, limited materials, and low confidence, but they overcame these through teacher support, increased practice, peer collaboration, and exposure to artistic examples. They agreed that art courses improved creativity, aesthetic awareness, communication, and teamwork, and suggested expanding practical projects, interdisciplinary activities, and access to resources.

Interviews with expert teachers highlighted the important role of art education in developing creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills for vocational students. Experts identified challenges, including limited interdisciplinary curriculum design, insufficient teacher capacity, outdated instructional content, and inadequate resources. They recommended enhancing teacher training, updating course content, strengthening industry cooperation, and improving learning resources. These findings helped clarify existing problems and needs in art curriculum management and guided the overall direction of curriculum improvement.

Table 9. Thematic Analysis of an Interview on Art Curriculum Management

Theme	Codes	Key Findings	Quote
1 Strategic Self-Management	Goal setting, Time blocking, Self-discipline, and Flexibility.	Students succeed by dividing daily schedules into "blocks", (e.g., morning for skills, afternoon for art).	<i>"I divide my day into blocks. I do skills in the morning and art in the afternoon."</i> (Student A)
2 Interdisciplinary Synergy	Skill integration, Creative problem-solving, and Narrative expression.	High achievers don't see art and professional courses as separate; they use art to enhance professional outputs (e.g., using color theory in digital media).	<i>"Art is not separate from my major. Color theory improves my digital work."</i> (Student B)
3 Psychological & Creative Resilience	Creative bottlenecks, Confidence building, and Persistence.	Challenges include "abstract theory" and "creative blocks." Overcoming these requires peer feedback and exposure to external exhibitions.	<i>"The theory can feel abstract, and I get creative blocks. Peer feedback helps me continue."</i> (Student C)
4 Career & Academic Edge	Aesthetic literacy, Originality, and Competitive advantage.	Experts and students agree that art training makes professional work more "attractive" and "innovative," aiding in internships and employment.	<i>"Art training makes students' work more attractive and innovative. This helps in internships."</i> (Expert A)
5 Institutional Support & Resources	Resource scarcity, Faculty collaboration, and Facility optimization.	Experts highlight "curriculum silos" and "insufficient teacher training" as major barriers to integration.	<i>"Curriculum silos and insufficient teacher training are key barriers to integration."</i> (Expert B)
6 Pedagogical Innovation	Visual note-taking, Micro-learning, and Project-driven assessment.	Students utilize "visual notes" and "daily 15-minute practices" to maintain proficiency without burnout.	<i>"I use visual notes and do fifteen minutes of practice every day. It prevents burnout."</i> (Student D)

Table 9 presents a strong consensus between high-achieving students, teachers, and administrators. The management of vocational art curricula must move away from isolated subjects toward an interdisciplinary ecosystem. While students focus on personal "micro-strategies" like time-blocking and visual memory, experts emphasize the need for "macro-structural" changes, such as industry-aligned projects and shared training bases, to ensure that artistic literacy translates directly into career competitiveness.

5. DISCUSSION

In this Discussion, the quantitative rankings and mean scores (Tables 3-6) are interpreted alongside interview themes to explain why the key problems exist, how they affect curriculum effectiveness and daily implementation, and what actionable responses are feasible at the school level. Differences in perceptions between stakeholder groups are also addressed using Table 7 to support evidence-based curriculum

decision-making.

5.1 Learning Resources as the Highest-Ranked Constraint

Quantitative results indicate that Learning Resources is perceived as the most severe problem by both groups, with the highest mean score for students ($\mu = 3.30$) and teachers/administrators ($\mu = 3.36$) (Table 3). This ranking suggests that learning resources are a “binding constraint” on curriculum effectiveness: even when course content is appropriate, insufficient resources limit hands-on practice, reduce task authenticity, and produce uneven learning opportunities across classes. As a result, student learning outcomes may become inconsistent because performance depends on whether adequate materials, tools, space, or reference examples are available during instruction rather than on the intended curriculum design (Greer et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2024; Wirtati et al., 2025).

Importantly, resource shortages should not be treated only as an instructional issue; they are closely tied to curriculum management processes. Several root causes are plausible in this context, including budget constraints, insufficient external support, and administrative/procurement issues (e.g., delayed purchasing cycles, unclear responsibility for resource planning, or weak prioritization across modules). Interview findings can be used to strengthen this explanation by showing how resource limitations appear in practice—for example, teachers may rely on personal materials, simplify tasks, or reduce studio/practical time when equipment is unavailable, which directly widens the gap between intended curriculum objectives and actual classroom implementation (Wirtati et al., 2025).

Based on these results, curriculum managers can respond through targeted, practical steps: (1) establish a minimum resource standard for each module (essential materials/tools per learning outcome), (2) strengthen resource planning and accountability (annual resource audit, named responsibility, and transparent procurement timeline), (3) develop local partnerships with enterprises, studios, and community organizations to share practice sites or equipment, and (4) expand digital and low-cost resource substitutes (demonstration videos, exemplar portfolios, rubric banks, and virtual galleries) to reduce reliance on limited physical resources while maintaining learning continuity (Wang, 2024; Zhang, 2024).

5.2 Art Course Problems

Survey results also identify significant problems related to the Art Course (Tables 3–6). These concerns suggest that curriculum coherence may be weakened when course objectives, content sequence, and assessment tasks do not form a clear progression. Such problems often stem from gaps in curriculum management, including limited alignment between intended competencies and actual teaching tasks, insufficient curriculum mapping, or weak routine review mechanisms. This pattern is consistent with prior work highlighting theory–practice gaps and weak alignment when learning outcomes are not connected to structured project pathways and industry collaboration (Zhang, 2024), as well as research emphasizing the importance of clear vertical sequencing from basic skills to integrated, career-relevant projects (Yao, 2025). When the Art Course structure lacks coherence, teachers may interpret content differently across classes, and students may experience repeated or fragmented content rather than cumulative skill development.

Interview data can be used to provide concrete illustrations of this gap. For example, if students report that course content does not effectively support skill growth or career preparation, and teachers report difficulty coordinating content across modules, these insights together indicate that curriculum planning and implementation monitoring require strengthening. The gap between intended curriculum and actual

delivery becomes visible when students do not clearly understand learning expectations, when assignments are not aligned to stated outcomes, or when assessment criteria are inconsistent across instructors.

One good solution is to have a curriculum mapping process that links (1) learning outcomes → (2) weekly topics/tasks → (3) assessment rubrics → (4) required resources. Moreover, the school may organize a curriculum review meeting each semester, using information from surveys and interviews as input to first revise the modules with the highest problem ratings. Hence, this way changes will be based on data and they'll be focused on improving curriculum coherence (Velayutham, 2024).

5.3 Theory – Practice Gap

Problems related to Skills for Education (Tables 3–6) indicate a persistent theory–practice gap: students may understand concepts but have limited opportunities to translate them into observable performance. From a curriculum management perspective, this gap often reflects insufficient integration between competency requirements and daily learning tasks, limited practice intensity, or assessments that emphasize knowledge recall over applied performance. When “skills” are not translated into routine practice tasks and measurable performance standards, curriculum implementation becomes less effective, and students may graduate without stable competence in core professional or artistic skills. Prior studies suggest that when art programs neglect transferable skills and structured learning designs, students struggle to connect art learning with broader educational development goals (Greer et al., 2023). Conversely, transversal skills can be strengthened when tasks are designed with explicit outcomes and structured reflection (Kyomugisha, 2024; Sulaieva & Batiievska, 2023).

Interview feedback will help clarify the mechanism underlying the problem by indicating where the practice is breaking down (e.g., no practice conditions, unclear performance criteria, or insufficient feedback cycles). For example, when there is very limited access to the learning resources, it is quite possible that skills training can only be demonstrated or explained rather than be followed by guided practice, this drastically diminishes the learning outcomes and confidence. Actionable strategies. A feasible improvement is to redesign each module around competency-based tasks, with clear performance criteria and staged practice. Curriculum management can support this by requiring each module to include (1) a minimum number of practical tasks, (2) formative assessment checkpoints, and (3) a rubric aligned with the intended skill outcomes. This makes skills development measurable, monitorable, and more consistent across instructors.

5.4 Instruction of Art: moving from teacher-centered delivery to implementable active learning

The study reveals that instruction remains predominantly lecture- and teacher-centered (Tables 3-6). A similar pattern of teacher-dominated approaches that reduce student autonomy and engagement has been reported, even when modern tools and projects are involved (Chen & Che Din, 2024; Yu et al., 2024). Nevertheless, beyond merely pointing out this issue, the Discussion section should analyze the reasons for it and suggest ways to transition to more interactive practices. Teacher-centered instruction may continue for a variety of reasons, such as: lack of resources, which limits hands-on activities, inadequately trained teachers in active learning methodologies, the pressure of time to cover the syllabus, or the absence of institutional support (such as lesson templates, assessment tools, and well-managed class structures) that is necessary for the implementation of student-centered strategies.

A shift toward student-centered, project-based, or studio-based learning should be supported by concrete implementation steps. For example, curriculum management can require that each module converts a planned proportion of instructional time into task-based learning, including critique sessions, studio practice, and project milestones) and provides the support that makes this feasible rather than aspirational (Kyomugisha, 2024).

Practical ways to make this transition workable include: (1) converting a defined portion of lecture time into studio/project tasks aligned with learning outcomes, (2) providing short, targeted teacher development workshops on project-based learning, critique routines, and formative feedback, (3) using portfolio-based assessment with rubric-based evaluation and periodic checkpoints, and (4) creating a shared repository of model lesson plans, project templates, and assessment rubrics so that teachers have ready-to-use tools to implement interactive instruction consistently (Wang, 2024; wang et al., 2025).

5.5 Why Rank of Problems Differ

Table 7 suggests that students and teachers/administrators do not always prioritize curriculum problems in the same way. This discrepancy is meaningful for curriculum management because it reflects differences in daily experience and professional responsibility. Students often rank Learning Resources as more severe because resource shortages are immediately felt in task completion, practice quality, and confidence during learning activities. In contrast, teachers/administrators may perceive Art Course issues as more urgent because they are responsible for curriculum design, sequencing, assessment standards, and overall program coherence. Therefore, different rankings are not contradictions; rather, they indicate that curriculum improvement must balance “visible implementation barriers” (resources that shape daily learning) with “structural curriculum issues” (course design and coherence).

A data-driven improvement plan should combine both perspectives: prioritize the highest-ranked constraints affecting implementation (Learning Resources) while simultaneously improving curriculum structure and coherence (Art Course mapping and outcome alignment). This dual strategy reduces the risk of revising curriculum documents without improving classroom feasibility, or of investing in resources without clarifying which competencies and tasks those resources should support.

5.6 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence

The mixed-method design is most useful when quantitative and qualitative evidence are synthesized. Survey data (Tables 3–6) identify which problems are most severe and how stakeholder groups rank them, while interviews explain the underlying causes and operational consequences, such as how resource constraints lead to simplified tasks, why teacher-centered instruction persists, and what forms of support are feasible. Synthesizing both sources indicates that the curriculum management challenges are not isolated classroom problems but system-level constraints involving planning, implementation support, resource allocation, teacher capacity development, and monitoring mechanisms. This integration also strengthens the practical value of the findings by moving from problem description to cause explanation and implementable responses.

The overall findings indicate that enhancing curriculum management entails concerted efforts in four areas: (1) resource governance: standards, planning, partnerships, and digital supplements (Wang, 2024; Zhang, 2024; Wirtati et al., 2025), (2) curriculum coherence: mapping learning outcomes to tasks and assessment (Zhang, 2024; Yao, 2025), (3) instructional capacity support: practical active learning tools and teacher training (Chen & Che Din, 2024; Yu et al., 2024; Kyomugisha, 2024), and (4) monitoring and

feedback mechanisms: regular reviews based on stakeholder input. For reforms that require sequencing and budgeting considerations, it is advisable to align changes with institutional constraints and relevant standards (Chen et al., 2025). These implications derive from the quantitative rankings and are further supported by interview explanations; thus, they are useful for curriculum developers, school heads, and teachers seeking feasible ways of improvement.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

The questionnaire findings show that the overall level of curriculum management problems was moderate for both groups, including students and teachers/administrators. Among the four domains, Learning Resources was rated as the most serious problem by both groups. In contrast, the overall level of improvement needed was high. Students reported the strongest need in Instruction of Art Education, while teachers/administrators reported the strongest need in Learning Resources. Comparative data from students, teachers, and administrators highlighted a significant demand for modernized management structures.

Based on these findings, curriculum management improvement should prioritize four evidence-based actions: (1) strengthen resource allocation and governance through module-level minimum resource standards, transparent procurement planning, partnerships with local enterprises/studios, and expanded digital learning resources; (2) improve curriculum coherence through curriculum mapping that aligns outcomes, tasks, assessment rubrics, and required resources; (3) support instructional improvement by providing implementable student-centered teaching tools (project templates, critique routines, and portfolio rubrics) and targeted teacher development; and (4) establish routine monitoring and feedback mechanisms that use stakeholder evidence and performance data to guide iterative curriculum updates.

6.2 Recommendations

The synthesis of interview data led to several critical implications for the future of vocational art curriculum management:

(1) School administrators should reduce curriculum silos by establishing a shared plan across arts and professional subjects, so that teachers deliver connected content in a consistent sequence.

(2) Curriculum coordinators should require integrated learning outputs that combine art training with vocational production, so that students routinely apply artistic principles to improve the quality of their professional work.

(3) Art and vocational teachers should replace overly abstract delivery with guided practice and clear performance tasks, so students can understand theory through doing and reduce learning barriers.

(4) Teachers should build regular peer-feedback routines in class, so students receive timely critique and can move through creative blocks with structured support.

(5) Teachers should coach students to manage their learning with time blocks and short daily practice so they maintain proficiency without burnout.

(6) Schools should provide scheduled exposure to external exhibitions and professional works so that students broaden their references, strengthen their motivation, and improve their creative output.

(7) School administrators should strengthen teacher training focused on integrated teaching, so teachers can design cross-subject tasks and guide students effectively. Internship coordinators and teachers should emphasize high-quality, attractive, and innovative work in student outputs, so that integrated

learning better supports internship performance and employment readiness.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

This study has several limitations. First, survey responses may be affected by social desirability bias, response bias, and recall bias, which could lead participants to overreport positive views or underreport problems, thereby influencing the reported mean scores. Second, the study is school-based and focuses on one secondary vocational school in Baise City, so the findings reflect a specific institutional and regional context and may not be fully generalizable to other vocational schools or regions. Third, the sample of teachers and administrators was relatively small compared with the student sample, which may limit the stability of group comparisons and help explain the greater variability in staff responses. Finally, although qualitative interviews were used to support interpretation, the study did not aim to achieve broad representativeness of all stakeholder views beyond this case.

Future studies could extend this work in several ways. First, researchers can conduct multi-site replication by applying the same framework in vocational schools with different sizes, majors, and resource conditions to test transferability and refine the guidelines. Second, implementation and evaluation studies are needed to examine how the proposed guidelines are adopted in practice, including barriers, facilitators, and implementation fidelity. Third, longitudinal or pre-post designs can assess the long-term effects of guideline implementation on outcomes such as teaching practices, student engagement, skill development, and resource use. Fourth, future research may use comparative stakeholder analysis (students vs. teachers vs. administrators) to explore why perceptions differ and how these differences shape curriculum decisions. Finally, more focused studies can evaluate the effectiveness of specific interventions within each domain (e.g., digital resource upgrades, teacher capacity-building programs, or diversified assessment models) to identify which changes produce the greatest improvements.

Acknowledgments: This article is derived from the author's Independent Study completed at Dhonburi Rajabhat University, Thailand, as part of the requirements for the Master of Education degree. The author gratefully acknowledges the guidance and support of the academic advisor and thesis committee, whose constructive feedback and supervision were essential to the completion of this study. Appreciation is also extended to the participating school and all respondents for their valuable cooperation.

Author contributions: Jiashi Wei was responsible for all parts of this study, including data collection, analysis, and drafting and revising the manuscript. Aree Ussavanuphap, corresponding author, led the study's conceptualization, provided academic guidance, oversaw critical proofreading, helped revise the manuscript, and handled all correspondence with the journal.

Ethical Statement: All participants were fully informed of the study's objectives and voluntarily provided their consent before any data collection began. Privacy was strictly maintained; all shared insights and interview data were treated with confidentiality and used exclusively for academic purposes. Furthermore,

formal permission to conduct this study and engage with the student body was officially granted by the administration of Baise City Youjiang Art Secondary Vocational and Technical School.

Consent to Participate: Before data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, clearly explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Competing Interests: The author declares that this work has no competing interests.

Grant/Funding information: The author declared that no grants supported this work.

Data Availability Statement: The datasets and research materials used in this study are not publicly available due to institutional requirements and participant confidentiality, but they are available from the authors on reasonable request. All cited documents and secondary sources are listed in the reference section of the manuscript.

Declaration Statement of Generative AI: Generative AI tools were not utilized in the conceptualization, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. Grammarly was employed exclusively for editing, grammar, and style.

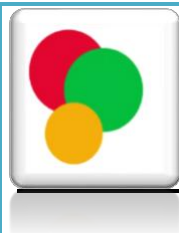
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Employment Guidance to Improve Job Placement for Students of Guangdong Electronic

Commercial Technician College

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Article Information

ABSTRACT

Article Type: Research Article

Dates:

Received: 09 Jan 2026

Revised: 20 Feb 2026

Accepted: 27 Feb 2026

Available online: 11 March 2026

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In Guangdong province, China, manufacturing economy is fast-evolving, thus, students from vocational Mechatronics fields need employment guidance that matches job requirements in real life and supports from school to work. However, guidance in many technical colleges remains fragmented and insufficient. This mixed-method study investigated employment guidance problems and needs among Mechatronics students at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires from 296 students by stratified random sampling and 65 teachers. Instrument quality was confirmed by expert review (IOC) and reliability testing. Descriptive statistics were used. Qualitative data came from semi-structured interviews with three vocational experts and five outstanding students, analyzed via content analysis. Students rated overall employment guidance problems as high, especially content-job mismatch. Teachers also perceived high-level problems, with teacher competence as the most salient issue. Students reported high guidance needs overall, prioritizing job-finding skills training and internship/practical opportunities. Interview results reinforced concerns about outdated guidance, weak continuity across years, limited personalization, and insufficient internship quality. In conclusion, the study proposes an integrated employment guidance system including updated industry-aligned content, skills training, strengthened school-enterprise cooperation, and capacity building for guidance teachers.

Keywords: Employment Guidance, Job Placement, Technical Disciplines, Vocational Education, Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College



1. INTRODUCTION

Vocational and technical education has been recognized as a key driver for developing skilled human capital aligned with labor market needs in the context of industrial upgrading and transformation. For more

than a decade, there have been global policies targeting vocational development and youth employment. At the global level, the UN 2030 Agenda explicitly calls for substantially increasing the number of youth and adults with relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, to support employment, decent work, and entrepreneurship (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). In the same direction, UNESCO's TVET Strategy 2022–2029 emphasizes transforming TVET to strengthen skills for employment and to support digital and green transitions (UNESCO, 2022). At the national level, China has promoted vocational education reform through the State Council's National Vocational Education Reform Implementation Plan and the updated governance framework under the revised Vocational Education Law (2022), both of which stress stronger industry–education integration and the cultivation of high-quality technical talent (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2019; National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 2022). Internationally, the EU's Council Recommendation on VET (2020) calls for more agile and labor-market-responsive VET systems, highlighting work-based learning and quality assurance (Council of the European Union, 2020), while the United States' Perkins V reauthorization strengthens career and technical education by emphasizing employability and alignment with workforce needs (U.S. Congress, 2018). Employers now place greater emphasis on comprehensive employability, including technical competence, job adaptability, and practical problem-solving skills. Consequently, improving the employability of students in technical disciplines has become a critical issue for vocational institutions, and employment guidance is regarded as an essential mechanism for facilitating effective school-to-work transitions (Zhou & Chen, 2023). In this study, employability is a multidimensional capability that integrates disciplinary skills, transferable competencies, and the ability to secure and sustain employment across changing contexts. Employment guidance, therefore, should be more than job placement support; it serves as a structured intervention that helps students set realistic career goals, interpret labor market signals, and develop evidence-based job search strategies.

At the same time, students' expectations regarding employment guidance have continued to increase. Empirical research has shown that vocational students, especially those in technical disciplines, express strong needs for personalized employment guidance, practical job-finding skills training, and sufficient internship and practical opportunities to enhance employability and career confidence (Mo et al., 2024). However, employment guidance systems in many vocational institutions remain fragmented, lacking systematic integration with labor market information and school–enterprise cooperation mechanisms (Azmi et al., 2018). From a career-development perspective, effective guidance should support students' career adaptability and decision-making by linking self-knowledge (interests, strengths, constraints) with occupational information and experiential learning opportunities (Savickas, 2005). In addition, Social Cognitive Career Theory suggests that job-search behavior and persistence are shaped by self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and contextual supports—factors that can be strengthened through targeted guidance and work-based learning (Lent et al., 1994).

Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College is a representative vocational institution specializing in skills-based, application-oriented education, particularly in Mechatronics. Although students receive systematic technical training, recent studies indicate that vocational students often face challenges when entering the labor market, such as mismatches between employment guidance content and actual job requirements, incomplete employment guidance systems, and insufficient professional competence among employment guidance teachers (Asunda, 2014). These problems may weaken students' job readiness and limit the effectiveness of employment guidance in improving job placement outcomes. For Mechatronics, where occupational roles frequently require cross-domain integration, misalignment between guidance

content and workplace competency requirements can further increase transition risk and reduce perceived fit between graduates and job positions (Holland, 1997).

Therefore, this study focuses on employment guidance for Mechatronics students at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College. The research aims to improve job placement outcomes and provide practical implications for vocational institutions operating in similar educational contexts through examining current problems in employment guidance and exploring students' employment guidance needs, thus developing an employment guidance system suited to vocational students in technical disciplines. The study would contribute to clarifying where guidance systems break down (including content, process, staffing, and linkage with enterprises); to map students' priority needs into actionable program components; and to translate career-development theories into a context-specific but transferable guidance system design logic for technical vocational programs.

1.1 Research Objectives

(1) To study the problems in employment guidance for Mechatronics students at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College.

(2) To explore the needs of students regarding employment guidance at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College.

(3) To develop an employment guidance for improving job placement in technical disciplines at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the relevant literature on employment guidance and job placement in vocational and technical education. The review focuses on key concepts, theoretical perspectives, and empirical studies that are closely aligned with the objectives of this research. By synthesizing previous studies on employment guidance systems, students' employment guidance needs, and job placement practices in technical disciplines, this chapter establishes a theoretical and empirical foundation for the present study and supports the development of an appropriate employment guidance system for Mechatronics students at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College. To move beyond definition-based review, this section links studies through an explanatory chain: employment guidance conditions shape employability-related mechanisms, which in turn influence job-search behavior and job placement outcomes.

2.1 Employment guidance in technical VET

Employment guidance is a systematic, targeted approach to providing career-related support for vocational students, emphasizing the alignment of guidance content with labor market demand through customized interventions such as industry-linked training and career readiness development (Zhou & Chen, 2023). Studies indicate that traditional employment services in technical colleges often focus on short-term placement outcomes and neglect long-term career planning, whereas strategic employment guidance integrates labor market information, student characteristics, and occupational pathways to enhance decision-making and employability (Su, Horadal, & Punctatree, 2024). Empirical evidence further suggests that institution-specific initiatives, such as course-to-occupation mapping and personalized counseling, can significantly improve job placement outcomes (Dotong, 2024). In this study, employment guidance is defined as a forward-looking support model tailored to vocational and technical institutions, aimed at aligning technical competencies with labor market needs while strengthening students' career readiness

and long-term adaptability. Mechanism focus–guidance is expected to influence job placement by strengthening job-search readiness, confidence, and adaptive career behaviors rather than by “placement” alone (Lent et al., 1994; Savickas, 2005).

2.2 Employment Problems

Employment problems in vocational and technical education refer to structural, procedural, and personnel-related barriers that hinder students’ smooth transition from school to employment. Existing studies indicate that these problems are closely associated with misaligned employment guidance content, incomplete guidance systems, and insufficient competence of employment guidance teachers (Loyalka et al., 2016). In this study, employment problems are conceptualized into three key dimensions. These constraints are treated as “negative conditions” that reduce the effectiveness of guidance and weaken employability formation, which helps explain why technically trained students may still experience poor job placement outcomes.

(1) Guidance content ≠ job requirements

The disconnect between employment guidance content and job requirements refers to the mismatch between the guidance provided by vocational institutions and the competencies employers actually demand. Research indicates that employment guidance in many vocational colleges relies on outdated or overly theoretical content and fails to reflect the dynamic needs of the labor market, particularly in technical fields such as Mechatronics (Azmi et al., 2018). This misalignment weakens students’ job readiness and reduces their competitiveness in the labor market. This “fit” problem echoes the person–environment matching logic in vocational psychology, where mismatch undermines perceived fit and the quality of employment decisions (Holland, 1997).

(2) An incomplete employment guidance system

An incomplete employment guidance system refers to fragmented, underdeveloped institutional arrangements lacking standardized procedures, clear responsibilities, and long-term strategic planning. Studies show that employment guidance in vocational institutions is often dispersed across departments, overly dependent on individual teachers, and insufficiently supported by systematic coordination mechanisms, resulting in inconsistent and reactive career services (Azmi et al., 2018). When the system is fragmented, guidance becomes episodic rather than developmental, reducing sustained skill-building and long-term career-planning support.

(3) Insufficient competence of guidance teachers

Insufficient competence of employment guidance teachers refers to limitations in professional training, industry experience, and access to up-to-date labor market information among those responsible for providing career support. Research suggests that many guidance teachers come from general academic backgrounds and lack practical exposure to industry practices, which reduces the effectiveness of employment guidance in preparing students for real-world job demands (Acomi et al., 2023). From a mechanism viewpoint, limited teacher capacity may weaken students’ career self-efficacy and outcome expectations—two key predictors of job-search persistence and career choices (Lent et al., 1994).

2.3 Employment Needs

Concept of Employment Needs in Vocational and Technical Education refers to the essential conditions and support mechanisms required to help students successfully transition from school to employment.

Existing studies indicate that vocational students, particularly those in technical disciplines such as Mechatronics, increasingly demand targeted support that goes beyond generic employment guidance, including individualized career assistance, practical job-finding skills training, and access to real-world work experience (Raudasoja et al., 2024). In this study, employment needs are conceptualized into three core dimensions. These “needs” are treated as design requirements for effective guidance and can be interpreted as supports that strengthen career adaptability and employability development (Savickas, 2005).

(1) Student-centered guidance

Personalized employment guidance is individualized, student-centered career support that considers learners’ technical backgrounds, personal interests, and career goals. Research suggests that one-size-fits-all guidance models are ineffective for vocational students, whereas tailored counseling enhances career awareness, decision-making ability, and job-matching outcomes (Huang & Liu, 2022). Such guidance is particularly important for Mechatronics students, whose career pathways require precise alignment between skills and labor market demands. This aligns with career construction perspectives emphasizing individual meaning-making and adaptive planning in career development (Savickas, 2005).

(2) Practical job-finding training

Practical job-finding skills training focuses on equipping students with essential competencies, including resume writing, interview performance, job application strategies, and professional communication. Studies indicate that many vocational students lack systematic training in these areas, which significantly undermines employability despite strong technical skills (Su, Horadal, & Punctatree, 2024; Xu, 2018). Integrating structured job-search skills training into employment guidance is therefore critical for improving job readiness. In SCCT terms, such training can increase self-efficacy for job-search tasks and strengthen action-oriented behaviors that predict employment outcomes (Lent et al., 1994).

(3) Internship and practical opportunities

Internships and practical opportunities are structured work-based learning experiences that allow students to apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings. Research consistently shows that participation in internships enhances technical competence, career confidence, adaptability, and employment outcomes by strengthening school–industry connections (Min-En et al., 2024; Asunda, 2014). For Mechatronics students, such opportunities play a key role in bridging the gap between technical training and workplace requirements. This supports the argument that “employability” is co-produced by education and workplace exposure, making school–enterprise cooperation a key pathway for improving job placement.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

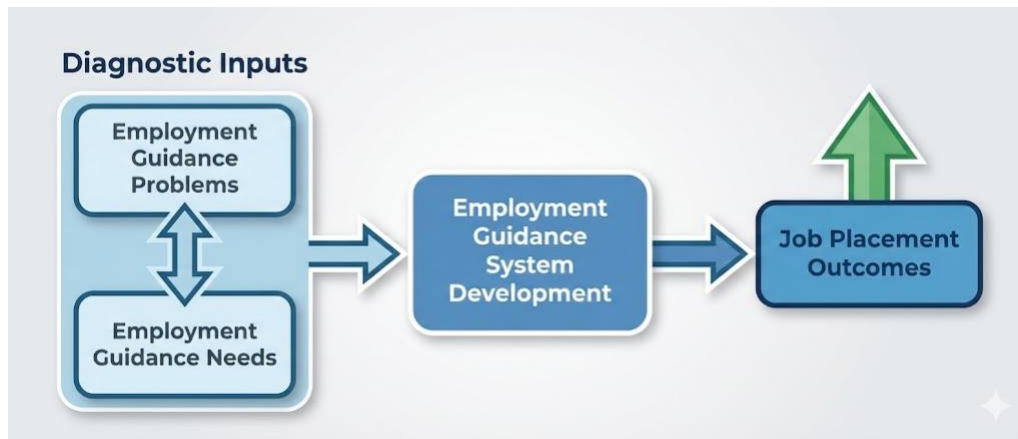


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: (Compiled by the author, 2025)

This study employs a needs- and problems-driven design model to conceptualize an effective transition strategy for Mechatronics students. The framework positions Employment Guidance Problems and Employment Guidance Needs as diagnostic inputs that undergo gap analysis and prioritization. This diagnostic data directly informs the construction of an Integrated Employment Guidance System—characterized by systematic support, skill-building, and school-enterprise synergy—which serves as the primary intervention to drive the final outcome: Improved Job Placement Outcomes, measured by enhanced employability and better alignment between students’ skills and technical labor market demands.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine employment guidance for Mechatronics students at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College. This study adopted a convergent mixed-methods design in which quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews were conducted concurrently, with equal emphasis on both strands. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires to investigate employment guidance problems and needs, while qualitative data were obtained from semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into guidance practices and challenges. The integration of both methods enabled data triangulation, enhanced the validity of the findings, and supported the development of an appropriate employment guidance system for vocational students in technical disciplines. Integration occurred at the interpretation stage by comparing and merging quantitative patterns with qualitative themes to explain convergences and divergences.

3.2 Population and Sample

The study population comprised students and teachers in the Department of Mechanical and Electronic Engineering at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College. It included 1,135 full-time students enrolled in technical programs and 65 teachers involved in technical instruction and employment guidance.

The student sample consisted of 296 students selected through stratified random sampling by academic year, while all 65 teachers were included via a census. The student sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error (Yamane, 1967).

3.3 Research Instruments

(1) Questionnaires

The quantitative research instrument was a structured questionnaire consisting of three parts: general information, employment guidance problems, and employment guidance needs. Separate versions were developed for students and teachers, each containing 36 items (18 items on employment guidance problems and 18 items on employment guidance needs). Content validity was examined by three experts using the Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC), with values ranging from 0.67 to 1.00. Reliability was tested using the formal research samples, yielding Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of 0.873 for the student questionnaire (N = 296) and 0.862 for the teacher questionnaire (N = 65), indicating strong internal consistency. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). Mean scores were interpreted using the following cutoffs: 1.00–1.80 = very low; 1.81–2.60 = low; 2.61–3.40 = moderate; 3.41–4.20 = high; and 4.21–5.00 = very high.

(2) Semi-structured Interviews

The qualitative research instrument consisted of semi-structured interviews designed to gain an in-depth understanding of employment guidance practices, problems, and needs. The interviews were conducted with three experts in vocational education and employment guidance and five outstanding students. Outstanding students were selected based on documented internship/placement performance and willingness to participate, and an interview guide was used to ensure consistency across participants. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, was audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. Saturation was considered reached when no new themes emerged in the final interviews. Qualitative data were used to complement and explain the quantitative results, providing deeper insights to support the development of an appropriate employment guidance system. To reduce selection bias, the interview sample was broadened to include average and struggling students, internship participants, and employment-guidance staff, in addition to experts. The same semi-structured protocol was applied across groups, with all interviews recorded, transcribed, and coded using a consistent procedure.

3.4 Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to students and teachers in the Department of Mechanical and Electronic Engineering at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College. A total of 296 student questionnaires and 65 teacher questionnaires were collected and screened, and only complete and valid responses were used for analysis. Only fully completed questionnaires were retained for analysis (no imputation was applied), and the final dataset contained no missing values in the screened sample. Data collection was conducted from Month–Month Year; all distributed questionnaires were tracked to calculate the response rate. In addition, qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with three experts in vocational education and five outstanding students. All data were collected during the designated research period with participants' consent.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to examine employment guidance problems and needs. Reliability analysis

using Cronbach's alpha was conducted to confirm internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951). Qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews were analyzed using content analysis to identify key themes and patterns. Qualitative content analysis was selected because it provides a systematic and transparent procedure for condensing a relatively small, focused set of interview transcripts into meaning units, codes, and higher-order categories/themes, which is appropriate when the analytic aim is to describe recurring patterns and interpret participants' meanings rather than to produce statistically generalizable claims (Krippendorff, 2018; Schreier, 2012). Given the limited number of interviews and the purposeful selection of information-rich participants, the analysis followed an information-power rationale: when interview data are closely aligned with a specific study aim and collected from knowledgeable informants, a smaller dataset can still yield sufficient analytic insight, supporting the use of a concise content-analytic approach in this study (Malterud et al., 2016). The integration of quantitative and qualitative results supported comprehensive interpretation and the development of an employment guidance system.

4. RESULTS

4.1 General Information

This section presents the descriptive research results obtained from vocational students (N = 296) and teachers (N = 65) at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College. The findings are organized into three main sections: (1) general information about the respondents, (2) problems related to job placement from the perspectives of students and teachers, and (3) job placement needs of students and teachers. The results cover demographic characteristics and the overall status of problems and needs in employment guidance across multiple dimensions, providing an empirical foundation for developing an employment guidance system.

Table 1. General Information of Students

Item		N=296	
		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	188	63.51
	Female	108	36.49
	Total	296	100.00
Ages	17-20	214	72.30
	21-24	82	27.70
	Total	296	100.00
Year of Study	First Year	78	26.36
	Second Year	74	25.00
	Third Year	72	24.32
	Fourth Year	72	24.32
	Total	296	100.00

Table 1 presents the students' demographic characteristics (N = 296). Male students accounted for 63.51% (N = 188) and female students 36.49% (N = 108). Most students were aged 17–20 (72.30%, N = 214), while 27.70% were aged 21–24 (N = 82). By year of study, the sample was relatively balanced: first-year students comprised 26.36% (N = 78), second-year students 25.00% (N = 74), third-year students 24.32% (N = 72), and fourth-year students 24.32% (N = 72).

Table 2. General Information of Teachers

Item		N=65	
		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	35	53.85
	Female	30	46.15
	Total	65	100.00
Ages	26-30	12	18.46
	31-40	27	41.54
	41-50	18	27.69
	51-60	8	12.31
	Total	65	100.00
Years of Teaching Experience	1–5 years	14	21.54
	6–10 years	22	33.85
	11–15 years	17	26.15
	16 years and above	12	18.46
	Total	65	100.00
Type of Teacher	Professional teacher in technical subjects	40	61.54
	Public course instructor for career and employment guidance	25	38.46
	Total	65	100.00

Table 2 summarizes the teachers' background characteristics (N = 65). Male teachers accounted for 53.85% (N = 35), and female teachers 46.15% (N = 30). Most teachers were aged 31–40 (41.54%), followed by 41–50 (27.69%), 26–30 (18.46%), and 51–60 (12.31%). Teaching experience was mainly 6–10 years (33.85%) and 11–15 years (26.15%), with 21.54% having 1–5 years and 18.46% having 16 years or more. In terms of role, 61.54% were professional teachers in technical subjects (N = 40), while 38.46% were public course instructors for career and employment guidance (N = 25).

Table 3. The Problems of Job Placement for Students

Items	N=296		Level of Needs
	μ	σ	
Disconnect between employment guidance content and job requirements	3.96	0.85	High
Incomplete employment guidance system	3.86	0.87	High

Insufficient competence of employment guidance teachers	3.84	0.89	High
Total	3.89	0.87	High

Table 3 shows that students (N = 296) perceived job placement–related problems at a high overall level (M = 3.89, SD = 0.87). The most severe issue was the disconnect between employment guidance content and job requirements (M = 3.96, SD = 0.85), followed by an incomplete employment guidance system (M = 3.86, SD = 0.87) and insufficient competence of employment guidance teachers (M = 3.84, SD = 0.89); all three dimensions were rated high.

Table 4. The Problems of Job Placement for Teachers

Items	N=65		Level of Needs
	μ	σ	
Disconnect between employment guidance content and job requirements	3.70	0.79	High
Incomplete employment guidance system	3.68	0.78	High
Insufficient competence of employment guidance teachers	3.74	0.79	High
Total	3.71	0.79	High

Table 4 indicates that teachers (N = 65) rated job placement–related problems at a high overall level (M = 3.71, SD = 0.79). The highest-rated issue was insufficient competence of employment guidance teachers (M = 3.74, SD = 0.79), followed by the disconnect between employment guidance content and job requirements (M = 3.70, SD = 0.79) and an incomplete employment guidance system (M = 3.68, SD = 0.78); all dimensions were assessed as high.

Table 5. The Needs of Job Placement for Students

Items	N=296		Level of Needs
	μ	σ	
Disconnect between employment guidance content and job requirements	3.67	0.92	High
Practical job-finding skills training	3.80	0.90	High
Internship and practical opportunities	3.77	0.90	High
Total	3.75	0.91	High

Table 5 shows that students (N = 296) reported high overall needs for job placement support (M = 3.75, SD = 0.91). The strongest need was practical job-finding skills training (M = 3.80, SD = 0.90), followed by internship and practical opportunities (M = 3.77, SD = 0.90) and support related to addressing the content-job requirement disconnect (M = 3.67, SD = 0.92); all needs were rated high.

Table 6. The Problems of Job Placement for Teachers

Items	N=65		Level of Needs
	μ	σ	
Disconnect between employment guidance content and job requirements	3.83	0.60	High
Practical job-finding skills training	3.74	0.64	High
Internship and practical opportunities	3.82	0.58	High
Total	3.80	0.62	High

Table 6 indicates that teachers (N = 65) perceived students' job placement needs as high overall (M = 3.80, SD = 0.62). The highest-rated needs were addressing the disconnect between employment guidance content and job requirements (M = 3.83, SD = 0.60) and improving internship and practical opportunities (M = 3.82, SD = 0.58), followed by practical job-finding skills training (M = 3.74, SD = 0.64); all dimensions were rated high.

4.2 Summary of Semi-Structured Interviews with Students and Teachers

(1) Students

Student interviews converged on three recurring themes. First, students perceived a content–industry misalignment, reporting that employment guidance was overly theoretical, outdated, and weakly connected to actual job tasks, current technologies, and enterprise expectations for soft skills. Second, students described the guidance process as fragmented and discontinuous, noting that most activities were concentrated in the final year, with limited support in earlier years and inconsistent information among teachers; they also reported a lack of personalized guidance. Third, students emphasized the insufficient quality of internships, citing limited relevance to Mechatronics roles, low technical depth, short duration, and inadequate supervision. Across themes, students consistently expressed strong needs for practical job-search preparation, including resume writing, interview performance, communication, and career planning. Overall, the student data suggest that improving employment guidance requires stronger alignment with workplace requirements, earlier and continuous support across years, and higher-quality work-based learning opportunities.

(2) Teachers

Teacher interviews reinforced the student perspective while adding an implementation-level view. Teachers emphasized that existing guidance content is outdated and insufficiently industry-specific, with limited integration of the technical competencies and soft skills employers require. They also highlighted system-level weaknesses, including the absence of a unified guidance framework, limited cross-department coordination, and insufficient continuity across academic years. At the staff level, teachers acknowledged constraints in their competence in employment guidance, particularly in career counseling methods, interview coaching, labor market analysis, and understanding of industry certification pathways. In response, teachers strongly advocated for strengthened school–enterprise cooperation, including long-term partnerships, enterprise participation in curriculum design, industry mentors, and improved internship supervision. Collectively, teacher interviews indicate that improving employment guidance depends on

coordinated reform across updated content, institutional mechanisms, capacity building, and enterprise collaboration.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Systemic Constraints in Employment Guidance

Recent vocational education research presents contrasting perspectives on the effectiveness of employment guidance. Some approaches focus primarily on improving students' job-search skills and short-term placement outcomes, assuming that employability problems can be resolved through targeted training (Zainal Shah, Ab Aziz, & Marie Balraj, 2022). In contrast, comparative evidence indicates that such approaches remain insufficient when employment guidance content is weakly aligned with labor market demands and delivered through fragmented institutional arrangements. Studies show that guidance systems emphasizing continuity, curriculum integration, and sustained school–enterprise collaboration are more effective in enhancing career readiness than those relying on isolated interventions near graduation (OECD, 2021; CEDEFOP, 2020). Further comparisons also reveal differences in how teacher roles are conceptualized. While employment guidance is sometimes treated as an additional teaching responsibility, recent findings indicate that limited professional training and insufficient industry exposure constrain the quality of guidance, particularly in technical disciplines (Hooley et al., 2021). Overall, these contrasting viewpoints suggest that employment guidance problems are better understood as outcomes of systemic misalignment and institutional capacity gaps rather than individual student deficiencies.

5.2 What Students Need for Effective School-to-Work Transition

The strong demand for practical job-finding skills training indicates that students prioritize guidance that directly improves performance in recruitment contexts such as interviews, job applications, and workplace communication, a pattern widely observed in vocational education under competitive labor market conditions (Jackson, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017). The high demand for internships and practical opportunities further reflects the recognition that work-based learning is essential for translating technical knowledge into employability and enhancing workplace readiness, rather than serving as a supplementary component of education (OECD, 2018; CEDEFOP, 2015). Although personalized employment guidance is given relatively lower priority than practical and experiential support, research in career development consistently demonstrates that individualized guidance remains critical, as it helps students interpret learning experiences and align personal goals with labor market opportunities (Watts, 2010; Jiang, Chen, & Gao, 2024). Together, these contrasting perspectives highlight that employment guidance in technical education is most effective when applied skills training, experiential learning, and targeted individual support are integrated within a developmental framework.

5.3 Toward an Integrated Employment Guidance Framework for Technical Programs

The findings indicate that improving job placement outcomes for students in technical disciplines at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College requires a comprehensive and integrated employment guidance framework rather than isolated adjustments. The challenges identified reflect interconnected structural, pedagogical, and institutional limitations, including insufficient long-term planning, misalignment between guidance content and labor market demands, limited use of interactive guidance methods, inadequate material and digital support, and weak emphasis on professional behavior education. Consistent with prior research, employment guidance is most effective when implemented as a

coordinated, developmental process embedded throughout students' academic trajectories, rather than being concentrated in short-term interventions near graduation (Su, Horadal, & Puchatree, 2024; OECD, 2010). Studies further demonstrate that guidance content must be continuously updated through industry engagement and labor market information to maintain practical relevance in technical education (Watts, 2009; CEDEFOP, 2014). Evidence also shows that student-centered, practice-oriented methodologies, supported by appropriate resources, digital platforms, and experiential learning environments, significantly enhance employability and job readiness (Jackson, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017; OECD, 2018). In addition, research increasingly emphasizes that professional ethics and soft skills are essential complements to technical competence in sustaining employment outcomes (Watts, 2010; Tomlinson, 2017). Taken together, these comparative perspectives suggest that effective employment guidance in technical disciplines must be systematic, practice-oriented, digitally supported, and institutionally coordinated to support students' successful transition from education to employment.

6. CONCLUSION

This study reveals significant challenges in employment guidance for Mechatronics students at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College, with both students and teachers reporting high levels of problems, including mismatches between guidance content and job requirements, fragmented systems, and inadequate teacher competencies. Concurrently, strong needs were identified for practical job-finding skills training, enhanced internships, and personalized support, corroborated by qualitative insights highlighting outdated practices and weak industry linkages.

These findings underscore the necessity for an integrated employment guidance framework that embeds career development throughout the curriculum, fosters school-enterprise collaborations, and builds teacher capacity through targeted training. By aligning guidance with labor market dynamics and emphasizing experiential learning, vocational institutions can enhance student employability, reduce transition barriers, and improve job placement outcomes in technical fields.

Theoretically, the research advances career development models such as Social Cognitive Career Theory and Career Construction Theory by contextualizing them within Chinese vocational education and demonstrating how systemic interventions bolster self-efficacy and adaptability. In practice, it offers a blueprint for policymakers and educators to reform guidance systems, thereby promoting sustainable workforce development amid industrial transformations.

Despite its limited scope and reliance on self-reported data, this work paves the way for longitudinal studies that track graduate trajectories and for multi-institutional comparisons to refine guidance strategies globally.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Practically, employment guidance at Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College should be strengthened through systematic and long-term planning that spans students' entire period of study. Guidance content should be continuously updated to align with labor market demands through close collaboration with enterprises. Practice-oriented methods, such as skills workshops, mock interviews, and structured internships, these should be expanded and improved by adequate materials and digital platforms. In addition, career ethics and professional behavior education should be integrated into guidance activities to enhance students' overall employment rate.

Theoretically, this study contributes to employment guidance and vocational education research by situating employment guidance within technical disciplines in the context of Mechatronics education. By demonstrating how university-level planning, pedagogical approaches, and individual career development considerations interact in shaping guidance perceptions. The findings also provide empirical support for human capital perspectives by emphasizing the perceived importance of practical skills development, work-based learning, and professional behavior formation in employment development.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted at a single vocational institution—a narrow scope that may limit generalizability. Second, the data were primarily based on self-reported perceptions from students and teachers, which may be subject to bias. In addition, the cross-sectional design captured employment guidance problems and needs at only one point in time, without observing long-term employment outcomes. Future studies could include multiple vocational institutions to broaden the scope and adopt longitudinal designs to track graduates' employment outcomes over time.

Acknowledgments: This article is derived from the author's thesis completed at Dhonburi Rajabhat University, Thailand, as part of the requirements for the Master of Education degree. The author gratefully acknowledges the guidance and support of the academic advisor and thesis committee, whose constructive feedback and supervision were essential to the completion of this study. Appreciation is also extended to the participating school and all respondents for their valuable cooperation.

Author contributions: The first author LJY was responsible for all parts of this study, including data collection, analysis, and drafting and revising the manuscript. The second, and corresponding, author NK led the conceptualization of the study, provided academic guidance, oversaw critical proofreading of the manuscript, and handled all correspondence with the journal.

Ethical Statement: All participants (students, teachers, and interviewees) were fully informed of the study's objectives and procedures, and they voluntarily provided informed consent before any data collection began. Participant privacy was strictly protected; all questionnaire responses and interview materials were anonymized, treated as confidential, and used exclusively for academic purposes. In addition, formal permission to conduct this study and access the participant groups was officially granted by the administration of Guangdong Electronic Commercial Technician College.

Consent to Participate: Before data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, clearly explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Competing Interests: The author declares that this work has no competing interests.

Grant/Funding information: The author declared that no grants supported this work.

Data Availability Statement: The datasets and research materials used in this study are not publicly available due to institutional requirements and participant confidentiality, but they are available from the authors on reasonable request. All cited documents and secondary sources are listed in the reference section of the manuscript.

Declaration Statement of Generative AI: Generative AI tools were not utilized for conceptualization, analysis, or writing of this manuscript; however, Grammarly was employed exclusively for editing, grammar, and style.

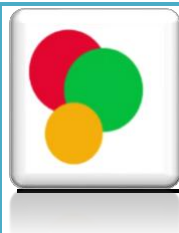
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Proverbs in Producing the Intended Discourse: An Understanding of the Conative Functional Aspect of the Pashto Proverbs

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Article Information

Article Type: Research Article

Dates:

Received: February 10, 2026

Revised: March 15, 2026

Accepted: March 18, 2026

Available online: March 22, 2026

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ABSTRACT

Pashto proverbs, as a folkloric genre, are effectively utilized in the communication processes of the Pashtun community residing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. They play a significant role in the communicative and socio-cognitive framing of the Pashtun community. Pashto proverbs employ figurative language to perform a discursive function in communication. However, this folklore genre of Pashto proverbs has not received substantial attention in research studies. Therefore, this paper addresses the question of what discursive function Pashto proverbs perform in shaping the intended discourse when used within the community. This study analyzes 10 purposely selected Pashto proverbs from *Rohi Mataluna* (Pashto Proverbs, 2007) authored by *Mohammad Nawaz Tair and Thomas C. Edwards*, utilizing both their literal English translations and contextual usage. Investigating the discursive role of these proverbs as cultural assets through the lens of Elias Domínguez Barajas's Proverbs as Discursive Tools (PDT) approach and the Mapping Domains Procedure, the findings reveal that Pashto proverbs serve a vital conative functional role. Ultimately, they act as rhetorical tools to influence the addressee and successfully (re)produce the Pashtun ideological and cultural perspective in communication.

Keywords: Discourse, Discursive Aspect, Conative Function, Pashto, Proverbs

1. INTRODUCTION

Proverbs, as concise, widely recognized expressions of popular wisdom, encapsulate truths, morals, and traditional perspectives in a metaphorical, fixed, and memorable format, transmitted across generations (Mieder, 2004). As a genre of folklore, proverbs mirror the social values, beliefs, and attitudes of a nation. They are a valuable asset to the community, which reflects its wisdom and behavior in the communication process (Ghafoori & Elyas, 2023). Prescriptive proverbs (morality-based proverbs) articulate the moral and social standards of folk philosophies; they drive communities toward the ideological and cultural norms of their respective communities (Ballesteros, 1979; Chuchvara, 2009).

In communication, proverbs convey the collective wisdom of a society and transfer its socio-cultural values across generations (Bobuafor, 2021), expressed in their semantic richness. Their ubiquity and significance in communicative discourse have been discussed by Obeng (1996) and Hansford (2003) in terms of their oratorical functions. They serve various illocutionary functions, such as advising, convincing, reproving, or establishing an argument during a communicative process (Bobuafor, 2021), due to their metaphorical



expressions. Social beliefs, cultural values, and ideologies are richly manifested in the proverbs, which often go unnoticed in the communicative process (Lomotey & Csajbok-Twerefou, 2021).

Concise snippets of oral communication, proverbs are very effective rhetoric in oral or written communication (Mieder, 2004) since they are “expressions of wisdom and truth” which are passed “from generation to generation” (Hrisztova-Gotthardt & Varga, 2015) through the communicative process. As an aphoristic saying Nwoga (1976) accumulates in proverbs “the wisdom of many and the wit of one; the experience and wisdom of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression; and the edge tools of communication”. They reveal cultural ideologies, social identities and rich linguistic construction.

Pashto Proverbs constitute a significant part of Pashto folklore and are popularly known as *Mataluna* (Singular: *Matal*). They are considered and acknowledged as highly valuable expressions of the beliefs, ideologies, cultural and moral values, and social patterns of the Pashtun community, which comprises forty million Pashtuns living in this Northwest province of Pakistan. That is why they are “prized pearls of wisdom” and “molecules” (Tair & Edwards, 2006) that guide the Pashtun community for generations and play a key role in its ideological construction (Khan et al., 2015).

Pashto Proverbs are not just “folkloric relics, verbal decorations, or collector’s items” but are considered “*a course of action, affect a change of attitude, or provoke a change in perspective. Proverbs are rhetorical tools to accomplish social or personal ends*” (Tair & Edwards, 2006). Also, they play significant functions in the Pashtun community (Ullah & Abid, 2020) since they carry “national character, national ideology or philosophy” (Tair & Edwards, 2006) and reflect ideological struggles (Badshah & Khan, 2015).

Semantically, Pashto proverbs contain a compressed and complex meaning that cannot be comprehended and appreciated without the schema of social knowledge. For example, the proverb *Khaza da koor chiraagh dy* (Woman is the lamp of the family) locates women in the house as its manager in the social order. They should prioritize the household over places or work outside the house. This proverb makes sense to readers only if they understand the social divisions and culture of Pashtun society. Otherwise, it would seem a mere patriarchal attitude towards women of the community. In the same sense, the proverb *Hr cha ta khpl watan Kashmir dy* (Everyone considers their country as Kashmir in terms of its beauty and resourcefulness) illustrates the respect that Pashtuns have for their homeland. Respecting their homeland is part of their Pashtunwali, the code of life of Pashtuns (Bartlotti, 2008). Again, readers can understand this proverb only if they have the schema of the social knowledge of the Pashtun code of life (Pashtunwali). Next to them, the proverb *Che Khudy ye na kae nu Pir Baba ba ye sa oki* (If God does not like to make it happen, how will the Sufi Baba do it) expresses the belief of Pashtuns in God that everything in the world happens at the command of God and no human can do it until God wills it. Here, the metaphorical reference is to Pir Baba (Sufi Baba), who is known in the Pashtun community as pious and religious. This proverb would be interesting to the readers only if they know the social and cultural association of Pir Baba with the Pashtun community and its people. Therefore, the schema of social context and knowledge is important in understanding Pashto proverbs. Otherwise, they remain meaningless when socially decontextualized.

Language carries embedded ideologies, and its linguistic components, such as proverbs, are considered essential for developing various discourses within a specific community. Pashto language and its proverbial discourse are not an exception to it. Pashto Proverbs used in the proverbial discourse of the language are regarded as very meaningful in this respect (Farid & Dinakhel, 2023). They play a significant role in the communicative and socio-cognitive framing of the Pashtun community (Bartlotti, 2001).

Although proverbs are meaningful and play an important role in community discussions, they have not received much attention from critical perspectives. This study aims to explore the discursive function of proverbs in the Pashto language discourse. The current research aims to analyze the discursive function of proverbs in the proverbial discourse of Pashto.

Generally, this research study has a scope in the field of research studies conducted in the domains of language and linguistics, Discourse Studies, paremiology, and Pashto literature. However, this study has a broader scope within Pashto paremiology and Pashtun culture. From an overall perspective, this study welcomes academicians' understanding of the Pashto language in general and its proverbial discourse in particular, regarding its contextual importance due to its novel approach. This study has analyzed the discursive functional aspects of Pashto proverbs based on a proper analytical framework. This function has never been explored in the previous studies conducted on Pashto paremiology.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pashto proverbs have received less research attention, with studies exploring them from various perspectives. In this regard, Farid (2024) has analyzed the relation between humans and the environment as produced in the Pashto proverbs and selected 15 Pashto proverbs from an eco-critical perspective. It is of the view that Pashto proverbs portray “the fact that in traditional folk wisdom, environment-friendly ideas exist and these ideas need to be promoted for the preservation of our environment”. It explains the anthropocentric ideas in the Pashto proverbs that need to be restructured for the sake of the environment cum human beings. Such a study, based on the theory of Ecocriticism, aims to achieve the objective of creating “an awareness from eco-centric and earth-centric, rather than anthropocentric perspective”.

Another study on Pashto and English paremiology has been conducted by Ali et al. (2023) to compare and find the elements of “bravery and honour” in both proverbial discourses. Using a qualitative approach, “the symbolic representation of bravery and honour in both cultures” has been decoded in this study through the above-mentioned theoretical frameworks. This study investigates an important aspect of Pashto proverbial discourse and adopts a systematic approach to the analysis of proverbs. This study has significant implications in various fields. “However, there is a need to conduct further proverbial studies to explore other themes for better cultural understanding”. While the current study differs in both its objectives and research design from this one.

In addition to them, another study on Pashto proverbial discourse has been conducted by Aziz et al. (2022), in which Pashto proverbs are described as “enshrined carriers of the wisdom of Pashtun elders”. This study has been conducted to identify and acknowledge Pashto proverbs as interpreters and disseminators of Pashtun cultural practices, identities, viewpoints and life experiences across generations. Moreover, a research scholar from Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan, Ullah (2022) has investigated an interesting functional aspect of the Pashto proverbs in Pashtun culture. This study concludes that the Pashto proverbs do not have “kinship ties” when verbal rivalry is the concern.

In another study, Momand & Rahimi (2020) examined Pashto proverbs in terms of positioning. The role of Pashto proverbs is to resolve conflicts verbally through communication. This study aimed “to understand the position and effectiveness of proverbs in resolving social conflicts and problems in society, as well as to know the real and allegorical meanings of proverbs and the scope of their use”. The researchers have hypothesized that proverbs have a critical role in reasoning and comprehensive concepts, and they resolve disputes to a greater extent.

Moreover, another study on Pashto proverbial discourse has been conducted by Dinakhel & Islam (2019), examining the function of Pashto proverbs in building the Pashtun nation. Using the theory of ethics

and identity, the scholars have purposely selected 10 proverbs to present a “three lines” function of the selected proverbs for the objective of nation-building through proverbs, under the subheading “Reflection of Pashtun identity in Pashto proverbs,” in their paper.

The above related studies have revealed and highlighted various gaps due to methodological weaknesses and data limitations. These past studies have paved the way for the current research in certain aspects. Pashto proverbs have not attracted researchers to explore their linguistic features and discursive functions. These past studies have revealed that Pashto proverbs have not been analyzed under the conceptual approaches adopted in this study. Also, the current study differs from these past studies in terms of its objectives and research framework. Although the past studies have contributed significantly to various domains, they suggest limitations in research techniques and objectives. Therefore, this study has considered these limitations and gaps in past related studies on paremiology, both generally and specifically in Pashto paremiology, to be addressed.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Proverbs as a Discursive Tool Approach

Discussing Proverbs as Discursive Tools (PDT) approach in *The Function of Proverbs in Discourse: The Case of a Mexican Transnational Social Network* (2010), Elías Domínguez Barajas writes that proverbs perform various discursive functions of “arguing, advising, uniting, and entertaining” when used in communication. According to this approach, proverbial discourse teaches and promotes reflection by way of advice. “Proverbs are definitely oriented towards a particular listener” during the interactional process. Accordingly, Jakobson’s consideration of the “conative aspect of language” indicates that the discursive function of proverbs is conative, with proverbs having “orientation towards the Addressee” (Barajas, 2010).

3.2 Analytical Procedure

This study has employed the Mapping Domains Procedure to analyze the discursive aspects of Pashto proverbs. This is practiced by Barajas (2010) while presenting the discursive functions of the proverbs in *The Function of Proverbs in Discourse: The Case of a Mexican Transnational Social Network*. In this procedure, a proverb is examined based on its contextual use, and then the “figurative context”, which is the source domain, is analyzed for its “immediate context”, which is the target domain in the given context. The “figurative context” and “immediate context” involve the cognitive process of synthesizing and abstracting the target domain using the source domain. This procedure is applicable only when the proverbs are used in context, since the relationship between the two can be recognized through cultural associations. Table 1 will help in understanding the analytical procedure:

Table 1. Analytical Procedure

General Observation	Cognitive Task	Particular Situation
Figurative referent & Context	Abstraction & Synthesis (Recognition of relational similarity based on cultural associations)	Immediate Referent & Context

3.3 Data Collection

This study has selected Pashto proverbs from *Rohi Mataluna (Pashto Proverbs)*, published in 2007 with authorship by Mohammad Nawaz Tair and Thomas C. Edwards. Proverbial data is taken from this book because this book provides both the English literal translation of the Pashto proverbs and their contextual usage. Also, the proverbs given in this book are in their original form. Since proverbs are synchronically and diachronically unchanged, they are still used effectively in the same way. This study has selected 10 proverbs based on their contextual use and English literal translations from the mentioned source to address the research question posed in this paper.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pashto proverbs perform various functions by employing nominal metaphors in different contextual situations. The following are some illustrations where proverbs perform differently in various contexts through the use of different metaphors.

Roman Transcription: “*Islam tar tori landi dy*”.

English Translation: *It is the sword that protects Islam.* (Tair & Edwards, 2006, p.36)

Context: This proverb is often quoted in a situation where someone wants to obtain something valuable without having to struggle for it.

Table 2. Mapping Metaphor of Proverb 1 (Tair & Edwards, 2006:36)

Source domain	Target domain	Metaphorical Context	Target Context
Islam	An achievement	Protecting Islam	Achieving something
Sword	Struggle	Protecting with a sword	Achieving with hardships/work

Table 2 shows that the proverb uses two metaphors, “Islam” and “sword Islam,” which serve as the source domain in the current proverb to represent the “valuable and important thing/position” in the given context. Achieving something is like protecting Islam, which is done through the “Sword”. In a similar context, “sword” is used metaphorically by the Muslim Pashtuns living in KP, Pakistan, to represent the “physical and psychological struggle” needed for getting/achieving the desired thing/position. In the given proverb, two culturally valued metaphors, “Islam” and “sword”, are used to represent the situational domains convincingly. To convince Muslim Pashtuns to work hard and struggle to achieve their goals, this proverb uses Islamic and Pashtun cultural metaphors. The proverb produces a “to do [hard work] discourse” in the given context. The proverb develops the said discourse through Islamic and cultural metaphors to help Muslim Pashtuns living in KP, Pakistan, catch the underlying discourse of “to do” produced contextually in the given situation.

Roman Transcription: *Alwati marghae pa las na raze.*

English Translation: *A bird that has flown from the hand will not return.* (Tair & Edwards, 2006:45).

Context: This proverb is said in context to a Pashtun who loses an opportunity that would hardly come again.

Table 3. Mapping Metaphor of Proverb 2 (Tair & Edwards, 2006:45)

Source domain	Target domain	Metaphorical Context	Target Context
Flown Bird	Lost Opportunity	Catching a bird	Availing an opportunity

Table 3 shows that the proverb has concretized the abstract domain of a “given opportunity” through the use of the “flown bird,” helping its user understand its conative function in the language's discourse. In the given proverb, giving a physical shape to the “opportunity” by selecting a “bird” and then a “flown bird” is also very artful. The proverb does not use a source domain of an animal, for it would not have conceptualized the message in the true sense, the way a bird can. Animals cannot fly as birds can, and that is the reason, perhaps, in the given proverb, “bird” is used to instigate the instinct of the human heart to do. It teaches Pashtuns that “*Opportunity knocks but once*”. The flown bird never returns, and neither does the lost opportunity. This proverb convinces Pashtuns to act in time before the opportunity is lost.

Roman Transcription: *Allah Raziq dy, magr shooli pa oobo kegi.*

English Translation: *God gives man his living, but rice still needs water.* (Tair & Edwards, 2006: 45).

Context: This proverb is most often used when one is more fatalistic and does not exert sufficient effort or means to achieve their goal. This proverb is used by the Muslim Pashtuns in KP in such a context.

Table 4. Mapping Metaphor of Proverb 3 (Tair & Edwards, 2006:45)

Source domain	Target domain	Metaphorical Context	Target Context
Rice	Goals/Achievements	Getting rice	Achieving the target
Water	Efforts	Watering the rice	Struggling for the goals

Table 4 illustrates how proverb, two source domain metaphors, “rice” and “water”, are used to conceptualize two target domains of “goals/achievements” and “efforts/means”, respectively. The proverb refers to a crucial aspect of the human belief system, known as the “struggle for existence.” This aspect of the human belief system has been simplified through the tangible metaphors of “rice” and “water” to be understood and valued by the human mind. Being fatalistic alone is rejected by the proverb and encourages community members to put in effort (watering) and use various means (such as water) to achieve the goal.

The importance of self-struggle and the use of concerned means are advised in the given proverb, and only a fate-centered life is rejected by the proverb. Spoon-feeding by God is not favored by the proverb, which is why Muslim Pashtun community members are instructed to earn their living through hard work and struggle to live in the world. Nature does not select the riders on fate solely, but rather “selects the fittest” to live in the world while bearing hardships and suffering of various kinds. An easy life is not meant for the Muslim Pashtuns, and this is expressed by the proverbs to be comprehended by the respective community members. This whole concept of the struggle and then achieving the desired results has been concretized through a tangible and physical demonstration of the farming work, where “rice” as a source domain targets in the given proverb represents the “goal/achievements” of the human being, and “water/watering” represents the “means/struggle” put the humans to get to their desired position. Fate blended in (plan of) actions is the teaching of the proverb.

Roman Transcription: *oogra de we, taoda de we.*

English Translation: *Let us have porridge, but let it be hot.* (Tair & Edwards, 2006:68)

Context: This proverb is used when someone is disgraced by being treated poorly in a certain situation. The person then uses this proverb.

Table 5. Mapping Metaphor of Proverb 4 (Tair & Edwards, 2006:68)

Source domain	Target domain	Metaphorical Context	Target Context
Porridge	Hospitality	Offering Porridge	Offering Hospitality

Table 5 shows the proverb, in which the metaphor is “porridge,” which stands for something “little/less expensive” offered by a Pashtun to others. Pashtuns have different codes of life, constituted in one word as *Pashtunwali* (Khattak, 2010). “Hospitality” is one of the important codes of it. It is expected from every Pashtun individual in the community regardless of caste, race, color, and nationality. In the given proverb, this code of “Pashtunwali” is expected from the speaker of the proverb to be given by the host. Not necessarily. Every Pashtun gives or receives the same amount of respect from every other member of the community, but giving the least amount of respect is the moral and social responsibility of individuals who call themselves Pashtuns. The proverb, through its conative function, develops such a discourse in the communication process of the Pashtuns, which binds every member of the community to be respectful to every other member or a non-member of the community. Respect is important for humans in the Pashtun community. Be it “porridge” as an offer, but “hotness in the porridge is the moral and social responsibility of every Pashtun. Thus, the proverb develops a discourse that binds community members to be respectful in their treatment of others.

Roman Transcription: *Pah tood jang ki asnona na sarbegi.*

English Translation: *Horses cannot be flattened in the thick of battle.* (Tair & Edwards, 2006:103)

Context: This proverb is commonly narrated by Pashtuns in situations where something cannot be done in a pinch.

Table 6. Mapping Metaphor of Proverb 5 (Tair & Edwards, 2006:103)

Source domain	Target domain	Metaphorical Context	Target Context
Horse	A task (intended to be done) Proper Time	Flattening horses	Doing a task
Battle		Thick of battle	Improper time

As detailed in Table 6 the proverb, where the first nominal metaphor is the “horse”, which refers metaphorically to the “something” intended to be done by the Pashtuns. The second nominal metaphor is the “battle”, which metaphorically personifies the proper “time” for the “something” to be done. In this proverb, Pashtuns are advised by the proverb to do something at the proper time. The proverb in the given context instructs the Pashtun speakers of the proverb to flatten the “horses” before the “battle” is due. Persuading the moral intention of the Pashtuns, this proverb develops a social discourse that instructs the community members about the importance of time generally, and its appropriate use specifically. By intriguing them with its attitude and guiding them on individual responsibility for using time for personal and social causes, this proverb instills a sense of social and moral responsibility among Pashtun community members. This “to-do” social discourse helps the Pashtuns constitute a responsible community where the “horses” are not flattened during “the thick of battle” and educates them about “time is money”. The proverb uses the nominal metaphors according to the cultural orientation of the Pashtuns, who keep horses as a hobby nowadays and for battle purposes in the past and, therefore, functions conatively in an effective way.

Roman Transcription: *Aspa ka da zzro rupoo bachy we Wali sok tre khabr Qadri hum na we; Charga ka da yawi pese agae na weAo tol kor ye pa sir aghesty we*

English Translation: *The mare foals a thousand-rupee colt secretly. The hen wakes the household with an egg worth a paisa* (Tair & Edwards, 2006:35)

Context: This proverb is said when a Pashtun of high breeding performs/achieves some significant deed/action quietly, disregarding its publicity, and a Pashtun of low birth boasts his insignificant performance/achievement.

Table 7. Mapping Metaphor of Proverb 6 (Tair & Edwards, 2006:35)

Source domain	Target domain	Metaphorical Context	Target Context
Mare	High birth Person	Foaling a colt	Achieving something great
Hen	Low birth Person	Waking the household	Boasting the insignificant

Table 7 shows that the “mare” refers to the “high-bred breed Pashtun” who foals a “colt”, a metaphor for his great “achievement”. The metaphor of “hen” conceptualizes the “low-breed Pashtun” who gives an “egg”, a metaphor for his “insignificant achievement” in the given context of the proverb. In this proverb, the “high-born” Pashtuns are compared to the “mare,” a costly and most liked animal in Pashtun culture. Comparatively, the “low-born” and immature Pashtuns, like the hen, are overwhelmed to publicize their insignificant and comparatively low-value work, like giving an egg. In the current proverb, “hen” is conceptualized as a metaphor for those people of the society who boast about their low-quality work and try to hold the attention of the community unnecessarily. Moreover, the second source-domain metaphors in the current proverb are “colt” and “egg”. In the first portion of the proverb, “colt”, an expensive animal baby, is used conceptually to refer to the valuable achievements of the good-breed people, while the use of “egg” in the second portion refers metaphorically to the insignificant yet boasted performance of the people with less social maturity. The proverbial discourse restrains Pashtuns from doing such ill-mannered actions.

Roman Transcription: *ooda spey pa zan ma wekhawa.*

English Translation: *Do not awake the sleeping dog.* (Tair & Edwards, 2006:59).

Context: This proverb is used when a Pashtun unnecessarily invites trouble or disturbs a situation, and asks for trouble as a result.

Table 8. Mapping Metaphor of Proverb 7 (Tair & Edwards, 2006:59)

Source domain	Target domain	Metaphorical Context	Target Context
Sleeping Dog	Troubles/Problems	Awaking the sleeping dog	Facing/inviting the troubles/problems unnecessarily

Table 8 maps metaphor used in the proverb is the “sleeping dog” metaphorically expressing the “troubles/problems/unpleasant situations” in the given context. The proverb teaches Pashtuns not to interfere unnecessarily. However, this does not mean that the proverb forbids an individual from taking risks to achieve their targets or reach their desired position. Appropriately, the proverb metaphorizes the nature of troubles/problems, and unwanted situations by using the “dog” metaphor, which is known for biting and being fearful at times. As a frightful and ferocious animal, the proverb describes the nature of the troubles/problems/unwanted times by personifying them through the use of the “dog” so that it becomes

easy for Pashtuns to understand the underlying message of the proverbial discourse regarding the unnecessary interventions. The proverb teaches safety-based morals to the Pashtuns.

Roman Transcription: *Oor ta che nezdi kigi. Khu aakhir bah swazegi*

English Translation: *He who stands near the fire is bound to be scorched.* (Tair & Edwards, 2006:60).

Context: The given proverb is said in two situations when a Pashtun dares to do something and is willing to bear the risk, pain and criticism. Secondly, it is used contextually to warn a Pashtun not to approach danger without being cautioned or taking precautionary measures.

Table 9. Mapping Metaphor of Proverbs 8 (Tair & Edwards, 2006:60)

Source domain	Target domain	Metaphorical Context	Target Context
Fire	Pain/risk/danger/criticism	Standing near the fire	Bearing the risk/pain/criticism

Table 9 demonstrates that the proverb uses one conceptual nominal source metaphor, “fire,” for the target domain of “risk, pain, danger, and criticism” in both contexts. The nominal metaphor of “fire” in the proverb carries the same denotational implications in both contexts. By personifying the consequences of an individual’s act or saying as “fire,” the proverb creates awareness and prepares members for the results of their actions or words. This proverb is trying to bring Pashtuns’ attention to the consequences of their actions/sayings and, therefore, forces them not to do something unnecessarily or thoughtlessly. The proverb advises Pashtuns not to act without considering the social, moral, and personal consequences.

Roman Transcription: *Budae aspi ta trapaki ma khaya.*

English Translation: *Don’t teach an old mare galloping.* (Tair & Edwards, 2006:86)

Context: This proverb is said in context by a Pashtun experienced in the work, and is commented on by someone fresh and inexperienced in the same work.

Table 10. Mapping Metaphor of Proverb 9 (Tair & Edwards, 2006:86)

Source domain	Target domain	Metaphorical Context	Target Context
An old Mare	An Experienced Pashtun	Teaching a Mare	Suggesting/Teaching an experienced Person

Table 10 displays the proverb uses two source nominal conceptual metaphors to explain two target domains for its speaker. The first nominal metaphor is the “old mare”, which personifies the “experienced man” in the given context. The second nominal metaphor is the “gallop”, personifying the “work” in the aforementioned context of the proverb. Teaching work to an experienced Pashtun is like “showing an eagle how to fly”. Giving unnecessary advice by a young Pashtun in a specific field to an experienced one is discouraged here, since the proverb establishes his reputation as inexperienced and naïve. This proverb establishes the rapport between the Pashtun speaker and the Pashtun listener; one as an experienced Pashtun and the other as an inexperienced Pashtun, respectively. This proverb develops a discourse which categorises the Pashtuns into two groups based on their skills and understanding of a certain profession, and owing to skills, the experienced ones and the inexperienced ones, and advises the inexperienced not to interfere with the skills of the experienced ones. The manners of professionalism have been taught by the discourse in the given context.

Roman Transcription: *Pesho da ghwakho chowkidara kra.*

English Translation: *They asked the cat to watch the meat.* (Tair & Edwards, 2006:129)

Context: When an untrustworthy Pashtun is trusted with something, community members recite this proverb to evaluate the situation.

Table 11. Mapping Metaphor of Proverb 10 (Tair & Edwards, 2006:129)

Source domain	Target domain	Metaphorical Context	Target Context
Cat	Untrustworthy Pashtun	Asking a cat	Entrusting an untrustworthy Pashtun
Meat	Something valuable	Watching the meat	Entrusting something valuable

Table 11 indicates two linguistic nominal metaphors. The first nominal metaphor is the “cat”, which is metaphorically conceptualizing the “untrustworthy Pashtun”, while the second nominal metaphor is the “meat”, personifying the “something metaphorically” trusted to the “cat” in the given context. This proverb teaches the Pashtuns not to trust the inappropriate members of the community. The “cat” should not be given the responsibility of watching the “meat”. Pashtuns should not misjudge and misunderstand the nature of the people around them. Although this proverb discourages entrusting something important to an untrustworthy Pashtun, it cautions individuals against misjudging members of the community. This proverb teaches Pashtuns not to misjudge members when assigning responsibility. The proverb develops the judgmental mannerism of the Pashtuns.

5. DISCUSSION

Analysis of the action-based Pashto proverbs shows that Pashto proverbs function discursively to produce a “to-do action-based discourse” in the communication process. This discourse advises Pashtuns on the society-based moral standards of doing an action. These proverbs help to develop and maintain the community discourse, which carries the underlying ideological moral standards of the Pashtun community. What is expected from the Pashtuns in a specific situation during the core of action is advised through these proverbs. These proverbs express the ideological perspective of the Pashtun community while teaching, advising, and instructing Pashtuns on the right and socially acceptable way to act in a particular situation.

The analysis of the Pashto proverbs based on “forcing action” discourse concludes that Pashto proverbs produce a “not to do” action-based discourse in the communication process, which restrains Pashtuns from doing the actions mentioned in the above proverbs in the given contexts. These proverbs help Pashtuns to maintain and pass on the “not to do” discourse about the recommended ways of actions in the mentioned (in contexts) situations to future Pashtun generations. What should not be done in the mentioned situations (in contexts) of the proverbs is the underlying ideological perspective of the Pashtun community. The proverbs in the “Not to Do Action-Based Discourse” advise, teach, and instruct the Pashtuns regarding the appropriate manners based on the core morality of the Pashtun community.

6. CONCLUSION

The analysis of Pashto proverbs based on the conative discursive function has shown that they possess rich nominal metaphorical expressions in the source domain, which refer differently to various target domains depending on the contextual and cultural use of the proverbs. Additionally, these metaphorical expressions lend significant weight to the Pashto proverbs, enabling them to function differently as a discursive tool in communicative contexts. Pashtu proverbs “tend to perpetuate the existing [norms of the

Pashtun] social system rather than challenging it” (Dupree, 1979) by the way of advising the Pashtun community. The analysis of Pashto proverbs has shown them to be “a genre of cultural production” (Sanauddin, 2015). Pashto proverbs advise and fix the ways of the Pashtun according to the moral standards of the Pashtun community (Bartlotti, 2001). These proverbs have an “orientation towards the addressee” and function to teach morality and virtue while advising one addressee; however, they are meant for all community members.

The analysis of the above proverbs shows that Pashto proverbs tend to produce a discourse based on action when used contextually in a particular situation. They develop a discourse that (re)shapes the “acting” tendencies of the Pashtuns in favor of both the individuals and the community. They attempt to dominate the “Pashtun minds” by perpetuating their social and cultural values, particularly during interactions within the Pashtun community. Though proverbs have been shown as “context-bound” entities in the communication process, they carry certain discursive functions, as in this case, conative discursive functions, in their metaphorical referents and context. This discursive function is achieved by linking the proverb to its context during the cognitive abstraction and explanation of the proverb. To understand the context, one needs the linguistic and cultural schema of the proverb in use. The linguistic and cultural schema helps the listener to “recognize the implicit cultural information communicated by the particular items mentioned in the proverb” (Barajas, 2010).

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is limited to the above-discussed Pashto proverbs published in *Rohi Mataluna (Pashto Proverbs)* in 2007, which serve a conative function in the intended discourse. The current study recommends an investigation of the discourse produced in the Pashto modern poetry and literature. Also, the analytical framework adopted in this research study is recommended for investigating the proverbial genre in other languages with respect to their discursive aspects. Furthermore, this study recommends applying critical discourse analysis (CDA) to investigate the discourse produced by the oral genres of other languages.

Author contributions: Mashhood Ahmad and Roslina bin Mamat have equally contributed to the preparation/drafting of this paper.

Ethical Statement: Not Applicable

Competing Interests: The authors declare that this work has no competing interests.

Grant/Funding information: The author declared that no grants supported this work.

Data Availability Statement: The associated data is available upon request from the corresponding author.

Declaration Statement of Generative AI: The authors did not use Generative-AI content in this work except for the language editing and proofreading.

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