

# Art Education Curriculum in Vietnam and Indonesia: Historical Perspectives on the Impact of Colonialism, Economic Reform, and Local Cultural Heritage

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## Abstract

This article discusses commenting on the characteristics of Vietnam and Indonesia art education curricula based on colonial influences, post-socialization economic reforms, and local cultural values. Vietnamese art education was influenced by the French art program, which began in the later decades of the nineteenth century and adopted a fine arts education program. In contrast, the Indonesian art education program started in the early part of the twentieth century and reflects the Dutch style of art education that highly valued applied arts/crafts. This study explores the reciprocal relationship between economic growth and the development of art education in both countries. Through a historical-comparative approach, this study highlights how socio-economic transformations have shaped arts education policies and practices. Moreover, it assesses the contribution of art education in developing the creative economy. It suggests measures for the improvement of art education so that it can promote sustainable cultural and economic development. Based on the results of this study, it is possible to successfully combine such local features as Bale culture with foreign art education curricula to create a solid foundation for financial culture in the region via art education.

**Keywords:** *Curriculum, Art Education, Indonesia, Vietnam*

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## INTRODUCTION

Art is an important contribution to arts and culture and is instrumental to economic initiatives (Eisner, 2002). The Indonesian and Vietnamese arts education has carried aesthetic values and is relevant to the growth of the creative economy, which is aligned with one of the nation's priorities. Vietnamese and American art education provides an analysis of arts education in both countries that adopted the colonialist view, which was influenced by changes in economic reform and the effort to maintain local art tradition (Nguyen, 2020); (Taylor, 2016). Indonesian arts education inherited from the Dutch has employed applied arts and crafts to fulfill administrative needs and to create financial assets (Arsyad, 2018); (Jasper & Pirngadie, 1912). Employment of arts such as batik and carving made the colonial functional and aesthetically sufficient. French influence introduced Western art practice to Vietnam through sources such as L'École des Beaux-arts d'Indochine, instrumentalizing European art styles and techniques in

modern painting (Taylor, 2009); (Tran, 2019). Although this kind of art education was colonial-oriented, it became the basis for the growth of modern art in both countries.

The subject of interest in this thesis is to understand the impacts of the economic change of the latter half of the 20th century on art education in Indonesia and Vietnam. In Indonesia, the 1998 reforms have led to devolution in education by enabling the regions to include local cultural products like gamelan and batik into the national curriculum (Hapsari, 2019). Meanwhile, the Doi Moi policy in Vietnam in 1986 opened the door to modernizing art education, including introducing digital art and design to support a dynamic labor market (Nguyen, 2020). This transformation shows the application of human capital theory (Schultz, 1961), which views education as an investment to increase economic productivity.

In the modern era, art education also faces the challenge of preserving traditional culture amidst globalization. In this regard, the theory of global local synthesis by (Robertson, 1995) has some interest, thus pointing to the need to mix global factors with local culture. For example, batik arts in Indonesia are complemented today with digital processes to unlock other forms of creativity and better address product market problems for global players (Suryani, 2021). In Vietnam, such traditional arts, including silk painting, are effectively taught in the curriculum but combined with technological advancement, as observed by (Tran, 2019).

Arts education in both countries is a tool for cultural preservation and a driver of globally relevant economic innovation. Traditional arts that were previously only part of cultural heritage have become important elements in the modern creative economy. Arts education helps connect cultural heritage with job market needs by developing creative skills such as digital art, design, and animation.

The formulation of the problem that is the basis for the discussion of this article includes three things: (1) how colonialism shaped the basic framework of the arts education curriculum in Vietnam and Indonesia, (2) how economic reforms in both countries contributed to the modernization of arts education, and (3) how local cultural heritage can be maintained through arts education while responding to the challenges of modernization. This article explores arts education as a tool for preserving culture while driving economic innovation.

## METHODS

This research adopts a comparative qualitative research design with a historical-descriptive research method. This approach was chosen to analyze the influence of colonial heritage, economic reform, and local cultural heritage on the arts education curriculum in Vietnam and Indonesia. The potential data source is the documents belonging to the government and educational databases, texts including an official history and education policies, and several academic documents. The data in this study were obtained through two main methods:

### 1. Documentation Study

The research narrows down documents concerning arts education, including arts education policies, government papers, colonial papers, and academic pers. The primary sources include the École des Beaux-Arts d'Indochine in Vietnam and reports on the Indonesian Fine Arts Academy (ASRI) in Indonesia. In addition, both countries' economic reform documents are the main focus.

### 2. Literature Review

The literature used includes scientific journals, academic books, and relevant theories. This study's theoretical approach includes the theory of human capital (Schultz, 1961), the theory of local-global synthesis (Robertson, 1995), and the theory of culture-based education (Dewey, 1934). This study provides an analytical framework to initiate the integration of local culture and modernization in the arts curriculum.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **1. The Impact of Colonialism on the Curriculum of Art Education**

#### **a. Vietnam: The French School**

The history of French impact on the information of art education 'in Vietnam can be traced to when the École des Beaux-Arts d' Indochine was founded in Hanoi in 1925. This institution initiated the style that later adopted classical arts like realism, impressionism, and Western-style paintings, including ones done outdoors. Similar to that seen in Laos, evidence of French influence with a Vietnamese accent can be analyzed in the so-called Indochine style with its mix of French design and Vietnamese motifs that emerged at that time (Taylor, 2009). While colonizers employed art to disseminate propaganda, artists in Vietnam responded by using this tool to establish a new Vietnamese artistic culture. This French influence can thus be analyzed using the theoretical framework developed on postcolonial theory as a form of acculturation in which colonial aesthetic norms sought to impose themselves on local artistic productions. However, at the same time, this theory also points to local cultural imperialism, and Vietnamese artists developed this from foreign art to incorporate their values (Ashcroft et al., 1989). In this sense, the Indochine Style became an upward-antagonist signifier against colonial oppression, embodying global components into its network while maintaining regional otherness. Although art was used for colonial propaganda, Vietnamese artists utilized this influence to create a new national art identity.

#### **b. Indonesia: Dutch School**

In Indonesia, applied arts developed under the influence of the Dutch colonial. Crafts such as batik, carving, and textiles were directed to meet the administrative and economic needs of the colonial. The Indonesian Academy of Fine Arts (ASRI), founded in 1947 in Yogyakarta, followed the structure of art education at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam (Holt, 1967). Traditional arts, which previously functioned in domestic and religious contexts, were transformed into economic products with high market value (Arsyad, 2018). From the perspective of postcolonial theory, as stated by (Bhabha, 1994), the dominance of applied arts in the Dutch colonial education system can be seen as an attempt to maintain economic control by exploiting local cultural resources. Colonial hegemony is seen in how local craft arts are directed to meet Western aesthetic standards and functionalism aspects by (Gramsci et al., 1971) concept of cultural hegemony. However, the adaptation and innovation carried out by Indonesian craftsmen show a form of resistance that takes advantage of the situation, as explained by (Scott, 1985) in "Weapons of the Weak," where they not only comply but also create space to maintain their cultural identity through art products that are meaningful to their local communities.

### **2. Effect of Economic Reform on Arts Education**

#### **a. Vietnam: The Doi Moi Era**

The Doi Moi reform, meaning "renewal," is an economic reform policy that began in Vietnam in 1986. Vietnamese reforms were launched by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) under the leadership of Nguyen Van Linh because of the economic stalemate caused by the completely centralized economic system. Doi Moi meant changing Vietnam from a centrally planned economy to a market-driven socialist economy that opened to foreign investors, provided land reforms, and improved social sectors, of which education is the core. The outcome of this reform was to start forming a new concept of arts education that would fit within the workings of the international labor market. The government deliberately inflated arts funding to schools and included digital arts, design, and animation to develop a more capable and creative generation workforce. This approach was also intended to enhance the ranking of Vietnam's worldwide competition in the creative economy sector, which is seen as one of the main drivers for VN's

post-Doi Moi economic development. This step reflects the application of human capital theory, which emphasizes that education is an investment to increase individual productivity and national economic competitiveness (Schultz, 1961). This reform is also in line with the endogenous growth theory, as proposed by (Romer, 1990), where improving the quality of education, especially in the creative arts, can drive innovation and economic growth.

In addition, the visual arts previously dominated by social realism began to accommodate contemporary styles, making Vietnamese artists more competitive in the global market (Nguyen, 2020). This transformation encouraged the expansion of the domestic creative arts sector and created new opportunities in the international market. For instance, Vietnamese tradition-based digital art gained its first visibility in international art platforms; a model of art education that synchronizes tradition and modernity emerged victorious unquestionably.

## **b. Indonesia: The Reformation Era**

In the educational approaches to art in Indonesia, change occurred in 1998 with new reforms in art education while the political economy of Indonesian Society had turnovers. This reform was defined by the devolution process that decentralizes most of the power used at the central level to the local level to oversee the education sector. This policy could lead to increased administrative work and offers several possibilities for curriculum development, for instance, the so-called 'Merdeka Belajar Program' designed to enhance the orientation and application of the Indonesian School Days curriculum to the needs and requirements in the present and the future. The consequences of this reform include an increase in Indonesia's GDP due to economic growth and better investment in ministries of education and cultures (Bank, 2023). Such an increase in the GDP level encourages a more significant fraction of the education budget to be allocated to arts education.

In addition, (Putnam, 1993) theory of social capital is relevant in explaining how arts education can leverage local social networks and trust to encourage collaboration between the arts community and the creative sector. Arts education can be a tool through which local performers relate to the global marketplace and enhance community involvement in the growth of the creative sector. On the other hand, (Florida, 2002) theory of the creative economy emphasizes the importance of creativity as a key factor in modern economic development. Referring to Indonesian culture, the added value of traditional arts like batik and wayang, which have been extended to include curriculum, can be enhanced by applying a digital technology percentage direction to create high-value art products for the worldwide market.

However, there was no growth in infrastructure for arts education, insufficient funding, and insufficient preparation for teachers in arts learning. These should be solved through practices, including humane policies from the political and other authorities for long-term support through private funding in training and employment and the management of technologies. Therefore, through the help of these theories, Indonesia has to ensure the use of arts education as a tool for promoting economic development.

## **3. Culture found within a locality in the arts curriculum**

### **a. Vietnam**

Teaching art in Vietnamese schools as cultural preservation: Dong Ho painting and literary writing. The Dong Ho painting technique is one example of traditional painting, which tells about traditional Vietnamese values and transmits social stories with multilayered symbolism (Tran, 2019). Vietnam has adopted all these traditional arts as part of the curriculum to teach the young generation moral, aesthetic, and historical values. This way, we will not only maintain traditional arts but also proceed with their update through the contribution of digital technologies.



Figure 1. Dong Ho's painting entitled Rat's Wedding  
(doc vovworld.vn)

This approach relates to global /local interactions, which consider integrating globalization processes and local contexts to create appropriate cultural products in the contemporary world (Robertson, 1995). For instance, Dong Ho's paintings are done in animation or design to achieve broader markets within globalization (Tran, 2019). The effect enhances cultural identity formation at the local level and puts traditional art in a better position in the international market. Besides, one can also borrow (Dewey, 1934) concept of culture as the basis for education in this regard. Dewey about arts education with local cultural features: Arts education is so necessary for the building of social participation as well as for the development of a strong community identity. In Vietnam, traditional arts such as calligraphy teach values of politeness, spirituality, and human relationships with nature. This way, arts education is not only a function of promoting cultural values but also a form that can answer the questions of the new world. Digital technology in this curriculum aims to preserve traditional arts in the global market while maintaining its localized aspects (Tran, 2019).



Figure 2. Vietnamese calligraphy painting  
(doc vietnamplus.vn)



## 4. Ideology in Art Education

### a. Vietnam: Peculiarities of Relations between Socialist Ideology and Culture

To some extent, after the process of independence, art education in Vietnam bore the values that followed collectivism associated with nationalism within socialism ideology. In the political sense, art was utilized to pass messages about politics, unite people around nationalistic ideologies, and foster the idea of working-class consciousness. Social realism became the dominant style, reflecting the lives of the Vietnamese people, including peasants and workers, as the main element of social struggle (Nguyen, 2015). This approach is based on the theory of cultural hegemony, which was put forward by (Gramsci et al., 1971), in which the state uses art to establish "moral leadership" over society. In the context of Vietnam, art was produced to support the ideological goals of the Communist Party, strengthening the narrative of nationalism and collectivism. In addition, the critical education theory by (Freire, 1970) is also relevant because art education is directed at raising political awareness of society towards social inequality.

The Doi Moi reforms provided space for contemporary art to develop, although elements of socialist propaganda remained integrated into local cultural representations. The modern art curriculum in Vietnam accommodates global influences while focusing on themes of patriotism and collective work. For example, artworks reflecting the struggle of the Vietnamese people are integrated with contemporary art techniques to promote national identity on the international stage (Nguyen, 2020). Triggered as early as 1986, the Doi Moi reels began to embrace contemporary art within its frameworks of art, but not without also including aspects of socialist propaganda.

### b. Indonesia: Pancasila Ideology

Another aspect is that Pancasila, the basis of the state, has a definite impact on art education in Indonesia. As a philosophical guide, Pancasila emphasizes the values of humanity, unity, and social justice, which are reflected in the art curriculum to preserve the diversity of national culture (Zaini, 2018). Batik, wayang, and gamelan are traditional arts that serve as media for strengthening the moral character of the students, as well as fostering love towards the culture of Indonesia. The following features of traditional art are incorporated into this curriculum to boost the country's national spirit as well as cultural disposition.

According to Dewey's cultural transmission perspective (1934), education is a process that must occur in context and be cultural and contextualized. Traditional arts such as wayang teach moral and philosophical values from epic stories such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, making this art an effective educational tool. In addition to being culture-based, creative learning models must be adaptive and contextual to the spirit of the times (Kusumandyoko, 2016). In addition, integrating traditional arts with modern technology shows the application of (Florida, 2002) creative economy theory, which emphasizes that creativity is the core of modern economic development. Indonesian traditional batik and carving arts are transformed by digital design technology to produce modern and marketable forms of artwork. In addition to thus advancing the cause of culture, this endeavor also enhances the participation of traditional arts in the creative industries.

However, the main challenge in implementing this Pancasila-based curriculum is the limited human resources and adequate infrastructure. Implementing traditional arts with new technology remains challenging for many art educators, and education policies remain lacking in continually training teachers. Thus, there should be more cooperation between the government, schools, other educational institutions, and the private sector to improve the arts education settings.

Table 1. Comparison of the Influence of Ideology on Arts Education

Aspects	Vietnamese (Socialism)	Indonesian (Pancasila)
Main Philosophy	Collectivism, nationalism, and class work.	Diversity, unity, and cultural preservation.
Art Focus	Social realism is art for the people	Traditional arts and arts-based on local culture.
Curriculum Approach	Centralized and based on political propaganda.	Flexible (decentralized) and based on traditional values.

The government body performing the state administration in the cultural, family, sports, and tourism spheres of Vietnam is the Minister for Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Vietnam (Bộ Văn hóa, Thể thao và Du lịch). Although there is no official information detailing the specific division of arts in Indonesia, arts in Vietnam encompass a variety of forms of cultural expression, including fine arts, music, dance, theater, and other traditional art forms. One example of a unique traditional performing art in Vietnam is water puppetry, which combines sculpture, music, light, and the skills of the artists. In addition, Vietnam has a rich tradition of folk painting, such as Dong Ho and Hang Trong paintings, which reflect the diversity of Vietnamese culture and beliefs. Although there is no official division of arts as in Indonesia, Vietnam has a variety of art forms that reflect the richness and diversity of its culture.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this research show that curriculum developments for art education in Vietnam and Indonesia have been influenced by their historical, economic, and cultural backgrounds. An overriding conclusion is that the colonial framework strongly colors the formative years of art education in both the Vietnam and Indonesia. French colonial influence in Vietnam resulted in a Western-based aesthetic approach to fine arts, while Dutch colonialism in Indonesia emphasized applied arts and traditional crafts.

The economic transformations in both countries, such as the Doi Moi reforms in Vietnam and the post 1998 political economic reforms in Indonesia, encouraged the modernization of art education. Both have blended traditional elements with modern technology to address the international market's requirements, making them accessible and reachable from both countries. However, this approach was carried out differently: Vietnam was more about integrating traditional and modern art, and, on the other hand, we had Indonesia, where they aimed to boost cultural heritage to create a new nation. Based on the study results, several steps can be taken to strengthen the role of art education in cultural and economic development in Vietnam and Indonesia. The governments in both countries need to improve the synergy between the education, culture, and creative industry sectors so that the art curriculum can be adjusted to the global market's needs without sacrificing local cultural values. These efforts include creating additional administrative policies to develop traditional arts while fostering new technology development in art education.

However, enhancing the capacity of arts educators is a dire requirement. Continuous training programs should be prioritized to help educators integrate modern technologies, such as digital arts and animation, into traditional arts teaching. In this way, traditional arts such as batik in Indonesia or Dong Ho painting in Vietnam can continue to develop and be competitive in the international market.

Arts education infrastructure cannot remain immune to change processes. Enhancing infrastructure like art studios with IT gadgets will enhance the delivery of a technology-based

curriculum. It is, therefore, crucial to build an arts education ecosystem that will support the localization of traditional practices with contemporary features.

Moreover, more research is required to assess the effectiveness of adopting arts curricula to develop a creative economy for both countries. This research can shed more light on how arts education can be utilized in sustainable economic development and add to the specific fields and practices of arts education to general education on assimilating traditional cultures in light of global improvements and developments. Therefore, the above mentioned steps will assist in escalating the position of the arts in these countries, developing a corresponding creativity industry, and responding to existing challenges in the international arena without losing cultural diversities.

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