

Research on the Reform of Music Education in Colleges and Universities under the Perspective of National Cultural Inheritance

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ABSTRACT

In the context of cultural revitalization and multicultural integration, higher education music programs serve as crucial platforms for preserving national heritage. While they bear the responsibility of promoting the essence of ethnic music, they also confront practical challenges including disconnection between cultural preservation and academic instruction, outdated teaching methodologies, and incomplete curriculum systems. These issues hinder effective cultural transmission and impede the realization of music education's educational value. By integrating cultural literacy into curricula, innovating teaching methods through cultural semiotics, establishing diversified internship bases, and developing systematic talent cultivation frameworks, higher education music programs can drive reforms. This approach enables balanced development between theory and practice, tradition and innovation, ultimately better serving cultural preservation while enhancing students' cultural confidence and comprehensive competencies.

KEYWORDS

Ethnic culture inheritance; Music education in colleges and universities; Education reform; Curriculum integration; Talent training

1 Introduction

Ethnic culture forms the spiritual foundation of the Chinese nation. As a vibrant carrier of cultural heritage, music plays a pivotal role in nurturing cultural confidence and sustaining national identity. While economic globalization fosters cross-cultural exchanges, higher education institutions' music programs under Western influence often neglect the exploration and integration of ethnic cultural elements. This results in the cultural essence of traditional music being inadequately conveyed. In this context, educational reform must refocus music education on preserving ethnic cultural heritage, deeply embedding cultural elements throughout the teaching process. This approach not only addresses current educational challenges but also serves as a crucial pathway for the creative transformation and innovative development of ethnic culture.

2 The Importance of Music Education in Colleges and Universities from the Perspective of national cultural inheritance

2.1 The Core Carrier of the Systematic Inheritance of National Culture

Higher education institutions in music, supported by comprehensive curriculum systems and teaching mechanisms, can systematically organize and deliver ethnic music culture. Unlike the fragmented and unstable nature of folk traditions passed down through oral means, universities achieve complete preservation and orderly transmission of core elements such as musical scores, performance techniques, and cultural connotations through the organic integration of specialized courses, theoretical research, and skill training^[1]. From instrumental performance techniques to folk song vocal styles, from historical contexts of musical works to the folk culture embedded within, universities can establish a holistic inheritance system. This transforms ethnic music culture from being confined to oral transmission into a standardized and academicized process, laying a solid foundation for intergenerational cultural continuity.

2.2 An Important Engine for the Innovation and Development of Ethnic Culture

Higher education in music is not merely a replication of ethnic culture, but rather a vital platform for driving its innovative development through inheritance. Universities, with their professional teaching-research teams and young student communities, possess interdisciplinary resource advantages. They can integrate modern music theory, creative techniques, and ethnic cultural elements to infuse traditional music with contemporary vitality^[2]. By deconstructing and recombining ethnic musical materials, innovating performance forms, and upgrading dissemination channels, universities can align ethnic music culture with modern aesthetic demands and social trends. This process facilitates the creative transformation and innovative development of ethnic culture, allowing ancient traditions to flourish anew in the modern era while expanding the influence and reach of ethnic cultural heritage.

2.3 The Key Ways to Cultivate Students' Cultural Literacy and National Identity

Integrating ethnic culture throughout the teaching process in university music education effectively enhances students' cultural literacy and ethnic identity. As a concentrated embodiment of ethnic emotions and cultural spirit, ethnic music embodies unique values and aesthetic pursuits. Through appreciating, studying, and practicing ethnic music works, students can deeply understand the essence of ethnic culture, experience the charm of different cultures, and strengthen their sense of belonging and pride in their own heritage. This cultural immersion not only enriches students' professional musical competence but also shapes their correct cultural perspectives and values, fostering cultural confidence and patriotic sentiment. It cultivates versatile talents with both professional skills and cultural awareness, laying a solid foundation for the long-term development of ethnic culture.

3 Existing Problems of Music Education in Colleges and Universities under the Background of National Cultural Inheritance

3.1 The Disconnection Between Educational Philosophy and Cultural Inheritance Orientation

Some universities still adhere to the traditional mindset of "prioritizing skills over cultural values" in music education, focusing their teaching on Western music theory and performance techniques while neglecting the inheritance of ethnic culture. The educational objectives lack clear definitions of cultivating cultural literacy, as they consider ethnic music culture to have limited impact on professional development and fail to incorporate it into core educational goals. This conceptual bias leads students to predominantly pursue academic scores and skill certifications, often overlooking the cultural significance, historical roots, and spiritual essence behind ethnic music. Consequently, they lack the awareness to actively preserve cultural heritage, leaving music education in universities in a passive position regarding ethnic cultural transmission.

3.2 The Curriculum and Teaching Material System Lacks the Adaptability of National Culture

In terms of curriculum design, ethnic music courses are predominantly offered as electives with limited credit allocation. The content often remains superficial in appreciation, lacking in-depth exploration of theoretical frameworks, cultural symbolism, and folkloric connections. Textbook development suffers from homogenization and oversimplification, predominantly adopting Western music systems as core frameworks. Ethnic music materials are fragmented, failing to systematically integrate regional and ethnic cultural resources, while insufficiently explaining the artistic characteristics and cultural value of ethnic music. Additionally, textbook content updates lag behind, failing to incorporate contemporary innovations in ethnic music and intangible cultural heritage resources. This inadequacy makes it difficult to meet the diverse educational needs for preserving ethnic cultural heritage.

3.3 Teaching Methods are Inconsistent with the Characteristics of Ethnic Culture Communication

Current music education in universities predominantly follows the traditional "lecture-based instruction + technical training" model. These teaching methods lack innovation and interactivity, making them ill-suited for the communicative nature of ethnic music culture^[3]. The educational process often neglects the interpretation and application of cultural symbols, failing to establish a pedagogical framework rooted in the essence of ethnic music. Relying heavily on Western music analysis frameworks to interpret ethnic works, students fail to grasp the cultural context and artistic expression of these musical traditions. Furthermore, the absence of contextualized and experiential teaching approaches prevents students from perceiving the close connection between ethnic music and folk life through practice. As a result, their understanding of ethnic music remains confined to theoretical levels, hindering deep cultural immersion.

4 Reform Path of Music Education in Colleges and Universities Oriented to the Inheritance of National Culture

4.1 Build an Immersion Curriculum System of National Culture

Rooted in the core mission of preserving ethnic cultural heritage, this innovative curriculum breaks away from the Western-dominated framework of traditional music education, establishing a three-dimensional framework integrating "foundational theory + ethnic characteristics + interdisciplinary integration" (see Figure 1). At the theoretical foundation level, compulsory modules cover ethnic music history, aesthetics, and anthropology, systematically teaching the historical development, cultural DNA, and aesthetic features of various ethnic music traditions to solidify students' theoretical grounding. The ethnic characteristic layer features specialized courses categorized by region and ethnicity, such as "Northwest Folk Song Performance Techniques," "Jiangnan Silk Bamboo Ensemble Practice," and "Ethnic Minority

Instrumental Composition," incorporating representative pieces and skills from intangible cultural heritage projects to achieve simultaneous transmission of musical techniques and cultural essence. The interdisciplinary integration layer introduces courses like "Ethnic Music and Folk Culture" and "Digital Dissemination of Ethnic Music," leveraging resources from history, sociology, and digital media to guide students in understanding ethnic music's cultural context from multiple perspectives. This creates a comprehensive curriculum chain spanning "theoretical cognition, skill mastery, and cultural interpretation," ensuring ethnic culture permeates the entire educational process.



Figure 1 Immersion curriculum system of national culture

4.2 Innovative Teaching Methods of National Culture Symbolization

Building upon the semiotics of ethnic cultural symbols, we transcend the conventional "lecture-training" model to develop an immersive teaching system centered on ethnic cultural symbols. In content deconstruction, we transform melodic motifs, rhythmic patterns, instrument designs, and vocal techniques from ethnic music into perceptible cultural symbols. For instance, we analyze the grassland cultural imagery behind the ornamentation in Mongolian long-form songs like "Nogul", and explore the connection between Miao flying songs and mountainous lifestyles, helping students establish a cognitive link between "musical symbols and cultural connotations". In implementation, we employ contextual teaching and project-based learning methods. By creating cultural scenarios and organizing creative projects for ethnic music works, we guide students to actively explore and apply cultural symbols. Additionally, through digital technology, we establish a virtual teaching resource library integrating regional intangible cultural heritage music videos, field research materials, and 3D models of ethnic instruments. Utilizing VR technology, we deliver immersive performance experiences that transform abstract cultural elements into participatory and perceptible teaching content, thereby enhancing instructional relevance and appeal.

4.3 Building diversified Platforms for Ethnic Cultural Practice

To meet the practical needs of ethnic cultural preservation, we are breaking down the closed nature of university education by establishing a three-dimensional practice system integrating "on-campus practice + off-campus bases + social services". Within campuses, we leverage the Music Performance Center and Ethnic Music Research Center to create ethnic music clubs and studios, regularly organizing performances and events like "Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritors on Campus" to provide students with regular practice opportunities. Off-campus, we deepen collaborations with local cultural departments, intangible cultural heritage protection centers, and cultural enterprises to jointly build platforms such as "Ethnic Music Heritage Practice Bases" and "Intangible Cultural Heritage Music R&D Centers". Students participate in field research, heritage promotion, and creative projects including IP design and digital music production, ensuring deep alignment between practical content and real-world cultural preservation needs. Simultaneously, we facilitate the transformation of practical achievements by incorporating students' original compositions and research reports into academic evaluation systems, forming a closed-loop cycle of "practice-research-transformation" to enhance their professional capabilities in serving cultural heritage preservation^[4].

4.4 Building a Professional Teaching Team for Ethnic Culture

To enhance teachers' capacity for ethnic cultural heritage preservation, we have established a three-pronged faculty development mechanism integrating cultivation, recruitment, and evaluation (see Figure 2). In terms of faculty development, a regular training system has been implemented, organizing teachers to participate in programs such as

intangible cultural heritage (ICH) preservation workshops for ethnic music, academic seminars on ethnic music anthropology, and interdisciplinary teaching skill training. This supports teachers in conducting field research and scientific studies on ethnic music, thereby improving their cultural literacy and teaching-research capabilities. For faculty recruitment, a specialized talent acquisition plan has been formulated, prioritizing the recruitment of ICH inheritors, veteran performers, and interdisciplinary researchers in ethnic music as full-time or part-time faculty members, optimizing the professional structure and cultural diversity of the teaching team. Regarding evaluation mechanisms, teaching achievements in ethnic culture, research projects in ethnic music, and service experience in ICH preservation have been incorporated into faculty assessment criteria. A professional title evaluation and performance incentive system aligned with cultural heritage preservation has been established, encouraging teachers to actively engage in ethnic cultural education practices. This approach cultivates a versatile faculty team that combines professional teaching competence with cultural preservation awareness.

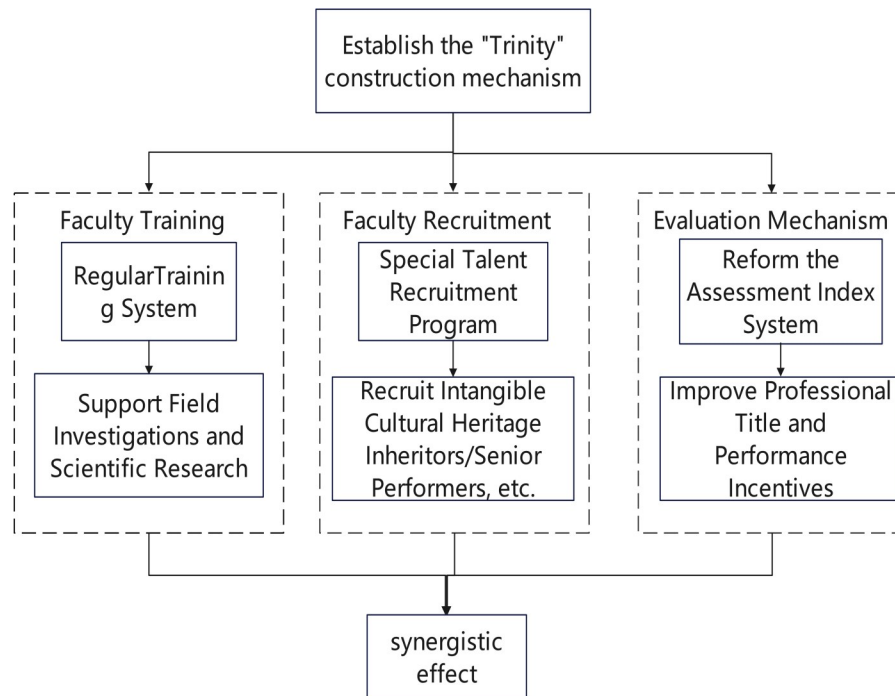


Figure 2 Building a professional teaching team for ethnic culture

5 Practical Guarantee and Effect Prospect of Music Education Reform in Colleges and Universities

5.1 Building a Multi-Dimensional Practice Guarantee System

5.1.1 Improve the Institutional Guarantee Mechanism

Guided by policy directives, we will establish a collaborative mechanism between universities and local cultural authorities and education departments. The preservation of ethnic cultural heritage will be integrated into the strategic planning of music education reform at higher education institutions. The "Implementation Guidelines for Ethnic Music Education Reform in Universities" will be formulated to clarify reform objectives, responsible entities, and evaluation criteria, ensuring alignment with national cultural strategies. Simultaneously, university management systems will be optimized by incorporating ethnic cultural preservation indicators into key processes such as curriculum revisions, course adjustments, and faculty evaluations. For instance, participation in ethnic music research projects and guidance of students' intangible cultural heritage practices will be recognized as bonus points in professional title assessments, while earning ethnic music course credits will become a mandatory graduation requirement. These institutional constraints will ensure the effective implementation of reform initiatives.

5.1.2 Strengthening Resource Supply and Security

To strengthen financial support, a special fund for ethnic music education reform has been established to fund textbook development, virtual teaching resource libraries, practice base operations, and the recruitment of intangible cultural heritage inheritors. Social capital is also encouraged to participate, such as through collaborations with cultural enterprises to establish innovation and R&D project funds for ethnic music, thereby expanding resource supply channels^[5]. In terms of resource integration, a "university-intangible cultural heritage protection center-folk art troupes"

sharing platform has been created. This platform systematically consolidates folk music scores, intangible cultural heritage audiovisual materials, and authentic ethnic instruments, digitizing and archiving these resources for inclusion in teaching repositories to optimize the utilization of cultural assets. Additionally, university libraries and museums are being utilized to establish ethnic music cultural exhibition zones, providing students with regular cultural immersion experiences that solidify the resource foundation for educational reform.

5.2 Outlook on the Effectiveness of the Reform

5.2.1 Empowerment Effect on National Cultural Inheritance

As reforms deepen, universities are emerging as dynamic carriers of ethnic cultural heritage. Through systematic education, they cultivate versatile talents with both professional expertise and cultural preservation awareness. These graduates, when entering cultural institutions, education sectors, and performing arts industries, drive innovation in ethnic music creation, performance, and dissemination. For instance, they utilize digital media technologies to produce ethnic music short videos, develop cultural and creative products, and expand the reach of ethnic cultural communication. Furthermore, collaborations between universities and local intangible cultural heritage protection centers effectively support the rescue and preservation of endangered ethnic music. Through field research documentation, skill organization and archiving, and training of new generations, these efforts ensure the intergenerational continuity of ethnic music culture, enhancing its vitality and influence.

5.2.2 The Effect of Improving the Quality of Music Education in Colleges and Universities

The reform will propel higher education in music to break through the developmental bottleneck of "Western system dependence", establishing a new educational paradigm characterized by "distinct national identity and harmonious integration of Eastern and Western elements". Through curriculum optimization and innovative teaching methodologies, music education will achieve greater professional depth and cultural richness. This transformation shifts the focus of music program development from "skill-oriented" to "cultural-oriented" approaches, significantly enhancing students' cultural literacy and creative capabilities. Notably, the proportion of works showcasing ethnic cultural characteristics in national music competitions and cultural innovation contests will see substantial growth. Concurrently, the professional development of faculty teams will elevate teaching and research standards in ethnic music education. This initiative will foster high-quality research outcomes, including innovative teaching models, school-based curricula, and academic projects, ultimately helping universities establish distinctive ethnic music education brands and strengthen their influence in the national music education landscape.

6 Conclusion

The preservation of ethnic cultural heritage stands as both the core mission and contemporary responsibility of music education in higher institutions. The deep integration of these elements serves as both an essential requirement for cultural revitalization and an inherent need for high-quality development in music education. Current challenges in integrating ethnic culture—such as curriculum fragmentation, monotonous teaching methods, and insufficient practical training—require systematic reforms including curriculum restructuring, pedagogical innovation, and optimized practice platforms. Only by maintaining cultural roots and embedding heritage preservation throughout the educational process can music education in universities solidify professional foundations while showcasing cultural distinctiveness. This reform not only enhances students' cultural confidence and comprehensive literacy but also injects lasting momentum into the creative transformation and innovative development of ethnic culture, ensuring the enduring vitality and continuity of ethnic music traditions in the new era.

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