

Chapter 2

Incorporating Ethnic and Folk Culture into Artistic Education a Case Study of the Embroidery of the Miao Ethnic Community

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As a key component of Chinese cultural tradition, Ethnic and folk culture proves the hotbed that nourishes the national spirit. The embroidery of the Miao ethnic community (“Miao embroidery” for short) exemplifies the best of Chinese ethnic and folk culture. Integrating at once the historical, aesthetic, and moral values, the Miao embroidery provides a high-quality resource for artistic education in primary and middle schools. But under the assault of modernization, the exploration and development of cultural heritage has been faced with a series of challenges.

This study is based on an onsite research of the practical conditions and education potential of the Miao embroidery. Using both the research data and the SWOT method, we analyze the advantages (S), disadvantages (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T) involved in incorporating the Miao embroidery into the artistic education in primary and middle schools. Based on a synthetic discussion and analysis of the research results, we propose policy recommendations on the macro decision-making, the vertical and horizontal trends of development, and the micro-coordination concerning the Miao embroidery education.

1 Research Problems

The 2013 “Resolutions on Some Key Issues Concerning How to Comprehensively Deepen the Reform Initiative” passed by the third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee clearly points out the necessity to “perfect the inculcation of the

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excellent traditions of the Chinese culture...improve artistic education, and help cultivate students' aesthetic judgment and accomplishments in the humanities" [63]. Likewise, in the "Several Opinions on How to Promote Artistic Education" published by the Ministry of Education, it is stated that "given the unique and important role art plays in educating students and shaping their moral values, schools at various levels are encouraged to offer art courses that could capitalize on the unique resources from the local ethnic and regional cultures" [64]. Meanwhile, the "Several Opinions" also requires adding artistic evaluation in primary, middle, and secondary vocational schools from 2015. The appraisal will be recorded in students' personal file, serving as a reference for the overall assessment in their admission to high schools and universities. The importance of artistic education has become more marked with the promulgation of a series of related policies.

The Miao embroidery, as an exemplary model of ethnic and folk culture, would play an indispensable role in shaping students' moral sentiments and improving their artistic taste and creativity. The learning of the Miao embroidery would also serve as an important avenue for the keeping of ethnic identity and development of the ethnic culture. The powerful wave of modernization has changed the clothes style of the Miao community, which, in turn, led to the gradual disappearing of its embroidery art. The Miao embroidery tends to be disinherited also because of the constraints of art inheritance itself, the manufacturing style, as well as the lack of a sense of protection. The promotion of education based on outstanding ethnic and folk cultural traditions in primary and middle schools will not only meet the psychological and emotional demands of recognition by the ethnic communities, but also accords with the core missions of protecting ethnic culture and developing ethnic economy.

According to Zhu Guangqian, a scholar noted for his achievements in aesthetic studies, beauty is the most valuable aspect of things and aesthetic experience is an invaluable part of life [65]. Aesthetic education is an important avenue to cultivate in students the ability to appreciate and create beauty, and art is a core component of aesthetic education, since it proves pivotal to shaping students' aesthetic taste and enabling their healthy growth and all-around development. But the incorporation of ethnic and folk culture as represented by the Miao embroidery in education has met with great difficulties, which not only hinders the offering of such courses but also affects the inheritance and development of ethnic culture and the promotion of cultural enterprises and ethnic economy. This renders it especially relevant to study the internal and external conditions involved in the incorporation of the Miao embroidery into school education and establish a mechanism that could address the problems encountered in the process of incorporation. The case study of the Miao embroidery would also provide useful lessons for integrating other ethnic and folk cultures into education and for breaking the bottleneck faced by the development of ethnic and folk cultures and related enterprises.

2 Research Design

2.1 *Definition of Core Concepts*

(1) **Ethnic and folk culture**

As the key expression of the unique character and spirit of a particular ethnic community, ethnic and folk culture is also the important carrier of ethnic sentiments and ideals. Ethnic and folk culture thus refers to the various cultural expressions and space closely related to the living conditions of the ethnic communities and continually passed from one generation after another. Such cultural heritage includes the oral traditions, traditional performance art, activities related to certain customs and practices, rituals and ceremonies, festivals, folk knowledge of Nature and the universe, traditional handmade craft, as well as the cultural space related to all the above items [66]. Five elements of ethnic and folk culture could be incorporated into education: skills and crafts, knowledge, entertainment, as well as folk customs and practices. The Miao embroidery also belongs to folk skill or craft, and what our study deals with is the folk art that could be effectively utilized in school artistic education, excluding those that cannot be utilized this way.

(2) **Artistic Education**

Put it narrowly, “artistic education” refers to the theoretical and empirical education that aims to cultivate artists or special artistic talents. But broadly speaking, artistic education should be the core of aesthetic education, since its primary goal is to develop students’ overall potential rather than merely training art specialists. So a broader definition of artistic education should focus on inculcating basic artistic knowledge and principles, improving aesthetic taste and appreciation, and cultivating a healthy aesthetic psychology through the reading and criticism of good artistic works.

So our definition of artistic education includes three key elements: general artistic education in regular primary and middle schools, artistic education in secondary vocational schools, and specialist artistic education. Our emphasis is on the problems and policy solutions concerning the designing and offering of artistic courses by tapping on students’ desire for, and interest in, artistic knowledge, as well as the artistic education aimed at cultivating professional skills in vocational schools.

(3) **“School-based curriculum development” (SBCD)**

SBCD, also called “site-based curriculum development,” refers to all manners of activities aimed at curricular development undertaken by schools, whether voluntarily, autonomously, or jointly with communities or individuals beyond the campus. These various modes of curricular activities are usually guided by the syllabus prospectus provided by the local government and based on considerations of the nature, characteristic, and conditions of the schools involved. The purpose is to meet the study demands of students. The SBCD features a continuous and dynamic curricular development process.

Literally speaking, the SBCD refers to two particular modes of activities —“school-based curriculum development” and “curriculum development based in schools.” The term “school-based curriculum development” emphasizes “school-based curriculum,” a category that differs from national and local curriculum, with a focus on curricular development within the campus and whose realization depends on teachers. The term “curriculum development based in schools” puts the emphasis on “curriculum development,” which means attempts to “localize” national and local curriculum through some integrative or reinvesting measures.

Our research focuses on the SBCD that seeks to develop school-based curriculum by integrating resources both within and outside the campus. This research studies the range, scope, manners, and goal of curricular development, the selection and organization of exemplary study methods, the planning and implementation of the syllabi, as well as assessment of related content and performances.

2.2 Research Questions and Values

We suggest following the direction outlined by both the Party and the Ministry of Education, seizing upon the opportunities offered by the new historical period to incorporate the Miao embroidery into school artistic education. This incorporation project could at once develop the intrinsic aesthetic value of the ethnic culture, meet the development demands of the ethnic community, promote the building of schools with ethnic characteristics, and provide opportunities for the young generation to inherit and innovate traditional ethnic culture and bring out its robust vitality. The unique education practices offered by the Miao embroidery will effectively complement the SBCD theory. Guided by the above principles, our research will zoom in on the following five problems.

The first concerns the knowledge of, emotional preference for, and will to support the Miao history and culture, especially its embroidery, manifested by both teachers and students in the Miao community.

The second deals with the comments of teachers and students in the Miao district on the educational value of the Miao embroidery.

The third addresses problems regarding the Miao embroidery courses offered by local schools, as well as the expectations and suggestions on such courses offered by teachers and students.

The fourth concerns the external policies and market conditions regarding the Miao embroidery education, as well as the relation of this education with governments, schools, and industries.

Fifth, we will analyze the various feasible ways and policies that could promote the incorporation of the Miao embroidery into school education.

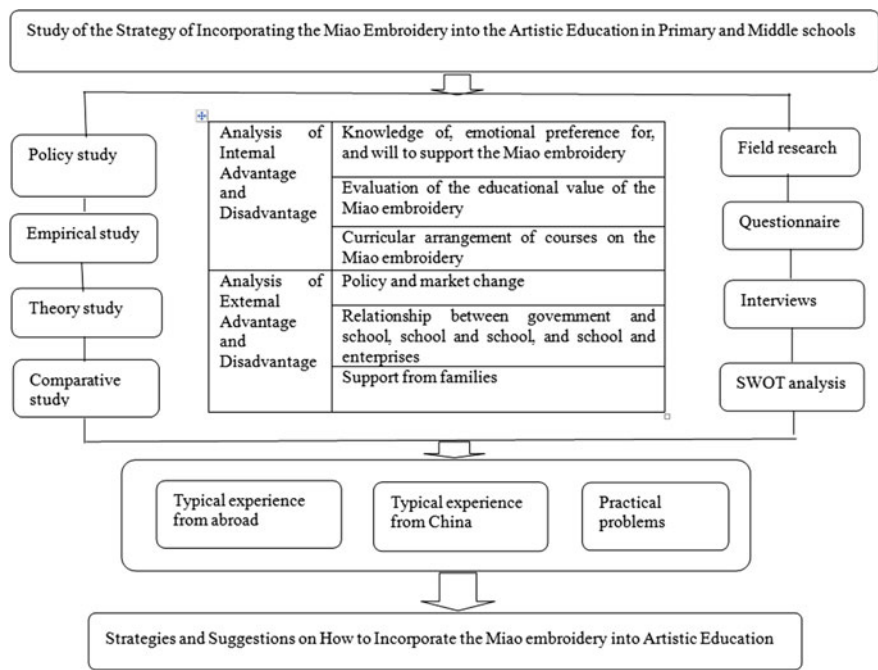


Fig. 1 Line of reasoning and research method

2.3 Line of Reasoning and Research Method

Based on the nature of the research questions, we adopt such research methods as questionnaires, interviews, and the SWOT. By distributing questionnaires to teachers and students, referring to interviews as well-related policies and documents concerning the Miao embroidery, and using the SWOT method, we come up with some feasible policy recommendations. The following figure vividly illustrates our line reasoning (Fig. 1):

(1) The design and distribution of prediction questionnaires

In reference to related documents, we designed two kinds of questionnaires —“Questionnaire on Incorporating the Miao Embroidery into Artistic Education for Students” and “Questionnaire on Incorporating the Miao Embroidery into Artistic Education for Teachers.” Each questionnaire consists of two parts—personal information and formal questions. Personal information refers to information on the school, class, gender, and ethnicity of the teachers and students involved. Formal questions are comprised of five key categories—basic knowledge, emotional preference, will to support, educational value, and implementation methods. These five categories are further divided into 13 subdivisions. This gives rise to the basic structure of the questionnaire, with 35 questions for teachers and 25 questions for students. Both are asked to choose in a five-scale chart ranging from “completely

matching” to “absolutely not matching.” We distributed 26 questionnaires both online and through some local distribution sites. We received 23 responses. The response rate is comparatively high.

(2) Analysis and adjustment of the predication questionnaires

Based on the reliability and validity of the responses, we made some adjustment to related categories, questions, and the phrasing of questions in the prediction questionnaires and came up with a formal nonstructural questionnaire. The formal questionnaire for teachers consists of 20 questions and that for students of 19 questions, and both achieved a higher level of reliability and validity. The Cronbach’s Alpha of the reliability and validity of the questionnaire for teachers reached 0.892; and those for students reached 0.76.

(3) Distribution of and response to the formal questionnaires

Our targeted objects of investigation are teachers and students in the primary and middle schools in the A Miao autonomous county in G province. The questionnaires distributed are 361 in total. There are 69 questionnaires for teachers and 64 responses, with a return rate of 92.6%. There are 292 questionnaires for students and 291 responses, with a return rate of 99.6%. There are 23 valid questionnaires for primary school teachers, and 31 for middle-school teachers. There are 107 valid questionnaires for primary school students, and 184 for middle-school students. The equal distribution of the samples provides solid empirical evidence for data analysis.

(4) Data analysis and processing

We established a data system by encoding and digitizing the returned questionnaires. By using spss20.0, we constructed a chart through analyzing the mean and variance of this data.

(5) The design of the interview synopsis and collection of the interviews

We designed the interview synopsis centered on certain questions concerning the incorporation of the Miao embroidery into artistic education. The interviewees include teachers, students, parents, school administrators, artisans of the Miao embroidery, as well as heads of related industries. The recorded interview lasts 9 h and 9 min. These recorded documents obtained through in-depth interviews provide an additional avenue to learn about the role of the Miao embroidery in artistic education.

2.4 The SWOT Method

SWOT is the acronym of Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat. Strength and weakness refer chiefly to the advantages and disadvantages of the internal conditions, and threat and strength mean the gains and losses entailed in the external environment. The SWOT method allows one to design strategic plans and related solutions based on a complete, systematic, and accurate grasp both of the

internal and external conditions. With the help of the SWOT method, we have acquired a deeper understanding of the internal and external conditions of the Miao embroidery education. This analysis will also provide effective guidance for the designing Miao embroidery courses.

(1) Literature review

We analyze the feasibility of incorporating the Miao embroidery into artistic education through an integrative study of the related documents on the historical development, coloring, patterning, characteristic features, as well as the cultural and educational values of this folk and ethnic art. We seek to justify the incorporation of the Miao embroidery into education by drawing on theories and experiences from both within China and abroad. Specifically, we hope to find a feasible model through a careful study of the undergraduate courses offered in Chinese and foreign art schools and a systematic investigation of the local policies regarding artistic education.

3 Research Process and Analysis

Using the SWOT method, we analyzed both the internal and external conditions of the Miao embroidery education. Based on the quantitative data, we proposed strategies and suggestions on how to resolve the various problems faced in the realization of this project in an accurate, complete, and systematic manner so as to break the bottleneck in applying the Miao embroidery to artistic education.

3.1 *Strength Analysis*

(1) The Miao embroidery as a unique resource

The Miao embroidery is closely tied to the history and life of the Miao ethnic community. The traditional embroidery motifs include dragons, phoenixes, butterflies, flower and grass, as well as drums and dances unique to the Miao community. Such motifs reflect at once the witchcraft culture of the region of Chu, the Miao people's admiration for Nature and the ancestors, as well as their wishes for good life. The Miao embroidery is noted for its bold colors, beautiful designs, and multifarious patterns. As a key medium of history and culture, it is infused with profound feelings toward the Miao ethnic culture. People wearing clothes made out of the Miao embroidery are actually wearing "embroidered history," as the art is a vivid expression of the life and history of the Miao community. The design of the Miao embroidery follows two primitive models—the "perceptive design" and "allegorical design." These models could at once meet the psychological and aesthetic needs of the viewers and express the embroiders' own aesthetic taste.

Table 1 The SWOT analysis matrix of the internal conditions

Strength (S)	Weakness (W)
S1. The unique Miao embroidery resources	W1. Lack of courses on the Miao embroidery; deviation from the goal of artistic education
S2. Stronger recognition of the Miao culture by local teachers and students and eagerness to learn about this culture	W2. The closedness, monotony, and lack of artistry and creativity in courses on the Miao embroidery
S3. Cultivation of aesthetic appreciation and overall ability	W3. Weaknesses and problems in the staffing of teachers in courses on the Miao embroidery
S4. Precedents of incorporating the Miao embroidery into artistic education	W4. The preliminary state of Miao embroidery courses
	W5. The lack of a uniform and effective assessment and supervisory system for both the internal and external conditions of the Miao embroidery courses
	W6. The lack of uniform and normative textbooks for courses on the Miao embroidery
	W7. The conflict faced by graduating students who are burdened with extra study tasks
	W8. Teachers' various concerns over the offering of courses on the Miao embroidery
	W9. The disparity shown by students of different ethnic groups and gender on the knowledge of, emotional preference for, will to support the Miao embroidery

Such designs are also indicative of the life, Nature, history, culture, and customs of the Miao ethnic group. So the Miao embroidery is a unique artistic creation with an emphasis on original inspiration and educational function (Table 1).

Meanwhile, the embroidery itself values the infusion of feelings and artistic creativity. With a focus on the aesthetic demands of nonrational signs, it achieves the distinctive aesthetic style “merging the self with things.” Also, the Miao embroidery evolves with time. Partly absorbing the best of the Confucian culture, it integrates both recent history and the aesthetic elements of modern art through vivid and lifelike images. This modern nature of the Miao embroidery enhances its appeal as a source of education. To sum up, the great advantage entailed in the historicity, ethnicity, distinctiveness, and modernity makes the Miao embroidery a great resource for artistic education.

(2) Study demand to learn about the Miao embroidery

Study demand refers to the gap between the present and the expected study, which should be an inner motivation for curricular design. According to our questionnaires conducted among 292 students and 66 teachers in primary and middle schools, recognition of the educational value of the Miao embroidery in the Miao district is

Table 2 Causes of student’s lack of knowledge about the Miao embroidery

Items	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	S.D.
Students	285	3.83	1.431
School education	280	3.64	1.402
Family	284	3.51	1.589
Government	284	3.49	1.298

Table 3 The mean of teachers’ response to the question “what kind of qualities in students the Miao embroidery could help improve”

Items	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	S.D.
Comprehensive quality	59	3.90	1.045
Aesthetic ability	58	4.02	1.100
Moral cultivation	59	3.80	1.171

not high, but both teachers and students manifested a higher sense of cultural belonging and spiritual support (see Fig. 2). In regards to the question concerning the “lack of knowledge about the Miao embroidery,” students who attribute the cause both to themselves and the schools got the highest score (see Table 2). Regarding the question “what kind of ability the Miao embroidery could help improve,” 47.1% students respond that it could enhance their manual skills, 35.1 and 33% students think that it could help improve their imaginative and aesthetic ability (see Fig. 3). As to the question “what kind of qualities the Miao embroidery could help improve in students,” most teachers got a higher score, and the aesthetic and comprehensive qualities rank at the top (see Table 3). In regards to the advantage and disadvantage of learning the Miao embroidery, most teachers and students think the advantage exceeds the disadvantage. Students got a higher score regarding the question “whether the Miao embroidery helps one learn ethnic culture and language” and “whether it helps enrich the extracurricular life” (see Fig. 4). Teachers score high regarding “the importance of the Miao embroidery to inherit the artistic skills” and “to increase recognition of the ethnic culture” (see Fig. 5). Thus both teachers and students show support for offering courses on the Miao embroidery.

As is shown in the above analysis, there is conflict between student’s recognition of the value of the Miao embroidery and their wish to learn about it. But this conflict will provide some latent opportunities to develop effective courses on the Miao embroidery. To sum up, the expectations and high recognition of the Miao embroidery manifested by both teachers and students provide solid internal evidence for the incorporation project.

(3) Empirical basis for school-based artistic curriculum

The empirical basis refers to not only the experiences of other ethnic communities in their attempts to incorporate their culture into education but also to the efforts made by the education departments in the Miao areas to offer courses and train

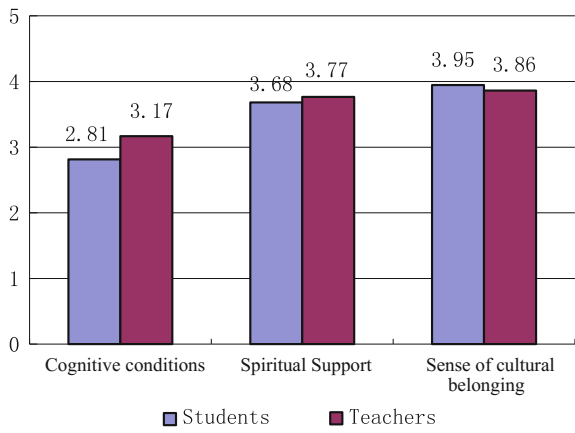


Fig. 2 The mean of recognition of the Miao embroidery by local teachers and students

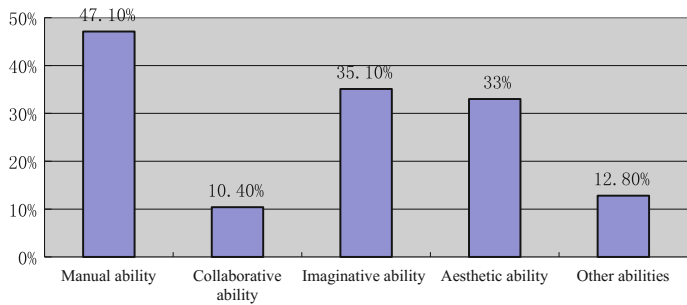


Fig. 3 Students’ response to the question “what kind of abilities the Miao embroidery could help improve”

teachers on the Miao embroidery. It also means local the industries’ marketization of embroidered products.

The ethnic middle school in the DZ county offers the “Miao ethnic wax printing (batik),” a national intangible cultural heritage, as a school-based selected course [67]. By offering such a course to girls from the ethnic communities, the school intends to propagate the ancient printing and dyeing craft. The LP county invested ¥600,000 to design textbooks on local ethnic culture for primary, middle, and high schools, providing teachers trainings on ethnic cultures, and establishing an assessment system that regards the teaching of ethnic culture as a key component in primary and middle schools [68].

Today, with the marketization of the Miao embroidery, the ST county Bureau of Education and the departments in charge of ethnic communities also started to take action. They actively seek collaborations with industries and higher education and establish the Miao embroidery program in vocational schools. They also train

teachers by sending them to local industries, colleges and universities, as well as higher education in Beijing.

Meanwhile, we find that in the G province, the “A Miao Ethnic Cultural Tourist Products Development Company” has made outstanding achievements in the development, marketization, and training of experts in the Miao embroidery. By enlisting specialists and folk artists on the Miao culture and through long-term collaboration with local higher education, the A Company has been devoted to designing and exploring handmade products related to the Miao culture. This Company has accumulated valuable experience in tapping on the opportunities offered by vocational schools and by actively cooperating with local primary, and middle schools. For instance, to propagate the Miao embroidery, the company regularly dispatches expert artists to primary, middle, and secondary vocational schools to incite students’ interest and cultivate their professionalism. The Company also collaborates with the local Bureau of Education in the training of teachers and designing of a uniform school-based textbook on the Miao embroidery. Further, the company takes initiatives to establish private schools aimed at training vocational skills and cultivating specialists for the Miao embroidery industry.

3.2 Weakness Analysis

(1) Lack of curricular resources for the Miao embroidery

First, curricular resource refers to the various components and conditions, including teachers, involved in the realization of the curricular goals. Courses on the Miao embroidery are still at the preliminary stage, and the lack of curricular resources is mainly shown in the crude state of the school-based textbooks, the inability to identify the subjects of the curriculum, poor participation from teachers, as well as the adoption of some one-sided, unscientific, and inartistic textbooks. There are also constraints on the exploration and integration of curricular resources outside the school, which renders it hard to well coordinate the internal and external resources.

In regards to the staffing of teachers, there is a grave dearth of specialists on the Miao embroidery, and most of the teachers are transferred from the teaching of other subjects. Quite a few turn to teach the Miao embroidery because of their interest in other artistic or physical subjects. These teachers usually start to give lectures on the Miao embroidery after a brief training offered by the school. Despite such training, however, the few who can teach such courses still cannot meet the demands of the expanding market. In the mean analysis of teachers’ response to the question “why the Miao embroidery course is not universally offered,” most teachers ascribe the cause to the lack of curricular resources, and some think the absence of specialists as an important factor (see Table 4). The poverty of both

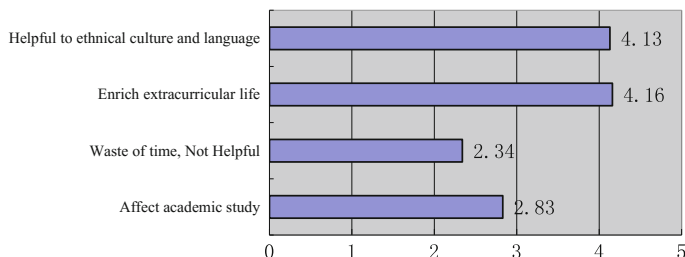


Fig. 4 The mean of students' attitude toward the Miao embroidery courses

internal and external curricular resources proves pivotal to hindering a smooth and effective offering of courses on the Miao embroidery.

Second, curriculum is a unitary top-down system with prescribed goals, supported by curricular content and with a strong operational capacity. Comprised horizontally of different goals and curricula, curricular design is a school-based system with interconnected and mutually reinforcing goals [69]. That the Miao embroidery course tends to be incomplete is mainly due to the lack of definite goals governing the designing of the courses and lopsided understanding of such goals. It is these problems that have given rise to the discrepancy between the purpose of introducing such courses and students' practical aesthetic demands. Meanwhile, the curricula of the Miao embroidery at all levels are usually one-sided, because they pay attention only to how to simplify the needling without inculcating related aesthetic theory. This has led to the nonartistic and empirical tendency to prize skills over art in the teaching process.

Also, there lacks a stable and consistent mechanism that could regulate the internal curricular management and assessment. The Miao embroidery course is usually offered once a week, but in a broken manner. The grade of such courses is separated from that of other subjects and excluded from students' overall performance assessment. The absence of an assessment standard to evaluate external instructions also contributes to turning the Miao embroidery course into a mere decoration or appendage. To sum up, the lack of order and organization is a real portrait of the Miao embroidery class, an image that also partly bespeaks the various dilemmas faced by offering such a course.

(2) Management discrepancy reflected in curricular conflict and teaching concerns

The effective offering of the Miao embroidery courses is inseparable from the guarantee of curricular time and students' study time. According to our research on students' attitude toward the Miao embroidery courses, though some would like to take such courses, they still have such concerns as "it is time-consuming and of little practical use" and "it affects the academic study" (see Fig. 4). A further study of the curricular conflict faced by different grades shows that, junior and senior high-school students and students in grades five and six score higher in regards to curricular conflict, and students in these grades also display more worries. But the

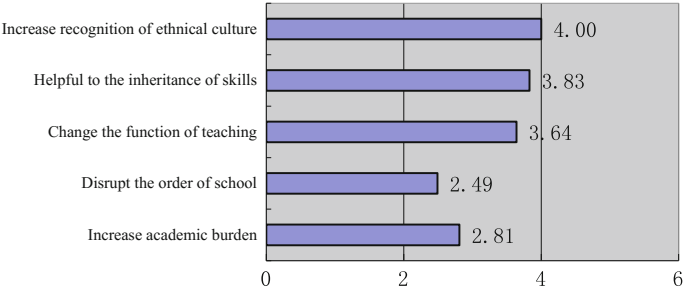


Fig. 5 The mean of teachers’ attitude toward the Miao embroidery courses

Table 4 The mean of teachers’ response to “why the Miao embroidery course is not universally offered”

Items	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	S.D.
Curriculum design	52	3.23	1.182
Curricular management	53	3.26	1.303
Curriculum assessment	53	3.40	1.276
Curricular resources	55	3.76	1.186
Teachers	57	3.88	1.103
Pressure of the entrance exam	54	3.74	1.291
Leaders’ awareness level	52	3.27	1.223

mean of concerns over curricular conflict among different grades does not show marked difference ($P = 0.134 > 0.05$) (see Table 5). Teachers exhibit various degrees of concerns over such problems as “adding to student’s academic burden” and “disrupting the normal teaching order” (see Fig. 5), and the worries over the first problem score higher. In our interview with teachers, we find that, given the pressure caused by high school and college entrance exams, teachers are usually not quite sure of offering courses on the Miao embroidery. Table 4 also shows that the pressure coming from preparing entrance exams is only second to that posed by curricular resources (Table 4).

Table 5 The mean of curricular conflict faced by different grades

Item	Grade	<i>M</i>	S.D.	<i>F</i>	Sig
Effect on academic study	Grade 5	2.53	1.239	1.704	0.134
	Grade 6	2.91	1.217		
	Grade 7	2.50	2.121		
	Grade 8	2.00	1.414		
	Junior high school	2.96	0.961		
	Senior high school	2.55	1.432		

As is shown in the above analysis, the key concerns of teachers and students are academic burdens: they worry that the offering of the Miao embroidery courses would affect students’ academic study and their entrance exams. These concerns are chiefly caused by the mismatch between the Miao embroidery courses, the current curricular management system, and the assessment mechanism. So it is imperative to reform curricular management in ethnic education through offering school-based courses on the Miao embroidery. As teachers and students are the subject of such courses, their concerns partly reflect the dilemma faced by schools offering the Miao embroidery courses. But these concerns would also provide clues to how to launch curricular reform.

(3) Learning desire related to student’s gender and ethnic identity

The Miao embroidery has been long considered an important avenue for women’s education, with men only playing a secondary role. Research also shows that there is cognitive difference in men and women’s perception of the Miao embroidery, and the average cognitive level of women is higher than that of men’s. There is marked difference in the emotional preference and the will to support between girls and boys, and in both respects girls score higher than boys. In regards to the will to support, the score of girls is 10.8% higher than that of boys (see Table 6). Regarding responses to the question on “willingness to learn more,” girls show much more enthusiasm for learning than boys (see Table 7). The average score of girls is 47.7% higher than that of boys, a disparity that signals conspicuous gender difference.

In a multicultural background, different ethnic communities also show different cognition of and identification with the Miao embroidery. The Miao students manifest greater cognition and identification than students from other ethnic communities; the next comes the Dong, Han, and Tujia ethnic groups. There is also difference in emotional preference and the will to support across the communities. Students from the Miao and Dong communities score higher than those from the Han and Tujia (see Table 8). A close study of “the learning desire” shows that there is marked difference in this respect ($P < 0.05$) (see Table 7). The Miao and Dong students demonstrate greater desire to learn than those from the Han and Tujia. Through the LSD multi-ratio analysis, we find that there is striking difference in the

Table 6 Gender-related difference in the cognition, emotion, and will to support the Miao embroidery

Item	Gender	<i>M</i>	S.D.	<i>t</i>	Sig
Cognition	Male	3.2885	0.75359	−3.519	0.001**
	Female	3.5878	0.61988		
Emotional preference	Male	3.4543	0.96692	−3.172	0.002**
	Female	3.7749	0.87316		
Will to support	Male	3.6757	0.89924	−3.932	0.000**
	Female	4.0726	0.74291		

Note *** $P < 0.001$, ** $P < 0.01$, * $P < 0.05$

Table 7 Gender- and ethnicity-related difference in students’ learning desire

Item	Gender/Ethnicity	<i>M</i>	S.D.	<i>F</i>	Sig
Learning desire	Male	2.60	1.336	15.264	0.000**
	Female	3.84	1.260		
	Han	3.06	1.425		
	Miao	3.55	1.396		
	Dong	3.14	1.345		
	Tu Jia	2.29	1.380		

Note ****P* < 0.001, ***P* < 0.01, **P* < 0.05

Table 8 Ethnicity-related difference in the cognition, emotion, and will to support the Miao embroidery

Item	Ethnicity	<i>M</i>	S.D.	<i>F</i>	Sig
Recognition and identification	Han	3.1346	0.72402	15.264	0.000**
	Miao	3.6821	0.58113		
	Dong	3.5020	0.85948		
	Tujia	3.0179	0.62029		
Emotional preference	Han	3.3082	0.94567	8.476	0.000**
	Miao	3.8663	0.83856		
	Dong	3.5238	0.85758		
	Tujia	3.2083	1.22069		
Will to support	Han	3.6332	0.85441	9.224	0.000**
	Miao	4.1040	0.74873		
	Dong	3.8214	0.82556		
	Tujia	3.1563	1.11753		

Note ****P* < 0.001, ***P* < 0.01, **P* < 0.05

learning desire beyond 0.05 across the four ethnic communities. The difference between Han and Miao is greater than that between Tujia and Miao, while the Dong students do not show marked difference from students in other ethnic groups in this respect (see Table 9). This means that the Dong students show a higher reception of the Miao culture than those from the Han and Tujia, while the Tujia students display a stronger rejection of the Miao culture, which might be caused by the different embroidery styles in the Miao and Tujia cultures.

This cognitive difference caused by gender and ethnicity indicates that more attention should be paid to gender and ethnic difference in the offering of courses on the Miao embroidery. Special care should also be given to the psychological and academic conditions of students from the Tujia ethnic group. Only by taking into account such differences schools could effectively offer the Miao embroidery course, reduce cultural conflicts, and promote the harmonious communication between different ethnic groups.

Table 9 The LSD multi-ratio comparison of the learning desire of students from different ethnic communities

(I) Ethnicity	(J) Ethnicity	Mean difference	Std. error	Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
Han	Miao	−0.489*	0.187	0.009	−0.86	−0.12
	Dong	−0.085	0.552	0.877	−1.17	1.00
	Tujia	0.772	0.552	0.163	−0.31	1.86
Miao	Han	0.489*	0.187	0.009	0.12	0.86
	Dong	0.404	0.542	0.457	−0.66	1.47
	Tujia	1.261*	0.542	0.021	0.19	2.33
Dong	Han	0.085	0.552	0.877	−1.00	1.17
	Miao	−0.404	0.542	0.457	−1.47	0.66
	Tujia	0.857	0.751	0.255	−0.62	2.34

Note *** $P < 0.001$, ** $P < 0.01$, * $P < 0.05$

3.3 Analysis of Opportunities

(1) Convergence of school education with state incentive policies regarding folk and ethnic culture

Given its emphasis on national intangible culture, the central government has put in place various policies that require the heritage protection department to collaborate with “the education department, introducing intangible cultural heritage into the classrooms and textbooks in primary and middle schools” [70]. The central government also promulgated “The State Council’s Notification on How to Strengthen Cultural Heritage Protection,” stating that “the education department should introduce topics on cultural heritage and protection into curriculum and textbook, organizing related activities and visits with a view to inciting student’s patriotic feelings and enthusiasm for traditional culture” [71]. In 2010, the office of the Ministry of Education published “Notifications on How to Promote Activities on Chinese Cultural and Artistic Traditions in Primary and Middle Schools.” The “Notification” requires establishing a host of heritage schools to at once promote Chinese cultural and artistic traditions and the national spirit and improve the environment of artistic education. The propagation of traditional culture and art would help deepen the reform of artistic education and establish a unique campus culture, such as “aspirations for truth, goodness, beauty, and nobility” [72]. These state policies provide important evidence for incorporating the intangible culture of the Miao embroidery into artistic education (Table 10).

The “Resolutions on Some Key Issues Concerning How to Comprehensively Deepen the Reform Initiative” passed by the third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee asks schools “to completely implement the Party’s policy regarding the cultivation of people, the inculcation of the core socialist core values,

Table 10 The SWOT matrix of external environment

Opportunities (O)	Threat (T)
O1: Central government policies supporting, encouraging, and guiding the preservation and development of folk and ethnic culture	T1: The lack of a strong consensus on Miao embroidery courses between schools and local governments; the lack of operational policies
O2: Local government policy supporting and promoting “the competitive power of culture”	T2: The dilemma faced by the collaboration between schools and industries; the constraints on cultivating experts on the embroidery; and the development of the embroidery industry
O3: The Miao embroidery going global, the turn to the Miao culture, and the expansion of the foreign markets of the Miao embroidery	T3: Impact of the rising wave of migrant workers; objections from parents
O4: The lack of entrepreneurs of the Miao embroidery, the urgent need of school support, and the broad prospect for the collaboration between schools and industries	T4: The discrepancy between the Miao embroidery courses and higher education; the interruption of education; and the lack of teaching resources

as well as the teaching of cultural heritage.” The “Resolutions” also states the necessity to “establish a long-term mechanism centered on the love of study, work, and country with the aim to cultivate social responsibility, innovative spirit, and practical ability.... The ultimate purpose is to improve students’ aesthetic ability and attainments in the humanities” [73]. Meanwhile, “The Ministry of Education’s Several Opinions on How to Promote Artistic Education in Schools” also points out that those better-conditioned schools should offer a rich variety of selected courses. The “Opinions” also encourage schools of all manners and levels to develop courses that capitalize on local ethnic and regional cultures, innovate the teaching of artistic courses by catering to the local needs, and explore a simple but efficient, stylistic but practical teaching method [74]. These instructions, opinions, and principles from the Party and the central government provide effective guidance for offering courses on the Miao embroidery.

Further, other documents, such as the “Curricular Design Pilot Project in Compulsory Education,” “Regular High School Curricular Program (Pilot),” “Secondary Vocational Schools Public Artistic Course Syllabus,” and “Public Artistic Course Syllabus Guidance for All Regular Schools in Higher Education,” all these documents give specific and consistent prescriptions on the manners, course hours, and grade management in artistic education. All these stipulations provide the policy guarantee for the joined efforts of all levels of government and all kinds of schools to promote artistic education.

Thus the series of policies and measures promulgated by the central government concerning how to incorporate cultural heritage into education and how to develop artistic education based on ethnic culture provide the necessary evidence and environment conducive to offering courses on the Miao embroidery in the Miao ethnic communities.

(2) Local government's policy on cultural industries and its benefits for the Miao embroidery education

The Miao districts in the provinces of Gui Zhou and Hu Nan are economically backward due to the constraint of geographical conditions. But these districts also provide the unique natural and human ecological environment for developing tourist and cultural industries. The local governments adopt scientific methods to develop a green economy, supporting the development of nonpolluting and sustainable tourist and cultural industries.

As a key product of the tourist culture in Gui Zhou, the Miao embroidery has given rise to a host of leading enterprises centered on the manufacturing of handmade crafts. These industries have become a major source of fiscal income for the local governments. Take the "Song Tao" Miao autonomous county in Gui Zhou for an instance. The local governments have taken initiatives to collaborate with industries, investing heavily in launching tourist and cultural enterprises. The flourishing and expanding of such industries has served as good examples for ordinary people to get rich. The local governments also undertake to improve the market system, creating new service and management models to promote tourist cultural enterprises by discovering or retrieve folk and ethnic cultures and creating brand products by combing these cultures with tourism. Led by these industries, the governments put great efforts on integrating various resources and innovating new models. Further, they are considering establishing a Song Tao Miao embroidery research center and a tourist and cultural industrial base in the Miao Wang city, building a street featuring exclusively tourist and cultural products.

These governments also seek to register a "Pigeon Flower" brand for the Miao embroidery, and the brand will encompass 220 different kinds of products classified under six broader categories—embroidered drums, embroidery patterned with pigeon flowers, embroidery with the Fan Jing Mountain scenery, totems with embroidered fish and dragons, embroidery reflecting folk customs and practices, and embroidery featuring folk stories. Their products have been sold on foreign markets such as Europe, America, Southeast Asia, as well as Hong Kong and Macao. To retain experts, the local governments published the "Related Stipulations on Housing Reward System for Workers in the Economic Development Zone" to award houses to specialists on the Miao embroidery in accordance with the length of their employment.

The development of ethnic economy is fundamental to helping the ethnic groups to reduce poverty. It is precisely with this purpose in view that the local governments provide policy support for the Miao embroidery industry. But ethnic economy also needs the incentive offered by ethnic education. The mutual dependence between ethnic economy and education will enable a balanced and interactive development in culture, education, economy, and society. This is why some local governments invest heavily in the local Miao embroidery education and support it with various forms of policies. The great disparities in local and regional development also afford new opportunities for exploring the education potential of the Miao embroidery.

(3) Rapid expansion of the Miao embroidery market and urgent demand for related experts

Market is a key indicator of the direction that guides the development of the Miao embroidery industry and education. On the one hand, with the deepening of the reform and opening policy, the global impact of Chinese culture has been on the rise. As a key component of Chinese culture, ethnic cultures have attracted more and more attention. This creates chances for the Miao embroidery to become gifts for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on diplomatic occasions and thereby serves as an important window for foreign people to learn about Chinese culture. On the other hand, with the increase of all manners of cultural communication, the Miao embroidery has also absorbed some best elements from other cultures. The artifacts and daily used articles made with the Miao embroidery integrate both the Miao traditional culture and modern techniques and fashions, which accounts for why these products have become more and more popular in domestic markets as well.

The income of the “Song Tao Miao Embroidery” in 2011 reached about ¥8,956,000, with a profit of about ¥1,334,000. The company has provided more than 3100 employment opportunities. From our in-depth interview with the heads of the company, we find that the company’s core target will be the domestic market, whose great potential will provide great opportunities for the Miao cultural products. But the lack of experts on the Miao embroidery has become a more and more urgent problem. Thus it is imperative to find and cultivate experts good at researching, innovating, designing the Miao embroidery products, which will provide a broad prospect for the collaboration between schools and industries.

The Miao embroidery courses offered in primary and middle schools will prepare students for further study in the future. Artistic education in secondary vocational schools would directly provide industries with experts on the Miao embroidery. The collaboration between schools and industries will not only improve students’ artistic attainments but also address the concerns of the company. Meanwhile, it also serves to preserve and develop ethnic culture and economy.

3.4 Analysis of Threats

(1) Lack of consensus on the Miao embroidery education between schools and local governments

To incorporate the Miao embroidery into education will be a tough game due to the conflict of interests between schools and the local governments. Out of consideration for political achievements, the local governments usually only provide limited support for the Miao embroidery education, so that such courses could be offered only in secondary vocational schools and usually with meager effects. The key cause of the conflict of interests resides in the discrepancy between the embroidery courses and the assessment system. Schools that undertake to incorporate the Miao embroidery are not approved by the formal assessment system. Without supporting

fund and related policies, the Miao embroidery education becomes a “one-sided preference” of schools, which inevitably hinders its further development. As some teachers put it, they are faced with a twofold pressure: the demand of the formal assessment standard and the teaching ideal of the principal and the teachers themselves. Because of this pressure, the Miao embroidery courses look like only window dressing, offered in a broken manner and most likely to be suspended because of excessive administrative intervention. These courses just serve as window-shopping for external competitions and incoming visitors. These teachers’ remarks might not reflect the real conditions, but they do point to the struggle between the two key powers involved in the offering of the course. There is indeed a long way to go for the Miao embroidery to be fully incorporated into education.

(2) Dilemma faced by school–industry collaboration and constraints on cultivating the Miao embroidery experts and related industries

The collaboration between schools and industries is an important step in incorporating the Miao embroidery into artistic education. A key mission of schools is to produce educated people. But the incorporation project is faced with a series of problems, such as the lack of curricular resources, teachers, and funds. By contrast, the industries have assembled a host of experts and artisans on the Miao embroidery and have plenty of funds because of its production lines. But the development of companies is usually constrained by the conflict between the expanded market and the lack of related experts. So it is a win–win and mutually beneficial cause for schools to collaborate with industries so that the problems faced by both could be effectively resolved. Schools and industries could collaborate on such key problems as teachers’ training, designing of textbook, and job opportunities for graduates from vocational schools. But in a market system governed by the law of supply and demand, the conflict of interests between schools and industries tend to escalate, which would not only put a stop to their collaboration but also cost graduates job opportunities. All these problems would negatively affect the normal teaching, deduct students’ benefits, and harm the social image of the Miao embroidery education.

Collaboration between the Miao embroidery industries and the local higher education remains to be explored. It is hard to establish a formal collaborative mechanism, and the research and production model is still in the making. All these tend to hinder the cultivation of experts on the Miao embroidery and the further development of related industries. The dilemma faced by the school–industry collaboration thus directly impacts the development of students, the training of experts, and the expansion of industries. It will also generate a negative image and thereby reduce its social recognition and appeal, which will, in turn, affect the enrollment of the Miao embroidery students.

(3) Discrepancy between the Miao embroidery and the art programs in local higher education

A key mission of the local higher education is to provide high-quality graduates for local economic and social development. But our research shows that there is discrepancy between the local ethnic culture and the art programs in higher education in areas with a high concentration of the Miao population. The courses in such programs are usually narrow and devoid of variety, which renders it hard for the Miao embroidery students to have advanced education. This condition will also affect the cultivation of teachers on the Miao embroidery, which usually adopts the model of apprenticeship, training by industries, or taking courses in colleges and universities in Beijing. The severe lack of good teachers is incompatible with the rapid expansion of the Miao embroidery industry. The quality of teachers is an important indicator of the competitiveness of a program. The interruption of education not only affects academic study but also costs the incentive for cultivating expert teachers. This would pose a severe problem for the sustainable development of the Miao embroidery industries.

(4) Objection from parents and the absence of a cohesive external support system

Influenced by the rising wave of migrant workers and some utilitarian considerations, parents have expressed various concerns over the Miao embroidery courses. In regards to regular primary and middle schools, parents would make such remarks as “Such courses will affect the regular academic study” and “it’s useless to learn the Miao embroidery.” Regarding vocational schools, parents consider the Miao embroidery “not conducive to job search” and “the return is very low.” And some also think that “it is better go out as a migrant worker than taking such courses.” Bias and misunderstanding are apparent in comments like these. Most of the parents’ concerns are financial, but they also partly indicate the lack of a cohesive external support system, which is mainly manifested in the limited development of the Miao embroidery industries, the absence of government promotion and policy support, as well as the difficulties faced by this ethnic art in schools.

Parents provide the key instruction and financial support for students, and their objection should be taken into account in developing the Miao embroidery education. Only by enlisting the support of parents could there be a favorable environment for the implementation of the ethnic art education.

4 Research Result and Discussion

4.1 The Result of the SWOT

In this section, we give a comprehensive analysis of the internal advantages and disadvantages and external threats involved in incorporating the Miao embroidery

Table 11 The SWOT strategy analysis matrix

OT	SW	
	Advantages (S)	Disadvantages (W)
Opportunities (O)	SO strategy: create opportunities out of the advantages 1. Use resource advantages to enlist various policy support 2. Collaborate with industries to cultivate experts 3. Seize upon opportunities to improve the Miao embroidery course design and propagation	WO strategy: transform the disadvantages into opportunities 1. Led by the government and guided by experts, establish a curriculum design group, an appropriate education model, and a scientific assessment system 2. Pay attention to the difference among students and respect students' choice 3. Design the curriculum in a way that avoids conflict with academic study
Threats (T)	ST strategy: mitigate or avoid threats with advantages 1. Promote communication between schools and the government and stabilize the course design mechanism 2. Strengthen government supervision, improve collaboration efficiency, and increase social benefits 3. Enhance social recognition and appeal through propaganda 4. Collaborate with higher education to avoid the interruption of education	WT strategy: overcome disadvantages and avoid threats 1. Led by the government and collaborate with industries, explore curricular resources for the embroidery and establish a scientific curricular system 2. Led by the government and collaborate other schools and establish a vertical system between primary, middle, and vocational schools, as well as schools in higher education 3. Led by the government and collaborate with industries through joint-stock to solve the problems of funds, experts, and employment opportunities

into artistic education. Through the analysis, we got the SO, WO, ST, and WT strategies, as shown in the Table 11.

As is illustrated by the above matrix, the key is to use different strategies to solve different problems. The ultimate aim is to reconcile and coordinate the threats and disadvantages so as to create a harmonious internal and external environment for the incorporation of the Miao embroidery into education.

The growth strategy (SO) seeks to seize upon the opportunities offered by external policies and take advantage of the Miao embroidery resources. An active collaboration between schools and industries and the propagation of the Miao embroidery courses will not only open up avenues for the training of experts but also help promote the local economy. All this will give rise to a favorable environment for the sustainable development of the Miao embroidery and artistic course based on it.

The preventive strategy (WO) aims to improve the disadvantages of the internal curricular system, such as conflicts with academic study and gender and ethnic difference. We suggest taking into account these conflicts and emphasizing the participation of the government and related experts in the perfection of the curricular system. This strategy will facilitate the unhindered implementation of the course.

The multidimensional strategy (ST) comes to grips with the external barriers faced by the incorporation of the Miao embroidery into artistic education. We recommend raising the social recognition of the embroidery through the leadership and propaganda of the government, and creating a favorable external environment for the education of this ethnic art by reinforcing the communication between schools and the governments, the collaboration among different schools, and the various manners of cooperation between schools and industries.

The transformative strategy (WT)—tends to find a safeguard for the Miao embroidery course with a high-level mechanism. To facilitate the sustainable development of the Miao embroidery education, we recommend establishing both the school–industry collaborative system and the expert guidance mechanism. We also suggest, through the collaboration among schools, instituting a system that could unite primary and middle schools, secondary vocational schools, as well as schools in local higher education. We further recommend resolving the conflict between artistic education in primary and middle schools, employment of graduates from vocational schools, and the development of industries through cooperation among schools, collaborative cultivation of experts between vocational schools and industries, and research and production cooperation between industries and local higher education.

4.2 Analysis of the Relationships Between the Various SWOT Strategies

As is shown in the above analysis of the SWOT strategies, the SO, WO, ST, and WT strategies are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

The transformative strategies mean to guarantee the smooth implementation of the Miao embroidery education with external support, and the multidimensional strategy aims at cooperation among a variety of different sources. The preventative strategies seek to solve some microscopic paradoxes and conflicts from the perspectives of the curriculum and students, and the growth strategy suggests seizing upon opportunities to speed up the incorporation project. All four strategies are complementary to each other, united by the common aim to help incorporate the Miao embroidery into artistic education.

Only when a favorable external environment is formed through the transformative strategy could the multidimensional and preventative strategies be timely carried out and the microscopic difference be taken into account. A harmonious coordination between all four strategies allows the Miao embroidery education to

create and capitalize on as many opportunities as possible to accelerate its development. Only by addressing the difference and conflicts at the microscopic level could the external safeguard system take effect and the internal and external opportunities be fully utilized. So it is important to resolve the microscopic or secondary-level conflicts faced by the Miao embroidery education, and establish a mechanism that could integrate all four strategies.

4.3 Analysis of an Overall Mechanism that Incorporate All the Strategies

Based on the analysis of the above strategies, we could summarize some key contradictions that affect the implementation of the Miao embroidery education at the macro-level. These include the conflicts between schools, between schools and industries, and between governments and schools. Hindrances at the secondary level come from the curricular system and the different ways of educating people, and difficulties at the micro-level mainly concern students' academic study and gender and ethnic difference. In fact, all these factors are interconnected. The absence of a macro-safeguard system directly affects the education of students and curricular design, which accounts for the conflict with academic study and the loss of external support. Thus all these factors should be taken into consideration to insure the smooth implementation of the Miao embroidery education project.

The following is a figure on the strategic analysis of how to incorporate the Miao embroidery into artistic education. It outlines the factors involved in the incorporation of the Miao embroidery in artistic education at the macro-, medium-, and micro-levels. This figure means to sketch out a comprehensive mechanism on the development of the Miao embroidery education (see Fig. 6).

Educational mechanism refers to the operation and interconnection of the various factors involved in education and is comprised of three basic types: the hierarchical, formal, and functional [75]. At the macro-level, we suggest coordinating the relationship between schools and governments, between primary and middle schools and the higher education, and between schools and industries. At the medium level, we recommend managing well the relations of curricular goals at different study stages, syllabi designing, and course assessment, as well as the special relationship entailed in the Miao embroidery itself—that of art and technique. Microscopically, we suggest handling well the relationship between “cultural pluralism and unity” typical of multicultural ethnic groups and the problems of gender and ethnic difference among students. Meanwhile, attention should also be paid to the overall planning of the Miao embroidery education. We advise to establish a complete and coherent system with “the Miao embroidery strategic development placed at the top, the Miao embroidery education in the middle, and its practical implementation at the bottom.” The overall planning should be based on a comprehensive formal mechanism centered on “instruction—service—supervision” and “implementation—feedback—perfection.” This would lead to the

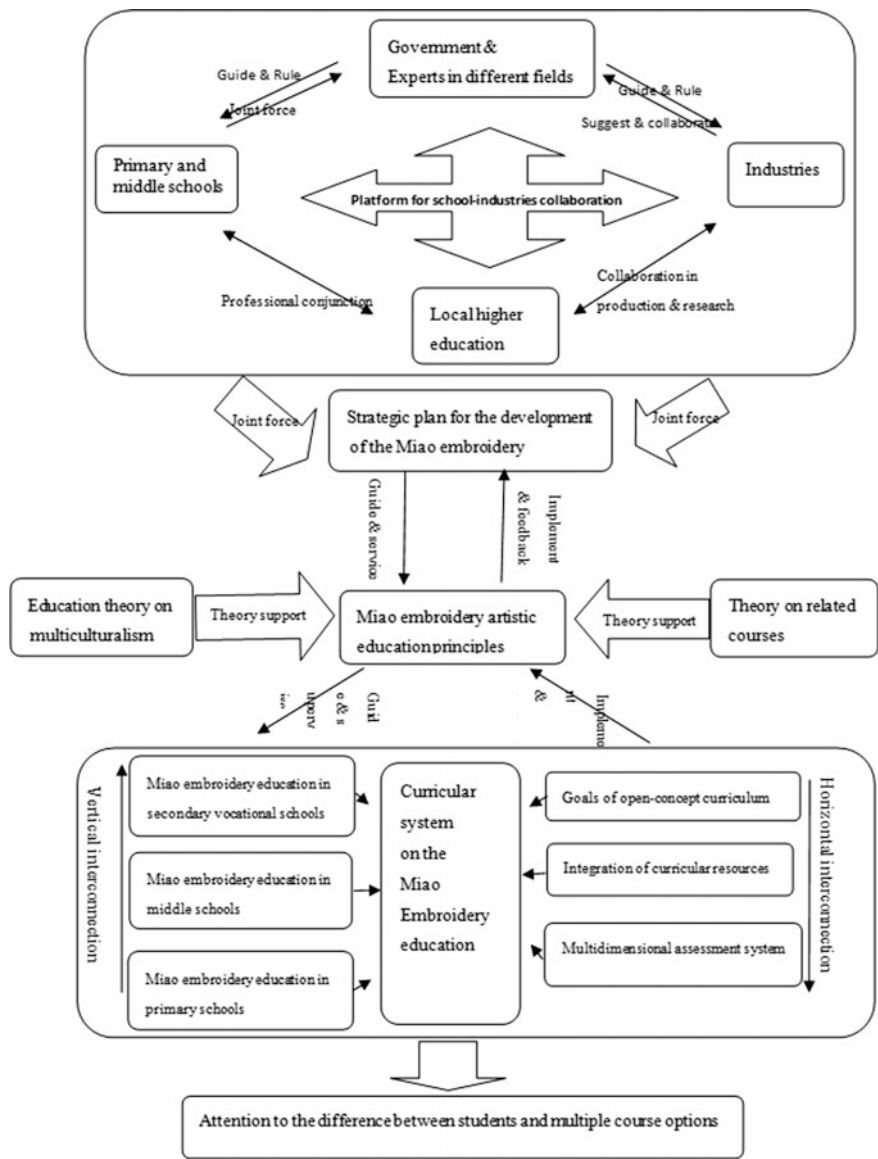


Fig. 6 The SWOT analysis of the Miao embroidery education in primary and middle schools

formation of a system featuring “macro decision-making, incentive, and safeguard—operation at the medium level—micro balance.” The interaction between the external conflict resolution system and the internal multidimensional safeguard mechanism could effectively help implement the Miao embroidery education project by mobilizing various possible resources.

5 Policy Recommendations

Based on both the SWOT analysis and practical conditions, we come up with some policy recommendations regarding the incorporation of the Miao embroidery into artistic education in primary and middle schools. We recommend establishing a collaborative mechanism that takes into account at once the interests of students at the micro-level, the vertical cultivation of people, the horizontal development of curriculum, and the multidimensional participation at the macro-level. The policy recommendations are proposed with the aim to transform the disadvantages faced by the offering of the Miao embroidery course and open up a new prospect for the development of this ethnic art.

5.1 Respecting Students' Individual Difference and Providing Multiple Course Options

(1) Attending to students' individual difference and avoid cultural conflict

Knowledge of students' individual difference proves a precondition for the realization of modern curricular design. As the crystallization of women's culture of the Miao ethnic community, the Miao embroidery expresses at once the unique aesthetic feature of the Miao women and some general aesthetic characteristics. So the Miao embroidery courses should keep in mind the interests of both women and men and both the Miao and Non-Miao communities so that they could be offered in accordance with gender and ethnic difference. Meanwhile, given the great disparity in the recognition of, emotional preference for, and willingness to support the Miao embroidery caused by gender and ethnic difference, close attention should be paid to the negative effects of these difference in the offering of the courses. It is imperative to give instructions based on students' different demands, preparation, and expectations, seek different ways of organizing study, and respect students' choice within the framework of the overall course arrangement. Further, we suggest providing artistic courses for students not in the Miao embroidery class, with an emphasis on students' overall psychological development and academic performance. In a multicultural ethnic community, we recommend attending closely to various manners of difference, mitigating cultural conflicts by giving full play to the potential of all cultures, and promoting cultural and psychological convergence to insure the unhindered realization of the Miao embroidery education.

(2) Providing a variety of course options and establishing a favorable learning environment

Schools should observe the principle of "unity out of multiplicity" in designing the Miao embroidery course, which should be put as a selected course. In the classroom

setting, teachers should be flexible in the way of teaching; they could just give lectures or instruct students in such practical activities as doing artworks, providing social services, and visiting art exhibitions. Teachers could also use campus culture and extracurricular activities to incite students' interest, cultivate their moral sentiments, enhance their understanding, and develop their potential and creativity. Thus through both classroom study and practical activities the traditional ethnic art would gradually infuse into students' life.

In our research on the question regarding "the best ways to offer the Miao embroidery course," students and teachers who prefer selected courses or comprehensive practical activities take up a greater percentage (selected course: teachers take up 66.7% and students 58.8%; comprehensive practical activities: teachers take up 54.9% and students 54.5%). Students also show great interest in visiting the Miao embroidery artworks and exhibitions (74%) [76]. So there might be a variety of different ways to offer the Miao embroidery course, whether visible or invisible, classroom study or extracurricular practices, all would form an overall environment that is at once conducive to artistic education, meet the demands of students at different stages of study, and develop their comprehensive ability. But these multiple approaches should conform to the overall curricular objective to avoid turning them into mere formulas.

5.2 Embrace an Open-Concept Curriculum and Develop School-Based Miao Embroidery Courses

(1) Embrace an open-concept curriculum and encourage pluralism

In the past 20 years, with the critique of technical and instrumental rationality intrinsic to the industrialization, the postmodern conception of curriculum has been affecting the various aspects of Chinese education. The new round of curricular reform esteems and borrows much from the postmodern concepts of openness, procedure, and multipolarity in the design of curriculum. As a school-based course, the Miao embroidery course should also follow such postmodern concepts to preserve the primitive flavor and procedure of this ethnic art form. Meanwhile, we should also keep in mind the defects entailed in postmodern concepts so as to capitalize on their potential and avoid the negative effects.

In multicultural areas, we suggest preserving ethnic cultures through developing school-based Miao embroidery textbooks. Only with textbooks that integrate multicultural values and attend to students' individual difference could students better understand and respect cultural difference. An effective textbook would also allow teachers and students to project their own experiences and insights into the artistic creation of the Miao embroidery and enable the harmonious development of students' body and spirit. Meanwhile, proper attention to the process of the course

would allow students to experience the beauty and artistic value of the embroidery through conversations and practical exploration. Artistic courses built on the Miao embroidery would, therefore, help cultivate both students' critical and creative ability.

To sum up, only in open-concept courses could the special aesthetic demands posed by the emotional, creative, and nonrational signs of the Miao embroidery be fully explored. In this sense, postmodern concepts serve to map out a direction for the development and practical operation of the Miao embroidery courses.

(2) Step up the development of school-based Miao embroidery courses

School-based courses are useful complements to those prescribed by the central and local governments. The development of school-based courses involves the concerted efforts of students, teachers, principals, experts, and the governments. The course-making process involves such dynamic and continued activities as the setting up of curricular goals, the integration of curricular contents, as well as curricular assessment. Students should be the subjects of the school-based courses on the Miao embroidery. The course should ground in an adequate prior analysis of the internal and external factors involved in the Miao embroidery education, supervised by governments, guided by experts and professionals, led by the principals, and jointly participated by teachers and students.

Above all, we suggest resorting to expert guidance to scientifically design the goals of at different stages of study in the offering of the Miao embroidery course. We also recommend handling well the relationship between society and students, between the theory and skills concerning the Miao embroidery, and between students' academic study and overall progress. Further, in regards to the course content, we suggest observing the unity of artistic and technical rules and the convergence of multipolar and unipolar principles. The course content should put emphasis on artistic appreciation of the Miao embroidery to avoid confusing students with obscure materials. We suggest utilizing those open-ended contents to cultivate student's imaginative and creative ability, and propagating the core socialist values while maintaining the characteristic of the Miao ethnic culture. We also recommend constructing an assessment system that emphasizes both multiplicity and the union of process and result by tailoring the assessment closely to the prescribed curricular goals (Fig. 7).

5.3 Strengthen the Collaboration Among Schools and Construct a System to Train Experts on the Miao Embroidery

Artistic education involves the cultivation of both art and skills, and it includes the three modes of general, vocational, and specialist education, all of which are also

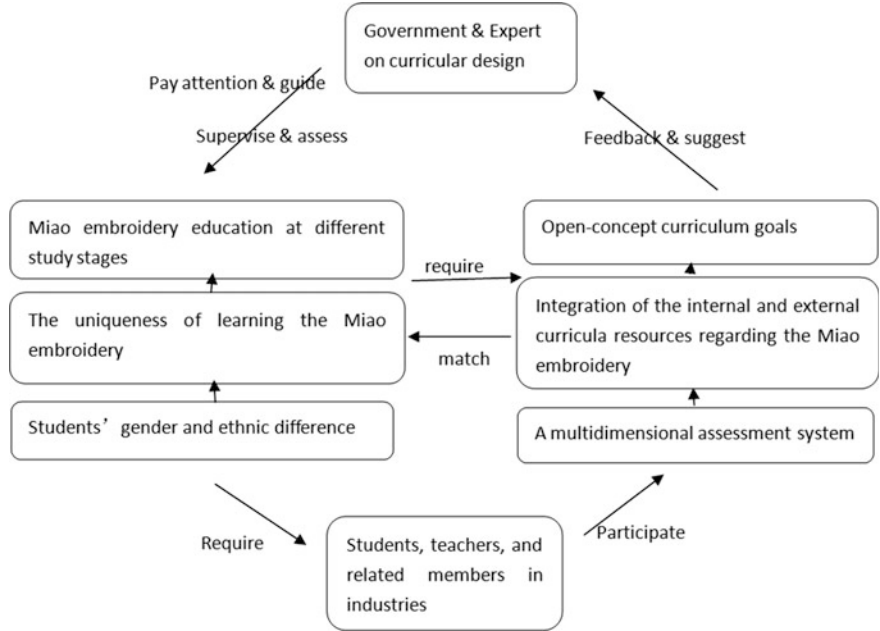


Fig. 7 Illustration of the development of school-based courses on the Miao embroidery

involved in the education of the Miao embroidery. The Miao embroidery education should link with not only primary and middle schools but also the secondary vocational schools and the higher education, which is the only way to break the bottleneck that constrains its further development (Fig. 8).

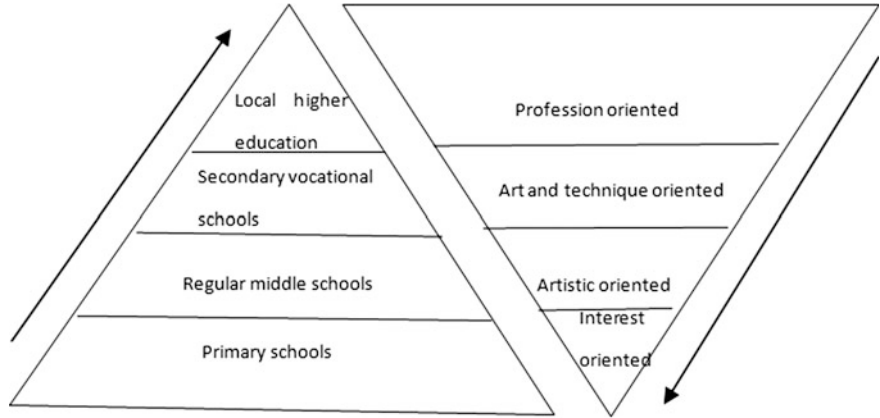


Fig. 8 Illustration of the training of experts on the Miao embroidery

(1) Strengthen the link between middle schools, vocational schools, and the local higher education

The “State Council’s Resolutions on Accelerating Modern Vocational Education” states that by 2020 the country should establish a modern vocational education system of world level and with Chinese characteristics [77]. Vocational education should be able to meet the demands posed by further development, the in-depth merging of production and teaching, the linkage between secondary and advanced professional education, as well as the communication between vocational and regular education. The joining of the general with the Miao embroidery education will not only provide a bridge for students’ multifaceted development but also raise the appeal of the Miao embroidery and thereby resolve the lack of embroidery experts in primary and middle schools.

We suggest the local government, together with the local higher education, submitting applications for the adding of a program on the Miao embroidery, with the justification that such programs could insure graduates from regular middle and vocational schools to receive further education in higher education. This would also help create a special platform for training experts on the Miao embroidery and establish an education system that vertically ties together primary and middle school, vocational schools, and the local higher education. This interconnected and mutually supporting system would help solve the problem of students’ continued education and the sustainable training of teachers on the Miao embroidery.

(2) Handling well the multidimensional relations involved in the Miao embroidery education

Artistic education should rank first in education that aims to cultivate students’ aesthetic judgment, moral virtues, innovative spirit, as well as practical ability. The Miao embroidery education in primary schools should follow students’ interest, with a focus on enhancing student’s recognition of and sentiments toward this ethnic art. Primary education should seek to cultivate passions for life, art, and the ethnic community by having students to participate in the artistic appreciation, representation, and creation of the Miao embroidery. Artistic education in regular middle schools could pay more attention to basic artistic knowledge and some preliminary embroidery skills. Middle-school classes should emphasize the cultivation both of artistic judgment and accomplishment and collaborative and creative ability. Vocational schools should shift the emphasis to the learning of professional skills useful for employment, while reinforcing the basic academic study. The integration of artistic attainments and humanistic study would be helpful to student’s sustainable development. The Miao embroidery in higher education should focus on the cultivation of high-quality professional skills, theoretical knowledge, practical ability, and innovative spirit. Graduates with such an education would become a rich source for the Miao embroidery teachers and industries.

To conclude, all these different levels of education should be conducted in a scientific manner and avoid the professionalization of the Miao embroidery education in primary and middle schools and the exclusive focus on professional skills in vocational schools.

5.4 Establish School–Industry Collaboration and Expert Guidance Systems Under the Leadership of the Government

(1) Governments should take initiatives to build a school-industry collaboration platform

School–industry collaboration is a teaching model that facilitates a mutually reinforcing, complementary, and resource-sharing relationship [78]. This requires the government to build school–industry collaboration platform and mechanism to insure unhindered communication and collaborative efficiency. Industries might play a part in enriching students’ artistic life and aesthetic judgment by regularly dispatching artists to schools or organizing visits to the Miao embroidery product exhibitions. Schools and industries could collaborate in the training of teachers as well, with the view to improving their teaching skills and knowledge of ethnic culture so that they could take a leading role in the Miao embroidery art education. Secondary vocational schools and colleges should take initiatives to innovate the operational model that governs the school–industry cooperation, having teachers and students participate in the research, designing, and production through joint-stock cooperation and integration of resources. These measures would not only improve students’ practical skills but also provide human resources and technical services to industries, thereby fully exploring the role of industry in school education. The local higher education should take an active part in collaborating with industries in both production and research, mobilizing the resources of each through a variety of different ways such as technique transfer, commissioned research, as well as cooperation in the resolving of some touch issues. These collaborations would at once produce practical experts on the Miao embroidery and develop ethnic cultural enterprises.

Schools and industries should follow a long-term collaborative system led by the government. This system could enable a timely resolution school–industry conflicts, coordinate cultural enterprises and the Miao embroidery education, and enhance the social recognition of the ethnic art. The collaboration would optimize the material and human resources between schools and industries and form a two-way and win–win symbiotic relationship that gestures toward the optimal “pareto efficiency” [79] (Fig. 9).

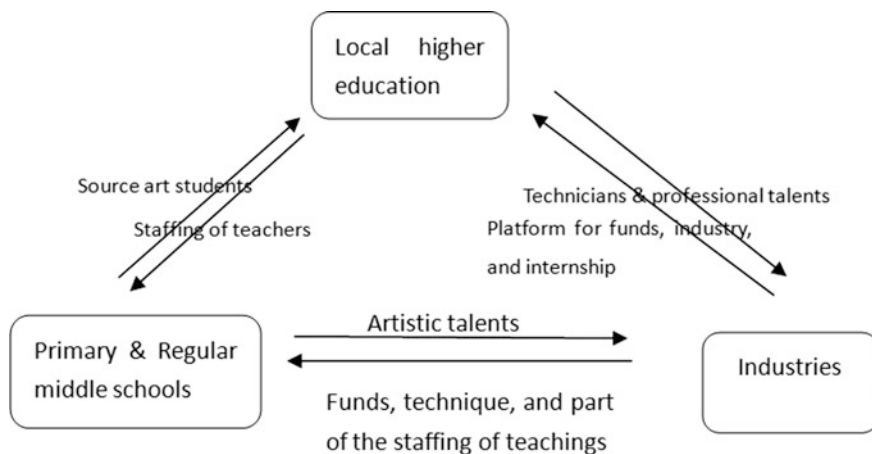


Fig. 9 Illustration of school–industry collaboration in the Miao embroidery education

(2) Establish the expert instruction mechanism to guide the overall Miao embroidery education

The Miao embroidery education is still at the preliminary stage with meager experience. The group made up of local teachers, artisans, and heads of companies could not guarantee the scientific development of the Miao embroidery education and enterprises. This renders it imperative to institute an expert instruction mechanism to insure the normalization and systematization of the Miao embroidery courses and enterprises. It is necessary to form, under the leadership of the government, a Miao embroidery management group comprised of curricular experts and economic experts. The group will be responsible for the following task: outlining the overall strategic direction and specific curricular goals, allocating and integrating curricular resources, designing school-based textbook and the corresponding evaluative framework, training teachers through collaboration, as well as resolving the conflicts of interests. These tasks will allow the group of experts to pool all possible forces and resources in the implementation of the Miao embroidery education.

The government should undertake to coordinate conflicts of interests by offering policy support. It should reinforce its guidance and supervision of the Miao embroidery education, give an attentive ear to the opinions and suggestions from schools, industries, and experts so that it could help refine the curricular system, train high-quality teachers, improve employment opportunities for graduates from vocational schools, raise the collaboration efficiency, and reach a balance between the decision-making and incentive system. The ultimate goal is to form a benign operation system based on expert guidance, school–industry cooperation, and teachers' participation to guarantee both the unhindered offering of the courses and the smooth development of the Miao embroidery industry.

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