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Dr. Manoj Kumar

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to put into the hands of readers Volume-8; Issue-3: 2026 (May-June 2026) of “**Journal of Humanities and Education Development (JHED) (ISSN: 2581-8651)**”, an international journal which publishes peer reviewed quality research papers on a wide variety of topics related to, Humanities and Education development. Looking to the keen interest shown by the authors and readers, the editorial board has decided to release print issue also, journal issue will be available in various library also in print and online version. This will motivate authors for quick publication of their research papers. Even with these changes our objective remains the same, that is, to encourage young researchers and academicians to think innovatively and share their research findings with others for the betterment of mankind. This journal has DOI (Digital Object Identifier) also, this will improve citation of research papers.

I thank all the authors of the research papers for contributing their scholarly articles. Despite many challenges, the entire editorial board has worked tirelessly and helped me to bring out this issue of the journal well in time. They all deserve my heartfelt thanks.

Finally, I hope the readers will make good use of this valuable research material and continue to contribute their research finding for publication in this journal. Constructive comments and suggestions from our readers are welcome for further improvement of the quality and usefulness of the journal.

With warm regards.



Dr. Manoj Kumar

Editor-in-Chief

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Selection of Exercise Systems and Development of a Training Plan to Improve Speed-Strength for Male Volleyball Athletes Aged 14–15 at the Hanoi Sports Training and Competition Center

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Keywords— *speed-strength, youth volleyball, speed-strength exercises, volleyball training, athletes aged 14–15 years.*

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Abstract— *This study was conducted to select a system of speed-strength training exercises for male volleyball athletes aged 14–15 at the Hanoi Sports Training and Competition Center. Based on the review of specialized documents, investigation of current training practices, and interviews with 40 experts, coaches, and volleyball lecturers, the study identified 36 speed-strength development exercises suitable for the physiological, psychological, and professional characteristics of young athletes. The exercise system was classified into three groups: weight and resistance exercises; plyometric and speed exercises; and volleyball-specific technical exercises associated with speed-strength development. In addition, a 12-month speed-strength training program was developed following the principles of specialization and modern periodization. The research findings indicated that the selected exercise system possessed high scientific value, practicality, and feasibility, meeting the requirements for improving speed-strength performance in young male volleyball athletes during the initial stage of sports specialization.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In modern volleyball, speed-strength is one of the most important motor qualities determining technical efficiency and competitive performance. Specialized activities such as spike jumping, blocking, counterattack movement, and transition play require athletes to generate maximum force within the shortest possible time. Particularly for male volleyball athletes aged 14–15, this stage is characterized by rapid neuromuscular development, enhanced technical acquisition ability, and fast motor adaptation, creating favorable conditions for speed-strength development.

However, current training practices at youth volleyball clubs and training centers indicate that the selection of speed-strength exercises is still largely based on coaches' personal experience, lacking systematic organization and insufficiently matching the biological

development characteristics of young athletes. Many training programs focus excessively on training volume while paying inadequate attention to movement quality and the specificity of speed-strength in modern volleyball.

Derived from this practical context, the study aimed to select a system of speed-strength exercises for male volleyball athletes aged 14–15 at the Hanoi Sports Training and Competition Center in order to improve the effectiveness of specialized physical training for the research subjects.

The study employed the following research methods: document review, interviews and discussions, pedagogical testing, and statistical mathematics.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Selection of Speed-Strength Exercise Systems for Male Volleyball Athletes Aged 14–15 at the Hanoi Sports Training and Competition Center

Based on the synthesis of domestic and international specialized documents, combined with practical surveys conducted at provincial, municipal, and sectoral volleyball clubs, the study collected 46 exercises aimed at developing speed-strength for young volleyball athletes. These exercises were classified into three groups: the weight-training group consisting of 12 exercises; the supplementary speed-strength development group

Table 1. Results of the First Interview on Selecting Speed-Strength Development Exercises for Male Volleyball Athletes Aged 14–15 at the Hanoi Sports Training and Competition Center (n = 40)

No	List of Exercises	List of Exercises 1 (%)	List of Exercises 2 (%)	List of Exercises 3 (%)	Note
I	Weight and Resistance Exercise Group (12 Exercises)				
1	Push Press	92.5	7.5	0	Selected
2	Standing Barbell Press	90.0	10.0	0	Selected
3	Rapid Barbell Squat	75.0	25.0	0	Selected
4	Snatch	85.0	15.0	0	Selected
5	Progressive Half Squat	72.5	27.5	0	Selected
6	Standing Bent-Over Rapid Barbell Pull	75.0	25.0	0	Selected
7	Overhead Medicine Ball Throw	77.5	22.5	0	Selected
8	Medicine Ball Slam	80.0	20.0	0	Selected
9	Rapid Hip Extension with Barbell Lift	30.0	62.5	7.5	Selected
10	Rapid Biceps Curl	72.5	27.5	0	Selected
11	Fixed-Leg Body Raise	15.0	70.0	15.0	Selected
12	Bench Press	70.0	30.0	0	Selected
II	Plyometric and Speed-Supplementary Exercise Group (12 Exercises)				
13	Depth Jump	87.5	12.5	0	Selected
14	Speed Hurdle Jump	85.0	15.0	0	Selected
15	Variable-Speed Jump Rope Exercise	92.5	7.5	0	Selected
16	Resistance-Band Spike Simulation	90.0	10.0	0	Selected
17	30-m Sand Sprint	82.5	17.5	0	Selected
18	Explosive Push-Ups in Prone Position	85.0	15.0	0	Selected
19	Continuous Box Jumps	77.5	22.5	0	Selected
20	30-m Sprint from a Standing Start	62.5	37.5	0	Excluded
21	Rapid Pull-Ups	72.5	27.5	0	Selected
22	Weighted Vest Jumping (5% Body Weight)	75.0	25.0	0	Selected
23	Rapid Sit-Ups for 30 Seconds	55.0	45.0	0	Excluded
24	Horizontal Resistance-Band Pull Exercise	20.0	67.5	12.5	Selected
III	Sport-Specific Speed-Strength Technical Exercise Group (12 Exercises)				

consisting of 12 exercises; and the spike technique training group associated with speed-strength development consisting of 14 exercises. This classification ensured systematic organization and comprehensively reflected the components constituting speed-strength in modern volleyball, ranging from muscular strength foundations and movement speed to the application of speed-strength in specialized technical skills.

To ensure objectivity in exercise selection, interviews were conducted with 40 experts, coaches, and volleyball lecturers. The obtained results are presented in Table 1.

No	List of Exercises	List of Exercises 1 (%)	List of Exercises 2 (%)	List of Exercises 3 (%)	Note
25	Maximum-Speed Approach Jump Drill	95.0	5.0	0	Selected
26	Combined Approach and Reactive Jump Drill	92.5	7.5	0	Selected
27	Standing Attack Drill (Wrist Development)	87.5	12.5	0	Selected
28	Resistance-Band Spiking Exercise	82.5	17.5	0	Selected
29	Self-Toss Approach Attack Drill	75.0	25.0	0	Selected
30	Approach Run Simulation for Quick Attack	77.5	22.5	0	Selected
31	Transition Attack Drill	72.5	27.5	0	Selected
32	Blocked Attack Drill (Rapid Reaction)	40.0	60.0	0	Selected
33	Whistle-Signal Attack Drill (Reaction Speed)	12.5	87.5	0	Selected
34	Continuous One-Step Approach Spiking Drill	25.0	70.0	5.0	Selected
35	Continuous Three-Step Approach Spiking Drill	45.0	52.5	2.5	Selected
36	Quick Attack from the Setter	70.0	30.0	0	Selected
37	Moving-Target Spiking Drill	30.0	65.0	5.0	Selected
38	Three-Position Combination Attack Drill	15.0	75.0	10.0	Selected

To confirm the stability of the results, a second round of interviews was conducted. The findings showed a clear convergence of opinions toward the 36 identified exercises.

Table 2. Summary of the 36 Officially Selected Exercises (Average Results from Two Interview Rounds)

No	List of Exercises	List of Exercises (TB)	List of Exercises (TB)	Summary
I	Weight Training and Medicine Ball Exercise Group (12 BT)			
1-8	Push press, snatch, squat, and medicine ball throw exercises	> 75.0%	-	8 BT
9-12	Rapid hip extension with barbell lift, rapid biceps curl, fixed-leg body raise, and bench press exercises	-	> 65.0%	4 BT
II	Plyometric and Speed Exercise Group (12 BT)			
13-20	Depth jumps, speed hurdle jumps, jump rope exercises, sand running, etc	> 70.0%	-	8 BT
21-24	Pull-up bar exercises, weighted vest exercises, resistance-band exercises, etc	-	> 62.0%	4 BT
III	Speed-Strength Technical Exercise Group (12 BT)			
25-30	Approach jump exercises, resistance-band spiking exercises, quick attack drills, etc	> 75.0%	-	6 BT
31-36	Command-based attack drills, blocked attack drills, rebound-ball attack drills, etc	-	> 60.0%	6 BT
Total	Experimental Exercise System			36 BT

Based on the interview results presented in Tables 1 and 2, the experts and coaches demonstrated a high level of agreement in selecting the speed-strength exercise system for male youth volleyball athletes aged 14–15.

Modern exercises such as depth jumps and speed hurdle jumps were highly evaluated due to their effectiveness in enhancing the stretch-shortening cycle, reducing ground

contact time, and improving explosive force production capacity.

The selected exercise system also emphasized the development of whole-body force transmission through medicine ball exercises, thereby contributing to increased spiking speed and power. In addition, resistance-band exercises demonstrated a high level of specificity, helping athletes improve arm-swing speed, maintain muscle contraction velocity, and reduce stress on the shoulder joints of young athletes.

Furthermore, the structure of the 36 exercises ensured diversity and a harmonious combination of supplementary and sport-specific exercises under actual competition conditions. As a result, the program not only enhanced speed-strength development but also improved athletes' tactical coordination abilities. These findings

Table 3. Duration of Speed-Strength Training in a Single Training Session for Male Youth Volleyball Athletes Aged 14–15 in Hanoi (n = 60)

No	Duration of Training (minutes)	Highly Appropriate		Appropriate		Not Appropriate	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
1	From 20 to 25 minutes	39	65	15	25	6	10
2	From 25 to 30 minutes	42	70	9	15	9	15
3	From 30 to 35 minutes	60	100	0	0	0	0
4	From 35 to 40 minutes	42	70	15	25	3	5
5	From 40 to 45 minutes	39	65	12	20	9	15

Table 4. Weekly Frequency of Speed-Strength Training Sessions for Male Youth Volleyball Athletes Aged 14–15 in Hanoi (n = 60)

No	Number of Training Sessions per Week	Highly Appropriate		Appropriate		Not Appropriate	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
1	Two sessions	39	65	12	20	9	15
2	Three sessions	57	95	3	5	0	0
3	Four sessions	42	70	9	15	9	15
4	Five sessions	42	70	15	25	3	5
5	Six sessions	24	40	18	30	18	30

The results presented in Tables 3 and 4 indicated that the majority of experts, coaches, and lecturers agreed that the appropriate duration for speed-strength training sessions for male youth volleyball athletes aged 14–15 was 30–35 minutes per session, with the “very appropriate” option receiving 100% agreement. The most suitable training frequency was identified as three sessions per week, accounting for 95% of the respondents' opinions.

provided an important basis for developing the 12-month experimental training program for the research subjects.

2.2. Development of a Speed-Strength Training Plan for Male Youth Volleyball Athletes Aged 14–15 in Hanoi

Based on the training curriculum, annual training plan, and existing instructional system of the men's volleyball team at the Hanoi Sports Training and Competition Center, the study developed a systematic speed-strength training plan for the experimental group in accordance with the research objectives. At the same time, in order to ensure objectivity and practical applicability, interviews were conducted with experts, coaches, and lecturers regarding the duration and weekly frequency of speed-strength training sessions. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Based on these findings, together with the 36 selected speed-strength exercises (BT1–BT36), the study developed an annual periodized training plan to ensure a rational distribution among training phases, consistent with the principles of biological adaptation and the developmental characteristics of young athletes. The training plan is presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5. Twelve-Month Speed-Strength Training Plan for Male Volleyball Athletes Aged 14–15 at the Hanoi Sports Training and Competition Center

No	Exercise Group	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12
		Week	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
1	BT1	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x _ _	x x _ _	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2	BT2	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x _ _	x x _ _	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3	BT3	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	_____	_____	_____	_____
4	BT4	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5	BT5	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	_____	_____	_____	_____
6	BT6	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7	BT7	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
8	BT8	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
9	BT9	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10	BT10	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
11	BT11	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	_____	_____	_____	_____
12	BT12	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x _ _	x x _ _	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
13	BT13	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
14	BT14	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
15	BT15	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
16	BT16	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
17	BT17	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
18	BT18	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	_____	_____	_____	_____
19	BT19	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
20	BT20	_____	_____	_____	_____	_ _ x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
21	BT21	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	_____	_____	_____	_____
22	BT22	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
23	BT23	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	_____	_____	_____	_____
24	BT24	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	_____	_____	_____	_____
25	BT25	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
26	BT26	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
27	BT27	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
28	BT28	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
29	BT29	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
30	BT30	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
31	BT31	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
32	BT32	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
33	BT33	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
34	BT34	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
35	BT35	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
36	BT36	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
IV	Testing and Competition												
37	Periodic Evaluation	_ _ _ x	_____	_____	_ _ _ x	_____	_____	_____	_ _ _ x	_____	_____	_____	_ _ _ x

No	Exercise Group	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12
		Week	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
38	2 vs. 2 and 3 vs. 3 Matches	x _ x _	x _ x _	x _ x _	x _ x _	x _ x _	x _ x _	x _ x _	x _ x _	x _ x _	x _ x _	x _ x _	x _ x _
39	Competition 6:6 ³	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x	x x x x

The speed-strength training process was developed based on the 36 selected exercises, following the principles of modern periodization and in accordance with the psychological and physiological characteristics of athletes aged 14–15. The training plan was divided into three phases: the accumulation and foundation-building phase (Months 1–4), which focused on developing maximal strength through weight-training and resistance exercises; the conversion and power-development phase (Months 5–8), which emphasized plyometric, reflexive, and elastic-resistance exercises to enhance rapid force production; and the refinement and competition-application phase (Months 9–12), which concentrated on sport-specific technical exercises under competitive conditions in order to transfer speed-strength into practical performance effectiveness.

In addition, a system of periodic evaluations was conducted in Months 4, 8, and 12 to assess athletes' adaptation and appropriately adjust training loads for each athlete. Overall, the training process ensured continuity, systematic organization, and specificity, thereby contributing to sustainable speed-strength development and improved spiking performance in young volleyball athletes.

III. CONCLUSION

Through the research process, the study successfully selected a system of 36 speed-strength development exercises suitable for male volleyball athletes aged 14–15 at the Hanoi Sports Training and Competition Center. In addition, a 12-month periodized training plan was developed, ensuring scientific validity, systematic organization, and suitability to the specialized characteristics of the research subjects.

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The Imperial Examination System and Traditional Culture: Their Dialectical Relationship and Contemporary Inspirations

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Abstract— *Against the backdrop of traditional Chinese culture re-entering public discourse and educational practice in contemporary China, the imperial examination system, as a significant component of this culture, is still often reduced to a negative symbol of "selecting officials through examinations" or "the shackles of the eight-legged essay." This paper, departing from the realistic context of the return of traditional culture, discusses the dialectical relationship between the imperial examination system and traditional culture. The imperial examination was not merely a system for selecting officials in the imperial era; it was also a comprehensive mechanism that long connected state governance, educational operations, social mobility, and cultural transmission. It provided traditional culture with an institutional vehicle for dissemination and social practice, yet simultaneously brought about problems such as utilitarianism, rigidity, and alienation due to its deep embedding in the competition for scholarly honors. At the same time, the open competition, relative fairness, and procedural credibility it embodied have profoundly influenced the modern Chinese understanding of examination systems. This paper argues that the study of the imperial examination not only aids in re-understanding the institutional and cultural structures of traditional China but can also offer inspiration for contemporary cultural and educational promotion—namely, how to transform abstract cultural values into concrete educational practices and establish a relatively balanced connection among cultural inheritance, institutional arrangements, and human development.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the rise of China's comprehensive national power and the expansion of its international influence, traditional culture has increasingly received attention in contemporary China's public discourse, educational practice, and external communication. However, in the process of related learning, research, and dissemination, the imperial examination—an important constituent part of traditional Chinese culture—often remains an object both familiar and unfamiliar. On the one hand, as a significant system that persisted for over a

millennium in Chinese history, it has long been deeply embedded in people's overall imagination of traditional society; on the other hand, to this day, the understanding of it held by the vast majority of Chinese people mostly remains at the negative impression of "selecting officials through examinations," "the shackles of the eight-legged essay," or even "stifling human nature and creativity," with little further inquiry into its historical role in political operations, educational forms, social mobility, and cultural transmission. This nearly stereotypical perception largely continues the critical tradition that began with the New

Culture Movement, particularly as exemplified by portrayals such as "the middle school textbook selections Fan Jin Passes the Provincial Examination and Kong Yiji, along with the regional opera stages' The Tale of the Lute and Qin Xianglian, which depict the absurdity and cruelty of the imperial examination system in a way that makes one's heart palpitate" [1], thereby shaping the public's fundamental image of the examination. Precisely for this reason, how to re-understand the imperial examination and, from this, grasp its deeper connection with traditional culture has become an issue worthy of renewed discussion.

This paper does not intend to offer simple praise or condemnation of the imperial examination, nor does it aim to confine itself to the investigation of institutional evolution and detailed historical facts. Rather, building upon existing research, it seeks to contemplate from a more holistic perspective: as a system that has been off the historical stage for two sexagenary cycles, why is the imperial examination still worth studying and discussing today? This is because its historical significance extends far beyond the selection of officials through examinations. With the passage of history, it gradually evolved into a comprehensive mechanism that simultaneously connected state governance, educational operations, social mobility, and cultural transmission. It can be said that "the imperial examination' is not a study concerning a part of traditional Chinese culture, but rather a study concerning its entirety" [2]. Therefore, the imperial examination is not only a crucial entry point for understanding the institutional structure of traditional China but also an important thread for rethinking how Chinese cultural traditions were implemented in society and how they influenced people's values and public life. It is from this perspective that this paper will discuss the dialectical relationship between the imperial examination system and traditional culture, and further reflect on several inspirations it offers for contemporary cultural and educational work.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE AND DIRECTION OF THE RETURN OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Over recent decades, the re-emergence of traditional culture into the public discourse in China has been a rather evident phenomenon. From the "Guoxue (National Studies) fever" since the 1980s, to the academic reflection on radical anti-tradition currents since the 1990s, and to the recent expansion of related topics from academia to wider social levels, all indicate a growing tendency among people to reconsider the position and meaning of tradition in modern life. This return does not signify a simple restoration of tradition, nor an unconditional affirmation of

historical resources. Rather, amidst rapid modernization, when facing the shaking of values, the pressure of social integration, and anxieties over cultural identity, people are conducting a re-examination and renewed understanding of their own cultural resources. In other words, the reason tradition is re-entering contemporary perspectives is not solely due to a need for knowledge supplementation or emotional nostalgia, but more so because if culture is to truly bring peace of mind, it ultimately must be connected to the transformation of one's own national tradition [3].

Delving further, an important reason contemporary society has renewed its emphasis on traditional culture lies precisely in this: culture is not merely an accumulation of knowledge or symbolic decoration; it also relates to how people understand themselves, how they settle their lives, how they form a common language of values, and even how a society maintains basic trust, order, and identity. It is precisely for this reason that the significance of traditional culture should not remain at the level of slogan-like advocacy or the construction of abstract ideals, but must be concretely implemented into specific educational practices, institutional arrangements, and social life in order to truly function. In other words, if culture is to become a living force, it cannot merely be "talked about," but must be capable of being continuously transmitted, learned, internalized, and practiced.

From this perspective, the reason the imperial examination system deserves renewed scrutiny lies precisely in the fact that it was not merely a method of selecting scholars, but one of the few key mechanisms in Chinese history capable of long-term integration of culture, education, and institutions. It not only influenced the dissemination of knowledge content, the formation of scholar-official identity, and the direction of social mobility, but also profoundly participated in the shaping of values and the maintenance of public order in traditional society. Therefore, if one wishes to discuss how traditional culture was institutionalized in history and how it entered broader social life through education, scholarly honors, and the scholar-official group, the imperial examination is undoubtedly a highly representative entry point. This is also the reason this paper links the study of the imperial examination with contemporary discussions on cultural tradition.

III. THE DIALECTICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE IMPERIAL EXAMINATION SYSTEM AND TRADITIONAL CULTURE

The relationship between the imperial examination and traditional culture is first manifested in how it linked together classical learning, the cultivation of scholars,

mobility through scholarly honors, and social order. Although the imperial examination initially served primarily as an institutional arrangement for state recruitment and centralization of power, its historical role, as it continued to develop, far exceeded the narrow scope of "selecting officials through examinations" and profoundly participated in the formation of the cultural structure and public order of late imperial Chinese society. Therefore, the relationship between the imperial examination and traditional culture cannot be viewed solely from the singular perspective of institutional history or intellectual history, but must be grasped within the context of the mutual embedding of institutions, culture, and society.

On the positive side, the imperial examination provided a relatively stable institutional vehicle for traditional culture. It connected classical learning, scholar cultivation, and opportunities for official advancement, allowing culture to be not merely the intellectual cultivation of a few but to continuously enter broader social life through systems of education, examination, and scholarly honors. Especially after the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, the imperial examination not only shaped the knowledge structure and value orientation of the scholars but also formed a close connection among studying, taking examinations, self-cultivation, and entering officialdom. This means that traditional culture was not an abstract existence floating outside institutions and society, but to a large extent, through the mechanism of the imperial examination, acquired the conditions for continuous transmission, repeated learning, and social practice. In this sense, the imperial examination truly serves as a crucial aperture for understanding how traditional culture was institutionalized and how it entered real life.

It should also be recognized that another extremely important reason why the imperial examination could achieve a considerable degree of legitimacy over the long term in traditional society lies precisely in the fact that it provided, to a large extent, a set of relatively fair, relatively open, and relatively comparable mechanisms for selecting scholars. Traditional Chinese society was profoundly rooted in patriarchal relationships, and human sentiment, solicitation, and personal dependency easily infiltrated social operations; if the selection of scholars relied primarily on family status, recommendation, or personal connections, it would very easily lead to factionalism and cronyism, thereby undermining the public credibility of state talent selection. In contrast, although the imperial examination was never absolutely fair and always had limitations—such as the prevalence of cheating, an overemphasis on literary form, and difficulty

in comprehensively assessing virtue and specialized skills—it nonetheless provided society with a relatively rigid channel for upward mobility through public examinations, unified standards, and layered competition. From this perspective, the imperial examination not only carried traditional culture but also, to some degree, formed an institutional restraint against the tendency of pervasive favoritism and relational penetration in traditional society. It is no wonder that Ouyang Xiu lavishly praised the imperial examination as being "as emotionless as the creative forces of nature, and as impartial as a balance scale" [4]. In other words, it was both a system born from the soil of traditional culture and, in turn, an important "preservative" that prevented the spread of certain maladies within that soil. For this very reason, the high social prestige of examination degrees in traditional society was connected not only to the opportunities for official advancement but also because they were generally regarded as legitimate qualifications obtained through open competition.

More importantly, the imperial examination did not merely shape a number of officials entering service; it also participated on a broader scale in the formation of the gentry class and the functioning of local society, integrating the gentry groups in rural society and the national bureaucratic body into a single political community [5]. Because the imperial examination and its surrounding system of degrees provided scholars with cultural prestige and social authority, a considerable portion of work related to moral edification, mediation, public welfare, and order maintenance in traditional Chinese local society was often undertaken precisely by groups possessing such cultural capital and moral discourse power. In other words, the imperial examination was not only selecting officials for the state but also continuously producing, certifying, and distributing a form of public cultural authority. This authority helped to form an intermediary layer between the state and the localities and also enabled the Confucian classics, moral language, and scholar-official ideals to gain relatively stable bearers and disseminators within local society. If traditional China was, to a considerable extent, a society where "ritual" (li) and "law" (fa) operated in parallel, with the former being more prominent, then the imperial examination undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping shared values, confirming scholar-official identity, and supporting the edifying order of local society.

Furthermore, the imperial examination, with its core content centered on the Confucian classics, allowed certain fundamental cultural languages, value concepts, and historical memories to be repeatedly learned, disseminated, and reproduced across vast spaces. This function does not

necessarily mean that culture was merely "indoctrinated" into society in a unidirectional, top-down manner, but it certainly facilitated the integration of a vast empire, across different regions and levels, into a cultural community with a unified moral identity [6], enabling a certain shareable cultural framework to form among different social strata. It is in this sense that the imperial examination pertained not only to bureaucratic recruitment and educational orientation but also to the maintenance of fundamental cultural identity within a large, unified society. Of course, this does not imply that the continuity and integration of Chinese civilization can be attributed solely to the imperial examination; civilizational continuity in history is always the result of multiple factors acting together. However, if one seeks to understand how traditional Chinese society could, over such a long duration, continuously link together classics, ethics, scholar-official ideals, and local life, the imperial examination is undoubtedly a factor that cannot be ignored.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the imperial examination and traditional culture is not solely positive. Precisely because the examination provided a powerful institutional vehicle for culture, once culture became embedded within a competitive system of degrees and honors, it was inevitably shaped by utilitarian motives and institutional logic. When classical learning was tightly bound to opportunities for official advancement, cultural content that originally held significance for self-cultivation and the propagation of the Way (Dao) was easily transformed into instruments for examination preparation; scholars who originally bore ideals of value could, amidst intense competition, allow their minds seeking the Way to yield to minds seeking profit. As Zhu Xi once criticized: "The Imperial University has merely become a field of fame and profit, and those in charge of education only select those who excel at writing for the civil service examinations" [7]. Yet he also stated: "It is not that the imperial examinations burden people, but that people burden the imperial examinations... Living in the present age, even if Confucius were reborn, he would still have to take the examinations; how could they possibly burden Confucius?" [8]. It is thus evident that what Zhu Xi was truly wary of was not the imperial examination system itself, but the deviation of culture from its original purpose of learning and self-cultivation once it became excessively subordinated to the competition for examination degrees. This duality—in which the system could both sustain and potentially distort culture—is a noteworthy aspect of the relationship between the imperial examination system and traditional culture.

However, the increasing prominence of this distortion in the late imperial period cannot be simply attributed to the moral decay of individual scholars; rather, it should be understood in terms of the dramatic expansion of the system's scale and the structural pressures this brought about. By the mid-to-late Qing dynasty, with significant population growth, the popularization of printing and dissemination, and the expansion of the scope of education, the number of participants in the examinations far exceeded that of earlier periods, and competition for degrees grew ever more intense. For the state, allowing more people the opportunity to sit for the examinations certainly helped to maintain the system's openness and stability; but concurrently, the limited quotas for official advancement, the layer upon layer of qualification screenings, and the constantly lengthening ladder of degrees placed ever greater pressure on the system itself [9]. Many practices originally intended as "remedial measures adapted to the times"—such as increasing the levels of degrees, strengthening examination specifications, and using standardized stylistic forms to maintain fairness in grading—may have, to a certain extent, prolonged the lifespan of the system, but they could also conversely foster new problems of rigidity, vacuity, and utilitarianism. In this sense, the alienation in late imperial examinations was not solely the result of culture being shaped by institutional logic, but also a structural fatigue that appeared after the system had exceeded its original carrying capacity.

Thus, the functions of integration and edification that the imperial examination originally possessed and had long exercised gradually became accompanied by problems such as rigidity, corruption, utilitarianization, and cultural alienation as the system operated in its later stages, amidst population growth, the expansion of the examination scale, deepening worship of examination degrees, and strengthened state control. In other words, the problem lay not merely in "the deterioration of human hearts," but in the fact that when culture, education, and political power were excessively bound together, several dimensions that could originally support each other could, under specific conditions, begin to consume one another. This is why, on the one hand, we can indeed see many scholars of the examination era cultivating their minds and assuming responsibilities through the study of the classics, Neo-Confucianism (Lixue), the School of Mind (Xinxue), and even Buddhism; on the other hand, we cannot ignore phenomena in the late period such as examination fraud, the instrumentalization of the classics, and the subordination of academies to the examination track. The coexistence of these two aspects precisely demonstrates that the imperial examination was both an important

channel for cultural transmission and a field within which culture could be reshaped by institutional logic.

Therefore, from a more macroscopic perspective, the relationship between the imperial examination system and traditional culture is not one of unidirectional support, but a mutually constitutive relationship characterized by inherent tension: culture attained broader institutional dissemination through the examination system, and the examination system gained moral legitimacy and social penetration through culture's participation; but simultaneously, once culture was deeply embedded in institutional competition, it also bore the risks of utilitarianization, rigidity, and absorption by power. This historical experience remains instructive today: it reminds us that if culture is to genuinely exert a positive influence, it certainly cannot be divorced from the support of education and institutions, but it also cannot be completely swallowed by the logic of power or utility. How to maintain the necessary tension and a sense of proportion among cultural transmission, institutional arrangements, and social practice is perhaps the most valuable historical lesson to be drawn from our rethinking of the relationship between the imperial examination and traditional culture today.

IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE AND INSPIRATION OF IMPERIAL EXAMINATION RESEARCH FOR THE PROMOTION OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION

If the preceding discussion focused on revealing how the imperial examination became a crucial mechanism for the institutionalization and socialization of traditional culture, while simultaneously generating tensions of utilitarianization and alienation in its operation, then what inspirations this historical experience holds for today's cultural and educational promotion is the question to be explored next. In the author's view, the significance of studying the imperial examination does not lie in restoring the old system, nor in unconditionally defending tradition, but rather in its ability to help us understand more concretely how culture is transmitted through education, institutions, and social life, and how it faces deformation, competition, and adjustment in the course of history. In this regard, although the imperial examination long ago exited the historical stage, the various issues revolving around it still possess considerable realistic relevance today.

First, the study of the imperial examination helps to transform the relatively abstract concept of "traditional culture" into concretely understandable historical experience. Today, discussions of cultural inheritance

often tend to remain at the level of value declarations or slogan-like advocacy, but the imperial examination reminds us that culture's ability to function continuously is not merely because it possesses certain lofty ideals, but because it once entered people's lives and the workings of society through specific channels such as educational content, examination systems, scholar cultivation, and local edification. Therefore, by studying figures of the imperial examination, examination lineages, family precepts and regulations, as well as local documents related to examination degrees, daily edification materials, and so on, one can not only gain a more vivid understanding of how traditional culture was passed down, studied, and practiced, but also further reflect on how, in today's education and cultural promotion, values should be concretely implemented, and how cultural resources can avoid remaining as abstract slogans and truly transform into living public content. From this angle, the study of the imperial examination itself can provide a historical reference for contemporary cultural and educational work.

Going further, the particular value of imperial examination studies for contemporary cultural and educational promotion lies in the fact that it itself embodies an integrative research orientation. According to the modern approach of dividing academic disciplines, fields such as politics, society, education, culture, literature, and law are often segmented into mutually independent departments of knowledge; however, the imperial examination, as a significant system that ran through the late imperial period of China, inherently transcends these different levels. This is precisely why the significance of so-called "Examination Studies" (Keju Xue) or a "comprehensive view of the imperial examination" lies not merely in adding another specialized field of study, but more so in reminding us that understanding traditional Chinese society often cannot be limited to the partial analysis of a single discipline, but must grasp the connection among its institutional operations, cultural forms, and social effects within a larger civilizational structure. "Through studying the imperial examination, one can bring together the political, social, cultural, literary, and various other facets of traditional China" [10]. For today's cultural and educational promotion, the value of imperial examination studies lies not only in providing knowledge content, but also in its ability to train the capacity to understand institutional, cultural, and social issues within the same field of vision. This point forms a certain resonance with the contemporary educational demand for "cross-disciplinary integration" and "comprehensive thinking" abilities. From this perspective, imperial examination studies are not just a supplementary body of knowledge;

they can further serve as a vital thread for understanding the overall structure of Chinese cultural tradition and help people break through fragmentary knowledge understanding, re-establishing a mode of cultural cognition that possesses both historical depth and holistic vision.

Moreover, the reason why imperial examination studies deserve to be included in the scope of contemporary cultural and educational promotion is also that it can help us re-understand how traditional society viewed "talent" and designed "methods of selecting talent." Today, when people mention the imperial examination, they often immediately associate it with the eight-legged essay, procedural uniformity, and the stifling of creativity. However, returning to the historical context reveals that the reason the imperial examination could serve as the primary method of selecting scholars over such a long period was not merely because it served the state's need to select officials, but more so because it responded, under the conditions of that time, to a highly realistic and persistent problem: how to select talent in a manner that was as open and fair as possible within a society that heavily valued human relationships, connections, and deeply rooted patriarchal networks. That is to say, what the imperial examination sought was not only the issue of efficiency in identifying talent, but also the problem of maintaining procedural credibility and order. It needed to identify, through large-scale competition, individuals with a certain level of comprehension, expressive ability, and thinking capacity, while simultaneously attempting, through unified examinations, open competition, and relatively objective evaluation methods, to minimize the infiltration of nepotism, solicitation, and personal relationships into the selection process. In this sense, certain procedural principles embodied by the imperial examination—such as open competition, relatively uniform standards, and the requirement that results be acceptable—indeed possess a kind of universal significance that transcends the imperial era. Even today, the reason Chinese people attach particular importance to the National College Entrance Examination (Gaokao) is not merely its connection to advancement to higher education and social mobility, but also, in the general social psyche, because examinations are still regarded as an institutional arrangement relatively capable of resisting manipulation through personal connections and maintaining a basic level of fairness. Of course, the fairness of the imperial examination was never absolute and was always conditioned by factors such as geography, resources, stylistic form, and institutional constraints; but precisely because of this, re-understanding the imperial examination helps us to see more clearly that, within Chinese historical experience, the intense

expectation for examination fairness is itself a modern continuation with deep cultural and institutional roots.

If the preceding discussion mostly concerned the inspiration brought by the imperial examination as a system and examination mechanism, then from a deeper layer, the imperial examination also profoundly intervened in the spiritual life of traditional society. Around the activities of preparing for the examinations, failing, passing, pursuing official careers, and retiring from them, generations of scholars and folk society formed a rich body of cultural resources related to self-cultivation, resolve, accepting fate, accumulating virtue, and mental and spiritual adjustment. Whether it was Neo-Confucian scholars attempting to unify the study for examinations with the learning of virtue, or the permeation of Buddhist and Daoist thought into scholars' mentalities and daily lives, all indicate that the cultural life within the examination society was not solely external competition and the pursuit of fame and gain, but also contained more internal themes such as how to find peace within oneself, how to face success and failure, and how to seek meaning within an institutionalized life. These resources certainly cannot be romanticized, but from the perspective of modern people's spiritual situation, they can still offer an observational angle: if cultural education focuses only on knowledge and competition while neglecting the cultivation of personality, mind-heart nature, and life experience, it will ultimately be difficult to build a lasting and profound spiritual world. In this sense, the study of the imperial examination helps us not only to understand the institution, but also to rethink the deeper connection between education and culture.

Furthermore, adopting a more rational and balanced understanding of the imperial examination also contributes to forming a more mature view of tradition. For a long time, many people have held a strong negative impression of the imperial examination, tending to reduce it simply to a historical symbol of rigidity, conservatism, and the stifling of creativity; yet with a slightly deeper look, one finds that the imperial examination indeed played a historical role in institutional integration, educational popularization, and cultural dissemination, while also truly exhibiting aspects of utilitarianization, instrumentalization, and late-stage rigidity. What is truly important is not to replace analysis with simple praise or condemnation, but to learn to grasp its complexity within its historical context. This mode of understanding itself offers inspiration for today's cultural education: it reminds us that when facing our own tradition, we should neither lapse into blind praise nor rest on vague negation, but rather form more balanced and measured judgments based on an understanding of its historical conditions, operational

mechanisms, and inherent limitations. True understanding of tradition has never been about choosing between praise and negation, but about re-establishing the capacity for judgment on the premise of acknowledging its historical complexity.

Finally, the study of the imperial examination can also enhance people's sensitivity to and ability to interpret Chinese cultural heritage today. Whether it be cultural relics related to the imperial examination, steles, memorial archways, ancestral temples, or the literary writings, local memories, and artistic expressions formed around it, all constitute an important part of Chinese cultural memory. If one lacks a basic understanding of the imperial examination system, its cultural significance, and "examination society," these historical remnants are easily perceived merely as scattered objects or hollow symbols; yet once placed within the historical context of the interaction between the imperial examination and traditional culture, these materials will again reveal their rich implications on institutional, social, and spiritual levels. Therefore, the study of the imperial examination not only aids intellectual understanding but also contributes to emotional and perceptual appreciation, enabling a deeper cognition of the concrete forms of Chinese cultural tradition. From the perspective of modern cultural and educational promotion, this cultural sensibility extending from intellectual understanding is perhaps a crucial condition for making tradition truly approachable, tangible, and worthy of contemplation.

In sum, the value of imperial examination studies for contemporary cultural and educational promotion does not lie in directly applying it as a ready-made answer, but in its provision of a historical perspective for re-understanding traditional culture: on the one hand, it shows how culture enters social life through institutions and education; on the other hand, it also reminds us to be vigilant against the possible distortions that culture may undergo amidst institutional competition and the logic of power. Precisely for this reason, the imperial examination is not only a historical subject worthy of study but can also serve as an important reference point for thinking about cultural inheritance, educational practice, and the construction of public values today.

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, if the imperial examination is understood merely as a system of selecting officials through examinations that has long been abolished, it becomes very difficult to grasp its true place in Chinese history. The importance of the imperial examination lies precisely in the fact that it long stood at the intersection of institutions,

culture, education, and society: on the one hand, it provided the conditions for the institutional transmission and social practice of traditional culture, creating stable bonds among classical learning, scholar cultivation, local edification, and state governance; on the other hand, because it was deeply embedded in a competitive system of degrees and honors, it inevitably brought about problems of utilitarianism, rigidity, and alienation. It is within this relationship of mutual support and mutual constraint that the imperial examination and traditional culture constituted a historical interaction charged with inherent tension.

It is precisely for this reason that rethinking the imperial examination today is not aimed at restoring the old system, nor at simply rehabilitating it from contemporary value standpoints, but rather hopes to use this opportunity to re-understand a more fundamental problem: how can culture avoid remaining only at the conceptual level and truly enter public life through education, institutions, and social practice; and simultaneously, how does institutionalization, while providing the power of dissemination, also exert pressure on and shape culture itself. In this sense, the modern significance of studying the imperial examination lies not in its belonging to the past, but in the fact that the issues it presents concerning culture, education, power, competition, and social integration have not yet lost their relevance today.

For contemporary China, the re-entry of traditional culture into the public view is both a historical phenomenon and a practical task. If one is to prevent traditional culture from degenerating into empty slogans, superficial symbols, or unidirectional propaganda, one must return to history and examine how it was once transmitted, how it was institutionally sustained, how it entered social life, and how it generated deviations and underwent corrections in concrete operation. The imperial examination provides exactly such a highly representative sample. Through its study, one can not only deepen the understanding of the overall structure of traditional China but also rethink how today's cultural and educational promotion can achieve a better balance among cultural inheritance, institutional arrangements, and human life development. This is perhaps the reason why the study of the imperial examination remains meaningful to us today.

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The Establishment and Transformation of the “Theory of Jituo” in the Changzhou School of Ci Poetry during the Qing Dynasty

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Abstract— This paper attempts to analyze the discourse on jituo (allegorical expression) by Zhang Huiyan, the founder of the Changzhou School of Ci poetry in the Qing dynasty, and by Zhou Ji, who inherited and further developed Zhang’s ideas, in order to understand the developmental process of the school’s central theory, the “theory of jituo.” Zhang Huiyan’s theory of jituo is primarily grounded in the concept of bixing jituo (allegory through comparison and evocative imagery). Zhang bypasses historical facts and, on an essential level, directly connects ci poetry with the tradition of the Shi Jing (Classic of Poetry) and the Li Sao, thereby establishing the ideal value of ci. This essence is precisely the “jituo” embedded in the works. Zhou Ji’s theory of wu jituo (non-allegory) expands the implications of Zhang Huiyan’s concept of jituo. By wu jituo, it is meant that when composing, the author must still embed allegorical meaning in the work; however, once the work is completed, this meaning should be concealed so that the reader cannot definitively identify what it refers to, and different readers may derive different allegorical meanings from the work. Moreover, the content of this jituo must reflect the rise and fall of the times and pertain to social morality, rather than being limited to personal sentiments of sorrow and nostalgia.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the early Qing, ci composition largely followed the Ming dynasty guideline of “modeling on the Huajian style and prioritizing graceful beauty” [1]; it was not until the rise of the Yangxian School and the Western Zhejiang (Zhexi) School that the trend began to change. The Yangxian School took Chen Weisong as its representative figure. Chen Weisong esteemed Su Shi and Xin Qiji in his discourse on ci, advocating a bold and unrestrained style. The Zhexi School was headed by Zhu Yizun, who revered Jiang Kui and Zhang Yan, taking refined purity as the hallmark of ci style. The poets honored and the styles advocated by the two schools seem to be widely divergent. Yet, judging from the association between Chen Weisong and Zhu Yizun, the two were not only close friends but also co-authored the book Zhu Chen Cun Ci, indicating

very close interaction. Therefore, we may interpret this situation from another perspective: the formation of these two schools and the emergence of their theories were primarily a response to dissatisfaction with the early Qing ci arena, which inherited Ming practices, and an attempt at reform. The Yangxian School proceeded in a diametrically opposite direction, using an entirely contrary, bold and unrestrained style to correct the overly delicate manner of the early Qing; the Zhexi School, standing on the ground of the restrained and graceful style, rectified its excesses and directed it toward refined purity. The two schools could, in theory, actually complement each other.

By the mid-Qing period, the defects of the Yangxian and Zhexi Schools gradually surfaced. The Yangxian School increasingly tended toward crudeness and roughness; the Zhexi School slipped into lavish

ornamentation and piling up of allusions. Jin Yinggui, a disciple of Zhang Huiyan, once wrote in his “Postface to the Ci Xuan”:

近世為詞，厥有三蔽，義非宋玉而獨賦蓬發，諫謝淳於而唯陳履舄。揣摩床第，汗穢中篝，是為淫詞，其蔽一也。猛起奮末，分言析字，詼嘲則俳優之末流，叫嘯則市儈之盛氣，其蔽二也。規模物類，依拖歌舞，哀樂不衷其性，慮嘆無與乎情，連章累篇，義不出乎花鳥，感物指事，理不外乎酬應。雖既雅而不艷，斯有句而無章，是為游詞，其蔽三也[2]。(In recent times, ci writing has three defects. When the meaning does not match that of Song Yu yet one solely describes disheveled hair; when the admonishment is less than that of Chunyu Kun yet one merely displays shoes and stockings — this is fumbling with bedchamber affairs, foul and obscene. This is lascivious ci, the first defect. When one bursts forth fiercely and dissects words and phrases, jests and mockery becoming the dregs of the jester’s trade, shouts and roars venting the bluster of the marketplace — this is the second defect. When one delineates objects and things, relies on singing and dancing, sorrow and joy do not stem from one’s nature, sighs and reflections have no connection to genuine feeling, producing piece after piece whose meaning never goes beyond flowers and birds, whose inspiration and reference never transcend social niceties. Although such pieces may be elegant without being sensual, they possess phrases but lack coherent composition. This is frivolous ci, the third defect [2].)

Xie Zhangting, writing in a later period, offered an explanation of Jin Yinggui’s remarks:

按一蔽是學周、柳之末派也。二蔽是學蘇、辛之末派也。三蔽是學姜、史之末派也。皋文《詞選》，誠足救此三蔽。其大旨在於有寄託，能蘊藉，是固倚聲家之金鍼也[3]。(According to this, the first defect refers to learning from the latter branches of Zhou Bangyan and Liu Yong. The second defect refers to learning from the latter branches of Su Shi and Xin Qiji. The third defect refers to learning from the latter branches of Jiang Kui and Shi Dazhu. Gaowen’s (Zhang Huiyan’s) Ci Xuan is truly capable of remedying these three defects. Its main tenet lies in possessing jituo and being able to be implicit and reserved — this is indeed the golden needle for composers of ci [3].)

From this, we can see that the lascivious ci of “defect one” mentioned by Jin Yinggui should refer to the early Qing continuation of Ming ci styles; “defect two” refers to the epigones of the Yangxian School; and “defect three” to the epigones of the Zhexi School. The “defect one” lascivious ci of the first stage had already undergone reform by the Yangxian and Zhexi Schools. By the mid-

Qing, however, “defect two” and “defect three” had reached a point where reform was urgently needed, and it was in response to this that the Changzhou School of ci poetry arose.

Nevertheless, Zhang Huiyan did not specifically direct his criticism solely at the epigones of the Yangxian and Zhexi Schools. In his “Preface to the Ci Xuan,” he once said:

自宋之亡而正聲絕，元之末而規矩隳。以至於今四百餘年，作者十數，諒其所是，互有繁變，皆可謂安蔽乖方，迷不知門戶者也[4]。(After the fall of the Song dynasty, the orthodox tradition of ci was cut off; by the end of the Yuan, its standards were ruined. From then until the present, over four hundred years, among the tens of authors, although they affirmed their own ways, each had manifold changes — all can be said to have rested content with their defects and gone astray, lost and unaware of the proper gateway [4].)

This shows that Zhang Huiyan aimed to guide all those who had “lost their way” over the past four hundred years. This also implies that his original goal was the same as that of the Yangxian and Zhexi Schools, and thus many of his views were by no means entirely distinct from those two schools. When discussing the developmental course of the Changzhou School, Yan Dichang discovered that Xu Yanzong’s preface to the Lianzi Ju Cihua reveals precisely this message: Zhang Huiyan’s Ci Xuan circulated among friends and associates, primarily among tongnian (examination peers) and scholarly circles, but it was not regarded as the banner of an independent school, nor was it seen as diametrically opposed to the Zhexi School [5].

This points out that Zhang Huiyan’s discourse was not entirely opposed to the Zhexi School. Likewise, Wu Hongyi discussed the relationship between the Yangxian School and the Changzhou School from two perspectives, regarding the Yangxian School as the forerunner of the Changzhou School: first, “Yangxian” refers to Yixing, which belongs to Changzhou Prefecture; second, after repeatedly reading the ci poems of Chen Weisong and others alongside those of Zhang Huiyan and his circle, Wu sensed similarities in their styles. By viewing the two schools as sharing a single line of inheritance and transformation, Wu highlights the affinities in some of their concepts [6].

To sum up, Zhang Huiyan’s reform of the ci genre did not stop at remedying the excesses of the Yangxian and Zhexi Schools; rather, he proposed a new direction for the entire development of the genre, namely, the concept of bixing jituo. Therefore, this paper will analyze the

discourse on *jituo* by Zhang Huiyan, the founder of the Changzhou School, and by Zhou Ji, who inherited and developed the theory, in order to understand the establishment and expansion of the school's central theory, the "theory of *jituo*."

II. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE THEORY OF JITUO CENTERING ON ZHANG HUIYAN'S THEORY OF BIXING JITUO

Although Zhang Huiyan was the pioneer of the Changzhou School, he did not fully construct a comprehensive and rigorous theoretical system. His *Ci Xuan* represents the fruits of his practical criticism. The theoretical aspects are mainly concentrated in the "Preface to the *Ci Xuan*."

When analyzing Zhang Huiyan's "Preface to the *Ci Xuan*," many scholars tend to divide it into several distinct topics. For instance, Ye Jiaying summarizes it into four points: 1) the origin of *ci*; 2) the definition of *ci*; 3) the evaluative criteria for *ci*; and 4) the purpose of compiling the *Ci Xuan* [7]. Ding Fang divides it into three points: 1) elevating the status of the *ci* genre; 2) emphasizing *bixing*; and 3) discussing the history of *ci* [8]. Zhu Deci also divides his discussion into three parts: "the theory of elevating the genre," "the theory of *bixing jituo*," and "the theory of orthodoxy and variation" [9]. In fact, the key points distinguished by these scholars differ little in essential meaning. While a point-by-point exposition can indeed highlight specific perspectives, it can also fragment the meanings of the various key points, preventing the holistic presentation of the *ci* theorist's thought. Therefore, we must pay attention to the inner coherence among these concepts in order to gain a full and concrete understanding of the theorist's system.

Zhang Huiyan's "Preface to the *Ci Xuan*" first discusses the origin of *ci* and then proceeds to the principle of *bixing*:

詞者，蓋出於唐之詩人，採樂府之音，以制新律，因繫其詞，故曰詞。《傳》曰：意內而言外者，謂之詞。其緣情造端，興於微言，以相感動。極命風謠里巷男女哀樂，以道賢人君子幽約怨悱，不能自言之情，低徊要眇以喻其致。蓋詩之比興，變風之義，騷人之歌，則近之矣！然以其文小，其聲哀。放者為之，或跌蕩靡麗，雜以昌狂俳優。然要其至者，罔不惻隱盱愉，感物而發，觸類條鬯，各有所歸，非苟為雕琢曼辭而已[10]。(Ci originated when poets of the Tang dynasty adopted the melodies of *yuefu* (Music Bureau ballads) to set new musical rules and, accordingly,

appended words to them; hence the name *ci* (literally "words"). The *Zhuan* commentary says: "That which intends meaning within and manifests words without is called *ci*." It traces emotions and initiates expression, arising from subtle words to move one another. It fully conveys the sorrows and joys of men and women in the folk songs of the lanes, thereby expressing the hidden, melancholy, and unutterable feelings of worthy men and noble gentlemen, with a lingering, delicate subtlety that intimates its meaning. This approaches the *bixing* of the *Shi Jing*, the meaning of the "changed airs" (*bian feng*), and the songs of the *Li Sao* poets! However, because its form is small and its sound is plaintive, when unrestrained people compose it, it sometimes becomes licentious and voluptuously beautiful, mixed with wild and jester-like elements. Yet in its most essential manifestations, there is none that does not arise from a heart of compassion and delight, stirred by things, touching upon kindred categories and expanding freely, each having its own place of return; it is not merely crafted with empty, ornate phrases [10].)

Zhang Huiyan traces historical facts to demonstrate the origin of *ci*. This approach explains the emergence of *ci* in terms of its genetic significance and also shows that he possessed a certain degree of understanding of its origins. However, Zhang immediately follows this by interpreting the meaning of *ci* using the statement from the classics: "Ci means 'intention within and words without'" [11]. This clearly does not match the historical facts he himself narrated (i.e., originating with Tang poets adopting *yuefu* melodies), and it consequently invited criticism from scholars [12]. In fact, judging from the passage that follows — "緣情造端，興於微言，以相感動。極命風謠里巷男女哀樂，以道賢人君子幽約怨悱，不能自言之情，低徊要眇以喻其致"(It traces emotions

and initiates expression, arising from subtle words to move one another. It fully conveys the sorrows and joys of men and women in the folk songs of the lanes, thereby expressing the hidden, melancholy, and unutterable feelings of worthy men and noble gentlemen, with a lingering, delicate subtlety that intimates its meaning)" — which defines the essence of *ci*, we can see that he had an ulterior motive. This is because, in the minds of literati at the time, *ci* was still regarded merely as a "lesser path" (*xiaodao*), unworthy of refined circles. Zhang Qi's "Preface to the Re-engraving of the *Ci Xuan*" mentions:

嘉慶二年，余與先兄皋文先生同館歙金氏，金氏諸生好填詞。先兄以為詞雖為小道，失其傳且數百年[13]。(In the second year of the *Jiaqing* reign, my late elder brother *Gaowen* (Zhang Huiyan) and I both stayed as tutors with the *Jin* family of *She County*. Several students

of the Jin family enjoyed writing ci. My late brother thought that although ci was a lesser path, its tradition had been lost for several hundred years [13].)

This shows that although contemporary literati composed ci, they still considered it not to be a “proper form” (zhengti) like shi poetry or fu rhapsodies. Yet, although Zhang Huiyan verbally referred to it as a “lesser path,” he inwardly believed that ci could stand on a par with shi poetry. He therefore felt compelled to elevate the value of ci and extricate the genre from the status of “lesser path.” There were roughly two ways to do this: one was through the method of “generic origin” (tiyuan), that is, tracing the development of ci back to the three hundred poems of the Shi Jing and asserting that ci is no different from shi poetry. The other method was through the approach of “essence” (benzhi), holding that shi and ci follow the same principle, whether in the manner of composition or in content [14]. Zhang Huiyan knew for certain that the origin of ci could no longer be altered. He therefore adopted this second method, the “essence” approach, directly equating the essence of ci with the essence of the Shi Jing and Li Sao, thereby elevating the status of ci. And this essence was the requirement that, in both composition and content, there must be the sense of bixing jituo. His statement, “蓋詩之比興，變風之義，騷人之歌，則近之矣 (This approaches the bixing of the Shi Jing, the meaning of the ‘changed airs’ (bian feng), and the songs of the Li Sao poets),” is precisely the application of this method, through which he maintained that ci is indeed close to the tradition of the Shi Jing and Li Sao. Although the ci genre sometimes, because “其文小，其聲哀 (its form is small and its sound is plaintive),” resulted in “放者為之，或跌蕩靡麗，雜以昌狂俳優 (when unrestrained people compose it, it sometimes becomes licentious and voluptuously beautiful, mixed with wild and jester-like elements)” — a situation that fails to meet this essential requirement — the normative standard of ci composition must still demand “罔不惻隱肝愉，感物而發，觸類條鬯，各有所歸，非苟為雕琢曼辭而已 (that there is none that does not arise from a heart of compassion and delight, stirred by things, touching upon kindred categories and expanding freely, each having its own place of return; it is not merely crafted with empty, ornate phrases).” Already visible here is his demand for an ideal ci genre. Through this method, Zhang Huiyan bypasses historical facts, reconstructs the creative spirit of ci, restores it to the entire Chinese tradition of the Shi Jing and Li Sao, and ensures that its function is no longer merely that of a “lesser path.”

Ye Jiaying believes that Zhang Huiyan compared ci to the Shi Jing because, when ci first arose, it

was set to music and sung, just like the Shi Jing, and thus he placed them on a par. And because the folk songs in the Shi Jing embody the principle of bixing and the meaning of the “changed airs,” ci must also possess bixing and the meaning of the “changed airs.” To prove that Zhang Huiyan’s argument was mistaken, Ye Jiaying used a lengthy discussion to demonstrate that the bixing and “changed airs” of the Shi Jing have, in reality, no connection whatsoever with ci [15,16]. However, while Zhang Huiyan’s argument is problematic from the perspective of ci’s historical development, we can see from the “Preface to the Ci Xuan” that he did not seek to prove that ci and the Shi Jing share the same origin based on external forms (structure, music); rather, he believed that the two should be identical in essence, and hence could be discussed side by side. Therefore, Ye Jiaying misunderstood Zhang Huiyan’s intention. It was not because both ci and the Shi Jing were set to music that Zhang Huiyan regarded them as sharing a common origin; rather, it was because he believed that ci, in its essence, ought to carry the connotation of jituo, identical to the bixing essence of the Shi Jing and Li Sao, that he viewed them as equivalent. The status of ci was thus naturally elevated to the level of the Shi Jing and Li Sao.

As for the scope of Zhang Huiyan’s so-called bixing jituo — are there any limits to its content? Zhang Huiyan did not provide a theoretical explanation. But if we consult his practical criticism of the works selected in the Ci Xuan, we can gain some understanding. For example, regarding Wen Tingyun’s “Pusaman” (“On the hills the golden light flickers and fades”), Zhang Huiyan commented:

此感士不遇也。篇法彷彿《長門賦》，而用節節逆敘。此章從夢曉後，領起懶起二字，含後文情事，照花四句，《離騷》初服之意 [17]。 (This expresses the lament of a worthy man meeting with no recognition. The composition resembles the “Changmen Fu” (Rhapsody on the Tall Gate), but employs reverse narration section by section. This piece begins after waking from a dream at dawn; the words “too languid to rise” lead into the feelings and events described in the rest of the poem. The four lines from “adorn a flower” onward convey the meaning of the Li Sao’s “former attire” [17].)

Zhang Huiyan believed that behind the boudoir sentiments, Wen Tingyun concealed a lament of “a worthy man meeting with no recognition.” He even regarded the final four lines of the second stanza as corresponding to the “former attire” (chufu) imagery in the Li Sao. Furthermore, Zhang Huiyan’s commentary on Su Dongpo’s “Busuanzi” (“A fragment of moon hangs by the sparse wutong”) proceeds in the same interpretive mode:

此東坡在黃州作。銅陽居士云：缺月，刺明微也。漏斷，暗時也。幽人，不得志也。獨往來，無助也。驚鴻，賢人不安也。回頭，愛君不忘也。無人省，君不察也。揀盡寒枝不肯棲，不偷安于高位也。寂寞沙洲冷，非所安也。此詞與考槃詩極相似[18]。(This was composed by Dongpo in Huangzhou. Tongyang Jushi said: “A fragment of moon” criticizes the dimness of the times. “The water clock has run dry” refers to dark times. “The recluse” means one who has not achieved his ambition. “Coming and going alone” indicates helplessness. “The startled swan” refers to a worthy person finding no peace. “Turning its head back” signifies longing for the sovereign and never forgetting him. “No one perceives it” means the sovereign does not discern. “Picks over all the cold branches, unwilling to roost” expresses refusal to settle comfortably in a high position. “The lonely sandbank is cold” indicates a place not of one’s peace[18]. This ci closely resembles the poem “Kao Pan”.)

Although Zhang Huiyan stated at the beginning that this was a comment by Tongyang Jushi of the early Southern Song, since he cited it, it can be taken as reflecting Zhang’s own view. He similarly considered this ci poem a work of jituo, hiding a sentiment of unwavering loyalty to the sovereign and love for the country, even when framed by petty men. Finally, he compared this ci poem to “Kao Pan” in the “Wei Airs” of the Shi Jing to highlight its emotional and allegorical dimensions. According to the Mao commentary, the poem “Kao Pan” is interpreted as: “A satire on Lord Zhuang. Unable to carry on the enterprise of his forebears, he causes worthy men to withdraw and dwell in obscurity” [19]. This shows that Zhang Huiyan believed this ci poem indeed contained a remonstrance that those in high places fail to employ worthy men. Another example is his commentary on Feng Yansi’s three “Butterflies Love Flowers” lyrics (also known as “Magpies Tread the Branch”: “六曲闌干偎碧樹(Six curving balustrades nestle against the green trees),” “誰道閑情拋擲久(Who says idle feelings can be cast away for long),” and “幾日行雲何處去(For days the traveling clouds — where have they gone)”), which he also discussed precisely in terms of “鍾愛纏綿，宛然變騷之義(a concentration of tender affection, as if embodying the meaning of the Li Sao in altered form)” [20]. From this, it is evident that the scope of Zhang Huiyan’s jituo primarily lies within the traditional connotation of the Shi Jing and Li Sao: loyalty to the sovereign, love for the country, sorrow at leaving one’s homeland, and melancholy sentiments.

With this premise, Zhang Huiyan’s view of the historical development of ci also emerged in conformity with the concept of jituo. Thus, the “Preface to the Ci Xuan” continues:

自唐之詞人，李白為首，其後韋應物、王建、韓翃、白居易、劉禹錫、皇甫湜、司空圖、韓渥，並有述造，而溫庭筠最高，其言深美閎約。五代之際，孟氏、李氏，君臣為謔，競作新調，詞之雜流，由此起矣。至其工者，往往絕倫，亦如齊梁五言，依託魏晉，近古然也。宋之詞家，號為極盛，然張先蘇軾、秦觀、周邦彥、辛棄疾、姜夔、王沂孫、張炎、淵淵乎文有其質焉。其盪而不反，傲而不理，枝而不物，柳永、黃庭堅、劉過、吳文英之倫，亦各引一端，以取重於當世。而前數子者，又不免有一時通脫放浪之言出於其間，後進彌以馳逐，不務原其指意，破析乖刺，壞亂而不可紀[21]。(Among the ci poets of the Tang, Li Bai was the foremost; after him, Wei Yingwu, Wang Jian, Han Hong, Bai Juyi, Liu Yuxi, Huangfu Song, Sikong Tu, and Han Wo all had compositions to their name. Yet Wen Tingyun was the most exalted; his language is profound, beautiful, grand, and restrained. During the Five Dynasties period, the Meng and Li houses, sovereign and subject alike, engaged in jesting and competed in creating new tunes. The heterodox stream of ci arose from this. As for their finest works, they were often matchless — just as the five-character poetry of the Qi and Liang dynasties, by relying on the Wei and Jin, approached antiquity. The Song dynasty’s ci writers are said to have reached the height of splendor. Yet among them, Zhang Xian, Su Shi, Qin Guan, Zhou Bangyan, Xin Qiji, Jiang Kui, Wang Yisun, Zhang Yan — deep and profound, their form possessed substance. Those who indulged without restraint, were arrogant without principle, and branched out without substance, such as Liu Yong, Huang Tingjian, Liu Guo, and Wu Wenying, each seized upon one aspect to gain esteem in their own time. Even the aforementioned poets could not entirely avoid occasional unrestrained words appearing in their works. Later generations rushed in pursuit of these, failing to seek the original intent, breaking and sundering, ruining and disordered beyond record [21].)

Zhang Huiyan regarded Wen Tingyun of the late Tang as the supreme model among Tang ci poets. This was because, in Wen Tingyun’s ci, he perceived not only surface splendor of language but also the deep-hidden jituo. Zhang Huiyan arrived at this judgment precisely because he had already predetermined that the essence of ci was jituo, and then examined Wen’s works

through this lens; the sentiments of a resentful woman perfectly matched the allegorical tradition of “fragrant flora and fair maidens” in the Shi Jing and Li Sao. The ci of the Five Dynasties consisted mainly of playful exchanges between sovereigns and ministers. Although such ci “approached antiquity” and could be “matchless,” they were still merely the “heterodox stream of ci.” In the Song dynasty, the development of ci reached its zenith. The highest standard of ci exhibited “deep and profound, their form possessed substance.” This was no longer mere splendor of language; the content, too, had to contain genuine emotion hidden within. It was simply that these ci poets occasionally uttered “unrestrained words,” but later generations took these as models to emulate, overlooking the deeper meanings hidden in the ci, thereby causing the decline of the entire ci development.

Zhang Huiyan believed that ci had undergone such a development. For this reason, in his *Ci Xuan*, he exclusively selected works whose “meaning harbors hidden depths,” hoping thereby to “塞其下流，導其淵源，無使風雅之士，懲乎鄙俗之音，不敢與詩賦之流，同類而風誦之 (block its downward course, trace its origins, and prevent gentlemen of refined taste from being repelled by vulgar sounds, so that they dare not join ci with shi and fu in recitation alongside them)” [4]. Wu Hongyi once criticized this argument: This entire passage by Zhang Huiyan can be summed up in a single phrase: “venerating the ancient and disparaging the modern. “Because this psychology of venerating antiquity was at work, he believed that the earlier the period of the ci poems, the better they were, and that later works invariably had some flaws [22].

Wu Hongyi’s assertion that Zhang Huiyan displayed a notion of “venerating the ancient and disparaging the modern” actually arises from a failure to clarify the overall argumentative context of Zhang’s discourse.

Looking at the “Preface to the *Ci Xuan*” as a whole, it is in fact entirely centered on one principal concept: bixing jituo. And the emphasis on bixing jituo was precisely for the purpose of elevating the status of the ci genre, freeing it from its position as a “lesser path” and ranking it alongside the Shi Jing and Li Sao. This is just as Wu Hongyi stated when discussing the theories of the entire Changzhou School: The theory of elevating the genre and the theory of jituo are mutually causal. The theory of elevating the genre is the goal of the theory of jituo, and the theory of jituo is the means by which the theory of elevating the genre is realized [23].

However, Wu Hongyi believed that the ideas set forth in Zhang Huiyan’s “Preface to the *Ci Xuan*” were too vague, and thus this view stemmed mainly from Zhou Ji’s

discourse. But from the exposition above, we can see that although Zhang Huiyan lacked a complete theoretical framework, he already possessed such a concept. It is precisely because of this that, when engaging in practical criticism, Zhang Huiyan consistently sought the jituo within the ci works themselves for his interpretations.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEORY OF JITUO THROUGH ZHOU JI’S “YOU JITUO” (POSSESSING ALLEGORY) AND “WU JITUO” (NON-ALLEGORY)

Zhang Huiyan’s discourse was not mainstream at the time. It was not until the Daoguang reign that the Changzhou School of ci poetry became a prominent school [24]. At that time, the person most important for expanding the theoretical scope of the Changzhou School was undoubtedly Zhou Ji.

Zhou Ji’s views on ci, by his own account, can be roughly divided into three periods [25]. In the first period, he earnestly followed Jiang Kui:

吾十年來服膺白石，而以稼軒為外道，由今思之，可謂瞽人捫籥也[26]。(For ten years I earnestly followed Baishi (Jiang Kui) and regarded Jiayuan (Xin Qiji) as heterodox. When I reflect on it now, I can be called a blind man tapping a pipe to guess its shape! [26])

The stance of “revering Jiang Kui and rejecting Xin Qiji” was perhaps influenced by the Zhexi School. However, after he met Dong Jinqing at the age of twenty-three, his entire outlook on ci underwent a complete change. Zhou Ji’s “Preface to the *Ci Bian*” states:

余年十六學為詞，甲子始識武進董晉卿。……其詞纏綿往復，窮高極深，異乎平時所仿效，心向慕不能已。晉卿為詞，師其舅氏張皋文、翰風兄弟。……晉卿雖師二張，所作實出其上。予遂受法晉卿，已而造詣日以異，論說亦互相短長[27]。(I began learning ci at sixteen. In the jiazi year I first became acquainted with Dong Jinqing of Wujin.... His ci was intricately winding and reciprocating, reaching the highest and deepest levels, utterly different from what I had previously imitated. In my heart I admired him and could not stop. Jinqing’s ci learning was modeled on his maternal uncles, the brothers Zhang Gaowen (Huiyan) and Hanfeng (Zhang Qi)... Although Jinqing took the two Zhangs as his teachers, his compositions actually surpassed theirs. I thereupon received instruction from Jinqing, and as time went on, my achievements changed daily and our discussions also had their mutual strengths and weaknesses [27].)

Dong Jinqing was Zhang Huiyan's nephew and studied ci under the brothers Zhang Huiyan and Zhang Qi. Through his association with Dong, Zhou Ji's concept of ci also began to lean toward the Changzhou School. As for the third period, it should correspond to the completion of Zhou Ji's *Song Si Jia Ci Xuan* (An Anthology of Ci by Four Masters of the Song) in 1832 — the stage when, as he said, “passing fifty, I first recognized the broad avenue” [25]. Thus, the scope of our discussion of Zhou Ji's ci theory encompasses his second and third stages.

Zhang Huiyan's theory of jituo, after undergoing revision and expansion by Zhou Ji, finally became a complete theoretical framework. This process moved from you jituo (possessing allegory) to wu jituo (non-allegory). Zhou Ji wrote in his *Jiecunzhai Lun Ci Za Zhu* (Miscellaneous Notes on Ci from the Jiecu Studio):

初學詞求有寄託，有寄託則表裡相宣，斐然成章。既成格調，求無寄託，無寄託則指事類情，仁者見仁，知者見知 [28]。(When first learning ci, seek to have jituo (possess allegory). If there is jituo, the surface and interior will illuminate each other, and the composition will be elegantly accomplished. Once a stylistic level has been achieved, seek to have wu jituo (non-allegory). With wu jituo, the description of events and the expression of feelings will allow the benevolent to perceive benevolence and the wise to perceive wisdom [28].)

So-called you jituo likewise means that the content of the ci must harbor jituo; only in this way can it fulfill the essence and requirements of what ci should be. However, Zhou Ji considered this merely the initial stage of learning to compose ci. Once a work has attained a certain degree of achievement and standard, one must strive toward the level of wu jituo. Wu jituo means that at the time of composition, the author must still embed jituo in the work, but after the work is completed, this jituo must be concealed and not revealed, so that the reader cannot definitively identify what it refers to, and different readers may obtain different allegorical meanings from the work. Only such a work represents the highest model of ci. Zhou Ji articulated this even more fully and clearly in the *Song Si Jia Ci Xuan*:

夫詞非寄託不入，專寄託不出。一物一事，引而伸之，觸類多通。驅心若游絲之貫飛英，含毫如郢斤之斲蠅翼，以無厚入有間。既習之，意感偶生，假類畢達，閱載千百，聲效弗違，斯入矣。賦情獨深，逐境必寤，醞釀日久，冥發妄中。雖鋪敘平淡，摹績淺近，而萬感橫集，五中無主。讀其篇者，臨淵窺魚，意為魴鯉，中宵驚電，罔識東西。赤子隨母笑啼，鄉人緣

劇喜怒，抑可為能出矣 [29]。(As for ci, without jituo one cannot enter it, but clinging solely to jituo one cannot emerge from it. Taking a single object or event, extending and stretching it, one connects and penetrates multiple categories. Driving the mind like a gossamer thread netting a falling blossom; holding the brush like the master's axe paring a fly's wing — using the blade that has no thickness to enter that which has crevices. Once one has practiced this, whenever a perception suddenly arises, it can fully convey its kindred categories; even after reading thousands of pieces, their tone and resonance never stray: this is entering. When one's endowed feeling is uniquely profound, every situation one encounters will stir awakening; after long fermentation, in the dark it issues forth and hits the mark seemingly by chance. Though the narrative is plain and the depiction simple and shallow, a myriad of sensations surge together, and the inner self loses its composure. Those who read such a piece are like peering into an abyss to glimpse fish, taking them to be either bream or carp; like being startled by lightning at midnight, losing all sense of east and west. Like an infant laughing or crying along with its mother, or villagers feeling joy or anger in response to a play — it may be said that one can emerge! [29])

Zhou Ji held that entering ci by means of jituo was the sole choice for writing ci. However, how does one cultivate the technique by which everything can become the vehicle of jituo? This then becomes a question of learning. Zhou Ji believed that in daily life, every single object or event must be capable of being extended and comprehended by analogy; only in this way can one gradually nurture the sensibility that everything can serve as jituo. The *Jiecunzhai Lun Ci Za Zhu* states:

學詞先以用心為主，遇一事，見一物，即能沈思獨往，冥然終日，出手自然不平 [28]。(In learning ci, first take applying the mind as fundamental. When encountering an event or seeing an object, be able to sink into deep thought and solitary reflection, absorbed all day long, and what emerges from your hand will naturally be out of the ordinary [28].)

This describes precisely such a state. Once one possesses this ability, then even if the narrative is plain and the depiction simple, the ci work itself will still produce a feeling that “a myriad of sensations surge together, and the inner self loses its composure.” Moreover, depending on the reader's identity, the allegorical meaning perceived will differ. Such a ci work is what is called one that can “emerge.”

Then, are there any limits to the scope of Zhou Ji's jituo theory? The *Jiecunzhai Lun Ci Za Zhu* says:

感慨所寄，不過盛衰，或綢繆未雨，或太息厝薪，或己溺己飢，或獨清獨醒，隨其人之性情學問境地，莫不有由衷之言。見事多，識理透，可為後人論世之資。詩有史，詞亦有史，庶乎自樹一幟矣。若乃離別懷思，感士不遇，陳陳相因，唾瀋互拾，便思高揖溫、韋，不亦恥乎[28]。(That in which sentiments and reflections lodge never goes beyond [the themes of] prosperity and decline. Perhaps it is preparing for rain before the storm, perhaps sighing over firewood piled on top of a stove, perhaps feeling as though oneself drowning and starving while others are unconcerned, perhaps remaining uniquely pure and uniquely clear-headed. Depending on the person's temperament, learning, and state of life, none lacks heartfelt words. Seeing many events and understanding principles thoroughly, they can serve as material for later generations to assess the age. Just as poetry has its history, ci also has its history; thus may one set up one's own banner. If it is merely parting, longing, and lamenting unrecognized worth — following well-worn paths and picking up others' spittle — then to fancy oneself greeting Wen Tingyun and Wei Zhuang as equals — is that not shameful? [28])

From this, it is clear that the content of Zhou Ji's jituo must reflect the rise and fall of the times and concern dimensions of social morality, rather than being limited to personal sorrow and nostalgia. In terms of content, works must all be capable of serving as “material for later generations to assess the age,” which is to say, they must possess the significance of “history.” If the content is simply matters of “parting, longing, and lamenting unrecognized worth” — such clichéd works — their value absolutely cannot be mentioned in the same breath as works that harbor profound allegories of nation and state. Zhou Ji's discourse can be said to build upon Zhang Huiyan's foundation, transforming it and developing it in a deeper, more comprehensive, and more detailed manner.

Equipped with such a theory, Zhou Ji's approach when conducting practical criticism naturally shifted toward a mode of not explicitly identifying the jituo. For example, he commented on Zhou Bangyan's “Su Muzhe” (“Burning aloeswood”): “若有意若無意，使人神眩(As if with intent, as if without intent — it makes one dizzy)” [30]. He did not concretely point out what allegorical meaning this ci expressed but assessed it with a vague, abstract concept. Another example is his commentary on Jiang Kui's “An Xiang” (Secret Fragrance) and “Shu Ying” (Dappled Shadows). As noted earlier, after Zhou Ji entered the second phase of his career, he abandoned his reverence for Jiang Kui and esteemed Xin Qiji instead. Yet he still regarded these two ci poems by Jiang Kui as

“lodging meaning beyond the topic, containing inexhaustible richness, and worthy of being ranked with Jiakuan (Xin Qiji)” [26]. However, although Zhou Ji rated these two ci poems very highly, in his commentary on “An Xiang” he only said: “盛時如此，衰時如此。想其盛時，感其衰時(In flourishing times it was so; in declining times it is so. Thinking of its flourishing age, grieving for its declining age).” Commenting on “Shu Ying,” he only said: “This ci uses ‘相逢(meeting),’ ‘化作(transforming into),’ and ‘莫似(not like)’ as its bones. Unable to retain it, letting it flourish and decline on its own. (Commenting on the second stanza).” These brief comments do not concretely identify what allegorical meaning Jiang Kui embedded in the ci. This mode of criticism, which refrains from pinning down the allegory, exhibits a quite substantial difference from Zhang Huiyan's approach of interpreting allegory word by word and line by line.

IV. CONCLUSION

The theory of jituo of the Changzhou School, though established by Zhang Huiyan, was in fact fully structured and completed by Zhou Ji. Zhang Huiyan's jituo can be described as a method of “meeting the intention by the reader's own understanding” (yi ni yi zhi). He attempted to find, within ci works, the original intention of the author. Zhou Ji's jituo, on the other hand, disregards the author's original intent and shifts the focus of interpretation to the reader's perception and response. Zhou Ji's theory of wu jituo can be said to have expanded the implications of Zhang Huiyan's theory of jituo. This critical approach definitively established the theoretical framework of the Changzhou School's jituo theory thereafter. Later, Tan Xian's statement in his “Preface to the Futang Ci Lu” — “作者之用心未必然，而讀者之用心何必不然(What the author intended need not be so, but what the reader intends — why need it not be so)?” [31] — was very likely influenced by Zhou Ji's theory of wu jituo.

Although the theory of jituo has repeatedly been criticized by later scholars as being overly forced and far-fetched, its developmental lineage was in fact shaped by the factors of its historical context. Moreover, seen in the context of its entire developmental trajectory, its influence throughout the Qing dynasty was so extensive that no other school could possibly replace it.

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Current Situation and Management Measures for the Application of Information Technology in Teaching at Secondary Schools in Sam Son Ward, Thanh Hoa Province, according to the Model Digital School

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Abstract— The study focuses on surveying and evaluating the current state of management of information technology (IT) applications in teaching at junior high schools (JHS) in Sam Son ward, Thanh Hoa province. Following the orientation toward building digital schools, a survey was conducted with 57 management staff members at 5 public secondary schools; data were processed using descriptive statistics. The results show that the management of the application of information technology in teaching and learning is at a fairly good level; in particular, the organisation and direction of implementation activities were rated higher than those of other activities, such as assessment and evaluation. Schools have developed digital transformation plans, utilising digital learning materials and online teaching platforms. However, the development of shared digital databases and learning materials, and the innovation in assessment and evaluation using digital technology, still face certain limitations. Based on the research results, this article proposes several measures to improve the effectiveness of managing the application of information technology in teaching, assessment, and evaluation, thereby promoting digital transformation and developing a digital school model in current secondary education.

I. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the context of the rapid digital transformation of education, building a digital school model is becoming an inevitable trend. There is a strong need for innovation in teaching and school management. In particular, the application of information technology (IT) in teaching has become essential to reforming teaching methods, developing digital learning materials, and enhancing the digital skills of teachers and students.

In recent years, junior high schools in Sam Son ward, Thanh Hoa province, have begun implementing information technology (IT) applications for teaching, testing, evaluation, and professional management. Many junior

high schools have focused on developing digital transformation plans, exploiting online learning platforms, and using digital learning materials in teaching. However, implementation across schools remains uneven; the development and exploitation of digital learning materials, testing and evaluation on digital platforms, and management according to the digital school model still face many difficulties. This situation shows the need to objectively research and evaluate the current state of IT application management in teaching at junior high schools in Sam Son ward to identify existing shortcomings, limitations, and their causes, as a basis for proposing measures to improve the effectiveness of IT application

management in teaching according to the current digital school model.

II. THEORETICAL BASIS FOR MANAGING THE APPLICATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING AT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS ACCORDING TO THE DIGITAL SCHOOL MODEL.

Managing the application of information technology (IT) in teaching at junior high schools under the digital school model is a purposeful and planned process by the management entity to organise, operate, and control the application of IT in all teaching activities, ensuring alignment with the goals of educational reform and the school's digital transformation. This management process not only focuses on the use of IT equipment and software in teaching but also aims to build a digital educational environment, develop digital learning materials, innovate teaching methods, improve assessment, and enhance the digital skills of teachers and students.

In the digital school model, the application of IT in teaching and learning is managed according to basic functions, including planning, organising, implementing, directing, monitoring, and evaluating.

III. MANAGING THE APPLICATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING AT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS ACCORDING TO THE DIGITAL SCHOOL MODEL

Managing the application of information technology in teaching at junior high schools according to the digital school model is a purposeful and planned process by the management entity to organise, operate, and control the application of information technology in teaching activities to meet the requirements of educational reform and digital transformation of the school (Government, 2022). This management process not only aims at the use of information technology equipment and software in teaching but also at developing a digital educational environment, digital databases, digital learning materials, digital competencies of teachers and students, and innovating teaching methods and assessment according to the orientation of developing learners' qualities and competencies (UNESCO, 2018).

In the digital school model, the application of information technology in teaching is managed according to basic functions, including planning, organising, implementing, directing, monitoring, and evaluating. In this model, the subject-specific team plays a central role in

deploying information technology in teaching activities, connecting the school administration's management direction with teachers' professional activities.

3.1. Developing a plan for applying IT in teaching and learning according to the digital school model.

Planning is the initial function, playing a guiding role for the entire process of implementing IT applications in teaching and learning. The IT application plan needs to be developed in conjunction with the goals of digital transformation in education and the development orientation of the school's digital school model (Government, 2022).

The plan's content should be integrated into the school's educational plan and the subject departments' activity plans to ensure consistency between teaching innovation and the application of information technology. The school administration and subject departments need to define the goals, tasks, implementation roadmap, each department's responsibilities, and the conditions for deploying information technology in each subject and educational activity.

In the context of digital schools, IT application plans need to focus on developing digital databases, digital learning resource repositories, learning management software, school management systems, and online learning platforms. Building digital databases helps schools manage teaching information, learning outcomes, teacher and student records in a synchronised and objective manner, creating a foundation for data-driven school governance (OECD, 2020).

The IT application plan also needs to be flexibly adjusted to the school's actual conditions, teachers' digital skills, and students' ability to access technology to ensure feasibility and effectiveness in implementation.

3.2. Organising the implementation of IT applications in teaching and learning according to the digital school model.

Implementation is the process of concretising the plan for applying information technology to teaching and learning activities in school practice. Schools need to organise teachers to apply information technology in designing lesson plans, organising learning activities, and exploiting digital learning materials to support teaching and learning (Voogt et al., 2013).

The professional team plays a direct role in guiding teachers in implementing IT applications across subjects, developing electronic lesson plans, selecting appropriate teaching software, and organising professional development activities focused on lesson study using digital technology. This is a crucial force in ensuring uniformity

and effectiveness in professional work during the implementation of the digital school model.

Schools need to effectively utilise digital platforms, teaching software, learning management systems (LMS), question banks, digital learning materials, and shared data repositories to expand students' learning environment beyond the traditional classroom (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014).

During implementation, teachers need technical support, digital literacy training, and skills for exploiting digital data in teaching. At the same time, schools need to create conditions for students to use IT applications for learning, information exchange, collaboration, and self-study, and strengthen the use of IT in testing and evaluation to enhance the objectivity, flexibility, and individualisation of learning activities (Redecker, 2017).

3.3. Directing the application of information technology in teaching and learning according to the digital school model.

Guidance is the process by which the school administration influences, directs, and promotes the application of information technology in teaching and learning, ensuring its consistent and effective implementation throughout the school.

The school administration needs to direct subject departments to strengthen the application of information technology to innovate teaching methods, using digital learning materials and online learning platforms suited to the characteristics of each subject and student group. At the same time, the school needs to build a shared digital learning resource repository and a specialised database to support management, teaching, and resource sharing between teachers and students.

In the digital school model, management also includes managing the teaching software system and data management system, ensuring information and network security, and using IT software in accordance with regulations (UNESCO, 2023). Connecting and synchronising data across school management, professional management, and teaching activities contributes to the formation of a unified data system, helping to improve operational efficiency, reduce information duplication, and support managers in making accurate decisions based on digital data.

The school administration needs to establish mechanisms to motivate and encourage teachers and subject departments to innovate and be creative in applying information technology, and to promote the professional leadership role of subject department heads in

implementing digital teaching activities and online professional development sessions.

3.4. Checking and evaluating the application of IT in teaching and learning according to the digital school model.

Monitoring and evaluation are management functions aimed at tracking implementation levels, identifying limitations, and adjusting the use of information technology in teaching and learning in line with defined objectives.

The school needs to develop criteria for checking and evaluating teachers' use of information technology in teaching, meeting the requirements of digital transformation and the characteristics of the subject department's professional activities. The school administration and subject departments should observe and inspect lessons that use information technology to assess the effectiveness of technology, digital learning materials, and teaching software in organising learning activities for students.

Assessment and evaluation should be linked to the use of data from digital platforms, learning management software, and online assessment and evaluation systems to improve the accuracy and timeliness of management. Assessment results should be used to adjust plans, support teachers, and refine the database for managing teaching and learning activities.

At the same time, schools need to organise reviews, summaries, and the sharing of experiences in applying information technology in teaching; develop digital learning materials; and build lesson plans and electronic lectures within subject departments and among schools in order to gradually perfect the digital school model in lower secondary education.

IV. CURRENT STATUS OF MANAGING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS IN VARIOUS SECTORS. SAM SON WARD, THANH HOA PROVINCE

4.1. Sampling and data processing methods

4.1.1. Sample Selection

The research sample was selected using a purposive sampling method combining school-based coverage. The survey was conducted in 5 public secondary schools in Sam Son ward, Thanh Hoa province, ensuring representativeness of different teaching and learning conditions and levels of IT application in the context of the current digital transformation of education.

The survey participants totalled 57 management staff members, including principals, vice-principals, and heads and deputy heads of subject departments. This group directly performs management functions related to the application of IT in teaching, such as planning, organising, implementing, directing, monitoring, evaluating, and ensuring the relevance and reliability of the survey data.

4.1.2 . Data processing methods

Data were collected using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. Scoring convention: Very Good = 5; Good = 4; Average = 3; Poor = 2; Very Poor = 1. Data were coded

Table 1. Current status of IT application planning in teaching at junior high schools in Sam Son ward, Thanh Hoa province (n = 57 administrators)

TT	Review content	Very good	Good	Medium	Not good	Very bad	\bar{X}	SD	Rank
1	The school is developing a plan to apply information technology to teaching and learning, aligned with the goals of digital transformation and the digital school model.	16	24	13	4	0	3.91	0.82	1
2	The IT application plan is integrated into the school's and subject department's educational plan.	13	25	14	5	0	3.81	0.84	2
3	The plan clearly defines the tasks, roadmap, and responsibilities of each department for implementing IT applications.	10	24	17	5	1	3.65	0.90	4
4	The school is developing a plan to invest in and supplement digital learning materials, equipment, and technological infrastructure to support teaching and learning.	8	22	19	7	1	3.51	0.93	5
5	The IT application plan is adjusted to suit the school's actual conditions and the teachers' capabilities.	11	25	15	5	1	3.70	0.88	3
Average GPA							3.72	0.87	

Source: Author's survey results, 2025.

The survey results show that the planning for the application of IT in teaching at junior high schools in Sam Son ward was rated fairly good ($\bar{X} = 3.72$). The highest-rated content was planning linked to digital transformation goals and the digital school model ($\bar{X} = 3.91$). This reflects the schools' initial interest in orienting towards digital transformation in management and teaching. The lowest-rated content was the planning for investment in digital learning materials, equipment, and technological infrastructure ($\bar{X} = 3.51$), indicating that physical facilities

and processed using descriptive statistics in SPSS 20.0, including frequencies, means (\bar{X}), and standard deviations (SD). The results of data processing directly serve as the basis for analysing the current situation and proposing management measures for applying information technology in teaching and learning, oriented towards digital transformation and the digital school model, in public secondary schools in Sam Son ward, Thanh Hoa province.

4.2. Current status of managing information technology applications in junior high schools in Sam Son ward, Thanh Hoa province.

and financial resources remain challenges to implementing IT applications in some schools.

The above results show that the planning process has a relatively clear direction; however, the degree of synchronisation among professional planning, infrastructure investment, and digital learning resource development is low. This is an issue that needs continued attention to ensure the feasibility and effectiveness of the digital school model in practice.

Table 2. Current status of IT application implementation in teaching at junior high schools in Sam Son ward, Thanh Hoa province (n = 57 administrators)

TT	Review content	Very good	Good	Medium	Not good	Very bad	\bar{X}	SD	Rank
1	The school organises training for teachers on applying information technology to lesson design and the organisation of learning activities.	18	26	10	3	0	4.04	0.78	1
2	The school utilises digital platforms, teaching software, and electronic learning materials to support teaching and learning.	14	25	13	5	0	3.84	0.84	2
3	Teachers receive technical support and training in applying information technology in teaching.	11	23	17	5	1	3.67	0.91	4
4	The school conducts student assessments using appropriate digital tools and software.	9	22	18	7	1	3.54	0.94	5
5	Students are allowed to use information technology in their studies, communication, and self-learning.	12	24	15	5	1	3.72	0.89	3
Average GPA							3.76	0.87	

Source: Author's survey results, 2025.

The survey results show that the organisation and implementation of IT applications in teaching and learning were rated as fairly good ($\bar{X} = 3.76$). The highest-scoring content was organising teachers to apply IT in lesson design and organising learning activities ($\bar{X} = 4.04$). This indicates that the use of IT to innovate teaching methods has been implemented quite frequently in schools. The lowest-scoring content was organising student assessment using digital tools and software ($\bar{X} = 3.54$), reflecting that the

innovation in assessment using technology is lagging behind the innovation in teaching and learning activities.

The above results show that current IT applications are mainly focused on supporting teaching and learning, while the exploitation of technology to innovate assessment, enhance self-learning, and personalise learning for students is not yet truly uniform. This area needs further strengthening in the process of building digital schools.

Table 3. Current status of directing the application of IT in teaching and learning in junior high schools in Sam Son ward, Thanh Hoa province (n = 57 administrators)

TT	Review content	Very good	Good	Medium	Not good	Very bad	\bar{X}	SD	Rank
1	The school administration directs the subject departments to strengthen the use of information technology to innovate teaching methods.	19	25	10	3	0	4.05	0.79	1
2	The school directs teachers to use appropriate digital learning materials and online teaching platforms.	15	24	13	5	0	3.86	0.85	2
3	The school administration directed the creation of a shared digital learning resource library.	10	22	18	6	1	3.60	0.93	5

4	The school directs the ensuring of information security and the proper use of IT equipment in accordance with regulations.	12	24	15	5	1	3.72	0.89	4
5	The school administration encourages and motivates teachers to innovate and be creative in their use of information technology.	14	25	13	5	0	3.84	0.84	3
Average GPA							3.81	0.86	

Source: Author's survey results, 2025.

The survey results show that the guidance on applying IT in teaching was rated as fairly good ($\bar{X} = 3.81$). The content on guiding the innovation of teaching methods through IT received the highest score ($\bar{X} = 4.05$). Meanwhile, the content on building a shared digital learning resource repository received the lowest score ($\bar{X} = 3.60$), reflecting that the digitisation of learning materials and the sharing of digital resources in schools have not been truly effective.

The above results show that the school administration's leadership role has been clearly demonstrated in promoting the application of IT. However, the development of shared digital learning materials, data management, and the exploitation of digital resources for teaching and learning still need more attention to meet the requirements of digital transformation in education.

Table 4. Current status of inspection and evaluation of IT application activities in teaching at junior high schools in Sam Son ward, Thanh Hoa province (n = 57 administrators)

TT	Review content	Very good	Good	Medium	Not good	Very bad	\bar{X}	SD	Rank
1	The school has developed criteria for assessing teachers' use of information technology in teaching.	12	24	15	5	1	3.72	0.89	2
2	The school administration conducts classroom observations and checks lessons that utilise information technology.	16	25	12	4	0	3.93	0.81	1
3	The school uses the test results to adjust plans and support teachers.	11	23	17	5	1	3.67	0.91	3
4	The use of information technology is among the criteria for teacher performance evaluation and professional assessment.	9	22	18	7	1	3.54	0.94	5
5	The school organises preliminary and final reviews and shares experiences on applying information technology in teaching.	10	23	17	6	1	3.61	0.92	4
Average GPA							3.69	0.89	

Source: Author's survey results, 2025.

The survey results show that the inspection and evaluation of IT applications in teaching was rated as fairly good ($\bar{X} = 3.69$). The content of observing and inspecting lessons that utilise IT received the highest score ($\bar{X} = 3.93$),

reflecting that professional inspection activities have begun to pay attention to the application of technology in teaching. The content with the lowest score was the inclusion of IT

application in the criteria for teacher performance evaluation and professional assessment ($\bar{X} = 3.54$).

The above results show that current inspection and evaluation activities still focus more on monitoring implementation than on evaluating the effectiveness of IT applications according to specific criteria of the digital school model. The use of evaluation results to adjust plans, support teachers, and build mechanisms to encourage innovation still needs further improvement.

** General assessment of the current state of IT application management in teaching at junior high schools in Sam Son ward, Thanh Hoa province*

The survey results show that the management of IT applications in teaching at junior high schools in Sam Son ward has been implemented relatively synchronously across management functions.

Of the four survey areas, the guidance and implementation were rated highest. Schools have focused on guiding digital transformation, encouraging teachers to apply IT in lesson design, utilise digital learning materials, and innovate teaching methods. The use of IT in professional activities is increasingly a regular requirement in school management and teaching.

The assessment and evaluation of IT applications in teaching have yielded lower results than those for other management functions. The development of evaluation criteria, the utilisation of assessment results to support teachers, the inclusion of IT applications in performance evaluation criteria, and the development of a shared digital learning resource library are not yet fully synchronised. This indicates that current IT application management still focuses more on organising and implementing activities than on managing the quality and effectiveness of technology applications in teaching.

The above situation indicates that the digital transformation of junior high schools in Sam Son ward has shown positive changes, but these changes are not uniform across all management aspects. Issues related to technological infrastructure, digital learning materials, teachers' capacity to utilise technology, and assessment mechanisms aligned with digital schools require continued attention in the next phase.

V. SOME MEASURES FOR MANAGING THE APPLICATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING AT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN SAM SON WARD, THANH HOA PROVINCE, ACCORDING TO THE DIGITAL SCHOOL MODEL

5.1 . Developing and implementing a plan for applying information technology in teaching and learning, linked to the digital school model.

The school needs to develop a plan for applying information technology in teaching and learning, aligned with the digital transformation orientation, ensuring it is integrated with the school's educational plan and the professional team's activity plan. The plan should clearly define the objectives, roadmap, tasks, and responsibilities of each department for implementing information technology.

The plan should focus on developing digital infrastructure, digital learning materials, shared databases, and online teaching and management platforms suitable for the specific conditions of junior high schools in Sam Son ward. Simultaneously, it is necessary to strengthen the mechanism for reviewing and adjusting the plan in light of teachers' digital skills and schools' technological capabilities.

5.2 . Strengthening digital skills and IT application skills for teachers and subject departments.

This is a crucial measure for the effective implementation of digital schools. Training content should focus on designing digital lessons, utilising digital learning materials, using online learning platforms, conducting digital assessments, and leveraging data for teaching and learning.

The school needs to promote the role of subject departments in thematic activities, lesson studies, and supporting teachers in applying IT to each subject. A core group of teachers specialising in digital transformation should be formed to provide professional support and disseminate experience in the application of IT throughout the school.

5.3 . Developing digital databases, digital learning materials, and technological infrastructure to support teaching and learning.

Secondary schools need to build a shared digital learning resource repository, a question bank, electronic lectures, and a database to support professional management. Data digitisation must ensure consistency, shareability, and efficient utilisation in teaching and management activities.

The school needs to continue investing in and upgrading its internet system, projection equipment, smart

classrooms, and software for teaching and learning. At the same time, it needs to effectively leverage resources from the social mobilisation of education and support from local authorities to improve the conditions for implementing the digital school model.

5.4 . Innovating the guidance on applying information technology in teaching and learning towards digital management.

The school administration needs to strengthen its guidance to subject departments on innovating teaching methods in conjunction with the application of information technology and the development of digital learning materials. This guidance should shift from administrative management to the management of teaching and learning activities based on digital data and performance effectiveness.

The school needs to develop mechanisms to encourage teachers to innovate and be creative in applying information technology; at the same time, it needs to strengthen the sharing of experiences and effective digital teaching models within the school and among junior high schools in Sam Son ward.

5.5 . Innovating the testing and evaluation of IT application activities in teaching and learning.

Schools need to develop specific evaluation criteria for teachers' use of information technology in teaching, aligned with the digital school model. The evaluation content should focus on the effectiveness of using information technology to organise learning activities, utilise digital learning materials, and develop students' competencies.

The results of tests and assessments should be used to adjust plans, support teachers, and serve as a basis for professional competition. At the same time, the use of digital software in student testing and assessment should be strengthened to enhance objectivity, flexibility, and the individualisation of learning activities.

VI. CONCLUSION

IT application activities in teaching at junior high schools in Sam Son ward, Thanh Hoa province, have been implemented in line with the digital transformation orientation and have initially met the requirements of the digital school model. Schools have focused on developing plans and organising the application of IT in teaching, exploiting digital learning materials, and increasing the use of technology platforms in professional activities.

The research results show that the organisation and direction of IT applications are rated fairly good; however,

the activities of checking, evaluating, and developing shared digital databases and digital learning materials remain limited. The use of IT in schools is uneven, and teachers' digital competence and IT infrastructure remain factors directly affecting the effectiveness of the digital school model.

Based on the research findings, it is necessary to strengthen the development of a synchronised digital transformation plan, develop digital competencies for teachers, improve digital databases and learning materials, and innovate the testing and evaluation of IT application activities in teaching to enhance management efficiency and meet the requirements of current educational reforms.

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Transforming Education for Viksit Bharat: Prospects and Challenges of NEP, 2020

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Abstract— *Viksit Bharat Abhiyan (or Viksit Bharat@2047) is an initiative of the Government of India to make India a developed nation by 2047. This vision stands on four pillars - Yuva (Youth), Garib (Poor), Mahilayen (Women) and Annadata (Farmers). It aims to boost India's economy to \$30 trillion in two decades, concentrating on its infrastructure, education, health care, technology, and sustainable development. The vision of any developed country has always been proactive by maintaining the quality of life (QoL) of all citizens, which includes access to quality education, healthcare, social and personal relationships, financial security, economic stability, and balance between work-life, environment, and living conditions. Such a vision can be realized only through a complete restructuring of the education system, including curriculum and quality of teaching, disconnect between academia and industry, digital divide, equity and access, financial resources, supply and demand, accreditation, examination-centric learning, etc. Some of the comprehensive objectives of the Viksit Bharat education system are to overcome the treacherous challenges in education, ensure a 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio, and be at the upper edge of literacy with transformative, accessible, but firm path toward formal schools as the preferred mode of learning. Therefore, fulfilling Viksit Bharat's vision needs to cater to the education system's imbalance and promote inclusive growth with skills upgradation suitable for the 21st century. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to catalyze this transformation. The policy focuses on the challenges of going through the runway, including financial constraints, overreliance on academics, overhanging competition, uneven development, untrained teachers, stagnant curriculum, infrastructural scarcity, and a digital divide. NEP 2020 addresses these challenges by prioritizing universal access, inclusive education, quality education, vocational education and skills development, lifelong learning, technology integration, digital literacy and inclusion, and teacher training and support. The objectives of the NEP 2020 are to provide excellent educational opportunities to the citizens of India through its Central and State Governments working together with appropriate stakeholder participation. NEP 2020 mandates a focus on holistic development, skill development, and cultural integration through which critical thinking, creativity, and innovation can be encouraged, academia and industry can be brought closer, and a modern outlook can be imbibed. These challenges can be addressed only through coupled legislator, educator, community, and educational process stakeholder action.*

INTRODUCTION

We will all celebrate 100 years of independence in 2047 so it is very proud movement to all of us. There are uncountable dreams of the country and the citizens that went to be realised. We picture a “Viksit Bharat”— a thriving and developed India. The Viksit Bharat Abhiyan, popularly known as Viksit Bharat@2047, is an initiative of the Indian Government to convert India into a developed nation by 2047. The dream rests on four pillars: Yuva (Youth), Garib (Poor), Mahilayen (Women) and Annadata (Farmers). The objectives are to address socio-economic challenges through a holistic approach, focusing on infrastructure, education, healthcare, technology, and sustainable development. The vision also highlights active youth engagement as a key component through which their ideas and creativity can be used to achieve national development goals. The economic objectives are to bring India's economy to \$30 trillion in two decades. India's journey towards Viksit Bharat @2047, including six transformative reforms in taxation, power, urban development, mining, financial sector, and regulatory policies. Moreover, as per the developed country we want to ensure the quality of life among all our citizen of nation. In the simple Quality of life (QOL) is a broad concept reflecting an individual's overall well-being and satisfaction with various aspects of their life. WHO (1998): “An individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns”. In addition, Quality of life (QOL) is a personal assessment of the degree of happiness and contentment in their life. In addition to wealth, employment, the environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, safety, healthcare cost of living, and climate. Factors that can affect quality of life include crime rates, public safety measures, healthcare system quality, cost of living, and climate. The Viksit Bharat education system is designed to counter critical challenges such as equity, quality, and standards and aims to achieve a 100 per cent gross enrollment ratio and literacy rate via access to learning avenues such as formal schools. Hence, all the efforts required to build the Viksit Bharat need to also address the disparities of the education system in India, so as to enable inclusive growth and endow the citizens of India with the skills required as per the needs of 21st Century. Additionally, in order to realise complete potential of the populace India require to focus on good education and also cover the gap in education access. These are among many, many elements of the quality education that will be needed for the Viksit Bharat:

- **Universal Access:** Bharat must reach 100 percent GER and literacy (NEP 2020, p. 11)

- **Inclusive Education:** We must give special education a priority, we need to accommodate the diverse needs of differently-abled children and treat learning disability with understanding, compassion, and possible assistance. Importance of mother-tongue based early learning (NEP 2020, p. 26).
- **Quality Education:** The curriculum should encourage critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and lifelong learning; competency-based assessments implementation etc (NEP 2020, p. 4 & 6).
- **Vocational Training and Skills Development:** The vocational training need to correlate directly with the industry needs and emerging technologies, courses to be designed and offered in healthcare, IT, green energy, agriculture field and entrepreneurship programs along with internship and apprenticeship and entrepreneurship programs. And this is why credentialing systems have to be set up like they have been for the conventional education so that vocational skills are not only recognized but can also lead to employability and thus vocational education can also become a high career path. Aligning vocational training with industry needs and emerging technology — is desperately needed. Research and development should be promoted in India, which is part of Viksit Bharat, and it should also not end there as Viksit Bharat should focus on internships and some apprenticeship programs for some practical experience (NEP 2020, p. 45 & 46).
- **Technology and Digital Literacy Integration:** We are living the twenty first century where everyone is working to improve technology. Given that there was a little expectation of education as to the skills and studies related to technology should ensure the affordable access to the internet, analysis of devices, and programs to educate on depression or digital illiteracy. In the current and digital age, digital literacy is the most fundamental ability for everyone. Hence, one of transformative aspect is education need to adapt with new technology to customize learning, boost accessibility and foster engaging learning atmosphere. This means supplying teachers with affordable, internet access, devices and digital literacy training efficiently while ensuring that all schools are adequately covered with technology. Therefore, with technology to tailor learning, facilitate accessibility, and construct engaging learning experiences by using AI-powered tutors,

establish accessible learning platforms, virtual reality simulations, and gamified learning modules (NEP 2020, p. 58 & 60).

- **Fostering a culture of lifelong learning:** Lifelong learning, where individuals are supported to acquire new skills and adapt to the evolving needs and dynamics of work, is a prerequisite. These initiatives encompass vocational training programs, skill development workshops, and accessible online learning platforms for individuals of all ages. It enables reskilling and upskilling through vocational training programs, online courses, and micro-credentials for those looking at a mid-career switch or are reshaping themselves with the dynamic job market (NEP 2020, p. 53).
- **Teaching the Ethical Principles of Technology:** Emphasizing the ethical implications of technology is an essential aspect of education today. There is a great need of the imparting ethical principles of technology among the citizens of the nation, to avoid any mishappening with anyone due to misuse of technology. Emphasizing ethical considerations in technology education, promoting responsible online behavior and critical thinking skills is crucial (NEP 2020, p.58)
- **Training of Entrepreneurship and Innovation building:** The economy is heavily reliant on entrepreneurship, and the idea of starting your own business is not our true strength. Therefore, it is to be understood that educational institutions must include entrepreneurship education, provide incubation centers for student startups, finally find ways to bring the lens of innovation and creativity (NEP 2020, p.57)
- **Holistic Development:** Education should prioritize holistic individual development, promoting values like critical thinking and emotional intelligence. The NEP 2020 seeks to transition from rote memorization to critical thinking; however, the coaching industry's shortcuts exacerbate India's "Shadow Education" problem. The EdTech sector was expected to grow from \$2.8 billion in 2022 to \$10.4 billion by 2025 (Shustova et al., 2023), driven by digital technology and AI. High-stakes exams like JEE and NEET negatively impact student mental health and incentivize teachers to pursue better coaching salaries, underscoring the necessity of this coaching culture. The NEP 2020 also stresses an integrated curriculum that extends beyond

traditional disciplines to include sports, arts, and social services.

- **Bridging the Educational Divide:** This means improving the quality of schools for millions of children all around the country, especially in underserved, low-income and marginalized communities by investing in infrastructure, training for teachers and access to resources, such as textbooks, libraries and technology (NEP 2020, p.13)
- **Updating Curriculum:** Urgent need of updating curriculum to promote thinking, creative skills, problem solving capabilities and lifelong learning. The NEP, 2020 defined that "curriculum content will be reduced to core essentials, and frameworks will be developed to ensure experiential, inquiry-based, and holistic learning, focusing on understanding rather than rote memorization"(NEP 2020, p.13).
- **Re-thinking Assessment:** There need to be competency-based assessment. Therefore, it is important that teachers are given the skills and knowledge necessary to provide quality education. This also means adequately training teachers and building enough infrastructure in every school. The NEP 2020, pointed out that "the progress card will be a 360-degree, multidimensional report reflecting each learner's progress in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, including self-assessment and project work"(NEP 2020, p.19).

This is an overview of on the main aspects to focus on in building quality education system in Bharat. Realizing its transformative potential, India has now set out on an ambitious journey to overhaul its education system by implementing the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The National Education Policy-2020 is a comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education in India, which is "to be building a Viksit Bharat" which is our main objective by 2047. NEP 2020 aims to establish an education system that should be not merely inclusive and equitable but also one that promotes holistic development, critical thinking, and innovation.

NEP, (2020). IN THE CONTEXT OF VIKSIT BHARAT @2047

On July 29, 2020, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was approved, and the entire education system in India needed to be transformed by 2030. It will replace the 1986 National Policy on Education and transform India into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society. The features of

the policy are the universalization of education, a new 5+3+3+4 school curriculum, multidisciplinary and holistic education, flexibility, experiential learning, teaching in the mother tongue/regional language, examination reforms, teachers training, and development, Integrating Technology at all levels, etc. It also intends to re-integrate two crores of out-of-school children into the mainstream, to promote the holistic study of subjects in an open-ended manner, and to encourage experiential and interactive learning. It also aims to instill a deep-rooted pride in being Indian and entice the best global institutions to set up campuses in India.

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY, 2020: OPPORTUNITIES FOR VIKSIT BHARAT @2047

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a far-reaching framework intended to transform the education system in our country, leading us to a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India) by 2047. It covers all facets of education, from early childhood care to higher education and beyond. As your question states, this vision can be achieved by NEP 2020, which brings the following key opportunities: -

FOUNDATIONAL STRENGTH:

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE): NEP 2020 emphasizes early childhood care and education and aims to make high-quality ECCE available. This will provide a strong base for future learning as foundational literacy and numeracy skills will be the focus of primary schooling (NEP, 2020 p.8).

Restructuring the old curricular and pedagogical system to a new 5+3+3+4 structure: The policy recommends a 5+3+3+4 system aligned with children's cognitive development. The new information will help to cement a comprehensive and coherent learning experience (NEP, 2020 p.12).

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT:

Multidisciplinary Education: NEP 2020 encourages a multidisciplinary approach toward learning and helps break the barriers between arts, sciences, and commerce. Avoid stooping to their level; if your child reads up to age 12 only, then amongst the family, you can read news articles, books, or watch documentaries to engage them with what is going on in the world (NEP, 2020 p.38).

Emphasis on Skills: The policy focuses on acquiring key skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. These skills are key to success in the 21st-century workforce (NEP, 2020 p.13).

Providing Vocational Training: NEP 2020 introduces provisions for vocational training in school education, thus making students industry-ready (NEP, 2020 p.45).

QUALITY AND EQUITY:

Teacher Development: Continuous professional development is emphasized to guarantee they are well-versed in the latest pedagogical techniques and subject matter expertise (NEP, 2020 p.23).

Inclusive Education: Special emphasis on equity inclusiveness and national standards. We pay special attention to marginalized groups and children with disabilities (NEP, 2020 p. 25 &28).

Technology Integration: It includes the use of Technology in education, which enhances learning outcomes and makes education more accessible (NEP, 2020 p.57).

TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION:

Multidisciplinary Institutions: Larger multidisciplinary universities and colleges should emerge that offer programs in diverse areas and promote research and innovation (NEP, 2020 p.34).

Flexibility and Choice: The policy introduces a flexible curriculum with multiple entry and exit points, allowing students to customize their learning pathways (NEP, 2020 p.36).

Research and innovation: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 intends to promote a robust research ecosystem in institutions at higher education levels, enabling innovation and contributing to India's economic and social growth (NEP, 2020 p. 48).

INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS:

Integrating Indian Knowledge: The policy stresses the integration of the Traditional Knowledge systems of India in the curriculum to become better acquainted with the rich heritage of India. The NEP 2020 embraces multilingualism, encouraging students to learn in their regional languages and mother tongues. Thus, NEP 2020 is a crucial enabler for achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. By focusing on holistic development, skill enhancement, and quality education, the policy aims to create a generation of empowered and capable citizens who can contribute to India's economic, social, and cultural progress (NEP, 2020 p. 21).

The policy's emphasis on research, innovation, and Technology will also transform India into a global knowledge superpower. Therefore, NEP 2020 presents a unique opportunity to transform India's education system and pave the way for a Viksit Bharat by 2047. By focusing on foundational strength, holistic development, quality and equity, higher education transformation, and Indian knowledge systems, the policy can create a generation of empowered citizens who can contribute to India's growth and development.

NEP 2020: CHALLENGES TO VIKSIT BHARAT@2047

The NEP 2020 offers great hope for a Viksit Bharat by 2047 but is not without challenges in execution. There are various challenges for NEP, 2020 implementing to achieve the goals of Viksit Bharat@2047: -

FINANCING AND MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES:

Higher Public Investment: NEP 2020 also recommends enhancing public expenditure in education to 6% of GDP. But, reaching this goal needs huge funding by the Centre and state (NEP, 2020 p. 60).

Infrastructure Development: Development of new schools, higher education institutions, as well as upgradation of the existing ones especially in remote rural areas, requires huge investments (NEP, 2020 p. 13).

Professional Development of Teachers: NEP 2020 intends to prompt ongoing professional development for teachers but such training programs and workshops need a considerable number of resources (NEP, 2020 p. 24).

EXECUTION AND COORDINATION:

Interconnected Components: NEP 2020 is a complex policy with multiple interrelated components. It needs careful drafting and detailed collaborations between multiple stakeholders including state agencies, education sectors, and instructors (NEP, 2020 p. 5).

Decentralization: The NEP 2020 stresses on decentralization, and empowering local communities. For successful enactment at the ground level, this also requires clarity in laws and processes (NEP, 2020 p. 14).

Inter-State Coordination: As education is a concurrent subject, the central and the state governments need to work together and coordinate. Coordinating implementation across the states can be difficult (NEP, 2020 p. 58).

CAPACITY BUILDING:

Expanding Access to Qualified Teachers: India has a shortage of qualified teachers, particularly in rural areas. NEP 2020 implementation requires recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, especially in the specialized subjects (NEP, 2020 p. 19).

Orientation for the Educator: it is essential to provide updated information on the newest techniques and study material to the teacher. Continuous professional development (CPD) programmes must be designed and implemented successfully (NEP, 2020 p. 24).

Capacity Building of Teachers: There is a need to build capacity (infrastructure, faculty, research facilities) at all

levels of education institutions to align with the objectives of NEP 2020 (NEP, 2020 p. 24).

EQUITY AND ACCESS:

Access & Equity: Providing all children access to quality education, regardless of background or location, is fundamental but can be challenging. It is essential to address disparities on the basis of caste, gender, and socio-economic status (NEP, 2020 p. 25).

Rural-Urban Gap: Bridging the gap in access to quality education between rural and urban areas is a challenging aspect. It is also important to have better infrastructure and motivate qualified teachers to work in rural areas (NEP, 2020 p. 25).

CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY:

Curriculum Reform: In line with the goals of NEP 2020 and 21st-century skills, developing a new curriculum is another significant task (NEP 2020, p.11).

Pedagogy: Moving away from rote learning to experiential/inquiry-based learning requires a change and shift in the pedagogy used for teaching (NEP 2020, p.11).

Changing the Assessment Process: It is imperative to implement a holistic assessment system where students are assessed on learning outcomes beyond exams (NEP 2020, p.12).

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION:

Digital Divide: Bridging the digital divide to ensure access to technology and internet connectivity for all students is a prerequisite for effective technology integration into education (NEP 2020, p.57).

Teacher Training: Instructors have to be trained in the proper use of technology in the classroom and create digital learning resources (NEP 2020, p.24).

Cyber Security: Protecting students in the virtual learning atmosphere is really important (NEP 2020, p. 57).

SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS:

Engaging Parents and Communities in the Education Process: The role of parents and local communities in meeting the objectives of NEP 2020 is quite critical (NEP 2020, p. 14).

Social Attitudes: These could be biases and social attitudes that the discriminated groups (like girls and marginalized communities) face because of their gender or class, which impacts their access to education (NEP 2020, p. 4).

Cultural Diversity: India's multilingualism necessitates careful planning for linguistic diversity, addressing socio-economic disparities, and catering to special needs like disabled students, requiring specialized training, accessible

infrastructure, and inclusive education practices (NEP 2020, p. 3).

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES:

Policy Coherence: Thus, it is sufficient to draft a policy, but it more important to implement it an effective manner to ensure that the real benefits of the policy are reaching to all of the stakeholders. This, along with emphasis to implement the NEP, 2020 in an effective manner there is a great need to strengthen existing policies like the Right to Education Act, where corruption and mismanagement are addressed usually. Thus, there is a great need to align NEP with existing policies, regulations, and institutional structures is crucial for continuous implementation (NEP 2020, p. 5).

Monitoring and Evaluation: Robust mechanisms for tracking progress, identifying challenges, and making necessary adjustments are essential for achieving NEP's goals (NEP 2020, p. 58).

The NEP in India instigates the introduction of digital technology in pedagogy, promoting the home language till class five and the multilingual character of the scripts. However, the policy faces several challenges, being poorly integrated, language barriers, and funding constraints. With the tax-to-GDP ratio obsessed at a lower notch and competing for resources against healthcare, national security, and contributors to robust economic growth like education, the policy's leviathan absolute necessity of public spending at 6 percent of GDP will be no mean task. It further emphasizes pedagogical limitations by acknowledging the diverse pedagogical needs of higher education. Avoid a forced multi-disciplinary approach; go for the diversity of institutions. The policy makes you compete in a war ground because the exams are done and there is so much mismatch in it as there is a gap between the knowledge and your skills with that job. The downside of policy is that there are provisions, such as the age of starting school, that need to be considered consciously. Everybody is aware that previous attempts at regulation were through legislative efforts in parliament and were under the regulatory setup, which has not been so effective as the function of the regulators, and what was teamed to change as a result of the legislation was not really finding a mention. In order to achieve the target of increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education by 2035, a new university has to open every week for the next 15 years (NCEUS, 2007). India witnessed a welcome focus on interdisciplinary learning, but the trend, especially in universities, of being siloed and departmentalized has been entrenched. Is there scope for deliberation and watching for NEP 2020? Sure, but it should be taking redistribution over to just make sure it works for everyone in the country. This

needs strong political will, astute planning, and the involvement of all relevant stakeholders – teachers, students, parents, authorities, and civil society groups.

In conclusion, while NEP 2020 presents a transformative vision for India's education system, its implementation faces numerous challenges. Addressing these challenges effectively is essential for creating a generation of empowered citizens who can contribute to India's economic, social, and cultural progress and achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it is clear that to make it possible, i.e., the Viksit Bharat Abhiyan, the given priorities access to quality education, healthcare, social and personal relations, financial security, economic stability, the balance between the work-life, environment and living conditions, etc. Viksit Abhiyan (the concept of reservation for developed country citizens) With the vision of any developed (Viksit) country, quality-of-life (QoL) of all citizens has always been the prime policy and aim of all Viksit nations, which includes quality education, quality health Institutions, social and person relationship, financial security, economic stability, work-life balance, environment, and living conditions. Thus, to realize the vision of Viksit Bharat, reinstating the balance of the education system and providing inclusive growth in the form of 21st-century much-needed skills seems to be the way forward. The NEP 2020 seeks to be the change agent in this respect. Shuffling through the runway, analyzing the financial constraints, overreliance on academics, overhanging competition, uneven development, untrained teachers, stagnant curriculum, infrastructural scarcity, and the digital divide. This realization can only be accomplished with education system reforms, starting from curriculum to teaching quality, industry-academia disconnect, digital divide, equity, access, financial resources, accreditation, supply and demand, and examination-centric learning, etc., Because the explanation behind policy-making for a robust education system is to resolve the disparities in the education system to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat and ensure comprehensive growth of all citizens enabling them to become productive members of society in the 21st century. However, its success is largely dependent on the successful implementati-on of NEP 2020. For this, the political will, meticulous planning, and strong involvement by all stakeholders — educators, students, parents, and policymakers — are a must.

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Postmodern Dialogue Secularists v/s Religionists

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Abstract— This paper simply an attempt to challenge the epistemological anarchism by using scientific rationality as the sole guardian of rationality. This increasing interrogation of the objectivist claims of scientific knowledge received a reinforcement with the advent of recent theories which offered rigorous critique of foundationalist epistemologies. The philosophical quest for certainty and truth has been challenged by relativists of multiple hues and colours. The Jaina doctrines of Syadvada and anekantavada emphasized on grasping the relativistic positions or points of view with regard to the same phenomena whereas pre-Socratic Sophists brought out a relativistic critique of philosophy in ancient Greece. . On the religious plane, such religions as. Hinduism. Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity. Islam etc., have historically claimed to be repositories of truth. In modern times, such movements or ideologies as Humanism, Capitalism Socialism, etc., have competed for attention as liberating panaceas across the globe. Various religious value-systems or even secular-rational value-frameworks have also claimed to resolve all the social political and economic problems faced by contemporary world

The increasing interrogation of the objectivist claims of scientific knowledge received a reinforcement with the advent of recent theories which offered rigorous critique of foundationalist epistemologies. Further the development of hermeneutics as a method for historical studies and the proliferation of postmodern trend of thought in different fields have led to a problematization of rationality as a privileged concept.

While this attempt to question rationality along with the entire ensemble of universalistic notion has been hailed as liberating move by some others have expressed misgivings about the tenability of an unqualified relativism

There are many issues related to this problematic. The present paper is an attempt to evaluate the two extreme positions and will be an attempt to justify relativistic position.

Relativism as a critical or methodological position has been a pervasive feature of philosophical discourse.

Ancient philosophers in Greece as well as in India have advanced relativistic standpoints stemming from various modes of apprehending reality. The philosophical quest for certainty and truth has been challenged by relativists of multiple hues and colours. The Jaina doctrines of Syadvada and anekantavada emphasized on grasping the relativistic positions or points of view with regard to the same phenomena whereas pre-Socratic Sophists brought out a relativistic critique of philosophy in ancient Greece. In pre modern European thought Montaigne may be said to be a radical champion of philosophical relativism. With the advent of post modernistic formulations in the second half of twentieth century relativism has again been pushed to the center-stage of philosophical discourse making it an important facet of contemporary intellectual life. The acceptance of relativism has been one of the pervasive features of post-modern thought. Various historians, sociologists and philosophers have been attracted by the notion of relativism in our times

and climes. In fact, it has become quite fashionable in contemporary methodological debates and discussions.

Man's perennial quest for truth and certainty has crystallized into multiple philosophies, ideologies, theologies, moralities blueprints and agendas. On the philosophical plane, various 'isms or systems of thought such as idealism, realism, materialism, monism, dualism etc., have been worked out as systematic accounts of what is ultimately real. On the religious plane, such religions as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam etc., have historically claimed to be repositories of truth. In modern times, such movements or ideologies as Humanism, Capitalism, Socialism, etc., have competed for attention as liberating panaceas across the globe. Various religious value-systems or even secular-rational value-frameworks have also claimed to resolve all the social political and economic problems faced by contemporary world. All philosophical, theological, ideological and ethical claims have presented themselves as sure, certain and true propositional gestalts. More often than not, they have deemed themselves to be sole repositories of truth and certainty. During the course of historical evolution, these philosophical, theological, ideological and ethical schemes have either been dialectically confronting one another or actually engaging themselves in bloody competitions. While philosophers have mostly been involved in verbal disputations, theological and ideological enthusiasts and zealots have been at daggers drawn to impose their so-called truth-claims on opposing camps. Adherents of Semitic religions such as Christianity and Islam have fought long drawn out battles across Asian, African and European lands since the advent of Islam with a view to impose their world-views in value-systems upon each other. Besides, hundreds of thousands of Buddhist, Christian and Muslim missionaries have been engaged in Asia, Africa and Europe to preach their respective gospels of truth and win as many converts to their folds as possible. These theological and ideological disagreements and clashes have been widely prevalent throughout twentieth century and may not altogether disappear in twenty first century.

Exponents of relativism have always argued that these world-view and value-systems do not have any absolute and objective status, but are relative to traditions, mores, historical backgrounds, cultures, patterns of socio-economic development and technological wherewithal etc. The rise and fall of these views and values is negotiated through concrete historical, geographical, cultural and technological conditions. They are not unqualified or objective accounts of natural or human phenomena but elucidations or formulations

operating within given conditions and contexts. For example, during the ancient or primitive times, the cultural and technological developments were too nebulous to allow any elaborate metaphysical or theological formulations. Instead elaborate mythological accounts or explanations were rampant during the primitive stage of historical development. The two millennia from fifth century B.C. upto around fifteenth century were ripe for carrying out metaphysical system building and religious world-views and value-systems. Critical assessments and rebuttals of theologies and philosophies could be worked out only in Post-Copernican or post-Renaissance period of European history. In ancient and medieval times various cultural traditions, by and large, developed and functioned in blissful ignorance of one another. However, when various cultural traditions confronted one another due to intercontinental explorations and cross-oceanic circumnavigations could modern man take a critical look at well-entrenched theological pre-suppositions, philosophical predilections and ideological prejudices. In fact, the mingling of cultures was instrumental in the development of various sociological and anthropological sciences. Contemporary resurgence of relativism is deeply rooted in massive historical and anthropological data available to modern man. Historians, sociologists, ethnographers, anthropologists, philologists etc., have furnished us elaborate accounts of ancient-cultures, traditions, mores and myths. Detailed accounts of contemporary cultural and ethical diversity have also been furnished to modern man with increasing methodological sophistication and rigor.

Ethical norms and values differ from culture to culture. Relativists may account for such variations as a function of different historical, geographical, philosophical and economic conditions. Like other phenomena, behavioural norms, arise out of complex sets of circumstances and we find ourselves subscribing to various notions of what is right and wrong. Furthermore, the relativists argue that cognition or the representation of the world to ourselves too reflects the very selective structure of our perceptual apparatuses. There are many possible world-views. No world-view is so privileged or objective as to see things as they "really" are. Objectivity, at its best, is the agreement between individuals about what exists and how the world works. However, even such a compromise is obtained within a framework of a particular culture.

For absolutists, beliefs and values are based upon certain and universal standards grounded in a trans-human perspective. For example, the cognitive and moral certainty of men of religion or theologians, is rooted in some sort of

supernatural explanations of the natural phenomena. Truth is arrived at through divinely ordained revelations or by consulting an authoritative text or through instructions from a trusted mentor. Knowledge and morality are intimately linked to the Absolute in the transcendent realm. The supposedly eternal and universal standards stem from that very transcendent realm of Absolute. Unfortunately, there seem to be a number of rather different Absolutes and valiant disagreements as to which of them constitutes the Truth. Religionists do not have a patent on absolutism. It can operate vehemently and arrogantly in secular discourse as well. Non-religious forms of absolutism can display an equal disregard for the multiplicity and contingency of human experience. Racial ideologies, caste-agendas, fascist, blueprints, patriotic interpretations, egalitarian viewpoints, utopian dogmas etc.. all seek to monopolise truth, justice and rationality. Thus it is assumed that there are things so sacred that they must be protected by the arm of the state from any irreverent challenge. Those who scoff at the absolute truth and/or virtue must be punished. Many Americans may argue that American flag must be defended at all costs. In Communist China it is the monolithic and utopian absolute of the party line which must go unchallenged. Similarly, free-market may be dogmatically defended as the only mechanism of economic growth. Socialist model of economic management may be defended to be the only instrument guaranteeing distributive justice. Even scientific arguments may be marshalled demonstrating the inherent superiority of the Aryan race or the inevitable ascendance of the working class or the inevitability of the social stratification or the unavoidability of 'survival of the fittest'.

The so-called secularists, modernists and humanists have put up a valiant methodological struggle to set up rationality as a foundation for deriving universally acceptable cognitive beliefs and ethical values. Relativism always challenges the basis of this inherent human wishful thinking and contends that an objective rationality against which we could measure or evaluate our ideas as to what is true and what is right is impossible of formulation. Peter Winch, Bary Barnes, David Bloor, Richard Rorty, Alasdair Macintyre etc., argue that rationality operates within an already given set of assumptions and motives and even our conception of rationality is related to a context. They will never be able finally to rationally justify our most fundamental beliefs about how the world is or our basic values. These beliefs and values constitute the context within which our version of rationality works.

Thus, there are competing notions of rationality and what is rational is ultimately linked to our pre-rational convictions. It does not matter whether these convictions are based on authority, revelation and tradition or on empirical evidence. A person, operating in a religious culture and accepting claims of scriptural texts is accepted to be a rational person. However, such a person is condemned to be irrational by those who espouse a scientific or evidential standard of rationality. Thus, both secularists and fundamentalists may advance their respective claims with impeccable logical and practical consistency and yet the grounds for holding their respective claims do emanate from conflicting background assumptions. Such a situation entails charges and counter-charges of irrationality and nothing substantial can be done to eliminate these in ineliminable bickerings. For example, the secularists might try to justify his world-view by pointing out how it leads to technological sophistication, how it generates material wealth, how it promotes freedom of thought and expression and how it encourages social justice etc. However, our fundamentalist friends may not be persuaded by this kind of pragmatic justification. They may well show us the equally fruitful results of their Weltanchnung; its social cohesiveness, its impact on moral refinement of the individual, its optimism, its never-say-die attitude, its purposive ness, its meaningfulness and above all its spiritual satisfaction and more importantly, satisfaction over success. Thus both these world-views operate quite perfectly in keeping with their respective standards, although it needs to be stressed that these respective standards emanate from radically different assumptions about how the world is how we should act and what constitutes a good life etc. The respective assumptions of these two world-views and value systems are beyond the pale of pragmatic justification.

Such considerations show that both the fundamentalist and the secularist have the ability to offer acceptable justifications in support of their respective world-views and values systems. Both these camps can demonstrate the coherence of their beliefs and values with equal rigor and sophistication. Therefore, both may be counted as rational and both need to withdraw the charges and counter-charges of irrationality. The secularists can have complaints against fundamentalists and vice versa. However, the basic ethical and cognitive commitments of any view are not themselves open to a rational critique. The criteria justifying beliefs, values and goals perused in one culture may seem flawed when judged by the standards of a rival world-view. However, all the beliefs, values and goals perused within competing cultural

frameworks are rooted in pre rational starting points which are not amenable to rational evaluation.

Our cultural and historical legacy generally endows us with a set of assumptions. Certain beliefs and values are inculcated in every person in his or her numberless interactions and relations. These beliefs and values are not premised on rational criteria. They are given or handed over to us by multiple circumstantial factors. They may be said to be pre-rational assumptions and postulates of our understanding or our actions. We want these beliefs and values to be self-consistent and can, if the need arises, forward plausible reasons with a view to justify them. However, there can not be any ultimate justification or validation for these beliefs and values. The 'rational' is embedded and elaborated within a non-rational context of preferences and assumptions. Therefore an ultimately rational justification of values and world-views generated by human culture can not be worked out. For example, men of religion are widely committed to the authority of sacred texts. The knowledge and values transmitted by these sacred texts serve as the pre-rational set of commitments on which their very rationality operates. Suppose we ask a Muslim fundamentalist as to why we should establish an "Islamic State his stock response would be because Allah has asked Muslims in the Quran to establish such a State. Now if something is really or allegedly divinely ordained or recommended in the Quran then any further discussion or debate on the matter would be sacrilegious to the fundamentalist. The belief in the divine infallibility of the Quran is the ultimate weapon in the armory of the fundamentalist. He can not offer a yet more basic commitment to justify his belief in the infallibility of the Quran. All our rhetorical skills and persuasive strategies will not change his basic belief about the Quran. The belief in the truth of the Quran is the cognitive bed-rock of the fundamentalist.

The secularist or the rationalist espousing evidence, experiment and scientific consensus as the ultimate standard of rationality, will also find himself in a quandary if he is asked to justify these very features of his rationality. He can try to justify his beliefs and values by recourse to scientific rationality. However, he has no more basic or fundamental set of arguments or reasons to justify scientific rationality itself. For example, inductive statements and the so-called law of uniformity of nature are beyond the ken of any philosophical or methodological justification. Belief in the inductive generalization and regularity of nature is itself at the core of scientific rationality.

The world has no built-in guidelines as to how we should conduct ourselves. There is no ultimate or privileged

description of what exists and how things fit together. All accounts of Absolute seem to be arbitrarily formulated stories. There is no ultimate guarantee either for our cognitive stances or for our ethical choices. However, the desire to justify one's beliefs or values is widely prevalent. Most of us find it important to be self-consistent by not holding obviously contradictory beliefs and by acting according to our avowed values. If we are self-consistent chances are we shall be able to offer justifications that are, by and large, acceptable. This ability to offer justifications which are acceptable to ourselves and others is one general characteristic of being rational.

Philosophers are notorious for engaging in endless disputations. Indeed, disagreement is the hall-marks of all philosophizing. There are positions and counter-positions, arguments and counter-arguments, propositions and counter-propositions theories and counter-theories, systems and counter-systems etc., characterizing the core of philosophical dialectic. There are idealists and materialists, realists and anti-realists empiricists and rationalists, objectivists and subjectivists, foundationalists and anti-foundationlists, theists and atheists, monotheists and polytheists etc.. offering there "isms" as universally and eternally justified and justifiable world-views and values systems. All of them hope that in course of time the outstanding merits of their view-points will persuade their opponents to join their camps by giving up their beliefs and values they so ardently but unsuccessfully defend. They all hope, their watertight compartments not withstanding, for the gradual emergence or sudden discovery of an ultimate philosophical consensus on their respective philosophical positions. However, pious wishes or wishful thinking, fortunately or unfortunately, are no substitute for sophisticated methodological analysis. The philosophical struggle of thousands of years for hammering out a consensus with regard to our beliefs, values and goals and the multidimensional contemporary methodological critiquing of such a long drawn-out tradition indicate that there is no consensus waiting to be discovered by some ultimate philosophers. Philosophers may well be like blind men in dark a room searching for a black cat which is not there. The ultimate consensus does not remain undiscovered. It most probably does not exist. All philosophies, theologies and ideologies are attempts to decipher what is indecipherable or say what can not be said. All of them struggle to formulate universal and eternal panaceas; a project outside the cognitive limits of homoserines.

Philosophers have long aspired that the application of reason might unite us in a single worldview and value-system. They have believed in an ultimate rationality that can

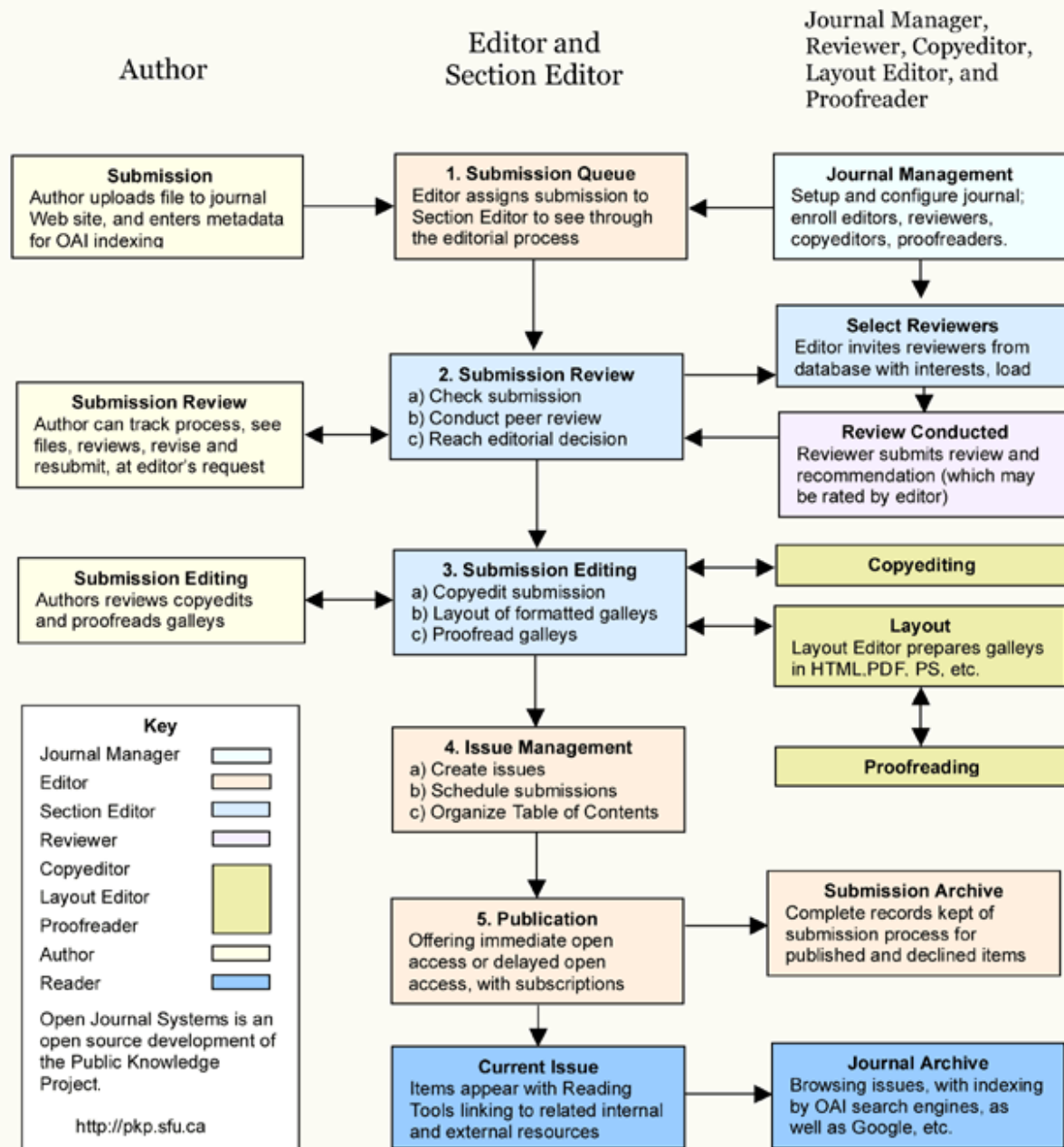
deliver a consensus amidst multiple disagreements both cognitive and ethical or generate a universally agreed upon set of beliefs and values. However, the differences in respective positions are radical enough to allow such a project to come to fruition. The underlying assumptions about beliefs and values are cross-culturally too radical to admit of any such reconciliation. Even what counts as rational and self-consistent discourse may vary from culture to culture. Therefore, for two philosophical disputants, there may be no shared fundamental value that is binding enough to serve as a common ground. Human beings as seekers of knowledge and doers of action are inherently perspectival with limited outlooks and specific needs. These inherently perspectival cognitions and actions are further stamped upon by cultural specifications. We may all be rational in the sense that our actions are, in general, pragmatically consistent with our motives and our pictures of the world. But this conception of rationality still leaves potentially unbridgeable gulfs between our motives and our world-views. In a world characterized by radical cultural diversity, neither scientific nor religious world views and value systems can be supported by any ultimate standard of rationality, even though both types of beliefs and values may be respectively self-consistent, intellectually satisfying and pragmatically effective. The possibility of different perspectives that are equally consistent and effective and shaped by multiple or different constraints can never be ruled out in view of our limited cognitive resources. Therefore, the very project of philosophical inquiry to establish for all times, places and persons some ultimate and necessary truth about reality can never be worked out or arrived at. The possible success of such a project seemed brighter in ancient, medieval and even modern phases of philosophical evolution. The assumption that some self-evident propositions about the world were waiting to be discovered, at some point of time, set the stage for final solution to philosophical problems. However, the anti-foundationalist turn of the post-modern era has called into question the whole project of classical objectivity. It is being plausibly argued that the correspondence theory of truth is not tenable. Our theories about the world have no isomorphic relationship with the world "in itself". They are not evaluated on the basis of their correspondence to the world. We are not living in a world unconditioned by our points of view, our needs and goals etc. So far as we are concerned, there is no theory-independent world. Our knowledge is always representation of reality from a particular perspective. Although there may be an ultimate reality our knowledge of that reality can never be ultimate.

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