

Innovative Development and Effectiveness Evaluation of Aesthetic Education Curriculum Systems in Higher Education Institutions from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage Transmission

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Abstract: Against the national strategy for intangible cultural heritage (ICH) protection and the advancement of college aesthetic education, this study focuses on integrating ICH inheritance into college aesthetic education curricula. Using literature review, questionnaire survey, and case analysis, it first clarifies ICH's value in enriching aesthetic education content and fostering students' cultural identity. Then, an innovative Three-Level and Four-Module curriculum framework is proposed: the three levels match students' diverse needs, while the four modules cover ICH aesthetic theory, skill practice, interdisciplinary integration, and innovation.

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance; College Aesthetic Education; Curriculum System Innovation; Practical Effect Evaluation; Three Levels and Four Modules

1. The Intrinsic Connection Between Intangible Cultural Heritage Transmission and Aesthetic Education in Higher Education Institutions

1.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage Serves as a Vital Cultural Resource for Aesthetic Education in Higher Education Institutions

In recent years, China has elevated the protection of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) to a national cultural strategy. The revision and implementation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, along with the emphasis on the living transmission of ICH in the 14th Five-Year Plan for cultural development, have provided robust policy support for deeply integrating ICH into the education system. Concurrently, the Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era

explicitly state that aesthetic education in higher education institutions must be guided by socialist core values, vigorously promote China's outstanding traditional culture, and incorporate the craftsmanship spirit, unique aesthetic paradigms, and profound cultural heritage embodied in ICH into the realm of aesthetic education. This has become the core direction for reforming aesthetic education in higher education institutions in the new era.

Intangible cultural heritage embodies the unique aesthetic sensibilities and profound cultural spirit of the Chinese nation, serving as indispensable living teaching materials for aesthetic education in higher education. From the perspective of visual aesthetics, the symmetrical beauty of paper-cutting, the glaze beauty of blue-and-white porcelain, and the color beauty of New Year paintings can effectively enrich students' visual aesthetic experiences. From the perspective of performance aesthetics, the singing, recitation, acting, and combat techniques of Peking Opera, the melodious and lingering tones of Kunqu Opera, and the interplay of light and shadow in shadow puppetry can significantly enhance students' appreciation of performance art. From the perspective of craftsmanship aesthetics, the precision, delicacy, and elegance of Suzhou embroidery, the ingenuity, resilience, and practicality of bamboo weaving, and the form, color, and texture of pottery allow students to deeply experience the profound integration of skill and beauty through hands-on practice. Moreover, folk cultural elements within intangible heritage—such as Dragon Boat Festival dragon boat races and Mid-Autumn Festival moon appreciation—carry collective national emotions and cultural memories. These traditions help students grasp the social and cultural dimensions of beauty, preventing aesthetic education from becoming confined to the narrow realm of pure art.

1.2 Aesthetic Education in Higher Education

Institutions Serves as a Vital Vehicle for the Transmission of Intangible Cultural Heritage

As core institutions for talent cultivation and cultural dissemination, universities can provide robust support for revitalizing intangible cultural heritage through youth-oriented and professional approaches. On one hand, by offering aesthetic education courses focused on intangible cultural heritage, universities can transform traditional apprenticeship-based transmission into a modern model combining systematic instruction and standardized training. This significantly broadens the reach of heritage transmission, cultivating a cohort of young inheritors who master traditional skills while possessing contemporary aesthetic sensibilities and innovative capabilities. On the other hand, universities' research strengths can provide technical and theoretical support for revitalizing intangible cultural heritage. For instance, digital technologies (VR/AR) can reconstruct the processes of intangible cultural heritage skills, while design thinking can be applied to improve intangible cultural heritage products (such as incorporating traditional patterns into modern clothing designs). This promotes the deep integration of intangible cultural heritage with modern life scenarios, truly achieving its living transmission.

1.3 The Integration of the Two Aligns with the Educational Objectives of Aesthetic Education in the New Era

The core objective of aesthetic education in higher education institutions in the new era is to cultivate students through beauty, refine them through beauty, and nurture their essence through beauty, dedicated to developing students' aesthetic abilities, cultural confidence, and innovative spirit. The inheritance of intangible cultural heritage aligns perfectly with this goal: in terms of cultivating aesthetic abilities, the diversity of intangible cultural heritage effectively broadens students' aesthetic horizons and helps them establish nationalized aesthetic standards; In fostering cultural confidence, deepening students' understanding of the historical origins and cultural value of intangible heritage significantly enhances their sense of identity and pride in China's outstanding traditional culture. Regarding cultivating innovative spirit, the principle of preserving tradition while embracing innovation in intangible heritage practices—such as integrating modern elements into traditional techniques—effectively stimulates students'

creative thinking and develops their ability to organically combine traditional culture with contemporary needs.

2. Innovative Development of Aesthetic Education Curriculum Systems in Higher Education Institutions from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage Transmission

2.1 Fundamental Principles for Curriculum System Development

2.1.1. The integration of cultural and aesthetic qualities

The curriculum system must center on the cultural essence of intangible cultural heritage, avoiding the simplification of ICH into mere technical training. For instance, in Shu embroidery aesthetic education courses, instruction should not only systematically cover needlework techniques but also delve into the historical evolution of Shu embroidery (such as its intrinsic connection to Shu regional culture) and the cultural symbolism of its patterns (e.g., hibiscus and koi carp representing auspiciousness and prosperity). This approach enables students to grasp the craft while deeply appreciating its underlying cultural and aesthetic values.

2.1.2. Integrating Theory with Practical Application

The curriculum system must overcome the disconnect between theoretical lectures imparting knowledge and practical sessions training skills, achieving a deep integration of theory and practice. For instance, in traditional Chinese opera aesthetic education courses, the theoretical component focuses on explaining the aesthetic characteristics of opera (such as stylization and virtuality), while the practical component organizes students to choreograph small opera excerpts. This allows students to validate theoretical knowledge through hands-on practice, effectively enhancing their aesthetic practical abilities.

2.1.3. Hierarchy and individuality complement each other

The curriculum system must fully consider the needs of students from different majors and with varying foundational knowledge, scientifically designing tiered courses. For instance, it should offer an introductory course on intangible cultural heritage aesthetics for non-arts majors (foundational level), an advanced course on intangible cultural heritage techniques for arts majors (professional level), and an innovation

workshop on intangible cultural heritage for students with creative aspirations (innovation level), comprehensively meeting students' personalized development needs.

2.1.4. Balancing regional characteristics with openness

The curriculum system should be grounded in local intangible cultural heritage resources while maintaining an open and inclusive approach. For instance, Soochow University prioritizes developing local intangible cultural heritage courses such as Suzhou Pingtan storytelling and Kesi silk embroidery, while expanding students' horizons through online courses introducing resources from other regions (e.g., Shaanxi paper-cutting, Cantonese opera). Additionally, regularly inviting intangible cultural heritage inheritors from other areas to conduct lectures and workshops facilitates the sharing and complementary use of intangible cultural heritage resources across regions.

2.2 Three-Tier, Four-Module Curriculum Framework

2.2.1. Course Level Design

The foundational outreach tier targets all students, primarily through general education courses, thematic lectures, and intangible cultural heritage exhibitions. It aims to enhance students' understanding of intangible cultural heritage and cultivate their aesthetic appreciation. Representative courses include Introduction to the Aesthetics of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Appreciation of Chinese Folk Art, complemented by activities such as campus exhibitions showcasing intangible cultural heritage.

The Professional Enhancement Track is designed for students in arts disciplines (such as Fine Arts, Music, and Design), primarily through specialized electives and practical courses. It aims to elevate students' intangible cultural heritage skills and their ability to integrate these skills into their professional fields. Representative courses include "Shu Embroidery Techniques and Creation," "Fundamentals of Traditional Opera Performance," and "Intangible Cultural Heritage Pattern Design and Application."

The Innovation Application Layer targets students with innovation needs (regardless of major), primarily through innovation workshops and entrepreneurship projects. It aims to cultivate students' intangible cultural heritage innovation capabilities and practical application skills. Representative courses include "Intangible

Cultural Heritage Digital Innovation Workshop," "Intangible Cultural Heritage Cultural and Creative Product Design Project," and "Intangible Cultural Heritage Short Video Creation and Dissemination."

2.2.2. Course Module Design

The Intangible Cultural Heritage Aesthetics Theory module covers foundational aesthetics of intangible cultural heritage, cultural history of intangible heritage, and regional aesthetic characteristics of intangible cultural heritage. It employs a blended learning approach combining classroom instruction with online self-directed study. For instance, online courses guide students to independently explore China's intangible cultural heritage inventory system, while classroom discussions delve into the aesthetic differences across regions (such as the refined beauty of Jiangnan intangible heritage versus the bold and vigorous aesthetics of Northwest China's intangible heritage).

The Intangible Cultural Heritage Skills Practice Module encompasses hands-on activities in traditional crafts, performing arts, and folk skills, employing a dual-instructor teaching model featuring both ICH inheritors and professional educators. For instance, Shu embroidery masters are invited to classrooms to systematically teach core techniques such as seed stitch embroidery and gold thread embroidery, while professional instructors guide students in creating works from an aesthetic perspective, achieving an organic integration of skill transmission and aesthetic guidance.

The Intangible Cultural Heritage and Interdisciplinary Integration module deeply integrates intangible cultural heritage with disciplines such as literature, history, communication studies, and digital technology, offering cross-disciplinary courses. Representative courses include: Intangible Cultural Heritage and Literature: Exploring the Essence of Intangible Heritage Through Folk Tales (in collaboration with the College of Liberal Arts), Digital Preservation and Dissemination of Intangible Cultural Heritage (in collaboration with the School of Journalism and Communication and the School of Computer Science), Intangible Cultural Heritage and Tourism: Designing Intangible Heritage Tourism Products (in collaboration with the School of Tourism).

The Intangible Cultural Heritage Innovation Practice module centers on project-based learning (PBL), guiding students to engage in systematic

practices focused on ICH innovation. For instance, student teams undertake ICH cultural and creative product design projects, completing the entire innovation process from market research and design proposal development to sample production and product promotion. Alternatively, they execute ICH short-video dissemination projects, leveraging mainstream platforms like Douyin and Bilibili to spread ICH culture and effectively enhance its social impact.

3. Practical Effectiveness Evaluation of Aesthetic Education Curriculum Systems in Higher Education Institutions from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage Transmission

Table 1: Evaluation Indicator System and Weighting for the Implementation Effectiveness of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Aesthetic Education Curriculum System

Primary Indicator (Weight)	Secondary Indicators (Weights)	Indicator Explanation
Level of Awareness of Intangible Cultural Heritage (0.20)	Intention to Inherit Intangible Cultural Heritage (0.3)	Students' willingness to participate in intangible cultural heritage transmission activities and become volunteers for intangible cultural heritage
Practical Innovation Capability (0.30)	Interdisciplinary Application Skills (0.4)	Students' ability to integrate intangible cultural heritage with other disciplines (such as digital technology and design)
	Project Implementation Capability(0.3)	Students' ability to complete intangible cultural heritage innovation projects (such as cultural and creative design, short video dissemination)
	Problem-solving ability(0.3)	Students' ability to address technical, design, and dissemination challenges in intangible cultural heritage practices
Cultural Identity (0.25)	Pride in one's national culture(0.4)	Students' sense of pride in China's outstanding traditional culture stemming from intangible cultural heritage
	Sense of Responsibility for Cultural Heritage(0.3)	The extent to which students perceive themselves as having a responsibility to carry forward China's outstanding traditional culture
	Cultural Communication Awareness(0.3)	Students' initiative to actively share intangible cultural heritage with others and convey their learning experiences in this field

3.2 Summary of Practical Outcomes

3.2.1. Dual Enhancement of Competency and Proficiency

Aesthetic appreciation evolves from singular perception to comprehensive judgment: Students not only recognize the external aesthetic features of intangible cultural heritage (such as the symmetrical beauty of paper-cutting or the rhythmic elegance of Kunqu opera) but also delve into analyzing the underlying cultural context and aesthetic logic. For instance, in an interview, a student from an experimental class mentioned: "Through learning Suzhou Pingtan, I not only grasped the melodious twists and turns of the

3.1 Construction of the Evaluation Indicator System

Based on the objectives and content of the curriculum system, this study constructed a practical effectiveness evaluation framework comprising four primary indicators and twelve secondary indicators (see Table 1). Using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), ten experts—including five university aesthetic education instructors, three intangible cultural heritage inheritors, and two educational evaluation specialists—were invited to scientifically determine the weighting of each indicator, ensuring the scientific rigor and rationality of the evaluation framework.

tunes but also understood the scenes of Jiangnan water town life embedded in the lyrics. Now, when viewing traditional artworks, I instinctively consider their cultural background."

The shift from passive awareness to active participation in intangible cultural heritage (ICH) preservation: 68.3% of students in the experimental group expressed willingness to engage in ICH volunteer activities (such as campus outreach programs and community ICH experience guidance), significantly higher than the 23.5% in the control group. Additionally, 12.7% of students proactively joined school-based intangible cultural heritage clubs or participated in innovation and entrepreneurship projects related

to intangible cultural heritage. For instance, a student team from Sichuan Normal University developed notebooks featuring Shu embroidery motifs based on their coursework outcomes and achieved small-scale mass production. This demonstrates how the curriculum stimulates students' willingness to preserve intangible cultural heritage and motivates them to take practical action.

3.2.2. System Development and Teaching Model Innovation

The three-tier, four-module framework has yielded tangible results: The foundational outreach tier reached over 85% of students through general education courses and exhibitions, achieving broad coverage in intangible cultural heritage (ICH) aesthetic education. The specialized enhancement tier provided in-depth skills training for art majors, whose ICH craftwork received significantly higher expert evaluation scores (86.4 points) compared to non-art majors (77.9 points). The Innovation Application Layer, through workshops and project-based learning, has generated 43 innovative intangible cultural heritage outcomes. Among these, 12 have received provincial-level or higher innovation and entrepreneurship awards, validating the rationality of the tiered curriculum design.

The dual-instructor teaching model and interdisciplinary integration approach have proven effective: courses featuring intangible cultural heritage inheritors achieved a 91.5% satisfaction rate, with students noting that the hands-on craftsmanship expertise brought by inheritors—such as the tactile control of Shu embroidery stitches and the force techniques for celadon wheel-throwing—cannot be replicated in conventional classrooms. Interdisciplinary courses like “Digital Preservation and Dissemination of Intangible Cultural Heritage” integrate computer technology with intangible cultural heritage, enabling students to master skills such as VR demonstrations of intangible cultural heritage techniques and building intangible cultural heritage databases. Course outcomes have been adopted by three local intangible cultural heritage protection centers for digital preservation work.

3.2.3. Revitalizing Intangible Cultural Heritage and Cultural Dissemination: A Win-Win Approach

Empowering the Living Transmission of Local Intangible Cultural Heritage: Three case-study institutions have established long-term

cooperative mechanisms with local intangible cultural heritage protection centers, conducting a cumulative total of 28 training sessions on intangible cultural heritage skills and cultivating over 1,200 enthusiasts, thereby injecting youthful energy into the preservation of local intangible cultural heritage. For instance, Zhejiang Sci-Tech University collaborated with Longquan celadon inheritors to develop an aesthetic education course on celadon. This initiative not only trained 56 students in fundamental pottery-turning and glazing techniques but also promoted the application of Longquan celadon patterns in modern home design, driving a 15% increase in sales for local celadon enterprises.

Expanding the Reach of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Student-created works promoting intangible cultural heritage have garnered over 5 million views across platforms like Douyin and Bilibili. Among these, the short video “The Intangible Cultural Heritage Story Behind Sichuan Opera Face-Changing” alone achieved 870,000 views. This initiative spurred over 2 million discussions on campus-based intangible cultural heritage aesthetic education within the platforms, realizing student-led dissemination of intangible cultural heritage and elevating public awareness of local intangible cultural heritage.

4. Conclusion and Outlook

4.1 Research Findings

Intangible cultural heritage and aesthetic education in higher education share an intrinsic symbiotic relationship. As a vital carrier of China's outstanding traditional culture, intangible cultural heritage enriches the content dimensions of aesthetic education through its inherent aesthetic paradigms, craftsmanship spirit, and cultural DNA. It effectively addresses the shortcomings of traditional aesthetic education, which often prioritizes Western influences over local traditions and emphasizes skills over cultural understanding. Conversely, higher education's aesthetic education leverages its systematic teaching frameworks, specialized talent cultivation capabilities, and research innovation strengths to provide ICH with a younger generation of inheritors and modern revitalization pathways. Both domains align profoundly in their shared objectives of cultivating individuals through aesthetics and preserving cultural heritage, forming a mutually empowering symbiotic relationship.

The three-tier, four-module curriculum system is both scientifically sound and practically feasible. Built upon four core principles—the unity of cultural and aesthetic dimensions, the integration of theory and practice, the balance of hierarchical structure and personalized adaptation, and the coordination of regional specificity and openness—this system achieves comprehensive coverage for students of diverse majors and needs through its tiered design encompassing foundational literacy, professional advancement, and innovative application. The synergy among four modules—theoretical understanding of intangible cultural heritage aesthetics, hands-on craft practice, interdisciplinary integration, and innovative application—establishes a seamless aesthetic education pathway linking cognition, experience, integration, and innovation. Practice demonstrates that this system significantly enhances students' aesthetic literacy (23.6% increase), ICH awareness (31.2% increase), practical innovation capabilities (28.9% increase), and cultural identity (35.7% increase). Its implementation at case institutions such as Soochow University and Zhejiang University of Science and Technology has yielded replicable and scalable best practices.

The multi-dimensional evaluation and safeguarding mechanism serves as the critical foundation for the system's implementation. The assessment approach, involving multiple stakeholders—students, teachers, and outcomes—and employing a multi-dimensional methodology—quantitative questionnaires, qualitative interviews, and expert reviews—comprehensively reflects the practical effectiveness of the curriculum. It not only validates the overall efficacy of the system through quantitative data but also pinpoints issues such as insufficient depth in interdisciplinary integration and disparities in resource availability across regions through qualitative analysis. The safeguarding framework for the curriculum's stable operation is built upon three pillars: - Diverse teaching faculty comprising university instructors, intangible cultural heritage inheritors, and industry experts - Teaching resource allocation integrating hardware facilities with software resource libraries - Reformed assessment methods combining formative and summative evaluations The dual-instructor teaching model achieved a 91.5% course satisfaction rate, demonstrating the safeguarding mechanism's effectiveness.

The course practice achieves dual values of education and heritage preservation. From an educational perspective, the program not only enhances students' aesthetic perception and creative abilities but also strengthens their sense of national cultural pride and responsibility for preservation through immersion in intangible cultural heritage. 68.3% of experimental class students expressed willingness to participate in ICH volunteer activities, demonstrating the educational effectiveness of nurturing roots through beauty. Regarding preservation, the curriculum revitalizes local intangible cultural heritage resources by cultivating young inheritors, integrating intangible cultural heritage with digital technology and modern design, and leveraging new media to disseminate cultural heritage (student works garnered over 5 million views). For instance, Zhejiang University of Science and Technology's celadon course boosted local enterprise sales by 15%, achieving seamless integration across the education chain, talent chain, and cultural chain.

4.2 Future Outlook

Expanding theoretical depth and research scope, future studies may further explore pathways for integrating intangible cultural heritage aesthetics with modern aesthetic education theory. For instance, combining the concept of harmony between heaven and humanity found in intangible cultural heritage with ecological aesthetic education could help construct an aesthetic education theoretical framework with Chinese characteristics. Simultaneously, the scope of research can be broadened from the current undergraduate education to encompass vocational education and graduate education. Differentiated curricula tailored to the characteristics of students at different educational levels can be designed. For instance, vocational education could emphasize job-specific training in intangible cultural heritage skills, while graduate education could focus on academic research into the preservation and innovation of intangible cultural heritage, thereby forming a comprehensive intangible cultural heritage aesthetic education system covering all educational stages.

Embracing technological innovation and model transformation, the advancement of digital technology enables the exploration of AI-integrated teaching approaches for intangible cultural heritage (ICH) aesthetic education. For instance, AI can generate personalized ICH

learning plans, while virtual simulation technology recreates operational scenarios of ICH skills, addressing the shortage of hands-on teaching resources. Simultaneously, cross-sector initiatives integrating intangible cultural heritage aesthetic education with rural revitalization can be promoted. Students can be organized to engage deeply with villages rich in intangible cultural heritage resources, undertaking projects like intangible cultural heritage-inspired creative design and rural tourism planning. This approach not only supports the preservation of rural intangible cultural heritage but also creates new practical learning environments for students.

To advance standardization and international dissemination, domestically, we can draw upon the practical experience of pilot institutions to develop the “Guidelines for Building Intangible Cultural Heritage Aesthetic Education Courses in Higher Education Institutions.” This document will clarify standards for course objectives, content design, and faculty allocation, promoting the standardized implementation of the system nationwide. For international dissemination, platforms such as the International Workshop on ICH Aesthetic Education and overseas courses on Chinese ICH aesthetics can position ICH aesthetic education as a vehicle for cultural exchange. This approach showcases the aesthetic value of China's outstanding traditional culture to the world while incorporating advanced practices from foreign traditional cultural education systems, thereby advancing the international development of ICH aesthetic education. The aesthetic education curriculum system in higher education institutions, viewed through the lens of intangible cultural heritage transmission, represents both a crucial direction for reforming aesthetic education in the new era and an effective pathway for the creative transformation and innovative development of

China's outstanding traditional culture. Moving forward, it is essential to continuously refine this system through theoretical deepening, practical innovation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. This will enable the genuine realization of two overarching goals: nurturing cultural confidence through aesthetic education and empowering the nation's future through heritage transmission.

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