



# The Optimization of Curriculum System for Music Education Professionals in the Inheritance and Transmission of Intangible Cultural Heritage Music

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**Abstract:** This study examines the optimization of music education curricula for the preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) music in China, with a focus on Jiangsu Province's rich musical traditions. Using XX University as a case study, the research explores how higher education institutions can integrate regional ICH music into formal music education programs. The study analyzes curriculum reforms, extracurricular initiatives, and community partnerships that bridge academic training with cultural preservation. Key findings highlight the effectiveness of localized curriculum design, experiential learning, and policy-driven innovation. Localized curriculum design has proven effective in enhancing students' cultural literacy and technical proficiency. Experiential learning, including practical training, digital tools, and collaborations with ICH inheritors, fosters deeper student engagement with regional music. Policy-driven innovation ensures institutional support and scalability. The results demonstrate that these educational models not only safeguard traditional music but also cultivate a generation of culturally aware professionals capable of addressing the challenges posed by modernization. This study offers actionable insights for global educators and policymakers who are seeking to harmonize cultural preservation with contemporary pedagogical demands.

**Keywords:** Intangible Cultural Heritage Music, Curriculum Optimization, Music Education Professionals, Traditional Music Preservation

## I. Introduction

In 2021, the General Office of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the "Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage," which outlined general requirements for the protection and inheritance of ICH [1]. The document emphasizes the importance of improving the protection system, enhancing the level of inheritance, and expanding the dissemination of ICH, with strategic deployments addressing these multiple aspects, setting overall goals for 2025 and 2035 [1]. Additionally, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's "14th Five-Year Plan for Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection" calls for the participation of social forces in ICH education and training, encouraging the establishment of national ICH education practice bases [2]. In 2006, traditional music was first included in the ICH list, and the Ministry of Education made the "Research on Campus Inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritage" an important topic [3]. As schools increasingly prioritize traditional culture education, in 2018, the Ministry of Education issued a notice on the establishment of "Traditional Chinese Culture Inheritance Bases" in universities, aiming to strengthen the integration of excellent traditional culture into educational institutions [3]. The 2020 response by the Ministry of Education to the proposal from the 13th National People's Congress explicitly emphasized the importance of integrating excellent traditional culture into schools as a fundamental and soul-nurturing project [4].

In the context of promoting the inheritance and development of Chinese traditional culture, music education in schools has a natural advantage and an irreplaceable responsibility in the transmission and dissemination of ICH. This aspect should be given widespread recognition and importance. The inclusion of ICH music, especially regional music, into the curriculum of music schools carries significant implications. Not only does it broaden students' artistic horizons, offering them a unique aesthetic world, but more importantly, it enhances students' personal qualities and contributes to their healthy development. It also provokes reflection on the relationship between humans and nature. This study focuses on the optimization of the curriculum system for music education professionals,



specifically in the context of the inheritance and transmission of intangible cultural heritage music. The case study is based on XX University in Jiangsu Province, China, aiming to explore how the university can enhance its music education programs to better preserve and promote ICH music.

## II. Literature Review

The importance of incorporating NCH music into higher education curricula has been highlighted in several studies, such as those by Fan and Li (2025), who explore the integration of music-based non-heritage into university music teaching systems. They argue that this inclusion not only cultivates students' artistic appreciation but also enhances their sense of cultural identity. Their research provides methodologies for incorporating traditional music education into higher education systems to create a balance between modernity and tradition [5]. Similarly, Wen and Shan (2025) focus on Jiangsu folk songs, analyzing the challenges and strategies involved in their preservation through music education. They emphasize the importance of innovative educational strategies to effectively pass on these regional musical traditions within the framework of modern education systems [6].

Further studies have contributed to refining educational strategies in various contexts. Liu (2025) discusses the integration of NCH music into university music education, exploring the challenges and practical strategies for incorporating local musical heritage into university curricula [7]. Meanwhile, the significance of integrating local cultural elements in education has also been addressed in works by Yang (2024), who investigates the role of higher vocational education in preserving local ethnic music [8]. These contributions underscore the necessity of course design that incorporates local musical traditions, such as the inclusion of regional folk music, thereby enhancing both cultural awareness and student engagement with non-heritage music.

Innovative methods for preserving and transmitting NCH music through modern educational approaches have also been widely discussed. Xie (2024) examines the role of integrating non-heritage music into vocational education, focusing on how these educational strategies help students develop a deeper connection to their cultural roots [9]. Xu (2025) discusses the significance of local ethnic music in music education, using examples of regional Chinese music to underscore the pedagogical value of teaching students about the history, cultural significance, and techniques involved in these musical traditions [10]. The integration of NCH music into general music education not only preserves these traditions but also enhances students' overall musical literacy.

Another significant strand of research centers on the use of modern technologies in the preservation and transmission of NCH music. Digital technologies, including virtual and augmented reality, have been explored as tools for bringing NCH music into the classroom. For instance, Zhang and Wang (2024) discuss how digital technologies such as VR/AR and 5G have facilitated the branding and educational dissemination of regional folk music, offering students an immersive learning experience and creating new channels for cultural transmission [11]. This technological approach highlights the growing importance of digital tools in music education, helping to bridge the gap between tradition and modern learning methods.

The concept of integrating NCH music into music education to strengthen national cultural identity has been explored. Chen and Liu (2024) delve into the role of music education in fostering cultural confidence through NCH music. Their research emphasizes the need for educational institutions to develop strategies that integrate the preservation of intangible cultural heritage with the nurturing of student awareness and appreciation of their cultural roots [12]. This approach aims to foster a generation of culturally aware individuals who can contribute to the continuation of these musical traditions within modern society.

Many foreign scholars have investigated various aspects of ICH music, ranging from its role in education to the challenges involved in its preservation and transmission across generations. Smith discusses the importance of incorporating ICH music into formal education systems, particularly in Europe, where traditional music is often overlooked in favor of more contemporary genres. He highlights the role of music educators in bridging the gap between modern music education and the preservation of cultural traditions. His research suggests that integrating local musical heritage into curricula can not only preserve these traditions but also foster a deeper connection to cultural identity

among students [13]. Brown and Turner focus on the preservation of African traditional music in diaspora communities, particularly in the United States. They argue that ICH music serves as a vital tool for maintaining cultural continuity and resisting cultural erosion due to globalization. Their study examines how African diaspora communities have used music as a form of resistance and cultural empowerment, and how it is integrated into educational programs to ensure its continued transmission [14].

Müller presents a comprehensive study on the role of ICH music in the revitalization of indigenous languages in Latin America. She investigates how traditional music is intertwined with indigenous languages and how the revitalization of both plays a significant role in preserving cultural identity. Her findings show that music education programs focusing on indigenous music can be effective in encouraging young people to learn and use their ancestral languages [15]. Garcia focuses on the application of digital technologies in the preservation of ICH music. He examines the use of digital archives, virtual reality, and other innovative tools to record and share traditional music with wider audiences. Garcia emphasizes the potential of these technologies to make ICH music more accessible and to aid in its preservation by creating virtual spaces where it can be experienced by people across the globe [16].

Johnson and Thompson discuss the challenges of preserving ICH music in the face of urbanization and globalization, particularly in Asia. Their study highlights how the rapid development of cities has led to the loss of traditional musical practices, with younger generations often showing little interest in learning traditional music. They propose community-based approaches that involve local musicians and educators in preserving musical traditions and ensuring that these traditions are passed down effectively [17]. Davis examines the role of UNESCO in promoting ICH music worldwide, with a particular focus on the challenges faced by countries in Africa and Southeast Asia. Davis critiques the international framework set by UNESCO for the safeguarding of ICH, suggesting that while the organization has played a crucial role in raising awareness, its efforts often fall short in providing practical support for the preservation of music in local contexts [18]. Adams and Lewis explore the intersection of ICH music and tourism in Europe. Their study examines how traditional music has been commodified in tourist destinations, often resulting in a diluted or misrepresented version of cultural heritage. They caution that while tourism can provide economic benefits to communities, it can also lead to the exploitation and distortion of traditional musical forms. Their work underscores the importance of balancing cultural preservation with the pressures of modern tourism [19].

### **III. University Profile.**

XX University is a key comprehensive institution in Jiangsu Province, jointly supported by the provincial government and the Ministry of Education, with a focus on liberal arts and agriculture. Known for its contributions to educational reform, the university offers 13 major disciplines and has over 3.38 million undergraduates and 1.59 million postgraduates. It boasts 21 doctoral programs, 51 master's programs, and 22 postdoctoral research stations, with some fields ranked in the top 1% globally by the Essential Science Indicators (ESI). The university excels in research and talent development, with 41 first-class undergraduate programs and 28 certified by professional authorities. It has received nine national-level teaching achievement awards and is renowned for its performance in innovation and entrepreneurship competitions. The faculty includes over 2,900 full-time educators, five self-trained academicians, and 30 national-level talents. XX University has 30 key laboratories and undertakes over 3,800 research projects annually with a budget of nearly 1.2 billion yuan. On the international front, the university has partnerships with 320 universities in 56 countries and hosts over 2,400 international students. Its campus covers 6,000 acres, featuring extensive facilities, and has received accolades for energy conservation, campus safety, and smart campus development.

### **IV. Jiangsu's Traditional National Intangible Cultural Heritage Music**

Jiangsu Province is home to a rich array of traditional music that reflects the region's cultural heritage and agrarian history. One of the most notable traditions is Nan'zha Folk Songs, originating in Huai'an's Nan'zha Town over a millennium ago. These songs, flourishing during the Ming and Qing

dynasties, capture the rhythms of rural life and reflect themes of love, nature, and community. Known as “water-town musical fossils,” they are performed solo, in duets, or as competitive “song battles” during festivals and weddings. Efforts to preserve these songs, such as those led by folklorist Jin Kuang, have safeguarded over 500 songs, and modern adaptations are introducing them to younger generations through school programs and contemporary performances. Jiangnan Sizhu is a refined silk and bamboo ensemble music from Taicang City. Originating in the Ming Dynasty, it combines instruments like the erhu, pipa, bamboo flutes, and xiao. Known for its improvisational style, it became popular in literati gatherings and classical gardens. Recognized nationally in 2006, the Jiangnan Sizhu Association promotes its survival through workshops and youth competitions. Haizhou Five Major Tunes from Lianyungang blend imperial court music with local dialects and folk idioms. These tunes, listed in 2006, have been preserved through modern musical theater, apprenticeship programs, and digital archives.

Suzhou’s Xuanmiao Taoist Music, a spiritual tradition dating back to the Western Jin Dynasty, combines Taoist rituals with elements of court music and Kunqu opera. Monthly performances at Xuanmiao Temple attract global audiences. Shaobo Rice-Transplanting Chants from Yangzhou’s Shaobo Town, reflecting agrarian life, have been integrated into eco-tourism, where youth are trained to continue the tradition. Shifan Luogu, a Ming Dynasty tradition from Wuxi and Changshu, features ritual music and festive folk beats, performed with gongs, drums, and flutes, and is revived through cultural festivals and school programs.

Other traditions include Meicun Taoist Music from Wuxi and Jinhu Rice-Transplanting Songs, as well as Yangzhou’s UNESCO-recognized Guqin Art, a philosophical form of Chinese zither music. These traditions illustrate Jiangsu’s role as a cultural crossroads where imperial elegance meets grassroots creativity. Despite challenges like urbanization and aging practitioners, efforts in education, digital preservation, and cultural tourism are helping ensure these traditions endure for future generations.

## **V. Analysis of XX University’s Unique Approach to Inheriting Local Music**

### **5.1. Curriculum Design**

Guided by the university's connotative development strategy, XX University adheres to the principle of "student-centered" education and emphasizes moral development alongside academic knowledge. It strives to "optimize combinations, transform, and integrate," balancing discipline and professional development with the university's unique branding and cultural focus. The university’s goal is to cultivate first-class talent and professional expertise by adapting to the national industrial transformation and innovation-driven development strategies. As part of this mission, XX University continuously adjusts and optimizes its undergraduate program structure to ensure that its offerings are aligned with both present and future educational needs. The School of Music at XX University follows the school’s educational philosophy and, in accordance with national standards for higher education, provides a comprehensive policy framework for local music inheritance. The music school has developed courses that highlight local musical traditions. These courses are designed based on the professional standards of music education and are informed by the needs of society and the current state of professional development.

#### **Educational Philosophy**

The primary goal of talent cultivation at XX University is to meet societal needs and respond to the current state of educational resources and professional development. Talent development focuses on comprehensive knowledge, skills, and professional values, ensuring that graduates are well-equipped to contribute effectively to society. The program’s objectives shape the curriculum and directly influence the type of talent the university produces, ensuring that graduates meet societal needs and can contribute meaningfully to the field of music education.

The School of Music offers two undergraduate programs: Musicology and Music Performance. Each program has its own specific training objectives. The Musicology program is designed to cultivate music educators with solid theoretical knowledge and practical skills who can contribute to the reform and development of music education in China. Meanwhile, the Music Performance program aims to develop talented performers with solid musical knowledge, strong performance skills, and a

creative spirit, preparing them for careers in music performance, artistic planning, and management.

### Course Design

XX University’s music program is organized into four main course modules: general education, discipline-specific courses, open and interdisciplinary courses, and innovative practice. The discipline-specific and open/interdisciplinary courses reflect the university’s focus on fostering well-rounded, culturally aware music professionals. According to the most recent curriculum plan, the discipline-specific courses include core subjects, while the open and interdisciplinary courses offer flexibility for students to explore other areas of interest.(Table 1-2)

Table 1- 2, XX University’s music program

Module	Type	Courses	Credit		Courses for Music Performance	Credit	
			Theory	Practice		Theory	Practice
Disciplines and majors	general education	Professional introduction course	16		Introduction to the major	16	
		Basic music theory	32		Basic music theory	2	
		Teacher oral and written language	16	32	Chinese and foreign folk music 1, 2	4	
		Singing language training		64	Physical training 1, 2	16	32
		Chinese and foreign folk music 1, 2	64		Vocal basics 1, 2	16	32
		Physical training 1, 2	16	32	Piano basics 1, 2	16	32
		Basic harmony 1, 2	64		Basic harmony 1, 2	4	
		A brief history of Chinese music and appreciation of famous works 1, 2	64		A brief history of Chinese music and appreciation of famous works 1, 2	4	
		Modern educational technology theory and practice	32	32	Chorus and conducting 1, 2	2	64
		Form and work analysis 1, 2	64		Form and work analysis 1, 2	4	
		Vocal music foundation 1, 2, 3, 4	32	64	Music education and communication	2	
		Piano foundation 1, 2, 3, 4	32	64	A brief history of Western music and appreciation of famous works (Chinese and English bilingual teaching) 1, 2	64	
		Instrumental music performance foundation 1, 2, 3, 4	32	64	Music sociology	2	
		Sight singing and ear training 1, 2, 3, 4	32	192			
	A brief history of Western music and appreciation of famous works 1, 2	64		Sight singing and ear training*1, 2, 3, 4			
	discipline-specific courses	Education foundation	48		Vocal performance*1, 2, 3, 4	2	92
		Psychology foundation	48		Piano performance*1, 2, 3, 4		28
		Chorus and Conducting 1, 2	32	64	Instrumental performance*1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6		28
		Singing and Piano Accompaniment		64	Dance performance*1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6		92
		A Brief History of Music Education in China and Abroad	32		Vocal art guidance		92
Middle School Music Curriculum and Teaching		48		Computer music		64	
Integration	interdisciplinary courses	Arrangement Methods for Small Ensemble Music		64	Song writing and adaptation	16	32
		Playing and Singing by Yourself 1, 2		128	Music literature and paper writing	2	
		Class Teacher Work	16			2	
		Music Teaching Theory	32		Jiangsu folk song singing		
		Middle School Music Teaching Design and Case Analysis 1	32		Dance foundation 1, 2		
		Campus Cultural Activities Guidance and Planning		32	Local opera and rap music		
	innovative courses	Dance Basics 1, 2	16	32	Instrumental ensemble and duet	16	32
		Polyphonic Music	32		Polyphonic music	16	32
		Introduction to Folk Music	32		Dance masterpieces appreciation	2	
		Computer Music Basics	16	32	Vocal masterpieces and singing appreciation	2	
		Vocal Singing and Teaching 1, 2	16	32	Instrumental masterpieces and performance appreciation	2	
		Piano Performance and Teaching 1, 2	16	32	National chamber music	2	
		Instrumental Performance and Teaching 1, 2	16	32	Vocal masterpieces and performance appreciation	2	
		Dance Choreography 1, 2	16	32	Instrumental masterpieces and performance appreciation	2	
		Qinzheng Basics		64	National chamber music	2	
		Sketching		64	Dance choreography 1, 2	16	32
		Rhythmic gymnastics		64	Musicals and modern music performance	32	64
		Practice of middle school music teaching materials	16	32	Playing and singing 1, 2		64
		Music literature and paper writing	16		Stage creation practice 1, 2, 3, 4	32	92
		Classroom instrumental performance		32	Qinzheng design and production	32	
Song writing and adaptation	16	32	Large-scale event planning	32			
Cross-cutting open courses	Music aesthetics (international course project)	32		Singing language training		64	
	Introduction to art	32		Music aesthetics (international course)	32		
				Introduction to art	32		

The curriculum at XX University’s music program is strategically designed to integrate a balance of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, offering students a comprehensive education that

encompasses both traditional and modern music education. The program is divided into several modules, including general education, discipline-specific courses, interdisciplinary courses, and innovative courses. This diverse curriculum ensures that students gain not only a strong foundation in music theory and performance but also a deep understanding of various musical traditions, including regional music and folk genres. To effectively integrate Jiangsu's traditional national intangible cultural heritage music, the curriculum should incorporate more specialized courses that focus specifically on the music of the region, such as Jiangsu folk music, Haizhou Five Major Tunes, Jiangnan Silk and Bamboo music, and the Nanzha folk songs. Courses like "Chinese and Foreign Folk Music," "Jiangsu Folk Song Singing," and "Regional Music and Culture" would enable students to explore Jiangsu's unique musical heritage in-depth, providing them with a comprehensive understanding of local traditions. Additionally, students could engage in performance-based modules that emphasize Jiangsu's traditional music forms, allowing them to gain hands-on experience with these rich musical traditions.

The curriculum should also foster interdisciplinary connections between traditional music studies and other fields, such as cultural studies, history, and anthropology, to deepen students' understanding of the socio-cultural context of Jiangsu's intangible cultural heritage music. By incorporating both theoretical study and practical performance of Jiangsu's traditional music, the university can help students develop a more profound connection with the region's musical identity. Collaborative projects with local artists and cultural institutions could also be integrated into the curriculum, providing students with opportunities to learn directly from practitioners and gain real-world experience in preserving and promoting Jiangsu's traditional music. In this way, XX University's music program can become a hub for the safeguarding of Jiangsu's musical heritage, while simultaneously preparing students to contribute to the broader cultural landscape by bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary music practices. This integrated approach will not only preserve these traditional music forms but also allow them to evolve and resonate with future generations.

## **VI. Implication and Suggestion**

The "National Guidelines for Undergraduate Music (Teacher Education) Programs" specifies that professional courses should include mandatory, elective, and local courses, with a specific number of hours assigned to each. The guidelines also encourage universities to design courses that reflect regional and ethnic music traditions, as well as the institution's unique characteristics. The findings of this study suggest that the current curriculum at XX University, while comprehensive in its approach to music education, can benefit from a more focused inclusion of local and regional music forms such as Jiangsu's folk music, Haizhou Five Major Tunes, and Jiangnan Silk and Bamboo music. The university should consider expanding its course offerings to specifically address these traditional music forms, with courses like "Jiangsu Folk Song Singing," "Introduction to Regional Music," and "Chinese Folk Music and ICH," ensuring that students gain a deep understanding of their historical, cultural, and social significance. Furthermore, incorporating practical performance modules centered around these music styles, such as "Local Opera Performance" or "Traditional Jiangsu Ensemble," would provide students with firsthand exposure to regional ICH music.

To address the ethical and practical challenges in optimizing music education for ICH preservation, institutions must balance cultural authenticity with modern pedagogical demands by fostering partnerships with local communities and ICH inheritors to ensure respectful representation and co-creation of curricula, while tackling resource constraints through government and private funding, educator training, and scalable, modular frameworks that integrate regional traditions into national standards. Ethical concerns like cultural appropriation and intellectual property require transparent agreements and equitable access to digital tools, while practical hurdles such as aging practitioners and youth engagement demand apprenticeship programs, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and innovative pedagogies that blend traditional music with technology (e.g., VR/AR, digital archives) to enhance accessibility and relevance. By aligning localized curriculum design with interdisciplinary collaboration, policy advocacy, and sustainable technological infrastructure, institutions can cultivate

culturally aware professionals capable of preserving ICH music's integrity while adapting it to contemporary contexts, ensuring its survival amid globalization and urbanization.

In addition, the integration of ICH music should not be limited to specialized courses but should also be embedded in the broader curriculum. This could be achieved by linking the study of traditional music with subjects like "Music Sociology," "Music Education Theory," and "Cultural Heritage Management." By doing so, students can gain a holistic understanding of ICH music in its cultural, societal, and educational contexts. Moreover, interdisciplinary collaborations could be encouraged, such as joint courses with the departments of cultural studies or anthropology, to explore the role of music in the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage. The university should also explore the use of modern technology, such as digital archiving and online learning platforms, to make these traditions accessible to a wider audience, both on and off-campus. Finally, creating platforms for collaboration between students, local musicians, and cultural institutions could provide practical experiences that will contribute to the ongoing vitality of Jiangsu's musical heritage. By embedding these elements into the curriculum, XX University would not only preserve local traditions but also ensure that students are equipped to contribute meaningfully to the future of ICH music both in China and globally.

## **VII. Conclusion**

This study underscores the critical role of higher education institutions in preserving and transmitting intangible cultural heritage (ICH) music, using XX University in Jiangsu Province as a case study. The university has developed a holistic approach to integrate Jiangsu's traditional music into its curriculum. This approach combines theoretical instruction, practical training, and community engagement, making it a valuable model for other institutions aiming to preserve regional music traditions. The key strategies identified in this study include curriculum optimization, extracurricular innovation, collaborative partnerships, and technological integration.

Curriculum optimization plays a central role in this process. XX University has designed courses focused on regional music traditions, blending theoretical studies with hands-on performance opportunities. Additionally, extracurricular activities such as student clubs, cultural festivals, and the use of digital platforms have been leveraged to foster student engagement with local music. Collaborative partnerships between academic experts and local ICH inheritors help ensure authenticity in the transmission of these traditions. The use of modern technologies, such as VR/AR and online archives, further enhances accessibility and attracts younger generations, ensuring that these music forms resonate with today's digital-native students. The findings reveal that such initiatives not only deepen students' cultural identity and artistic skills but also help revitalize endangered musical traditions. However, challenges such as urbanization, aging practitioners, and the need for sustainable funding persist. Despite these challenges, XX University's model demonstrates that aligning curriculum design with regional heritage, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and embracing modern technology can effectively balance tradition with innovation. Future efforts should prioritize scaling these practices nationally, strengthening ties with rural communities, and expanding research on pedagogical frameworks for ICH preservation.

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