

Introducing Intangible Cultural Heritage into the Classroom and Studies of the Practice in Regional Colleges

A Case Study in Guangxi University of Science and Technology

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Abstract—Through integrating geographical and cultural resources advantages with specific major studies, intangible cultural heritage is actively introduced into the college classrooms. Doing so not only helps define the educational role of a regional college in training talents to promote local cultural heritage, but also contributes to classroom teaching studies. Such teaching practices require proper adjustment in course objectives, teaching plans and thesis design, which in turn can step up related research work such as grant application, paper publication as well as textbook compiling and so forth.

Keywords—intangible cultural heritage; college; practical teaching

I. INTRODUCTION

To meet the need of undertaking, preserving and innovating exquisite traditional culture, the need to reform classroom teaching in higher education, and the need to enhance specialized research, the School of Arts and Culture Communication (SACC) of Guangxi University of Science and Technology (GUST) has actively introduced the intangible cultural heritage into classrooms by taking advantages of its academic strengths in these subjects, its localization in Liuzhou that bears geographical uniqueness, and the rich traditional resources across the entire Guangxi multiethnic region.

II. INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE INTO THE CLASSROOM AND ITS UNDERTAKING BY LOCAL COLLEGES

"Talent cultivation, scientific research, social services, and cultural inheritance and innovation, are four missions for today's universities." [1] Toward these four goals, since its founding in June 2004, SACC has taken intangible cultural heritage research as a general theme for more than ten years through combining its strengths in the academic majors with the geographical features of Liuzhou area. The school has simultaneously been actively optimizing its teaching and research, making breakthroughs in teaching reform and scientific research, and relentlessly introducing intangible cultural heritage into the classroom.

A. *Intangible Cultural Heritage into the Classroom and Major Study at Local Colleges*

Introducing intangible cultural heritage into the classroom is actually a broad topic, covering issues ranging from classroom teaching reform and practice to correlated scientific research and communication. SACC has been very actively introducing intangible cultural studies due to the fact that all majors offered by the school are naturally linked to intangible culture contents. Currently, the school offers bachelor degrees in six full-time majors including apparel design, environmental design, visual communication design, music and Chinese language international education. Classroom learning is the main channel for guiding students to master basic knowledge and skills; however, making classroom learning widely welcomed is a common challenge currently facing universities. In addition to utilizing new technologies and multimedia devices, the exploration of subjects for classroom teaching that incorporate academic features of every major is paramount. This approach can help stimulate students' interest, motivating them to become more active in learning. For example, absorbing ethnic elements from Zhuang, Yao, Miao and Dong ethnicities into apparel design generates refreshing effects; environmental design and visual communication design can learn from the Dong ethnic architectural features to open new horizons; music can make use of ethnic folklores of Zhuang and others. In this way, Professor Yunlan Huang wrote the song "Zhuang Huan Loud up to the Sky", which won the Excellent Creation prize and the first prize in choral class at the third National Students Art Festival in 2012. International Chinese language teaching has reached out to ASEAN countries and established overseas training bases. The courses integrating intangible cultural learning are very popular to Southeast Asian countries. It should be noted that the introduction of intangible cultural heritage into the classroom based on academic characteristics of different majors should be natural and vivid, rather than blunt indoctrination; it should strive to stimulate students' interest in learning; it should focus on the breadth and depth of teaching, rather than being narrow, random, or unsystematic.

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B. Geographical Advantage and Talents Cultivation for Culture Inheritance and Innovation

Geographical advantage can be used as a tremendous wealth for a regional university like GUST. It is located in Liuzhou, a city that is old and young—old in terms of its more than 2,000-year history that is very rich in cultural heritage. Meanwhile, it is young in terms of its continuously ongoing industrialization with rapid progress. The strong cultural and economic basis, the central location in Guangxi region, and the convenient transportation system, all make it an extremely suitable place for instructor-led folk culture collection in accordance with SAAC's program requirements. In each semester, students of every major conduct field studies on intangible culture and submit research reports based on their first-hand information. There are as many as 12 ethnicities that have been living in Guangxi for thousands of years. Throughout all the years, these diligent and intelligent natives, including Zhuang, Yao, Miao, Dong and others, have formed a large variety of intangible culture, and such cultural heritage is a precious treasure that must be inherited and relayed through generations. One important approach to this mission is cultivating talents for innovation. As such, what would be more legitimate than a school for such a job? Given the special setup of its majors as mentioned above, SAAC is particularly suitable for introducing intangible culture. Following a deep comprehension of the essence of traditional culture, it will only be a matter of time to cultivate innovative talents for cultural heritage. Indeed, since its foundation the school has been making full advantage of its geographical uniqueness by integrating this intangible cultural heritage into major studies and the classroom. The school's accomplishments have been well recognized, so that in 2012, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Institute for Ethnic and Folk Culture in Central Guangxi was founded in SAAC and has since been under the leadership by Prof. Qing Cai; in 2014; the school has been designated by Liuzhou government as "Liuzhou City Intangible Cultural Research Base."

C. Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation and Serving the Society by Colleges

Preserving intangible cultural heritage is a systematic project that needs to be combined with social development and innovation. It is also a sacred mission through each era of human history. Given the academic strengths of its faculty, the educational advantages in major settings, and the multitude in its hardware, regional colleges must undertake the mission to not only contribute to preserving intangible cultural heritage but also come up with innovations. Being fully aware of the precious value of intangible culture, for more than ten years SAAC has mobilized its faculty and students to explore the treasure. Furthermore, through this mobilization a large number of talents have been built up for teaching, research and social services, and lots of research have accomplished results of significant and positive social impacts. Along with the graduation of each class and the graduates from the school becoming qualified culture carriers with thorough understanding of the cultural essence, the school achieves its goal of preserving and innovating the intangible cultural heritage. "The inheritance of cultural heritage is similar to knowledge inheritance; it is the responsibility of each

generation. Inheritance of cultural heritage is more than a contribution to the country; it benefits every person's life. Therefore, this kind of education should be first implemented in schools as an integral part of school education; then it should, through public media, become a part of general civil education. "[2] Introducing intangible culture into classroom teaching in connection with specific major requirements in local colleges greatly helps advance intangible cultural heritage preservation and innovation across the nation, thus serving the whole society.

III. INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE INTO THE CLASSROOM AND INNOVATION IN TEACHING PRACTICE

Once bringing intangible cultural heritage into the classroom has become a main direction for SAAC, it must ensure every step is executed with high quality, including curriculum, syllabus, thesis and etc.

A. Practical Teaching and Curriculum

It is very important to do the preparatory work well in order to introduce intangible cultural heritage into the classroom teaching smoothly. First, the content properness for college level courses is decided. Next, curriculum is designed systematically for the four-year undergraduate program. Integration of intangible culture must meet all the requirements: reasonable course design, scientific credit-hour allotment, and value in promoting teaching reform. "Guangxi Intangible Culture ", as an example, has been included in the curriculum as a public elective course. Taking such an elective course is a students' own option and helps develop their independent learning spirit ignited by their strong interest. The curriculum consists mainly of representative Guangxi clothing, food, architecture, folklore, literature, etc. It presents a multi-ethnic blend of fine traditional culture in Guangxi that enables students to fully appreciate the essence of ethnic culture. "Incorporate the essence of ethnic culture into curriculum to interest young students to study intentionally during which students truly feel the identities of the traditional culture. This process works as the best way to revive and nurture the supporting system for traditional culture by providing live media for preserving and disseminating ethnic traditional culture...in the form of courses, while endowing new meaning to traditional culture, it also builds up the best carrier for ethnic cultural heritage—the people. "[3] For the purpose of developing independent and creative talents for cultural heritage, curriculum design for the majors must ensure the academic depth of both fundamental courses and advanced required courses; meanwhile, it should actively incorporate intangible culture contents to expand the scope of study.

B. Syllabus and Practice

A syllabus specifies a course's purpose, focus and difficult questions in teaching, as well as chapter units and schedules for classroom teaching, so that the teaching can progress accordingly. Also it guides the rating of students' performances based on both usual study and final exams. Introducing intangible culture into the classroom serves to broaden students' vision and assist students to understand the essential role of traditional culture in China's five-thousand-year history. In order to fully mobilize the students'

enthusiasm for learning, the school must foster an atmosphere for them to take initiatives and go deep into learning. To achieve the desired effect of learning, practical teaching should factor more in syllabus. Distinctive intangible culture, such as traditional diet Liuzhou escargot vermicelli, ethnic costume Zhuang brocade, Dong Sanjiang bridge and Miao singing at a slope gathering, are better learnt through practice rather than sitting in the classroom, so that the dynamic elements can be really appreciated. It proves more fruitful to get out of the classroom and learn intangible culture onsite in those villages. For instance, students majoring in visual communication investigate Dong wooden constructions in Sanjiang, from which they get valuable inspiration in their own design. Other majors undertake similar practices and researches in line with each major's specific requirements. As a result, students have learnt to bring new life to traditional culture by weaving it together with their major study and by making innovations. It is very encouraging that many of the SAAC students' works have won numerous awards in nationwide competitions. Therefore, taking into account the importance of students' involvement, increasing the proportion of practice in regards to syllabus contributes enormously to encouraging students' active participation in practical teaching and learning.

C. Practical Application to Graduation Project (Thesis)

To create multileveled equations, it may be necessary to treat the equation as a graphic and insert it into the text after one's paper has been styled. Four-year undergraduate study, taking place in and out of the classroom, is a process of turning knowledge into a student's own capabilities, which climaxes at the stage of finishing a graduation project. Most majors offered by SAAC are associated with intangible culture. For example, each year graduates in apparel design extract ethnic elements and apply them to their own designs. Though the characteristic, traditional multiethnic clothing in Guangxi provides an exceptional treasure, it cannot be simply copied. Students must absorb its strengths while creating bold new designs reflecting present-day aesthetic standards. To this end, the practice of introducing intangible culture into the classroom has benefited students tremendously, as evidenced by the favorable recognition of their works at the Liuzhou College graduates' artwork exhibition in 2015. Also, every year students in the music major enjoy the spotlight in Liuzhou International Carnival because their singing and dancing performances embrace traditional ethnic features and show creativity bearing modern flavor at the same time. In Guangxi, the Zhuang, Miao, Yao and Dong ethnicities all love singing and dancing. Reaping from the traditional, multiethnic singing and dancing culture enriches students' ideas in thesis design. Combining what they have learnt from four years of major study, students are capable of turning their knowledge flexibly into thesis products, showing strong courage for adventurous innovation, and achieving the highest accolades at graduation.

IV. EXPANDING PRACTICAL TEACHING AND OPTIMIZING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE RESEARCH

For over ten years SAAC has organized its faculty and students to vigorously bring intangible cultural heritage into the

classroom. A great deal of effort has been put into the research of classroom teaching models and improving classroom learning efficiency. On September 18, 2015, the school invited Zuguang Wu, the inheritor of the national intangible cultural heritage project Dong grand singing, to give a lecture. Moreover, students had the opportunity to sing representative Dong songs on the stage with Mr. Wu, resulting in extraordinary effects. Such practical teaching naturally extends to passionate ex-curricular studies by faculty and students, which is reflected in their submitting of grant proposals, authoring research papers, publishing of textbooks and monographs, etc.

A. Expanding Research to Grant Application

Research in universities should involve both faculty and students with the faculty shouldering the responsibility of guiding and engaging students in scientific research. Competing with a large number of college faculty and students, how can SAAC stand out and establish its due status? The school uses the rich intangible culture in Guangxi as an entry point, adventurously exploring perspectives in academics, classroom teaching, faculty and student strengths, etc. This has proven to be successful with various research projects approved and funded over the years.

Research is an important part highlighted in universities' scientific activities. SAAC has committed to actively supporting a faculty's grant application, advocating especially projects linking the faculty's expertise with intangible cultural subjects. The research projects are sponsored mainly at three different levels. The first level is the platform supported annually by the province Department of Education for studies on teaching reform. The school is dedicated to classroom teaching reform from the professional perspective, for which introducing intangible culture into the classroom fits very well. Every year the school gets more than three research grants. The second level is the more competitive, biennial funding by the province government for philosophy and social sciences study. During the past five years, SAAC has won eight project awards at this level, among which, "Studies on Guangxi Zhuang Huan cultural heritage and development" (No. 11BMZ026), is completed by the authors, and explores viable approaches for inheriting and developing Zhuang Huan in the new era. The third funding support is at national level. In 2015, the school has made breakthrough at this level by winning award on "Studies on Guangxi Rongshui Miao brocade protective production". Currently the school is actively orchestrating experts, professors and all research forces, and striving to get sponsored by the national philosophy and social sciences program. In addition, with guidance by faculty in different specialties, students submit applications every year competing for grants from the innovation and entrepreneurship program as well as intangible cultural heritage research.

B. Classroom Practice to Research Publications

From classroom teaching practice to writing research papers, these are the inherent duties for all college faculties. In consideration of its faculty's expertise, SAAC has concentrated its research effort on intangible culture with appropriate adjustment on an individual base. In November, 2015, "Intangible cultural heritage: studies on Guangxi ethnic culture

and arts", a collection of research articles of more than 30 faculty members, was published by the Guangxi People's Publishing House. It consists of studies in four fields—apparel, music and dance, art design, and folk culture, all of which align with the school's majors very well. Specifically, apparel design research analyzes the ethnic characteristics of the traditional female costumes of Yao in Jinxiu-Ao, the apparel style of Miao and Dong and brocade ornamentation of Zhuang in Rongshui and Sanjiang area; music and dance study includes not only the analyses of specific events like Zhuang Huan and antiphonal singing on dikes, but also the probing of the unique cultural attributes of traditional long drum dancing of Yao and Shi-Gong dancing of Zhuang; art design study extends from classroom teaching practices to the investigation of the spatial construction of the Dong traditional village structures; folk culture research includes field surveys on the Zhuang Huan singers' current being, as well as discussions on the roles and tasks for local governments in the protection of intangible cultural heritage. This publication has about 290,000 words in total, representing a cohort of the research contributions to intangible cultural heritage by the school's faculty.

Besides, individual teachers publish papers every year, a majority of whom come up with innovative ideas by plugging the teachers' expertise into intangible culture, from which high-quality papers increasingly come out year after year. There have been more than 50 articles published in core Chinese journals over the past five years. It is also gratifying that the students' participation in the innovation and entrepreneurship program has tremendously encouraged student authorship. More than 10 student papers have been published, which will impact the students positively throughout their pursuit of more advanced education in the future.

C. Classroom Teaching and Textbooks and Monographs

Textbooks are the condensed results of college teachers' classroom teaching practice. In addition to ordering commonly used textbooks that are readily available, SAAC has put its faculty's expertise to compiling its own textbooks. Based on many years of teaching experience, the teachers are very familiar with what is important and/or difficult as well as what the students need. Therefore, the textbooks created by the teachers themselves are actually more suitable for the students' needs. Furthermore, because of the pioneer nature of this active teaching practice, introducing intangible cultural heritage into the classroom is so groundbreaking that there is a lack of proper textbooks available in the present market. Taking into account the educational goals, the school has organized its faculty and scholars to compile textbooks in their respective fields, which are revised and updated in a timely fashion through intensive debating and discussions and in response to users' feedbacks. Monographs are milestone achievements in the scholars' academic career, born out of many years of research effort. Usually they are related to classroom teaching to certain degree, sometimes sparked by the teacher-student interactions in classroom and sometimes from the innovative overthrow of old viewpoints. These outcomes mostly come from the teachers' personal teaching experiences that crystallize into specialized texts full of professionalism, which become shared resources for the teachers and students. During the past five years, SAAC has published 18 textbooks and

monographs. It is fair to say that introducing intangible culture into the classroom has greatly pushed forward the teaching reform, while simultaneously elevating the school's research to a new level.

Some experts have said, "We also advocate all higher education colleges in the country actively and urgently recognize the cultural heritage resources with the mindset on integrating the ethnic cultures. Especially the colleges located in regions with rich cultural heritage must play an active bridging role in the protection of local cultural heritage and development of cultural productive forces. "[4] Based exactly on such idea, SAAC conducts intangible cultural heritage research as it also unifies all four goals of the school, i.e. talent training, scientific research, social services, and cultural heritage preservation and innovation. Certainly, the practice of actively introducing intangible cultural heritage into the classroom has boosted greatly the in-depth study of practical teaching in local colleges.

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