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# Integrating Intangible Cultural Heritage Ethnic Music into University Curricula: A Guizhou-Based Practice for Strengthening the Sense of Community among the Chinese Nation

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**Abstract:** Guizhou boasts abundant intangible cultural heritage (ICH) musical resources, serving as an important auditory medium for showcasing the pluralistic yet unified nature of Chinese culture. This study takes ICH-based teaching practices at three universities in Guizhou as case studies, employing literature review, classroom observation, and case analysis methods to explore practical pathways for integrating ICH music into university classrooms and strengthening the sense of community among the Chinese people, focusing on three dimensions: educational function, curriculum content, and implementation mechanisms. The study reveals three distinct educational models emerging in the classroom: cultural cognition, emotional empathy, and community-based practice; it demonstrates how teaching integrates traditional Chinese aesthetic education, local ICH elements, and diverse ethnic musical materials, leveraging the curriculum system, dual-teacher teams, teaching resources, and practical learning environments to achieve the synergistic development of aesthetic education, cultural heritage preservation, and the cultivation of a sense of community. This research enriches the empirical body of knowledge on aesthetic education in universities located in ethnic minority regions and provides the "Guizhou Experience" for similar institutions seeking to implement analogous educational initiatives.

**Keywords:** Intangible cultural heritage–ethnic music; Chinese national community consciousness; Musical aesthetic education

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research background

Strengthening the sense of community among the Chinese nation is a core task in China's ethnic affairs and in the mission of fostering moral integrity and nurturing talent in higher education institutions during the new era. On October 15, 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the *Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening*

*and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era*, proposing to integrate China's outstanding traditional culture into every aspect of education and teaching, using aesthetics to nourish students' spiritual lives and cultivate their sense of cultural identity [1]. As a province with a diverse ethnic population, Guizhou has long enjoyed extensive cultural exchanges and mutual learning among various ethnic groups—such as the Dong ethnic group's "Dong Grand Song," the Miao ethnic group's "Flying Song," and the Buyi ethnic group's "Eight-Tone Seated Singing"—which provide uniquely advantageous cultural resources for promoting education on the sense of community.

In recent years, relevant institutions across Guizhou Province have gradually integrated intangible cultural heritage (ICH) music into their classroom curricula. The academic community has conducted in-depth discussions on various aspects—such as the incorporation of ICH music into schools [2], how music education can strengthen the sense of community among the Chinese people [3], the cultural values embodied in ICH music [4], its aesthetic education value [5], and its role in fostering social identity [6]—thereby elucidating the underlying logic through which ethnic music serves education aimed at nurturing a sense of community [7]. Simultaneously, scholars have engaged extensively in discussions regarding practical implementation pathways—such as the development of ICH music curricula [8], the engagement of ICH inheritors in school settings [9], and the development of school-based educational resources [10]—laying a solid theoretical foundation for this study. Reviewing the local context of Guizhou, most regional studies focusing on the region have centered on the artistic essence, ICH preservation, and folk transmission of specific musical traditions—such as the Dong ethnic group's "Dagé" [11], the Miao ethnic group's "Fei Ge" [12], and the Buyi ethnic group's "Bayin Zuo Shang" [13]; some of these studies have also offered constructive recommendations for reforming the design of ethnic music courses in higher education institutions [14]. While these efforts have yielded substantial academic outcomes, research that examines the entire implementation framework—encompassing curriculum content composition, faculty allocation, resource provision, and practical application contexts—within the classroom setting remains relatively scarce. The ICH music classroom is not merely a venue for the transmission of technical skills; it is, moreover, a vital educational space for shaping young people's cultural perceptions, collective emotions, and sense of community belonging. Thus, this study further underscores its academic value and practical significance.

## 1.2. Research objectives and research questions

This study explores how higher education institutions in Guizhou Province can transform local ICH music into an educational vehicle for fostering a strong sense of community among the Chinese people, as well as examines the local advantages and practical limitations inherent in such a classroom model. Based on this framework, the study sets forth four research objectives: to identify the educational functions arising from integrating ICH music into the classroom; to analyze the organizational paradigms for ICH music materials within the classroom setting; to investigate the teaching support mechanisms encompassing curriculum design, faculty resources, instructional materials, and practical implementation contexts; and to elucidate the underlying mechanisms linking aesthetic education, cultural heritage preservation, and the cultivation of a sense of community.

## 1.3. Research significance

The academic value of this study lies in advancing an empirical exploration of the intersection between ICH music education, university aesthetic education, and the sense of Chinese national community; it applies

the “Multiple Entities in One” community theory to the micro-level classroom teaching context, thereby adding a new case-study dimension to research on music education in western China’s ethnic regions. From a practical standpoint, the findings can serve as a reference for universities in Guizhou and other multi-ethnic regions across China when designing ICH music classroom teaching activities or refining aesthetic education practices oriented toward fostering a sense of community.

## 2. Theoretical framework and research design

### 2.1. Theoretical basis

The theoretical foundation of this study encompasses the following three aspects:

First is the theory of the “Multiple-Unity” cultural concept of the Chinese national community. This theory posits that all ethnic cultures are inseparable components of Chinese culture, and the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minority music serves as an auditory vehicle for this “multiple-unity” framework [15].

Next is the Aesthetic Education Immersion Theory. Distinct from didactic ideological and political education, this theory facilitates the construction of identity through perception, listening, singing, and practice, achieving an educational effect that is subtle and imperceptible. Then there is the Educational Field Theory. This theory can be used to analyze the logical framework underlying the establishment of a four-dimensional implementation support mechanism—encompassing university curricula, faculty, resources, and learning environments—and to elucidate the institutional conditions required for transforming local cultural resources into educational resources.

### 2.2. Case study selection: Higher education institutions in Guizhou Province

This study selected three universities in Guizhou Province as research subjects: one provincial-level key undergraduate teacher training institution, one local application-oriented undergraduate institution rich in ethnic cultural resources, and one municipal undergraduate institution located in the provincial capital. These three types of universities differ in their institutional positioning, disciplinary foundations, and existing frameworks for aesthetic education; these differences enable the study to more precisely define its observational boundaries and enhance the representativeness of the empirical research.

### 2.3. Research methods and analytical dimensions

#### 2.3.1. Research methods

This study primarily employs the literature review method, classroom observation method, and case study method. The literature review method is used to systematically analyze policy documents on national aesthetic education and ethnic education, as well as archival materials on the protection of intangible cultural heritage in Guizhou Province, university talent development programs, and course syllabi, thereby establishing a comprehensive policy and academic context; the classroom observation method involves conducting non-participatory observations of specialized intangible cultural heritage music courses, inheritors’ lectures, and stage-based practical activities at three universities selected for the study; the case study method selects representative courses and teaching activities and conducts an inductive analysis focusing on their functions, content, and mechanisms.

### 2.3.2. Core analysis dimensions

Building upon the research objectives and methodological framework, this study establishes three interconnected analytical dimensions.

First is the functional type dimension: within this dimension, the research team primarily examines the specific educational role played by ICH music classrooms at the levels of cultural cognition, emotional empathy, and community practice; second is the content model dimension: in this dimension, the research team analyzes the structural composition of classroom teaching content and distinguishes three types of instructional materials—mainstream aesthetic education content, local ICH texts, and collaboratively adapted works; third is the implementation mechanism dimension: this dimension analyzes the institutional safeguards established by higher education institutions across various dimensions—including curriculum design, faculty resources, material resources, and learning contexts.

## 3. Comparative case study: Commonalities and differences in practical approaches among different types of higher education institutions in Guizhou

This paper conducts a comparative case analysis based on three surveyed universities.

Case One is a provincial key normal undergraduate institution in Guizhou, focusing on the music major. It offers an elective course on Guizhou's ICH music within its music talent cultivation system. The course continuously invites ICH inheritors to demonstrate teaching in classrooms, incorporating theoretical lectures, skill training, field research, and stage performances. The aim is to cultivate music education talents with both ethnic music performance abilities and a cultural perspective on the Chinese national community. However, as an elective course, it is limited to music major students, resulting in a narrow audience. Field research is constrained by funding and class hours, allowing only a few students to participate in on-site investigations.

Case Two is the public aesthetic education practice at a comprehensive undergraduate university in the provincial capital. It offers the general education course "Appreciation of Guizhou Ethnic Music" to all students, focusing primarily on work appreciation and experiential singing, without intensive professional skill training. The emphasis is on achieving aesthetic education goals of cultural cognition and emotional resonance. The course has high accessibility, but due to limited general education class hours, field practices and joint performances are compressed. It mostly remains at classroom audio-visual appreciation and fragmentary singing, making it difficult to implement educational goals related to community practice.

Case Three is a local application-oriented undergraduate institution in an area rich in ethnic resources. Constrained by faculty, class hours, and funding, it has not yet established systematic ICH music courses. Relevant education relies on campus art festivals, student clubs, and special lectures for performances and experiential activities, aiming to achieve education through campus cultural immersion. This model has low participation barriers and a strong cultural atmosphere but lacks a stable curriculum outline and teaching design, leading to fragmented content and difficulty in building a replicable and regular teaching system.

The comparison shows that, influenced by their institutional positioning, faculty resources, funding conditions, and training objectives, the three universities differ significantly in course depth, resource investment, and practical forms: normal universities have sufficient depth in specialized teaching but a limited audience; comprehensive universities have broad coverage through general education courses but insufficient practical depth; local universities rely on campus culture dissemination but lack institutional

support for courses.

Although the three practical models are different, they share a consistent underlying logic: all utilize Guizhou's local ICH music resources for cultural identity education, follow an educational path of cultural cognition, emotional resonance, and community practice, and use multi-ethnic music as an auditory carrier to understand the pluralistic yet integrated pattern of Chinese culture. This indicates that ICH music has promotional value in fostering awareness of the Chinese national community and is not merely an individual case. Meanwhile, the three cases also reflect common predicaments in western ethnic minority region universities: difficulties in implementing dual-teacher teaching mechanisms, insufficient long-term guarantee of teaching resources, and constraints on practical teaching due to funding and class hours, providing a realistic basis for this study to draw conclusions and practical implications.

## 4. Integrating ICH ethnic music into university curricula: Functional types, content models, and implementation mechanisms

### 4.1. Primary educational functions of intangible cultural heritage ethnic music classroom programs

Based on their educational functions, the intangible cultural heritage ethnic music courses offered by universities in Guizhou Province fall into three categories: cultural cognition, emotional empathy, and community-based practice. The cultural cognition approach is commonly found in general education courses and thematic lectures; it utilizes theoretical instruction and audio-visual appreciation to comparatively analyze the distinctive musical characteristics of ethnic groups such as the Miao, Dong, and Buyi peoples, thereby dispelling the narrow perception of equating ethnic minority music solely with exotic cultural traditions and establishing a diverse multicultural knowledge framework. The emotional empathy approach centers on aesthetic experience and singing practice; through listening and learning to sing, students experience the shared spiritual core among various ethnic groups and forge emotional resonance across ethnic boundaries. The community-based practice approach employs project-based teaching methods, encompassing activities such as field research, collaborative rehearsals, musical composition, and campus performances.

### 4.2. Classroom teaching content model

The classroom teaching content is divided into three categories: mainstream Chinese aesthetic education content, regional core teaching resources, and multi-ethnic integrated music composition and adaptation. The mainstream Chinese aesthetic education approach uses "red music" and nationally renowned traditional musical classics to set the tone for classroom instruction and foster a holistic perspective on the Chinese cultural community. Regional resources include the Dong ethnic group's "Dong Grand Song," the Miao ethnic group's "Flying Song," and the Buyi ethnic group's "Eight-Tone Seated Singing," balancing technical skill instruction with historical interpretations of the integration of folk cultures and ethnic groups. Multi-ethnic integrated musical works co-created by teachers and students serve as teaching materials, providing an intuitive representation of the way various ethnic cultures coexist and blend together.

### 4.3. Implementation support mechanism for intangible cultural heritage ethnic music classroom programs

The teaching implementation mechanism faces multiple practical constraints. Firstly, the dual-teacher model

(comprising both school-based and external instructors) still has shortcomings: intangible cultural heritage inheritors may possess strong practical skills but lack formal university-level pedagogical training, resulting in relatively weak cultural interpretation capabilities; meanwhile, school-based teachers often lack fieldwork experience, and there is no established regularized teaching and research mechanism for the dual-teacher model. Secondly, the dual-track approach integrating specialized modules and general aesthetic education is constrained: specialized courses are predominantly elective, general education courses face tight class-hour allocations, and the institutionalization of curricula requires further improvement. Thirdly, the school-based resource database is built using project funding, yet there is insufficient funding for its ongoing maintenance; oral historical materials and field recordings face copyright-related challenges. Fourthly, the extension of classroom-based learning into multi-dimensional contexts—such as campus activities and fieldwork—is limited by funding, safety concerns, and class-hour constraints; as fieldwork activities are often short-term, it is difficult to ensure full participation from all students.

## 5. Conclusion

This study draws the core conclusion that non-heritage music classrooms in Guizhou universities have formed three progressive educational functions: cultural cognition, emotional empathy, and community practice. Relying on dual-teacher teams, dual-line courses, teaching resources, and diverse scenarios, a complete teaching guarantee system has been constructed, while numerous practical shortcomings still exist. Theoretically, this study confirms that non-heritage music serves as an excellent auditory carrier for cultivating the consciousness of the Chinese nation as a community of shared future, enabling the application of the theory of diversity and unity in micro-classroom teaching. If only technical instruction is emphasized and cultural narratives are neglected, the classroom will degenerate into a mere folk performance. In response, universities in ethnic regions should effectively utilize local non-heritage resources, strengthen dual-teacher collaboration and community cultural narratives, improve formative assessment, and construct a promotable aesthetic education curriculum model.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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