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A Review of the Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage Education in Primary Schools in the Past 15 Years

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Citation: Xu, Q. J. (2026). A Review of the Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage Education in Primary Schools in the Past 15 Years. *Journal of Global Arts Studies*, 4 (1), 34-50.
<https://doi.org/10.23112/jgas26033103>



Received: January 15, 2026
Revised: February 5, 2026
Accepted: March 25, 2026
Published: March 31, 2026



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Abstract: *Background:* The full implementation of the “Double Reduction” policy and the deep integration of outstanding traditional Chinese culture into basic education, has made intangible cultural heritage (ICH) education a key part of primary education in China. Its localized, practical and integrated characteristics has promoted the widespread development of relevant teaching methods nationwide. *Objective:* This paper systematically reviews practical explorations and research achievements of ICH education in Chinese primary schools from 2010 to 2024, aiming to summarize experience, analyze existing problems, and provide theoretical references and practical strategies for improving its quality. *Methods:* Using literature review and case analysis, this study classifies and summarizes relevant literature from document types, annual distribution and core themes, and integrates major conclusions and practical cases. *Results:* Over the past 15 years, ICH education in primary schools has attracted increasing attention and formed a multi-participant and multi-channel education framework, serving as an important platform for ICH preservation. However, it still faces challenges such as inadequate policy support, fragmented teaching content, insufficient teachers’ professional capacity and superficial implementation of teaching practices. *Conclusion:* Future development should focus on constructing a systematic curriculum system, building a professional teaching team and improving collaborative education mechanisms. As a systematic project, ICH education requires joint efforts from all sectors to achieve the dynamic transmission of ICH and its diverse integration into primary education.

Keywords: Intangible cultural heritage (ICH); ICH education; Primary school; Cultural inheritance; Curriculum integration

1. Introduction

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) represents the spiritual essence and cultural symbols accumulated over thousands of years in China, serving as a vibrant reflection of the country’s rich traditional culture. Preserving this heritage is crucial for the continuation of cultural roots and the cultivation of national identity. Schools are the core venues in passing on China’s ICH and talent cultivation, as well as key platforms for promoting the implementation of ICH education. The primary school stage is especially important, as it is a critical period for the formation of students’ worldviews, values, and cultural understanding. During this stage, students exhibit strong curiosity and high receptiveness, creating a natural inclination toward cultural awareness and inheritance. This makes it an important opportunity to promote and deepen appreciation for ICH education.

Over a period of fifteen years, from 2010 to 2024, China’s education sector has undergone significant changes. The deep implementation of the “Double Reduction” policy has provided essential support for primary education to return to its core mission of nurturing students and expanding opportunities for quality education. The comprehensive implementation of the project to incorporate excellent traditional

Chinese culture into schools has created a broad platform for integrating ICH education into the primary education system. As a result, China's approach to primary ICH education has shifted from initial sporadic attempts to a nationwide educational practice. This transition has been accompanied by advances in related theoretical research and practical exploration, resulting in a wealth of research achievements and diverse practical models.

Currently, research on ICH education in primary schools in China covers multiple dimensions such as curriculum development, teaching methods, and teacher training. However, most existing studies focus on single-case analyses or partial issues, lacking a systematic review and comprehensive reflection on research achievements and practical experiences over the past fifteen years. This makes it difficult to present the development path, existing challenges, and strategies for improving ICH education in primary schools. Based on this, the paper focuses on domestic research literature and practical cases related to ICH education in primary schools from 2010 to 2024 as the research object. By employing literature review and case analysis methods, it systematically examines the distribution characteristics, core research topics, and practical outcomes in this field. It also thoroughly analyzes key issues in current ICH education in primary schools, such as policy support, content design, teacher competencies, and practical implementation. Subsequently, targeted optimization strategies are proposed to support the standardized and systematic development of ICH education in primary schools. These strategies aim to facilitate the ongoing transmission of ICH culture in schools and promote a deeper integration of primary education with China's rich traditional culture.

2. Literature Review

Since China joined the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, various government departments at all levels have issued a series of documents related to the protection, inheritance, and education of intangible cultural heritage. This marked the beginning of efforts to educate, protect, and pass down intangible cultural heritage in China, including within primary schools, resulting in a grand momentum in this area. Among these, primary schools' ICH education has become the main focus of these efforts, particularly under the "double reduction" policy. Therefore, this article provides a comprehensive overview of the relevant research status from 2010 to 2024, summarizes the educational experience during this period, presents research findings, identifies existing problems, and proposes development strategies.

Through China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) searches using keywords including "primary school intangible cultural heritage education", "intangible cultural heritage education in primary and secondary schools", and "intangible cultural heritage school education", the author manually screened and removed duplicates, ultimately identifying 690 related publications (including books) on primary school intangible cultural heritage education. The largest category was journal articles, followed by academic theses, conference papers, comprehensive newspaper reports, and three monographs.

Among these three search terms, "primary school intangible cultural heritage education" yielded the highest number of documents, totalling 466. The literature predominantly consisted of journal articles, with a limited number of comprehensive newspaper reports. These publications demonstrated strong practical relevance, with authors primarily being frontline educators and administrators. However, the journals in which these articles were published generally had lower academic standing, often appearing in non-specialized general journals and a few comprehensive newspaper reports. This indicates that while frontline educators have diligently implemented teaching principles and accumulated substantial experience, their pedagogical research and theoretical depth still require improvement.

The search term “intangible cultural heritage education in primary and secondary schools” produced 152 publications, mainly journal articles and some academic theses. The authors were predominantly from educational administrative departments and universities. These works exhibited comprehensive, theoretical, and regional characteristics. Since the research also covered secondary education rather than focusing solely on primary school contexts, the content for primary school ICH education research appeared somewhat generalized, lacking specificity and depth. This category of articles is predominantly published in specialized academic journals, particularly those in education at various levels, including provincial education journals and “Primary and Secondary Education”.

A search using “intangible cultural heritage in school education” as the subject term identified 68 articles. In addition to journal papers, a significant proportion of these works are academic theses, with university authors constituting a larger share compared to the aforementioned categories. The content is characterized by strong theoretical and review-oriented features, and many include surveys on the overall status of intangible cultural heritage education in primary/secondary schools and universities within specific regions. Aside from theses, most of these articles were published in educational, academic, and university journals.

In addition to the three categories of literature mentioned above, several review articles emerged during this period. For instance, Huang and Liu (2018) published “A Review of Research on Introducing Ethnic Culture into Schools in the Past Decade,” while Song et al. (2016) presented “A Review of Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage Education in China’s Sports Sector Over the Past Decade.” Wang and He (2016)’s “Advances in Intangible Cultural Heritage Education Research in China Over the Past Decade” and Zhang’s (2017) “Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance in Early Childhood Education: A Review and Commentary” were also notable. Yao’s (2014) “A Review of Domestic Research on Ethnic Cultural Heritage Inheritance” was another significant contribution.

It should be noted that the theme of “intangible cultural heritage education in primary schools” covers a broad range of topics. Therefore, related topics such as “intangible cultural heritage protection and inheritance,” “traditional culture education,” “ethnic cultural heritage preservation,” “primary school quality education,” “extracurricular activities in primary schools,” “introducing intangible cultural heritage into schools,” “local culture education,” and specific subjects or teaching methods for primary school intangible cultural heritage education—such as Zhang’s (2020) “Exploring the Integration of Minnan Nursery Rhymes into Lower Primary Music Classes” and Yang and Gao’s (2024) “Developing Abacus Mental Arithmetic Education to Preserve Abacus Culture” —are also included. However, the content of these literature searches is not particularly unique, as it largely overlaps with previously identified research, merely increasing the quantity of available materials. Therefore, the literature reviewed above is sufficient to reflect the current state of the field.

The literature published during this period is statistically summarized as follows:

Table 1. Chronological Distribution of Primary School Intangible Cultural Heritage Education Literature (2010-2024)

Age	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Quantity	6	12	10	15	18	22	35	39	40	49	55	89	82	108	150

The data in the table above show that research on ICH education in primary schools has been increasing in China in the past 15 years, especially in the last 5 years. This reflects the increasing importance of ICH education in primary schools and is developing into a popular trend.

The author categorizes these documents into 21 thematic groups based on overlapping content and conducts statistical analysis for each category. It should be

noted that the thematic classification is not entirely precise, as many documents contain overlapping content. For instance, the implementation pathways section discusses integrating specific intangible cultural heritage (ICH) elements into curriculum teaching activities. Similarly, discussions on incorporating ICH into academic disciplines and other teaching activities often address implementation methods. Likewise, school-based curriculum development may involve specific ICH integration into particular courses, and vice versa. However, since these overlapping topics are frequently addressed separately, they do not compromise the accuracy of the overall thematic classification or quantitative statistics. The author will further analyze these overlaps in subsequent sections. Below is a categorized list of documents by thematic content, the academic disciplines incorporating ICH, and related teaching activities, presented in descending order of quantity:

Table 2. Distribution of Themes in Literature Related to Intangible Cultural Heritage Education in Primary Schools (2010-2024)

Order number	Content topic	Quantity
1	Comprehensive Discussion: Status Quo, Problems, Paths and Strategies	216
2	the fine arts	151
3	music	61
4	course development	51
5	physical culture	47
6	Aesthetic education, art education	33
7	After-school services, club activities	19
8	Course Design and Teaching Model	16
9	Comprehensive Practical Activities	15
10	labor education	14
11	Study Tour	12
12	moral education	12
13	Culture centers and museums enter schools	11
14	education for all-around development	8
15	Chinese	8
16	Integration of Digital Artificial Intelligence and Science and Technology	6
17	Mathematical abacus	4
18	environmental education	1
19	psychological identification	1
20	Campus Culture Construction	1

The 20 content themes can be categorized into four major types: 1) Comprehensive discussions; 2) Integration of intangible cultural heritage into primary school subjects and other teaching activities; 3) Curriculum development, design, and teaching models; 4) Participation of social institutions in education. Below is a brief summary of the four research content categories.

The comprehensive discourse presented here does not focus on integrating specific ICH with particular academic disciplines or teaching activities. Instead, it provides an overarching analysis of the current state, challenges, and strategies for ICH education and preservation in schools, including primary schools. Most contributors to this literature are university scholars, with the majority engaged in research projects and master's theses. These works exhibit a strong theoretical foundation, macro-level analysis, and academic rigor, offering comprehensive evaluations of ICH education from

various perspectives such as policy, environment, culture, psychology, management, curriculum design, and talent development.

They highlight the prevalent conditions of ICH education in schools, including primary schools, and propose corresponding countermeasures and optimization pathways. Such literature can be categorized into two types:

1) General discussions on ICH education and preservation across various school levels, including primary schools. Examples include Tan's (2015) "Exploring the Construction of an ICH Education and Preservation System" and Wang et al.'s (2011) "Research on the Educational Inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritage".

2) Comprehensive studies on specific regions, schools, or particular ICH education practices. Examples include Ma's (2024a) "Cultural Dilemmas and Optimization Paths of Integrating ICH into School Education in Ethnic Regions: A Case Study of ICH Programs in L County, Ningxia" and Yang's (2023) "Research on Countermeasures for Preserving Tujia Ethnic Group's ICH in Schools in Chongqing."

However, it must be noted that these articles often exhibit significant homogeneity in their discussion of the challenges, implementation pathways, and optimization strategies for ICH education. This indicates that the current state of ICH education in primary schools across China is largely uniform, revealing common issues. Additionally, in master's theses, the rigid formulaic structure of the eight-legged essay is particularly noticeable. The introductory sections—covering background, review, research methods, and conceptual frameworks—are often repetitive and lengthy, while content related to ICH education in schools, including primary schools, remains scarce and superficial. This repetition arises because such macro-level, theoretical, academic, and comprehensive topics are easier to complete for theses. The first half of the paper follows a standardized template, while the latter half merely requires analyzing the current state of ICH education in a specific region, school, or institution, followed by the application of implementation paths and optimization strategies. Consequently, such repetitive research offers limited practical guidance.

3. Comprehensive Discussion on the Integration of Intangible Cultural Heritage into Primary School Teaching

3.1 General Overview and Value of Integrating Intangible Cultural Heritage into Primary School Teaching

Regarding the integration of ICH into primary school curricula and teaching activities, the "National Cultural Development Outline for the Eleventh Five-Year Plan Period" issued in 2006 emphasized: "Prioritize education on China's excellent traditional culture and the inheritance of classical texts and craftsmanship. Primary schools with adequate resources should offer courses in calligraphy, painting, and traditional crafts. All primary and secondary school subjects should incorporate elements of China's excellent traditional culture based on their disciplinary characteristics (General Office of the CPC Central Committee & General Office of the State Council, 2006)." Therefore, from the perspective of implementation and effectiveness in primary schools, research on ICH education holds significant value and relevance. Since ICH education must be embedded across various academic disciplines and teaching activities, exploring and summarizing the patterns and experiences of integrating ICH into different teaching activities has become the core focus of primary school ICH education research. The aforementioned statistical table also reveals that such research constitutes the largest body of literature, comprising 427 articles (62% of the total), with authors predominantly being frontline primary school educators. This reflects that primary school teachers serve as both the primary practitioners of ICH education and key contributors to summarizing teaching experiences and theoretical advancements. However, it should not be ignored that a considerable part of these articles is published in non-specialized

general journals and newspapers, which, to some extent, reflects that there is still a lot of room for improvement in the professional theoretical level and research ability of primary school teachers.

3.2 Two Core Categories of Integrating Intangible Cultural Heritage into Primary School Teaching

This research can be divided into two major categories: the first is the integration of ICH with various subjects or comprehensive teaching content in primary schools. Specific subjects include art, music, physical education, dance, labor, Chinese, science and technology, mathematics, and more. Comprehensive teaching content includes aesthetic education, moral education, art education, quality education, environmental education, among others; the second is the integration of ICH education with other teaching activities, specifically including after-school services, club activities, comprehensive practice, Field trips, and more. These teaching practices and research not only reflect the richness and diversity of the cultural connotations of China's ICH but also demonstrate the multidimensionality and integrity of primary school ICH teaching practices. Of course, it also reflects the high recognition of ICH education by primary school educators, as well as the resulting awareness and proactive exploration.

3.3 Integration of Intangible Cultural Heritage into Primary School Subjects and Comprehensive Teaching Content

1) Integration of Intangible Cultural Heritage into Primary School Subjects

The classification statistics reveal that in the practical research on integrating ICH into specific disciplines and comprehensive teaching content, fine arts has the highest number of applications, followed by music, physical education, aesthetic education, and art education. Since fine arts serve as both an essential pathway for aesthetic education and a component of art education, we will consolidate these two aspects under the discipline of fine arts for discussion. The "Nine-Year Compulsory Education Full-Time Primary School Fine Arts Teaching Syllabus" stipulates: "Teaching content should reflect ethnic characteristics, fully promote China's excellent national and folk artistic traditions, and enhance students' national pride." Therefore, integrating ICH into primary school fine arts education not only fulfills the syllabus requirements but also implements national policies on protecting and inheriting ICH. Moreover, China's diverse ICH resources—including paper-cutting, decorative arts, painting, dough sculpture, traditional costumes, seasonal festivals, theater, paper crafts, pottery, clay modeling, tie-dye, printing, embroidery, weaving, and calligraphy—provide abundant teaching materials. For instance, Changzhou, Jiangsu Province, boasts unique traditions like paper-cutting, indigo dyeing, seal carving, bamboo carving using green preservation techniques, and cloisonné enamel painting. Consequently, primary schools across the country have prioritized incorporating these elements into their fine arts curriculum, yielding rich educational outcomes—a commendable achievement.

Music and physical education classes are the primary subjects in primary schools for ICH education. The "Music Teaching Syllabus for Full-time Primary Schools in Nine-Year Compulsory Education" specifies the objective of "learning China's outstanding ethnic and folk music," requiring that "to promote excellent national music culture and reflect regional characteristics in music education, local areas may select indigenous teaching materials, which should account for 20% of total teaching content." Given the rich diversity of musical ICH in China—including songs, dances, dramas, and instrumental music—primary schools across regions actively integrate local musical or music-related ICH into their curricula. Examples include Nanyin culture and Minnan nursery rhymes from Quanzhou City's primary schools and Yanpu Primary

School in Chendai Town, Jinjiang; Liuqin opera from Linyi Third Experimental Primary School; "Xishi Fan" music from LouTa Town Central Primary School in Zhejiang; Han opera from Wuhan Yucai Yikang Primary School; Shangluo flower drum from Shangluo City's primary schools; Shandong fish drum opera from Jinan Zhanhua District First Experimental Primary School; Shaoxing Huashe Primary School's Yue opera; and Qiang ethnic folk songs from Sichuan Maoxian Fengyi Primary School. These examples demonstrate both the integrability of musical ICH into primary education and its universal significance in preserving cultural heritage through school-based learning.

ICH that can be integrated into physical education classes mainly includes martial arts, traditional ethnic folk sports (such as dragon dance, lion dance, and shuttlecock kicking), and dance. According to the "Compulsory Education Physical Education and Health Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)" issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, "traditional Chinese sports" such as martial arts, dragon dance, and lion dance have been incorporated into the curriculum content (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022).

Martial arts are among the most representative and distinguished traditional cultures of the Chinese nation. Developed over thousands of years, Chinese martial arts display a wide variety of regional styles (e.g., Guangdong Province alone has 26 boxing styles, 15 of which are ICH projects). These martial arts carry a profound cultural significance and rich connotations. Practicing martial arts not only strengthens the body, hones willpower, and shapes character, but also serves as an important way to recognize and understand Chinese cultural heritage, thereby enhancing cultural confidence and national pride.

Therefore, primary schools across the country actively integrate local ICH martial arts into physical education activities and engage in systematic exploration. Examples include Qingcheng Martial Arts at Dujiangyan City Primary School, Xinyi Liuhe Quan at Zhoukou Hui Nationality Primary School, Yanghu Quan at Changzhou Jingchuan Primary School, Gong-style Tongbi Quan at Hangzhou Renmin Primary School, Hong Quan at Zhangjiagang Chongzhen Primary School, Wing Chun at Guangzhou Baiyun District Jixian Primary School, Bian Gan at Longnan City Primary School, and Meihua Zhuang Quan at Liaocheng Yuhong Primary School, all of which have achieved positive results. Dragon dance and lion dance are also projects that integrate ICH into primary school physical education classes. Dragon and lion dance, also known as dragon and lion sports, has a history of thousands of years in China. It is a sport that combines etiquette, celebration, and entertainment, and has been included in China's official sports programs. Among them, the lion dance is further divided into northern and southern lion dances. Due to the higher physical and skill requirements of dragon and lion dance compared to martial arts, dance, and other forms of intangible cultural heritage sports, it is less commonly practiced in primary schools. Notable examples include the dragon dance at Chengdu Yingbin Road Primary School and Guangzhou Yuexiu District Yaotai Primary School, as well as the Buyi water dragon dance at Guizhou Pingtang Experimental Primary School. Since dragon dance has relatively simple requirements for venues, equipment, and skills, it holds an important position in primary school physical education.

China's dance-related intangible cultural heritage is diverse across regions and ethnic groups, providing rich teaching resources for primary school physical education, making it widely practiced in primary schools. Examples include the bird dance and Reba dance at Qinghai Nangqian County No.2 Complete Primary School, the Tujia hand-waving dance at Chongqing Youyang County Primary School, the Tibetan, Qiang, and Yi dances at Chengdu Shuangliu District Experimental Primary School, and the knife dance at Ruili Huyu Central Primary School, all of which are implemented and promoted as recess activities.

According to surveys conducted by relevant scholars, 84 primary schools in Guangdong Province offer physical ICH education. Among them, 17 schools offer

martial arts programs, 14 offer lion dance programs, 13 offer dragon dance programs, 13 offer traditional dance programs, and 11 offer qilin dance programs. Additionally, 14 schools offer folk sports programs, and 2 offer folk speed events. 110 primary schools offer extracurricular training in physical and ICH programs. Among them, 35 institutions offer martial arts programs, 30 offer traditional dance programs, 24 offer dragon and lion dance programs, and 21 offer folk dance programs.

Other subjects that integrate ICH into primary school education include labor, Chinese language, science and technology, and mathematics. Labor classes primarily focus on ICH projects related to handicraft skills. The “Compulsory Education Labor Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)” includes traditional craft-making projects such as paper crafts, clay works, fabric art, and weaving. China’s traditional craft-making is highly developed and diverse, serving not only as art teaching resources but also as content for labor classes. Therefore, some schools have tailored their programs to integrate these crafts into labor curriculum based on local conditions. Examples include Langya grass weaving at Liudianzi Central Primary School in Hedong District, Linyi City; paper-cutting, porcelain engraving, and toy making at Wangsheren Experimental Primary School in Licheng District, Jinan City; sugar painting at Dongguo Town Central Primary School in Tengzhou City; and folk lantern making at Baogou Town Central Primary School.

The approaches to integrating ICH projects into Chinese classes mainly involve reading, writing, and reciting folk literature and local operas, observing and experiencing the performance process of ICH, and exploring traditional cultural elements in textbooks. Although fewer schools and related discussions have been conducted than in music, physical education, and art, this remains a meaningful exploration for ICH inheritance. Examples include folk literature (legends and ballads) and song-drama performances at Qianzhao Primary School in Decheng District, Dezhou City, Shandong Province; Minnan nursery rhymes at Wufeng Central Primary School and Nan’ an No.1 Experimental Primary School in Yongchun County, Fujian Province; folk stories, Chinese festivals, and hometown customs at Xinying Primary School in Rizhao City; observations and experiences of “Gao Lou Rice Noodles” at Guhuai Central Primary School in Changle District, Fuzhou City; and kite and blue printed cloth making experiences at Nantong Experimental Primary School. Discussions on integrating ICH into science and technology education remain limited, with existing studies primarily focusing on digital transformation and AI applications in ICH pedagogy (specific examples omitted). In mathematics education, the integration of ICH mainly involves abacus mental arithmetic. Notable examples include the “Efficient Integration of Abacus Mental Arithmetic into Primary Education” initiative at Meixian No.1 Primary School in Baoji City, the abacus mental arithmetic education experiment in Yishui County, Shandong Province, and Fengli Primary School in Rudong County, Nantong City, designated as one of Jiangsu Province’s first abacus mental arithmetic pilot schools. Over 3,000 students have won awards in abacus mental arithmetic competitions at various levels over the past 27 years.

2) Integration of Intangible Cultural Heritage into Primary School Comprehensive Teaching Content

While the preceding discussions primarily examine the educational value of integrating ICH into specific academic disciplines, the current exploration of incorporating ICH into primary school curricula emphasizes its comprehensive educational functions. These functions encompass aesthetic education, artistic education, moral education, holistic education, and environmental education. Although not specifically addressing the integration of individual ICH elements into subject teaching, such discussions still highlight the necessity of embedding ICH within academic programs and other educational activities. For instance, the aesthetic education

discussed in numerous articles fundamentally aims to realize its educational value by incorporating ICH into school curricula, extracurricular clubs, and other teaching initiatives.

The primary approach to aesthetic education is through the arts, which typically include music, fine arts, dance, drama, traditional theater, and film. Consequently, the ICH elements integrated into these art-oriented or artistically distinctive programs align with the core principles of aesthetic education. For instance, Daxing Primary School in Pingxiang, Jiangxi has integrated the traditional Chinese performing art “Lianhuoluo” into its curriculum and extracurricular activities (Wu, 2024). Some schools have incorporated Tibetan, Qiang, and Yi ethnic dances from southwestern China into primary school music, art, and Chinese language courses, as well as during large recess activities. Kaifeng’s Zhuxian Town has introduced woodblock New Year paintings into primary school aesthetic education, creating a “one school, one specialty” or even “one school, multiple specialties” aesthetic education landscape. Traditional crafts like Yunnan’s Yuanyang pottery and embroidery have been integrated into local primary school aesthetic curricula.

Huaiyin Primary School in Huai’an, Jiangsu, has consolidated over 40 extended courses by integrating local ICH elements such as folk literature, traditional art, performing arts, medicine, and sports. These courses are constructed and practiced through immersive experiences, on-site teaching, and club activities (Zhu, 2021). Regarding the integration of ICH into art education, the approaches and content are largely similar to aesthetic education. Aesthetic education can be considered a higher-level category of art education, while art education serves as the primary pathway. Art education is implemented through specific art courses. The “Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)” specifies courses including music, art, dance, drama (including opera), and film and television. Educators have integrated ICH elements with these art characteristics into teaching activities to achieve art education goals. While the substantive content may differ from the listed examples, the discussion perspectives are distinct. Therefore, no further examples will be provided here.

The integration of ICH into moral education is highlighted in the “Compulsory Education Moral and Rule of Law Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition).” This curriculum outlines teaching objectives that include helping students perceive, understand, and appreciate the charm of China’s outstanding traditional culture. The guiding philosophy emphasizes the importance of fostering a strong identity with the great motherland and Chinese culture. In curriculum development, it advocates tapping into and utilizing resources from China’s excellent traditional culture. The rich and splendid ICH of the Chinese nation is a valuable asset, containing deep ethnic sentiments, wisdom, and spirit. These elements provide vivid teaching resources that help students understand and connect with Chinese culture, thereby enhancing national pride.

Therefore, integrating ICH into moral education has become a crucial aspect of exploring ICH in primary school. For instance, Longlin County Primary School in Guangxi combines local ICH with the principle of “holistic education involving all staff, processes, and aspects” to conduct political and ideological education. Ruiying Primary School in Ronggui District, Shunde City, Foshan, has integrated Cantonese opera culture and moral education through its “Cantonese Opera+” activities. Anying Primary School in Shenyang integrates calligraphy education into moral practice, “allowing simple virtues to grow freely through ICH inheritance.” Since the content of quality education encompasses morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor, the significance and approaches of exploring primary school ICH teaching practices from this perspective are largely covered in this context, making further elaboration unnecessary.

3.4 Integration of Intangible Cultural Heritage with Other Teaching Activities in Primary Schools

The integration of ICH education with other teaching activities primarily refers to after-school services, club activities, comprehensive practical programs, and study tours. Similar to extracurricular initiatives, after-school services, and club activities, ICH education has become a key approach for many schools to implement, achieving notable success. For instance, Tonghongdian Yi and Miao Ethnic Township Central School in Huanning County, Yunnan Province, introduced Lusheng dance and embroidery into its after-school programs, enriching students' extracurricular lives while promoting the inheritance and development of ethnic cultures (Huang & Pu, 2024).

Liu Primary School in Hefei Economic Development Zone Experimental High School enhanced its after-school curriculum by establishing an art ICH club (Chen, 2024). Beijing Haidian District Nationalities Primary School adopted an "ICH workshop" model to diversify after-school content. The Second Primary School in Fuchuan Yao Autonomous County in Hezhou City, Guangxi, incorporated locally distinctive ICH elements into its after-school programs, sparking student enthusiasm and yielding positive outcomes. Zhanjiang No.8 Primary School integrated the learning and practice of "traditional dried fish-making techniques" into club-based teaching activities.

Regarding comprehensive practical activities, the "Guidelines for Comprehensive Practical Activity Courses in Primary and Secondary Schools" issued by the Ministry of Education on September 25, 2017, explicitly states: "Comprehensive practical activities are interdisciplinary courses that cultivate students' comprehensive qualities through real-life scenarios, problem-solving, and hands-on experiences." It further specifies that these activities are mandatory components of compulsory education curricula, with specific content developed by individual schools. Guided by these objectives, numerous schools have incorporated local ICH projects into comprehensive practical activities with remarkable success.

In fact, many ICH projects—especially those involving life-related crafts and practical applications—prove ideal for developing such curricula. Consequently, these institutions prioritize ICH projects that showcase distinctive local characteristics. For instance, Xiaotang Primary School in Chengxiang District, Putian City, Fujian Province, integrates local folk customs, handicrafts, and traditional theater into comprehensive activities through interdisciplinary approaches, mentorship by inheritors, and hands-on experiences. Qidong Economic Development Zone Experimental Primary School in Jiangsu Province has developed "Qidong Woodcut Art" as a school-based curriculum under its comprehensive practical activities. Luoyang Primary School in Linghe District, Jinzhou City, introduces paper-cutting culture through conceptual integration, course design, and practical exchanges. Similarly, Fu'an Experimental Primary School in Fujian Province incorporates "board candy making" into activities through guided listening, observation, tasting, and hands-on practice.

Notably, many studies focus not on specific implementation methods but on feasibility research, exploring how to integrate ICH elements like traditional crafts, festivals, and theatrical arts into comprehensive activities. Examples include Ma's (2024b) "Promoting Chinese Traditional Culture in Primary School Comprehensive Practical Activities" and Zhu's (2023) "Research on Chinese Traditional Culture Education in Primary Schools Through Comprehensive Practical Activities". Educational travel and comprehensive practical activities share similar fundamental characteristics, with the key distinction being that the former emphasizes research-based learning through immersive field trips. This approach is particularly well-suited for ICH education. However, because of its limitations—primarily its unsuitability for elementary school students and implementation challenges—most research on ICH education through this method has focused on feasibility studies, predominantly as master's theses.

3.5 Development, Design and Implementation of School-Based Curriculum for Intangible Cultural Heritage Education in Primary Schools

The development of school-based curricula for ICH education serves as a crucial foundation for systematizing and standardizing this area of study. As a localized, practical, and interdisciplinary teaching activity, ICH education has long been a key focus in academic research, particularly in developing personalized curricula that integrate regional ICH characteristics with subject teaching and practical activities.

Specifically, academic discussions on ICH curriculum development fall into two main categories: 1) Curriculum development studies integrating ICH into specific academic disciplines, such as Fengyin County Experimental Primary School in Jinan City developing cloisonné enamel into an art-based school curriculum, Wuhou Experimental Primary School in Chengdu creating a school-based art course based on the Peking Opera character “Daomadan”, and studies developing Hunan Yao ethnic costumes into art courses; 2) Generalized research on incorporating regional ICH into primary school education, including studies on Zhuang ethnic ICH curriculum development, explorations of Yimeng ICH curriculum practices, and research on Xiangxi earthenware art school-based curriculum development. These explorations demonstrate strong relevance and practical applicability, with the largest number of studies, reflecting academic emphasis on local context and interdisciplinary integration in ICH curriculum development.

School-based curriculum design and development share a similar exploratory nature. Curriculum design involves concretizing teaching content, methods, and procedures. The localized, practical, exploratory, and comprehensive nature of ICH education further underscores the importance of curriculum design. Integrating ICH into school teaching requires dedicated curriculum design. Although such explorations remain limited, they hold significant value. Examples include Liu’s (2022) “Spatial Construction and Curriculum Design for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Learning in Primary Schools”, and Wu’s (2024) “ICH Curriculum Design, Concepts, Systems, and Strategies in Primary Schools”. The implementation of school-based curricula, as the practical application of curriculum development and design, is the most critical component in ICH education. Consequently, academic discussions and summaries on this topic have gained significant attention. Research focuses include: implementing ICH school-based curricula in rural primary schools; teaching practices of “Baiju” (a traditional folk opera) in primary school clubs; and strategies for implementing ICH school-based curricula in labor education.

Discussions on school-based curriculum development and implementation often combine both aspects. Examples include studies on the development and practice of Wujiao thread-bound book craftsmanship school-based curricula, the implementation of Liuan bamboo weaving ICH curricula, and the development of Sichuan Opera face mask school-based curricula. In reality, development and implementation form an integrated process. Articles that focus solely on development may also address implementation, while implementation-focused articles may touch on development.

Discussions on teaching models are relatively limited, with content primarily involving explorations and summaries of instructional design and practice, making them largely similar to curriculum development and implementation. Examples include Yao’s (2022) “Practical Research on PBL Teaching Model in Primary School Art Education” and etc. Furthermore, the aforementioned content overlaps with earlier research on integrating ICH into subject teaching and comprehensive educational activities. For instance, the development and implementation of ICH art courses also constitute research on incorporating ICH into art education. Similarly, previous explorations of integrating ICH into comprehensive practical activities have involved curriculum development, design, implementation, and teaching methodologies. Additionally, most discussions on this topic are found in master’s theses, reflecting that

ICH education curriculum development, design, and implementation are highly theoretical and practical endeavors requiring in-depth investigation and resolution.

3.6 Off-Campus Institutions Collaborate in Education: An Important Supplementary Mode of Intangible Cultural Heritage Education in Primary Schools

In the context of widespread shortages of qualified teachers, limited professional expertise, and inadequate school facilities, introducing off-campus institutions for ICH education has become a crucial approach for schools—including primary schools—to implement ICH programs. These institutions primarily include cultural centers, museums, community art galleries, universities, and third-party educational organizations. For instance, the Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Center has successfully conducted ICH initiatives in schools through themed events and knowledge-sharing sessions. The Nanjing Folk Museum has long organized ICH inheritors to teach traditional crafts like paper-cutting, lantern-making, velvet flower creation, and dough modeling in primary and secondary schools. They also arrange visits and hands-on experiences for students and teachers, effectively promoting ICH culture in schools.

Faculty and students from Gannan Normal University have integrated the practical outcomes of the “Preserving Gannan Hakka ICH” art workshop into elementary art curricula. Meanwhile, Taiyuan Normal University collaborated with primary school teachers through a “high-level support for primary education” model to develop ICH general education textbooks. Third-party educational institutions refer to off-campus training providers, including teaching units and activity venues. Their involvement in school-based ICH education is not uncommon in China, though systematic research on this model remains limited. Dong’s (2023) study “Research on the Service Model of ICH Courses Provided by Third-Party Educational Institutions in Schools” identifies five key advantages: professional instructors, systematic curriculum design, closed-loop teaching, integrated services, and expanded benefits.

The ICH Inheritance Base in Qingkou Town, Ganyu District, Lianyungang City has established ICH protection and inheritance workstations in several local primary schools, teaching traditional crafts such as paper-cutting and gourd branding. It should be noted that these initiatives overlap with the aforementioned theme. For instance, during teaching activities, ICH inheritors visit schools while students participate in hands-on experiences at off-campus ICH bases or workshops. However, the implementation and discussion processes are not entirely dependent on external institutions.

4. Existing Problems and Optimization Paths of Intangible Cultural Heritage Education in Primary Schools

4.1 Existing Issues

Although ICH education in primary schools has made significant development over the past 15 years, several critical issues remain that severely hinder its high-quality advancement. These problems are widely relevant and remain central to academic discourse. While extensively discussed in studies integrating ICH into academic disciplines and teaching activities, such issues also frequently arise in regional and comprehensive research. Articles often use titles like “Optimization Strategies,” “Implementation Pathways,” and “School-Based Inheritance” to highlight their focus. As previously noted, these comprehensive analyses encompassing current status, challenges, and solutions are numerous but predominantly consist of academic theses and research outputs. This reflects the widespread nature of issues in ICH education across schools, including primary schools, making it a key focus in academic research. Representative works include Gao’s (2023) “Research on the Current Status and Optimization Strategies of Primary School ICH Education Based on Students’ Core

Competencies Development”, He’s (2024) “Problematic Manifestations and Optimization Paths of Intangible Cultural Heritage Education in Ethnic Minority Regions,” and Pu’s (2010) “Research on the Inheritance and Development of Minority Intangible Cultural Heritage in School Education: A Survey of Yunnan Province,” among others.

Based on comprehensive academic research, the challenges in primary school ICH education can be summarized into five key areas: 1) Policy and institutional support: Current policies and regulations only include guidelines, plans, and curriculum standards, lacking mandatory institutional safeguards. 2) Content design: The curriculum features fragmented and disorganized content, lacking systematic planning. The material often fails to connect with students’ daily lives or meet practical needs, while overemphasizing technical skills at the expense of cultural immersion. 3) Teacher qualifications: In-school teachers lack ICH expertise, while external instructors struggle to meet pedagogical standards, highlighting a critical shortage of qualified professional educators. 4) Teaching resources: Limited classroom space and inadequate equipment hinder ICH instruction, while external training centers remain scarce. Collaboration between schools and local ICH resources is also inadequate. 5) Awareness: Long-standing exam-oriented education has marginalized ICH as a non-core subject. Parents, students, and schools generally lack understanding of its value, reducing ICH education to a secondary function. 6) Teaching methods: Most ICH programs rely on interest groups and club activities, often becoming superficial. Many schools treat them as seasonal campus decorations rather than comprehensive approaches to heritage preservation. In terms of popularization, overall coverage of ICH education in primary schools is low nationwide, and regional development disparities are also significant. Even in schools that have implemented such education, the actual number of students participating is quite limited.

4.2 Optimization Path

The high-quality development of ICH education in primary schools relies on the accumulation of practical experience and targeted optimization strategies. Academic research on ICH education in primary schools has consistently focused on the core principle of “effective implementation”. Educators from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, regions, and schools have developed personalized and differentiated approaches through their teaching practices. Although these experiences are unique, they collectively provide valuable references and practical materials for the continuous development and refinement of ICH education in primary schools, accumulating essential experience for its standardized advancement. Meanwhile, optimization strategies proposed through comprehensive surveys and systematic analyses of ICH education in primary schools address common educational needs while balancing universality and guidance. This demonstrates greater promotion value and application significance. These optimization strategy studies and the related research on the practical challenges of ICH education in primary schools constitute two complementary components of the same research theme, achieving a cohesive understanding. The precise identification of educational challenges aims to propose scientifically sound and feasible solutions. Such research primarily manifests in academic theses and research project outcomes, with core viewpoints already forming academic consensus. Specific references will not be listed here.

Combining the main issues in primary school ICH education, such as policy support, teaching content, teacher competencies, and practical implementation, and integrating the relevant research achievements of China’s domestic academic community, the optimization path of primary school ICH education can be consolidated into the following core directions from the perspective of school practice: firstly, develop comprehensive courses, as it is essential to develop systematic professional ICH courses

based on the dual goals of preserving ICH and cultivating students' core competencies, which will help address the challenges of fragmented and unsystematic teaching content and thereby achieve deep integration of ICH knowledge with the primary education system; besides, focus on teacher development, for building a strong team of teachers is the key aspect, which can be achieved through various forms such as specialized training, pairing mentors with ICH inheritors, and teaching research exchanges to build a professional teacher team with both ICH literacy and teaching capabilities, making up for any gaps in professional competence; further, enhance inheritance bases by strengthening the construction of ICH inheritance both inside and outside schools, and integrating school-based educational resources with extracurricular ICH resources to provide students with authentic ICH experience scenarios and help prevent teaching practices from becoming superficial; additionally, adhere to the student-centered approach, as it is crucial to emphasize a student-centered methodology that enhances students' immersive experiences and personalized perceptions, and use diverse teaching methods to integrate the principles of ICH, achieving an organic combination of cultural immersion and value guidance; moreover, standardize club activities by enhancing the development of ICH club activities through enriching activity formats and refining content, as clubs can become an important platform for students to engage with and inherit ICH, thereby stimulating their awareness of cultural preservation and enthusiasm for participation; in addition, establish a collaborative mechanism by creating a collaborative educational framework among schools, families, and communities to break down educational barriers, integrate resources from all three parties, form a synergy in ICH education, and broaden its implementation paths; finally, implement an evaluation and incentive mechanism by introducing a scientific and perfect evaluation and incentive mechanism to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the ICH curriculum, teacher training, and student participation, which will mobilize the enthusiasm and initiative of teachers and students to participate in ICH education through incentives, ensuring the sustainable, healthy, and orderly development of ICH education in primary schools.

5. Conclusion

Over the past 15 years, driven by national policies on ICH protection and transmission, as well as initiatives like "Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture in Schools" and the "Double Reduction" policy, ICH education in primary schools has experienced rapid development. This field has gained increasing attention, forming an educational framework with multi-stakeholder participation and diverse implementation approaches. It has become a vital platform for dynamic ICH inheritance. Primary school educators and researchers who demonstrate strong cultural awareness have successfully integrated local ICH into subject teaching and campus activities. They have accumulated rich practical experience and achieved significant teaching outcomes. The academic community has also conducted multi-level research and produced summaries on primary school ICH education at various levels, providing theoretical support for practical development. Overall, primary school ICH education shows vigorous growth and emerging momentum. However, it still faces practical challenges, such as incomplete policy support mechanisms, fragmented teaching content, insufficient teacher professional competencies, and superficial teaching practices. These issues urgently require systematic solutions.

The implementation of ICH education in primary schools holds significant cultural and educational significance. Culturally, this approach enables elementary students to engage with ICH through listening, reading, experiential learning, and hands-on activities. It helps them appreciate the diligence and wisdom of the Chinese nation, understand its spiritual aspirations and aesthetic sensibilities, thereby strengthening cultural confidence and national pride. This initiative also promotes the

intergenerational transmission of China's outstanding traditional culture and safeguards its cultural roots. From an educational perspective, the primary school years are a critical period for shaping students' values, moral character, and aesthetic awareness. As a vital component of quality education, ICH education not only enriches the content and methods of primary education but also nurtures students' national spirit and wisdom, strengthens their willpower and moral integrity, and supports the comprehensive development of their core competencies. This highlights the cultural responsibility of primary education.

ICH education is a long-term, complex, systemic project that requires coordinated efforts from government regulators, educational and cultural institutions, enterprises, and social organizations. Establishing a collaborative education mechanism linking schools, families, and communities is essential for its successful development.

The advancement of ICH education in primary schools demands not only sustained theoretical research to provide academic support but also practical exploration by educators grounded in the realities of teaching. It requires not only hands-on practice and experiential learning to help students master ICH-related skills but also emphasizes cultural immersion and spiritual enrichment. The goal is to achieve a balance between the transmission of skills and the preservation of cultural heritage. ICH education is not a short-term seasonal initiative but a century-long endeavor requiring cumulative efforts and intergenerational continuity. Currently, primary school ICH education remains in the developmental stage and needs refinement. Future efforts should focus on curriculum system construction, teacher team development, resource integration, and improvement of evaluation and incentive mechanisms. These measures will promote a standardized, systematic, and in-depth development of primary school ICH education, ensuring that ICH culture takes root on campuses and fosters a diverse integration of cultural inheritance with the development of primary education.

Funding: This paper is a phased research achievement of the 2025 Special Research Project on the Practice of the Spirit of Educators in Baotou City (No.: BTJYJ2025B003) entitled "A Study on ICH Integration into Primary Schools: Curriculum System and Practical Paths".

Acknowledgements: Not applicable.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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