

Becoming a Music Teacherpreneur: The Journey from Music Teaching to Music School Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the process of becoming a music teacherpreneur. Using a qualitative case study approach, participants were required to hold a degree in music education or have full-time teaching experience in educational institutions, and to have transitioned to running a music school. Their schools must have operated continuously for at least five years and received recognition from students and parents. Two cases were selected. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews framed by the transformation from ideas to business opportunities and analyzed using thematic analysis.

The results show that Case Study 1, called *Faith-driven Thai Music School*, was shaped by parents involved in Thai music and dance, the participant developed an early passion and faith in Thai music. The process of becoming a music teacherpreneur begins with family roots in Thai music and inspiration from being called *Kru* (Thai traditional teacher), progresses to the establishment and official recognition of music schools, and is sustained through resilience and adaptation during crises while uploading values, relationships, and ethics. For Case Study 2, named *From Concert Pianist to Educational Trust*, the participant, a renowned musician, began her entrepreneurial journey by leveraging her artistic strength and gradually building trust through students' award-winning performances. The journey involves building a reputation and customer base, planning long-term finances, and developing music teachers to ensure quality teaching. Through effective communication, holistic relationships, and a clear long-term vision, she sustained trust and maintained quality, leading to continuity and impact in music education. Although they present different entrepreneurial journeys, three key pillars of music teacherpreneurial competencies are common: 1) Quality-driven Pedagogy, 2) Standardization and Credibility, and 3) Adaptive Resilience.

Keywords: Entrepreneur; Music Teacher; Music Teaching; Music School; Teacherpreneur

Introduction

Technology and innovation inevitably influence our current society, compelling all professional fields to adapt in order to keep pace with the rapidly changing circumstances-including the music teaching career. As a result, music teachers have explored multiple income streams, such as developing online music courses and creating music-related projects. Some of these projects eventually expand into establishing music schools, which require far more than music teaching skills alone. To succeed, music teachers must employ creative thinking, apply innovation in the educational system, and demonstrate financial literacy. These competencies align with teacherpreneurial competencies.

The word “teacherpreneur” refers to an educator who combines teaching skills with an entrepreneurial mindset, seeking creative solutions to improve educational innovation (Liu et al., 2024; Olusiji, 2020). According to Mirsobitov (2025), a teacherpreneur is a professional hybrid role encompassing both educator and entrepreneurs, driving innovation and systematic transformation in 21st-century education. This can be seen that teacherpreneurship is not only a strategy to develop the teaching profession but also corresponds to broader educational challenges.

The current research proposes that teacher education programs lack qualified training opportunities for the implementation of an entrepreneurial mindset (Ntsanwisi & Simelane-Mnisi, 2025; Shawkat, 2022). This lack of professional development and structured training limits the transition into entrepreneurial roles (Prachayapruit, 2017; Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015). In particular, music teachers often face barriers when stepping into the role of music school entrepreneurs. This gap indicates an urgent necessity for music teachers to develop teacherpreneurial competencies.

Consequently, this study examines the process of becoming music teacherpreneurs through two case studies of individuals who were trained as music specialists and later transitioned into music school entrepreneurs. Therefore, the study aims to address the following research questions: 1) What are the evolutionary stages

of transitioning from a music teacher to a music school entrepreneur? 2) What key teacherpreneurial competencies are required to sustain a music school?"

Literature Reviews

The literature review covers four perspectives: teacherpreneurship as a hybrid role of educators and innovators, family business succession in sustaining music schools, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) for building trust and enrollment, and entrepreneurial growth models explaining organizational development.

2.1 Teacherpreneurship

Teacherpreneurship represents a hybrid role in which teachers maintain pedagogy as their core duty while also fostering innovation through effective teaching practices. Their main drive is education logic, emphasizing social value creation for both students and colleagues. Teacherpreneurs contribute solutions in pedagogy and policy, raising the overall teaching profession (Berry et al., 2013). To perform such roles, entrepreneurial characteristics such as opportunity recognition, proactiveness, autonomy, and innovativeness are required (Dess et al., 2005; Pauceanu et al., 2021). Within highly bureaucratic systems, teacherpreneurs rely heavily on the entrepreneurial ecosystem of their communities, which provides social, cultural, and material resources (Roundy, 2022).

2.2 Family Business Succession in Music Schools

Family business often emerges early, rooted in family culture and supported by financial resources. They are typically characterized by intergenerational succession, which may evolve across generations toward profit orientation or broader institutionalization such as stock exchange listing (KPMG Professional Services, 2023). Each family prepares successors, but succession processes may encounter challenges in leadership transfer that directly affect business success. Planning is therefore crucial: readiness training in real contexts allows successors to manage effectively (Longenecker & Schoen, 1978; Meijaard et al., 2005). This aligns with findings that

family business success depends on clear family agreements, capable successors, leadership qualities, attitudes, and the ability to apply technology, innovation, and succession planning. (Sribunrueng et al., 2022).

2.3 CRM

Applying marketing knowledge in education focuses on increasing student numbers, improving satisfaction, and enhancing service attractiveness (Ivy, 2001; Kotler & Fox, 1995). Integrating marketing into education contributes not only to service quality but also to financial opportunities for sustaining facilities and the learning environment. Closely related is CRM, which refers to managing stakeholders throughout the service process-from admission through ongoing interaction. CRM involves aligning organizational goals with student learning experiences and satisfaction (Zablah et al., 2004). It requires recognizing multiple stakeholder groups such as students, alumni, parents, and employers. Octavia et al. (2023) emphasize that sustainable education institutions depend on maintaining relationships and addressing the needs of these groups. Similarly, CRM is necessary for music schools to enhance parental trust and strengthen the school's reputation.

2.4 Entrepreneurial Growth Stages

Entrepreneurial development is vital for the expansion of businesses from small enterprises to large enterprises. Churchill and Lewis (1983) describe five stages: The first stage, *Existence*, refers to customer acquisition and product delivery under limited funding. The second stage, *Survival*, concerns cash flow and expense control. *Success*, the third stage, relates to stability or reinvestment for growth. *Take-off*, the fourth stage, involves rapid expansion requiring funding and delegation. Finally, *Resource Maturity* represents full systems of planning and control but carries the risk of rigidity. On the other hand, Greiner (1998) explains six evolutionary stages interrupted by crises. The initial stage, *Creativity*, often ends with a leadership crisis. The second stage, *Direction*, introduces a structured system but results in conflict over decision-making power. The third stage, *Delegation*, empowers staff but leads to control challenges.

The fourth stage, *Coordination*, restored central systems but risks bureaucracy. Lastly, *Collaboration* emphasizes teamwork and organizational culture yet may cause psychological strain from continuous collaboration. These stages show that growth inevitably involves crises, which act as drivers of adaptation and further development.

Methodology

A qualitative case study was employed to reveal the pathways of two music teachers. Two participants were selected to facilitate an in-depth comparative analysis of their teacherpreneurial journeys across the various cultural contexts of music education in Thailand. Participants were selected based on three criteria: 1) having graduated in music education or possessing at least five years of teaching experience in higher education before transitioning to operating a music school; 2) having continuously operated their schools for at least five years with established recognition from students and parents; and 3) reflecting distinct entrepreneurial mindsets (Yin, 2018). Including one participant from Thai music tradition and one from the Western music tradition serves to illustrate the broad spectrum of music teacherpreneur in Thailand, ranging from cultural preservation to international professionalism. These selection criteria focused on professional profiles and institutional organization to ensure the depth of teacherpreneurial journey, independent of the participants' geographic locations. This distinction is evident in their drivers: Case Study 1 operates as a Thai music teacher driven by cultural preservation and faith-based values, while Case Study 2 operates as a renowned pianist focused on international excellence and professional reputation through competitive achievements.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, developed within the framework of the transformation from ideas to business opportunities (European Commission, 2021; Lackéus, 2015). The interview protocol was piloted with individuals of similar characteristics to refine timing and direction before obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Silpakorn University (Project Code: REC 67.0419-058-

2663). Each one-hour interview was conducted with informed consent for note-taking and video recording, and participants were assured of voluntary participation and withdrawal without consequence. Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection by reviewing transcripts repeatedly to identify patterns of life stages in the teacherpreneur journey, leading to thematic interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results

This study explores the experiences of music teachers who extend their teaching expertise into entrepreneurs. These experiences provide useful lessons for new generation teachers aiming to establish music schools. The findings are presented through two case studies that demonstrate contrasting pathways.

4.1 Case Study 1: Faith-driven Thai Music school

The participant's journey reflects deep passion and faith in Thai music, shaped by parents who were Thai music and dance teachers. His first unpaid teaching during secondary school, when students began calling him *Kru*, inspired lifelong dedication. There are five stages for his entrepreneurial journeys.

4.1.1 Root

This stage nurtured the participant's identity within a family rooted in Thai music and classical dance. His home became a center of cultural transmission, and from Grade 8-9, he was asked to teach younger children. Though tuition-free, the setting resembled a family-run school, providing early training in management and responsibility. As he recalled *"When I was in Grade 8-9, my parents began asking me to help teach the younger ones. The atmosphere was different. It was just a single-story Thai-style house, but children still came to learn there."* These experiences fostered both affection for Thai music and early entrepreneurial skills, planting the roots of his teacher identity and inspiring the faith-driven philosophy that later shaped his school.

4.1.2 Kru (Thai traditional teacher)

Being called *Kru* during secondary school gave him pride and recognition, marking a turning point that fostered his commitment to the teaching profession. Although offering free lessons, his contribution reflected values grounded in cultural and professional dedication rather than profit. As he stated, *“while I was still in secondary school, I was so proud when the children started calling me ‘Kru’. For someone my age back then, it was truly a source of pride.”* This formative moment reinforced his intrinsic motivation and identity as a teacherpreneur.

4.1.3 Establishment

The participant’s family taught Thai music informally without fees, which often led to interrupted learning and student dropout. This limitation stimulated his desire to transform informal wisdom-based teaching into formal education. After graduating, he spent a year developing the curriculum until official approval was granted by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 1996. He recalled, *“The license took about a year to obtain-submitting and revising the curriculum over and over again. Once it was approved, we opened the school that same year, which was 1996 when the license was granted.”* Recognition by the MOE transformed informal cultural instruction into a credible institution, attracting students and providing opportunities for contests, performances, and scholarships. The approval not only built trust but also linked cultural preservation with formal credibility, raising the status of Thai music education.

4.1.4 Resilience

His school faced two severe crises - the 2011 floods and the COVID-19 pandemic - which reduced enrollment from 100 to only 8 students. He successfully restored enrollment and adapted assessment methods, shifting from stressful exams to enjoyable public performances, while relying on his own high-achieving students as teaching role models. As he explained, *“We never*

bring in outsiders, because using them may cause problems. Thai music is not the same as Western music-it is more rigid and bound to a particular teacher's lineage." These strategies preserved both quality and identity, demonstrating resilience and adaptability as entrepreneurial capacities.

4.1.5 Values

Grounded in cultural preservation over profit, the school's policies included lifelong free learning for students completing the Thai music course and tuition waivers during COVID-19. Managed as a *Music House*, the school fostered sibling-like bonds and parental care, with some students even handling administration. He recalled: *"The students handled the collection of fees for us, so I didn't have to ask parents for payments. He approaches them and say 'Madam, your child's fee is complete' and then issue the receipt."* These practices illustrate values-driven management that not only built trust but also enhanced reciprocity and ethical returns, distinguishing the school from conventional music institutions.

4.2 Case Study 2: From Concert Pianist to Educational Trust

As a renowned musician, the participant built her reputation over seven years through performances and students' award-winning achievements, which earned parental trust and expanded her student base. Her entrepreneurial journeys comprise five stages.

4.2.1 Reputation

The participant emphasized reputation as the foundation for sustainable growth. Initially, she was known as a concert pianist, and her reputation grew through her students' competition achievements and word-of-mouth among parents. She explained, *"At that time, I felt like I wanted to start something new. I wasn't really thinking about opening school, but I wanted to do something different so that life wouldn't just repeat itself."* This suggests that her first entrepreneurial step was motivated more by a desire for renewal than

by profit-seeking. Supported by her partner, she oversaw the academic department while her partner manages administration.

4.2.2 Finance

She carefully approached financial management by estimating possible losses and setting aside reserves for risks ranging from rental costs to potential closure. Her consideration covered long-term strategies, depreciation, modernization, and contingency savings. Transparency was ensured through digital tools. She explained that *“We can see everything because it’s all in Google Sheets. Our school is paperless—everything is online and stored in the cloud.”* This reflects that the adoption of systematic financial practices and digital tools strengthens transparency while also supporting both accountability and sustainability of the school.

4.2.3 Teachers

The participant places strong emphasis on selecting competent teachers. Additionally, she pays attention to teachers’ ability to care for students and maintains professional attitudes. To attract and retain qualified teachers, she provides high remuneration and the opportunities for continuous professional development through masterclasses, seminars, and mentoring. Teacher evaluation considered retention, student achievements, and participation in concerts. As she explained, *“Evaluation is based on the retention rate—what percentage of students are retained without dropping out. Second is students’ achievements. Third is participation in the school’s concerts”* These practices highlight investment in human resources and an organizational culture where teachers were seen as the heart of both reputation and sustainability.

4.2.4 Trust

The participant emphasized communication as central to building trust with parents, teachers, and staff. Parents perceived music learning as an investment, so she focused on aligning expectations with honesty and care. She

noted, *“First, the students play well because the teachers are skilled. Second, we provide many performance opportunities. In terms of facilities, all our pianos are brand new—none are second hand—and the school itself is very beautiful.”* Her statement illustrates that reputation and retention stemmed not from marketing but from quality teaching, student performance opportunities, and a supportive learning environment leading to parental trust.

4.2.5 Visions

Her vision placed quality over expansion, with tuition fees reflecting premium instruction standards. She aimed to prepare students for world-class competitions and later expanded into other instruments. Beyond business growth, she sought to build a classical music community and collaborate with universities to prepare future teachers. As she shared, *“What I really want to do is work with universities. For example, if there is a third-year student who shows good potential, I’d like to train them in advance so that by the time they graduate, they can start teaching.”*

Her vision of proactive engagement with universities demonstrates the qualities of a teacherpreneur who prioritizes the enhancement of music education over profit by establishing a quality cycle. Furthermore, she intends to offer final-year university students opportunities for internships and music class observations free of charge, thereby enhancing their professional readiness for the labor market upon graduation. This trajectory illustrates her transition from a business owner to an educational leader who places importance on the sustainability of the teaching profession.

From the above findings, the different journeys can be seen between a Thai music school driven by faith and a Western music school that began by building a reputation as a concert pianist. However, both case studies demonstrate the integration of music teaching skills with entrepreneurship to elevate music schools. The table below demonstrates their entrepreneurial journeys.

Table 1: The summary of the entrepreneurial journeys

Case studies		
Faith-driven Thai Music school		From Concert Pianist to Educational Trust
Entrepreneurial Journeys	1. Root: Thai music and Thai classical dance were the family roots that nurtured the faith in the teacher's identity.	1. Reputation: The establishment of a reputation as a concert pianist, together with recognition gained from students' achievements, contributed to the growth of the music school.
	2. Kru: The word <i>Kru</i> brought pride and inspiration.	2. Finance: Long-term financial plans, ranging from rental costs to potential closure, should be considered before opening a school.
	3. Establishment: The development of a Thai music curriculum approved by the MOE and the establishment of the school elevated the standards of Thai music education.	3. Teachers: Qualified teachers are expected to care for students and to maintain professional attitudes. To attract and retain such teachers, the school offers high remuneration and continuous professional development.
	4. Resilience: Restoring enrollment during crises and adjusting assessment methods reflected a focus on students' happiness.	4. Trust: Communication builds trust with everyone involved in the school community. Teaching quality, performance opportunities, and a supportive environment foster parental trust.
	5. Values: The school's policies cover lifelong free learning for students who complete the school's curriculum, and the school is managed as <i>Music House</i> .	5. Visions: The school's vision fosters the development of piano students for world-class competitions and promotes collaboration with universities to prepare future music teachers.

Although the two-case studies exhibit contrasting entrepreneurial journeys—one beginning with family roots and the other with an established reputation—they share three key pillars of music teacherpreneurial competencies: 1) Quality-driven Pedagogy: Both music schools are driven by the roles of the teacher and educational leader.

They emphasize social values and student development rather than prioritizing profit. 2) Standardization and Credibility: Both cases employ standards as a tool to build parental trust. Case Study 1 transitioned from informal teaching methods to MOE-approved curriculum, whereas Case Study 2 focuses on international standards and promotes students for world-class competitions. 3) Adaptive Resilience: Management skills during crises are essential for survival. This is reflected in Case Study 1's adjustment of assessment methods to maintain student happiness, while Case Study 2 emphasizes long-term financial planning and the integration of digital technology for transparency. These pillars establish a framework for music teacherpreneurs, demonstrating how the integration of music teaching expertise with an entrepreneurial mindset ensures the long-term sustainability of their music schools.

Discussion

This study illustrates the pathways of two music teachers towards becoming teacherpreneurs. Both cases highlight teacherpreneurs as educators who combine pedagogical competence with entrepreneurial skills to pursue creative approaches to advancing educational innovation. This perspective aligns with Liu et al. (2024) and Olusiji (2020), who define teacherpreneurs as educators merging teaching expertise with entrepreneurial concepts to develop innovative approaches for educational improvement.

The Thai music school case emphasizes the family's role in cultivating cultural values and music from an early age. Ćalić and Đurđanović (2020) similarly emphasized that families are crucial in fostering students' interest in traditional folk music, thereby ensuring the continuity of cultural values. In contrast, the Western music school case highlights professional management, students' achievements, reputation through competitions and standardized examinations, and the use of customer relationship management (CRM) to build parental trust. This view is consistent with Ang et al. (2021) who argued that cooperation can be fostered or hindered depending on the values

and attitudes shared between parents and teachers. In particular, trust, reciprocity, and shared goals are the key elements. Moreover, these case studies demonstrate different pathways in music education teacherpreneurship while providing practical insights for teachers and school administrators. These findings suggest that administrators should integrate academic quality with entrepreneurial mindsets, including management practices. Such integration enables them to promote teacherpreneurs who combine teaching excellence with business skills to create sustainable music schools.

The growth pathways of both schools reflect established theoretical models of organizational growth, providing deeper insights into the teacherpreneurial journey. Case Study 1's pathway aligns with Greiner's (1998) theory, which posits that organizational growth is periodically interrupted by crises that act as essential drivers for adaptation. The severe impacts of the 2011 flood and the COVID-19 pandemic served as critical turning points, compelling Case Study 1 to transition from rigid assessment methods to flexible public performances to maintain student happiness. In contrast, Case Study 2 exemplifies Churchill and Lewis's (1983) growth stages. Specifically, the transition from the Survival to Success stage illustrates an approach centered on foundation building, which emphasizes deliberate long-term financial planning, the establishment of contingency reserves, and the use of digital transparency to secure stability before pursuing international excellence. While Case Study 1 utilizes crisis-driven adaptation to safeguard its cultural values, Case Study 2 employs systematic management to ensure professional sustainability. These cases demonstrate that music teacherpreneurs can lead organizational growth through either adaptive resilience or strategic formalization.

Research Limitations

This research acknowledges certain limitations. First, as the findings are based on two case studies, they are context-specific and not broadly generalizable. Second, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which may be subject to

subjective bias; therefore, the interpretation of the results reflects the career paths and personal viewpoints of the participants. Finally, the scope of the research was focused exclusively on music schools in Thailand; thus, the findings may not be applicable to music schools in different contexts.

Conclusion and Implications

The *Faith-driven Thai Music School* case reveals that growing up in a Thai music family nurtured the identity of being a *Kru*. This led to the integration of Thai music into the formal education system through curriculum approval in 1996. The school later overcame crises such as flooding and the COVID-19 pandemic by adopting flexible strategies. In contrast, the *From Concert Pianist to Educational Trust* case illustrates how reputation built through students' achievements generated social capital and trust. Although the case studies have their own identities, the transition journeys to music teacherpreneurs are the integral processes of music education and entrepreneurial skills. The findings lead to three key pillars of teacherpreneurial competencies comprising Quality-driven Pedagogy, Standardization and Credibility, and Adaptive Resilience for survival of music school in crisis period.

For music education, the findings suggest that developing music teachers requires more than pedagogical skills. This includes cultivating teacher identity with an entrepreneurial mindset, as well as competence in resource and financial management, communication, and professional sustainability. Additionally, the research results serve as the guidance to establish professional value and ensuring financial stability.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the researcher proposes the following practical recommendations and recommendations for future research:

8.1 Practical Recommendations

To apply these findings, educators can design curricula and learning activities that prepare music education graduates with academic knowledge and practical competencies. Regarding instructional management, team teaching is essential, especially for integrating disciplines between music education and business management. To produce graduates who are qualified for the labor market, providing opportunities for internships with experienced music teacherpreneurs promotes students' preparation for their professional careers.

8.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the limitation of studying only two cases, quantitative or mixed-methods should be applied in future research by studying large sample groups to investigate teacherpreneurial pathways suitable for other cultural contexts, including a comparative study between traditional and modern music schools. Furthermore, research should focus on developing curricula integrating music education and entrepreneurial skills—such as financial management, human resource management, and customer relationship management—based on backward design and subsequently examining the curricula.

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