

Article

Field Theory Insight into Intangible Cultural Heritage Skills Education: Field–Capital–Habitus Interaction and Teaching Practice in China

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Abstract

Education in intangible cultural heritage (ICH) skills plays a vital role in cultural transmission and innovation, yet it faces persistent structural tension between the authenticity of regional culture and the standardization of modern educational systems. Drawing on Bourdieu's field theory, this study examines the dynamic interaction of field, capital, and habitus within intangible cultural heritage skills education in Chinese higher education. Employing an exploratory qualitative single-case study design, the research investigates the ethnic arts curriculum at Southwest Minzu University, with data drawn from documentary evidence, teaching artifacts, and participant observation. The findings reveal a composite educational field structured by the intersection of native cultural, educational institutional, and cultural reproduction fields, within which cultural capital in its embodied, objectified, and institutionalized forms is transformed into symbolic and social capital through teaching practices, creative production, and institutional certification. The study further identifies a practical pathway extending from cultural capital accumulation to symbolic capital acquisition and ultimately to social capital expansion. Notably, the analysis empirically identifies the role of emotional persons—actors whose habitus is shaped by institutionally mandated affective cultivation, as articulated in the university's formal talent training program—in mediating capital reproduction and habitus formation. This study offers a systematic theoretical framework for understanding the internal operational mechanisms of intangible cultural heritage skills education and provides practical insights for balancing cultural authenticity with educational standardization in the context of globalization.

Keywords: field theory; higher education; intangible cultural heritage; capital transformation; emotional person



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1. Introduction

In the context of deepening globalization and the vigorous promotion of cultural diversity governance worldwide, the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has become an increasingly core proposition for maintaining the continuity of national cultural contexts and promoting the innovative development of traditional culture. This imperative is reflected in international policy frameworks such as the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage [1], which

calls upon States Parties to safeguard ICH through educational programs [2]. ICH skills, as an irreplaceable component of China's rich and diverse traditional culture, carry the historical memory, esthetic connotation, spiritual core and collective identity of all regional groups. Their living inheritance and intergenerational transmission are not only related to the protection of cultural diversity, but also to the construction of the Chinese national community consciousness [3]. ICH skills education serves as the core link between the native soil of local culture and the modern social system. ICH skills education is the fundamental path to realize the systematic inheritance, creative transformation and innovative development of ICH skills [4,5]. It undertakes the dual mission of continuing core cultural elements and cultivating professional inheritors, and has long been a key research topic in the fields of education, cultural anthropology and art education [6].

Education serves as a critical tool for the transmission and preservation of ICH [7]. Several studies emphasize the integration of ICH into educational curricula to foster cultural awareness and identity among younger generations [8,9]. In recent years, with the continuous improvement of the ICH protection system and the deepening of ICH integration into higher education, scholars have carried out multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary explorations of ICH skills education [10]. Existing studies have mostly focused on practical dimensions such as the optimization of teaching modes, the construction of teacher teams, the integration of curriculum resources, and the improvement of talent training systems. These efforts have generated a body of practical experience regarding the implementation of ICH skills education in colleges and universities.

However, most current studies are confined to a single perspective rooted in pedagogy, focusing primarily on the optimization of teaching activities themselves. This narrow lens fails to fully reveal the complex nature of ICH skills education as a social practice—one that is embedded in multiple social spaces and shaped by social power structures and the logic of resource allocation [11]. In particular, ICH skills education has long faced a deep structural tension between the originality and uniqueness of regional culture and the standardization and systematization of the modern education system. Available studies have yet to construct a systematic theoretical framework for analyzing this core contradiction, nor have they deeply interpreted the internal operational mechanisms linking educational practice and cultural reproduction [12,13]. Meanwhile, regional emotion and cultural identity—the core spiritual connotation of ICH—have not been fully explored in terms of their key role in the entire process of education and inheritance within existing theoretical systems [14]. This research gap restricts the deepening of theoretical understanding and also hinders the resolution of practical dilemmas such as the fracture of native inheritance and the erosion of cultural meaning within teaching practice [15].

In contrast, Bourdieu's field theory, with its core analytical framework of field, capital, and habitus, provides a more integrated and holistic theoretical perspective for transcending the limitations described above [16]. This theory emphasizes that social space is a dynamic network composed of multiple interrelated fields, and the interaction among field structure, capital flow, and habitus formation jointly constructs the practical logic of social actors and the mechanisms of cultural reproduction. For ICH skills education, this theoretical lens can break through the confines of single-discipline pedagogical research and situate educational practice within the interconnected structures of the native cultural field, the educational institution field, and the cultural reproduction field. This approach enables a systematic examination of the interactive relationship between structural constraints and situated practice. On this basis, researchers can grasp the inherent laws governing educational activities and also explore the deeper mechanisms of resource allocation, power dynamics, and meaning construction that operate behind educational practice. This perspective effectively explains the internal relationship between physical skill transmission

and cultural cognition, and provides systematic theoretical tools for reconciling the core contradiction between cultural originality and educational standardization.

This study addresses the following research questions:

- How do field, capital, and habitus interact in the context of intangible cultural heritage skills education within a higher education institution, and what pathways of capital transformation emerge from this interaction?
- What role do emotional persons—actors whose habitus is infused with regional cultural identity and affective attachment—play in shaping habitus and mediating the reproduction of cultural capital in the educational field?

To address these questions, this study draws on Bourdieu's field theory to systematically examine the interactive mechanism of field, capital, and habitus within intangible cultural heritage skills education. Through this theoretical lens, the study aims to deepen understanding of how cultural inheritance is integrated with modern educational systems and to provide practical reference for promoting the sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage skills education in the context of globalization.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Research Design

This study adopts an exploratory qualitative single-case study design [17,18]. This design is particularly appropriate for investigating complex social phenomena within their real-life contexts, and for generating in-depth, context-dependent understanding of how theoretical constructs—such as field, capital, and habitus—operate in a specific educational setting [19]. The case study approach enables the systematic examination of the dynamic interactions among institutional structures, teaching practices, and cultural reproduction processes that characterize ICH skills education. The overall research design is illustrated in Figure 1, which outlines the flow from case selection and data collection through theory-guided analysis to the derivation of key findings.

2.2. Case Selection

Southwest Minzu University, located in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China, was purposively selected as the case for this study. The selection criteria were threefold. First, the university is a leading institution for ethnic minority education in China and has a long-standing commitment to integrating ICH skills into its formal curricula. It has established a comprehensive ICH teaching system spanning multiple ethnic groups and artistic forms. Second, the university has developed a distinctive pedagogical model that combines classroom instruction with extensive fieldwork in ethnic minority regions, thereby bridging the native cultural field and the institutional educational field. Third, the research team had sustained access to institutional documents, course materials, and teaching practitioners, which enabled the collection of rich, multi-source empirical data. The institutional ICH courses at the university, particularly those in ethnic arts, serve as a representative and information-rich case for examining the operation of field, capital, and habitus in ICH skills education.

2.3. Data Collection

Following established case study protocols [20], multiple sources of evidence were triangulated to enhance the validity and richness of the findings. Data collection took place during the 2024–2025 academic year and comprised three main types of sources.

- Documentary evidence: Two key institutional documents were collected and analyzed. The first is a joint agreement signed in 2014 between the Education Bureau of Ganzi Prefecture and the School of Continuing Education of Southwest Minzu

University, which established a targeted talent cultivation program for ethnic arts. The second is the university's 2024 Undergraduate Talent Training Program, specifically the Fine Arts program curriculum, which contains detailed course objectives, graduation requirements, and the Graduation Requirement Achievement Matrix.

- Teaching and learning artifacts: One course syllabus for the Tangka Drawing course was reviewed, and a sample of twenty student Tangka paintings produced during the course was examined as concrete illustrations of embodied and objectified cultural capital.
- Participant observation: Three sessions of non-participant classroom observation were conducted in the Tangka Drawing course within the Fine Arts program, scheduled at the beginning, middle, and end of the academic semester. Each session consisted of one full teaching period of 90 min. Observational field notes were recorded to capture the pedagogical interactions, teaching methods, and the learning environment. Additionally, a field investigation was conducted at the university museum, where 48 representative Tangka paintings from the Four Medical Tantras Southern School Tibetan medical illustration collection were examined, and two Tangka lectures were attended.

As summarized in Table 1, these three sources were triangulated to capture formal rules, objectified cultural capital, and situated practices within the teaching field.

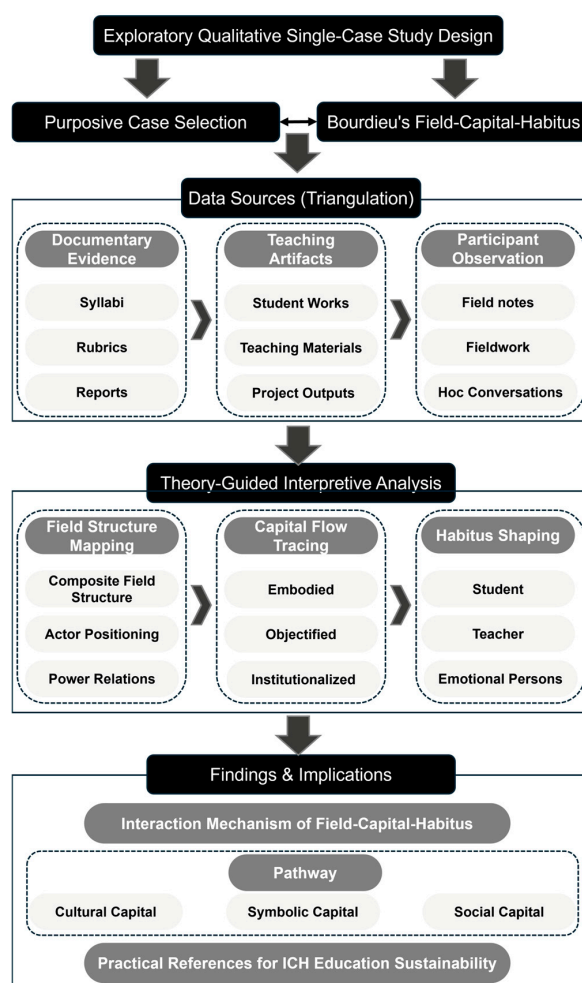


Figure 1. Research roadmap of this study. The framework illustrates the exploratory single-case design, the triangulation of three data sources, the application of Bourdieu's theoretical lens in interpretive analysis, and the derivation of key findings regarding the interaction of field, capital, and habitus in ICH skills education.

Table 1. Summary of data sources.

Data Source	Type	Quantity	Purpose in Analysis
Institutional documents	Partnership agreement, talent training program	2 documents	Identify formal rules, explicit capital forms, institutionalized capital
Teaching artifacts	Student Tangka paintings, course syllabus	20 works, 1 syllabus	Illustrate objectified cultural capital
Participant observation	Classroom observation, museum investigation, lectures	3 sessions (90 min each), 1 field visit (48 Tangka works), 2 lectures	Capture habitus in practice, implicit rules, power relations, and contextual understanding

2.4. Analytical Framework

The analysis was guided by Bourdieu’s theoretical triad of field, capital, and habitus [21–23], which served as a conceptual lens for interpreting the empirical materials. The study employed a theory-guided interpretive analysis [24] wherein the empirical evidence was examined to illuminate how abstract theoretical constructs manifest in the specific context of intangible cultural heritage skills education. This approach prioritizes the dialogical engagement between theoretical propositions and empirical data over rigid deductive coding procedures.

The analytical process followed three iterative steps. First, the institutional and pedagogical arrangements were mapped onto the concept of the field. Particular attention was directed to the intersecting native cultural field, educational institution field, and cultural reproduction field, as well as the power relations among the principal actors: university teachers, students, and village-based intangible cultural heritage inheritors. Second, the forms and flows of capital were identified. The analysis traced how embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital are accumulated and subsequently transformed into symbolic and social capital, and examined how this transformation is regulated by both explicit rules—such as formal assessment criteria—and the implicit authority of cultural tradition. Third, the shaping of habitus was examined. The analysis focused on how the dispositions of teachers and students are formed through sustained engagement in the field and investigated the role of emotional persons. This concept refers to actors whose habitus is deeply infused with regional cultural identity and who therefore mediate the reproduction of cultural capital through affective attachment rather than through institutional compliance alone.

2.5. Positionality and Ethical Considerations

Two of the authors (C.Y. and Y.Z.) are affiliated with Southwest Minzu University, which granted them access to institutional documents and observational settings relevant to this study. To mitigate potential insider bias, all analytical claims were collaboratively reviewed and discussed among the full author team, including a researcher from an external institution, thereby ensuring critical distance in the interpretation of the case data.

Regarding ethical oversight, this study relied exclusively on institutional documents that are either publicly available and on non-participant and participant observation of routine educational activities conducted in public or semi-public settings. No individual participants were recruited, no identifiable personal data were collected, and no experimental interventions were conducted. Therefore, in accordance with the institutional guidelines of the authors’ universities, formal ethics approval was not required. All documentary data presented in this study are used with institutional permission or are publicly accessible, as indicated in the references.

3. Theoretical Framework and Case Context

ICH skills education is not an isolated pedagogical activity but a comprehensive social practice embedded in multiple social spaces and shaped by power structures and resource allocation logics. Existing studies, which predominantly focus on teaching methods, teacher development, and resource investment [25,26], often fail to capture this complexity. Bourdieu's field theory, with its core analytical triad of field, capital, and habitus, offers a more integrated perspective for understanding intangible cultural heritage skills education [27,28].

The concept of field provides a lens for interpreting the practical characteristics of intangible cultural heritage skills education as situated within the intersecting native cultural field, educational institution field, and cultural reproduction field. This perspective reveals how differences in resource allocation and power structures are produced and maintained. Bourdieu's theorization of capital—particularly the distinction among embodied, objectified, and institutionalized forms of cultural capital—illuminates the process of value transformation in skills education, from individual bodily practice to institutional certification [22]. Habitus, as a system of durable dispositions internalized through long-term engagement in the field, manifests in the deep integration of physical skill training and cultural identity formation. Together, these three concepts provide a coherent analytical vocabulary for examining the dynamic interplay between structural constraints and situated practice in intangible cultural heritage skills education.

The application of field theory in educational research has expanded considerably in recent years, offering valuable perspectives on educational equity, power structures, and capital transformation. However, its application to specific educational domains requires careful attention to field particularity and the distinctive logic of cultural capital within that domain. In the context of intangible cultural heritage skills education, the inherent tension between the authenticity of regional culture and the standardization of modern education systems has become increasingly salient, often resulting in disruptions to native cultural inheritance and the erosion of cultural meaning.

Southwest Minzu University, as a leading institution for ethnic minority education in China, has developed a comprehensive intangible cultural heritage teaching system spanning multiple ethnic traditions. Through sustained fieldwork in ethnic minority regions and the creation of an extensive body of intangible cultural heritage works, the university has established a distinctive field structure that bridges the native cultural and educational institutional fields. Its rich practices in capital accumulation and transformation, as well as habitus formation, provide a fertile empirical ground for investigating the operation of field, capital, and habitus in intangible cultural heritage skills education. The following sections first establish the analytical framework derived from field theory and then apply it to the case of the university's ethnic arts curriculum.

The concept of "emotional persons" refers to educational subjects whose habitus is shaped not only by institutional rules and professional norms, but also by a deep-seated affective attachment to regional culture and collective identity. This affective dimension is explicitly cultivated in the institutional framework of Southwest Minzu University. For instance, the university's 2024 Undergraduate Talent Training Program consistently articulates cultivation objectives such as "profound national sentiment and social responsibility", "fostering a sense of community for the Chinese nation", and "humanistic and patriotic sentiment" across various disciplines [29]. These institutional expectations function as explicit rules that steer the formation of a specific habitus—one that integrates professional competence with emotional identification. In the context of ICH skills education, students and teachers who internalize these values become "emotional persons," whose practice is animated by a sense of cultural mission and regional belonging, thereby medi-

ating the reproduction of cultural capital through affective engagement rather than mere technical acquisition.

While Bourdieu’s framework provides a powerful analytical lens, its application to the Chinese context warrants critical reflection. Scholars have questioned the generalizability of concepts developed in the French sociological tradition to non-Western settings with distinct cultural and institutional configurations. In the Chinese ICH education context, the state plays a pronounced role in shaping educational objectives and mobilizing affective ties to cultural heritage—dimensions less explicitly theorized in Bourdieu’s original formulation. Furthermore, Bourdieu’s work has been critiqued for overemphasizing structural reproduction at the expense of individual agency. This study engages with these debates by examining how the field–capital–habitus triad operates in a Chinese higher education institution and by exploring whether the concept of “emotional persons” offers a meaningful extension of the framework to account for the affective and institutional specificities of this context.

4. Field–Capital–Habitus Interaction Mechanism

4.1. ICH Skills Education Field Structure

This section presents an analytical framework derived from Bourdieu’s theoretical constructs. It is intended to serve as a conceptual lens for the subsequent case analysis. The discussion in this section is primarily theoretical in nature and does not yet draw on specific case evidence from Southwest Minzu University. As a composite social space, the ICH skills education field encompasses multiple dimensions such as social relations, power structure and resource allocation, and establishes structural connections among the native cultural field, educational institution field and cultural reproduction (social) field (Figure 2). In this system, the teaching field is in the intermediary position, which is not only the practical interface connecting native culture and educational system, but also an important carrier of cultural reproduction, carrying diverse social and cultural functions.

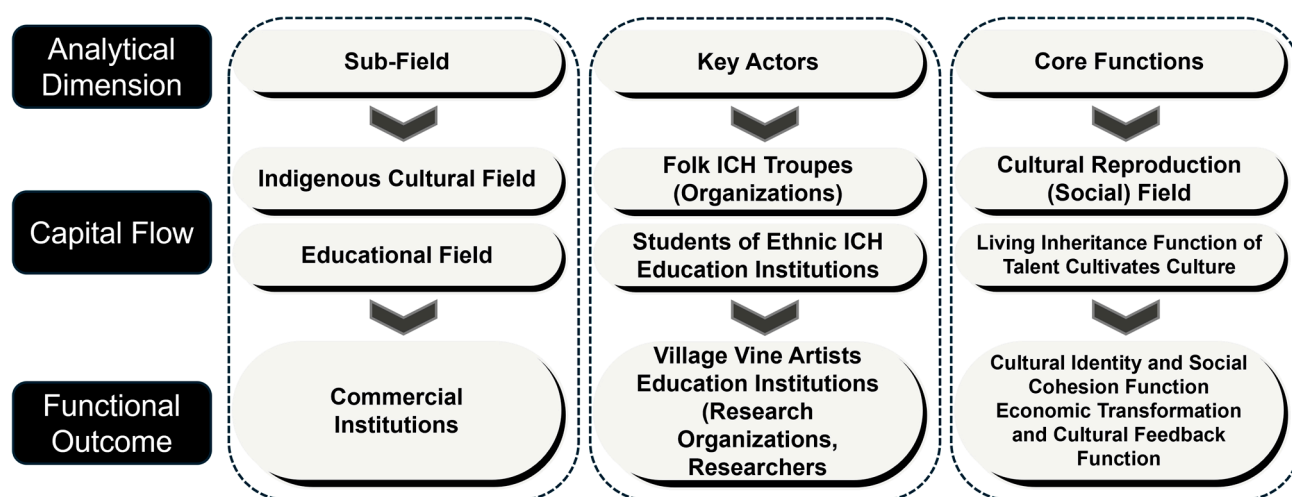


Figure 2. Structure of the ICH skills education field.

From the perspective of actor composition, the principal participants in the ICH skills education field include university teachers of ICH skills (including researchers and affiliated organizations), village artists (ICH inheritors), and university students. University teachers operate within the educational field, yet their activities also extend to the native cultural field—through fieldwork and art repatriation projects—and to the cultural reproduction field via competitions and exhibitions. Through these cross-field engagements, they participate in the transformation of cultural capital. Village artists are rooted in the native cultural

field. At the same time, they intervene in the educational and cultural reproduction fields through teaching, performances, and other collaborative activities, thereby influencing the processes of capital accumulation and transformation. The cultural reproduction field consists of commercial institutions, government departments, and cultural organizations. The cultural and economic activities of these entities are shaped, to a considerable extent, by the involvement of village artists and university teachers. The interaction among these actors across the three fields broadly corresponds to the linked processes of cultural capital transmission, production and transformation, and practical realization and feedback. In addition, national education and cultural administrative departments function as top-level mechanisms for rule-making and resource allocation. Although they do not participate directly in the cross-field flow of capital, they exert an overarching regulatory influence through institutional arrangements and policy guidance.

In terms of function, the ICH skills education field undertakes important missions at multiple levels: as the core carrier of the living inheritance of ICH skills, it shoulders the function of continuation and regeneration of native culture; as a key field for the implementation of educational goals, it has the basic functions of educational reproduction and talent training; as a supporting force connecting cultural reproduction and social practice, it also plays an indirect role in promoting cultural identity, enhancing social cohesion and promoting the transformation of cultural capital into economic capital. This functional multiplicity endows the ICH skills education field with the triple values of cultural inheritance, talent training and “social integration”, and also constitutes the structural root of internal tension and external expectations in this field. It should be noted that a power asymmetry characterizes the relationship between the educational institution field and the native cultural field, as the former holds the authority to confer institutionalized cultural capital—a form of legitimacy that the latter cannot independently provide.

4.2. Power Operation in Capital Flow and Transformation

In the capital transformation network formed by the ICH skills education field, although various capital forms coexist and interact, cultural capital plays a pivotal connecting role. It is not only a bridge connecting the inheritance of native ICH culture, educational resource allocation and institutional norms, but also a key driving force for driving the transformation between various types of capital and maintaining the continuous operation of the field. The cultural capital in the ICH skills education field is manifested in three forms: embodied, objectified and institutionalized, which are interrelated and continuously transformed with the capital forms in native cultural field and cultural reproduction field (Figure 3).

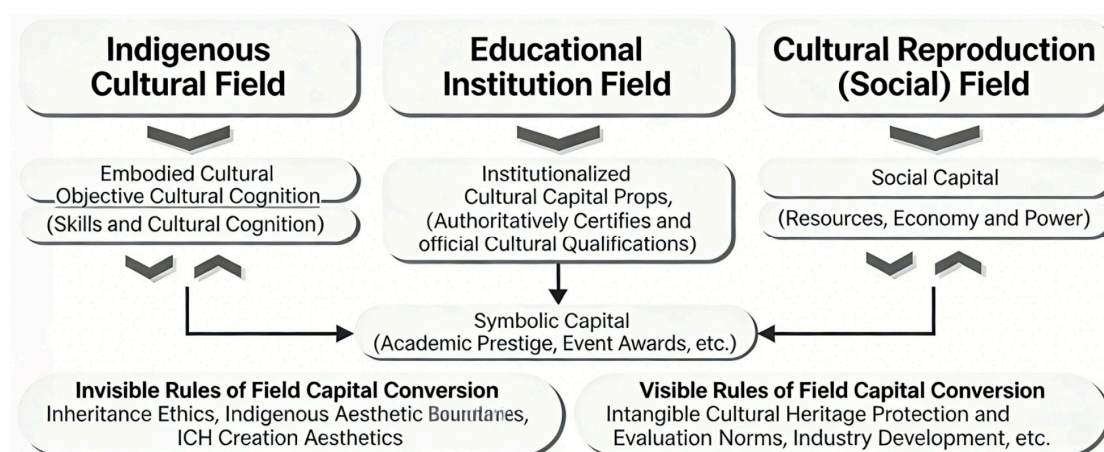


Figure 3. Capital forms and transformation in ICH skills education field.

Specifically, embodied cultural capital refers to ICH skills and cultural cognition internalized in individual physical practice, which constitutes the core content of education and teaching transmission. In the context of ICH skills education, such capital constitutes the core content of teaching transmission. Objectified cultural capital, in Bourdieu's framework, takes the form of materialized or textualized cultural carriers; in the educational setting, these include teaching materials, archival records, and instructional props that support systematic pedagogy. Institutionalized cultural capital refers to cultural qualifications certified by authoritative institutions such as diplomas, certificates and awards, whose essence is to realize the resource exchange of capital through institutionalized confirmation. In addition, symbolic capital runs through the whole process of capital transformation in each field and has circulation between different fields. Symbolic capital is not only a production relation, but also a social relation, which has the characteristics of accumulation and appreciation in the meaning construction of modern society. As symbolic capital accumulated and transformed into discourse power, its formation is closely related to the power status of specific individuals or groups in the field. Therefore, authorities in various fields can often accumulate symbolic capital through long-term practice, and then participate in cross-field capital flow.

Capital flow involves not only the transformation of capital forms and cross-field exchange, but also the adjustment of power structure among capital holders. Bourdieu defines social capital as "the sum of resources, actual or virtual, belonging to an individual or a group, with a durable, more or less institutionalized network of relations with mutual consensus and recognition". In the ICH skills education field, embodied cultural capital can be transformed into institutionalized, social, and symbolic forms.

In this transformation chain, objectified cultural capital helps to establish a legal transformation mechanism by providing concrete cultural references and standards, thus promoting the transformation of embodied cultural capital into institutionalized form. Symbolic capital runs through the whole process and is exchangeable at each transformation node, so that embodied, objectified, institutionalized cultural capital and even social capital can be transformed into symbolic capital under specific conditions.

The whole capital transformation process is restricted by both explicit rules and implicit rules. Although implicit rules do not have a mandatory binding force, they deeply affect the legitimacy and identity of actors in the field, reflecting the implicit power contained in embodied cultural capital in the native cultural field and the educational institution field; explicit rules directly intervene in the production and distribution of cultural capital through institutional mandatory force, reflecting that in the process of transforming cultural capital from embodied form to institutionalized form, it is gradually transformed into institutional power capital in forms of social capital, and then establishes its dominant position in the educational institution and cultural reproduction field. The dynamic transformation and interweaving mechanism of capital not only provides a path for actors to realize capital form transformation and obtain diversified capital, but also essentially reveals the internal power relations on which the ICH skills education field depends in systematic development and contradiction adjustment.

4.3. Habitus Generation and Cultural Capital Reproduction

In the ICH skills education field, the continuous interaction between capital accumulation and field rules promotes the main actors to gradually form an internalized behavioral tendency system that is often at the unconscious level in the long-term practice process, where lies the habitus generation mechanism. Once habitus is formed, it guides actors to obtain and transform various capitals according to the explicit and implicit rules in the field; at the same time, the process of capital accumulation and transformation will

further solidify the tendency, thus strengthening habitus in reverse, and jointly promoting the structural cycle and reproduction of ICH skills cultural capital in intergenerational transmission.

From the perspective of practical subjects, students, teachers (including teaching organizations and researchers) and village artists (ICH inheritors) have formed habitus with their own characteristics based on their positions and practical logic in the field. Students mainly form a habitus shaped by both physical discipline and cultural cognition around cultural capital reception. Teachers focus on effective production and accumulation of capital, and develop a practical tendency to seek balance between field investigation and classroom teaching, which reflects the intermediary habitus of trying to maintain the tension between cultural authenticity and educational standardization while complying with explicit educational norms and implicit cultural rules; the practice of village artists takes “native capital protection” as the core, and their habitus is manifested in the adherence to the integrity of cultural transmission and the continuous judgment of inheritance orthodoxy, aiming to prevent the hollowing out or loss of legitimacy of cultural capital in the transmission process.

In the ICH skills education field, habitus constitutes an indispensable intermediary for capital transformation, accumulation and reproduction. By following their habitus, students can more effectively internalize embodied cultural capital and transform it into institutionalized cultural capital, and then obtain different forms of social capital, completing the preliminary reproduction of capital. Relying on their habitus, teachers cannot only promote the transformation and accumulation of embodied capital into institutionalized and objectified forms, but also exchange them for social capital and symbolic capital, thus forming a cycle of “entering the field-obtaining capital-improving discourse power”, and realizing the large-scale and authentic reproduction of capital in the transmission process. With the help of their habitus, village artists ensure the accuracy and integrity of native cultural transmission, maintain their “orthodox” status, thus win multiple recognition from the people and the government, accumulate social capital and symbolic capital, support the sustainable practice of intergenerational inheritance, and achieve “effective transmission” and deep reproduction of cultural capital.

Different from general education fields, ICH skills education shows the uniqueness of “emotional identity affecting habitus shaping”. On the basis of emotional resonance with regional culture, students and teachers gradually form a “collective cultural identity” in long-term practice, which deeply affects the shaping and evolution of their habitus. In this context, the intervention of “emotional persons” (see Section 3) in the habitus generation process has become a potential path for the field to overcome internal contradictions and achieve dynamic development. The mechanisms outlined above constitute the theoretical lens through which the empirical case is examined. The following section applies this framework to the specific institutional practices observed at Southwest Minzu University.

5. Field Construction: Practical Case Study

5.1. Power Relations Transformation in Education Field

Building on the analytical framework established in Section 4, this section presents the empirical findings from the case study of Southwest Minzu University. The discussion draws on the data sources described in Section 2.3 to examine how the theoretical mechanisms of field structure, capital transformation, and habitus formation manifest in actual institutional practice. In the field of domestic undergraduate art education, the traditional indoctrination teaching mode has long dominated, which often simplifies education into a one-way knowledge transmission process from teachers to students, ignoring the joint exploration and creation of knowledge. In this top-down power field, students are

like passive knowledge containers, and their learning experience and innovation ability are severely limited. The singleness of the teacher evaluation system further strengthens this teacher-centered power structure, and further inhibits the development of students' personality and the cultivation of critical thinking.

However, with the continuous evolution of educational concepts and the continuous innovation of teaching methods, the structure of the power field is undergoing a profound transformation. Taking the unit-based ethnic folk ICH skills curriculum system implemented by the case university investigated in this paper as an example, since the establishment of the undergraduate curriculum in 2009, its teaching mode has significantly moved towards a diversified and open new stage from simple skill transmission and physical training. According to course documentation and observational notes, the class "Tangka Drawing" course adopts a hybrid teaching method, integrating multiple methods such as oral instruction and physical demonstration, task-driven, flipped classroom, and PBL teaching method, and has successfully realized the seamless connection between online and offline teaching. As documented in the course syllabus, a hierarchical and classified comprehensive evaluation system has been designed to align with students' competency development needs (Table 2). This system aims to improve students' knowledge, skill mastery, and overall quality. This teaching mode highlights the advancement of teaching forms, and realizes the interaction of new teaching methods by creating a teaching atmosphere of teacher–student interaction and student–student interaction. Under this framework, the role of teachers has changed from knowledge transmitters to guides and collaborators in the learning process, exploring knowledge side by side with students, and helping learning through organizing discussions, answering doubts and other ways. At the same time, the diversified evaluation mechanism also reduces the singleness of teacher authority, creating a more equal and democratic learning atmosphere.

Table 2. Weight ratio of formative evaluation indicators for Tangka Drawing.

First-Level Indicator	Second-Level Indicator	Proportion (%)
Learning Attitude	Online Visits	4
	Attendance Rate	7
	Class Participation	10
	Teaching Interaction	6
	Discussion and Speech	6
	Online Reading	4
Cultural Knowledge Literacy	Cultural Common Sense Test	5
	ICH Identification and Appreciation	4
	ICH Chapter Knowledge Point Test	4
	Online Homework Submission	4
Practice Ability	Phased Training Summary	5
	Mid-term Exam	8
	Final Exam	12
Learning and Critical Thinking Ability	PBL Project—Culture	6
	PBL Project—Basic Training Summary	7
	PBL Project—Application and Creation	8

In terms of the impact on students' learning experience and interaction methods, the hybrid teaching mode has changed students from passive recipients of knowledge to active explorers of knowledge, improving their learning initiative and participation. In class discussions and keynote speeches, students have the opportunity to express their own views and ideas, enhancing their self-confidence and expression ability. In addition, the introduction of student-to-student evaluation and teacher–student evaluation also makes

students pay more attention to the learning process and achievements of others, promoting mutual learning and reference.

This pedagogical transformation is not an isolated experiment but is institutionally sanctioned and reinforced. The 2024 Undergraduate Talent Training Program of Southwest Minzu University institutionalizes this shift in power relations through a standardized “Graduation Requirement Achievement Matrix” [29]. In this matrix, each course is mapped to specific graduation requirements—ranging from “knowledge application” and “research ability” to “professional ethics” and “communication skills”—with designated levels of contribution (High, Medium, Low). For ICH-related courses, the matrix explicitly links skill training to broader competencies. For instance, the program stipulates that students should develop “profound humanistic literacy and scientific spirit” and “strong cultural confidence and national identity” as core graduation attributes. These explicit requirements ensure that the conferral of institutionalized cultural capital is anchored in a transparent, multi-dimensional evaluation framework. Consequently, the explicit rules of the educational field are reconfigured, mandating that students develop not only embodied skills but also the reflective and critical capacities associated with a transformed habitus. This formal structure redistributes evaluative authority: the conferral of institutionalized cultural capital is no longer based solely on the instructor’s subjective assessment of technical proficiency but is anchored in a transparent, multi-dimensional evaluation framework. Consequently, the explicit rules of the educational field are reconfigured, mandating that students develop not only embodied skills but also the reflective and critical capacities associated with a transformed habitus.

Through the case, it can be seen that the power field in ICH education is undergoing a transformation from the teacher-centered traditional teaching mode to the modern teaching mode that pays more attention to students’ active participation and teacher–student interaction. This reform not only improves students’ autonomous learning ability, but also promotes the development of their higher-order thinking, such as creative thinking and critical thinking. At the same time, it shows that in the school power field, the status distribution is changing from one-way knowledge transmission to two-way knowledge co-construction, which reflects the far-reaching significance and positive impact of educational reform.

5.2. *Teaching Capital: Accumulation, Forms and Interaction*

5.2.1. Capital Accumulation

The teaching behaviors and measures in educational practice follow the systematic logic of dynamic mutual construction of field, capital and habitus. While promoting the improvement of teaching quality and the cultivation of ICH skills talents, they also indirectly or directly promote the dissemination and development of the cultural connotation carried by ICH skills. However, due to the special cultural attributes and emotional structure of ICH skills and their educational practice, the explanatory power of field theory in university education practice has certain limits, especially when dealing with deep structural issues such as cultural inheritance and regional emotion. To more clearly present the specific forms and accumulation methods of capital in the ICH skills education field, this study re-sorts the multi-dimensional capital forms and their contents existing in the case university based on field theory (Table 3).

Table 3. Forms and contents of capital accumulation.

Dimension	Capital Form	Value-Added Object
Cultural Capital	Individual Form	Students' ICH skills knowledge, skills, taste, etc.
	Product Form	Various academic works and artistic works of teachers, students and the college
	Institutional Form	Various (social) qualifications and systems of teachers, students and college
Symbolic Capital	Individual Symbol	Teachers and students with extensive social influence and certain reputation
	Collective Symbol	Colleges as a collective structure with extensive social influence
	Other Symbols	College culture or artistic achievements, awards, etc., with extensive social influence
Social Capital	Capability Network	Construction, mobilization and organization of ICH skills education resources
	Mutual Aid Network	Resource exchange with other ICH skills education organizations
	Exchange Network	Exchange of cultural or other social products with other social organizations or institutions
	Power Network	Role and exchange of social power in the field of ICH skills education
Field Boundary	Local Culture Boundary	Continuous excavation of ICH skills cultural resources
	Local Spirit Boundary	Continuous creation of carriers and media for the identity of the national spirit behind ICH skills

5.2.2. Multiple Capitals Interaction Mechanism

As an education and teaching organization with public attributes, the influence of economic capital in the construction of teaching field and the generation of habitus is relatively limited compared with cultural capital, symbolic capital and social capital. Therefore, the discussion on the university capital interaction mechanism in this part mainly focuses on the accumulation and transformation logic among cultural capital, symbolic capital and social capital. Combined with the historical practice of the case university, the following analysis can be made on the interaction mechanism of the above capitals.

From cultural capital to symbolic capital: The university has built a unique cultural and academic ecosystem around ICH skills education. In teaching practice, teachers improve students' professional quality and artistic appreciation by imparting ICH skills knowledge and skills; teachers and students jointly produce academic works, artistic works and research results in the field of regional culture and teaching research, and gradually improve and optimize the internal education system. The "Top Student Program" launched by the university, an innovative education mode, breaks the barriers of major, height and grade, and encourages students and teachers to participate voluntarily and form a tutor team together. In spare time, small-class teaching, one-on-one guidance and lectures by experts at home and abroad enable students to learn and grow in a free and open environment. This mode not only improves students' professional skills and comprehensive quality, but also lays a solid foundation for their future careers. In this process, a group of excellent ICH inheritors and educators have gradually emerged, accumulating symbolic capital at the individual level. At the same time, as an overall actor, the university has gradually established an extensive academic reputation and social influence by virtue of its outstanding achievements in the field of ICH skills education, realizing the transformation from cultural capital to collective symbolic capital, and bringing value-added effects to the accumulation of symbolic capital of teachers and students.

From symbolic capital to social capital: In the long-term school-running process, the university has cultivated generations of outstanding ICH skills talents by systematically mobilizing cultural capital and social capital, and has won numerous awards in important competitions at home and abroad. These achievements not only reflect the teaching level of teachers, but also significantly improve the overall reputation of the university. In addition, the university frequently undertakes ministerial-level artistic shows and international cultural exchange projects many times, further expanding the external network of its social capital. The accumulation of symbolic capital has enhanced the university attractiveness to high-quality teachers and students, thus forming a virtuous cycle of transforming symbolic capital into social capital.

From social capital to cultural capital: The application of social capital by the university focused on the institutional construction of the internal discipline system in the early

stage, aiming to promote the generation of cultural capital through standardized practice. As the accumulation of social capital shifted from scale expansion to quality improvement, after the internal structure became stable, the university gradually strengthened the integration of external social resources and the expansion of teaching field. For example, through systematic collection of literature materials and in-depth field investigation, the university has obtained rich ICH skills teaching resources, and compiled a series of ethnic ICH skills teaching materials accordingly. At the same time, the university regularly organizes students to carry out field collection in ethnic areas, so that students can deepen their understanding of the origin and social significance of ICH culture through on-site experience. Such practices not only enrich students' individual cultural capital, but also strengthen their cultural subject consciousness and inheritance responsibility, continuously promoting the reproduction of social capital into cultural capital.

The university's strategic engagement with external stakeholders further exemplifies the conversion of social capital into cultural capital. A concrete instance is the university's partnership with the Education Bureau of Ganzi Prefecture, which resulted in a joint agreement to cultivate targeted artistic talents for the region starting in 2014 [30]. This agreement enrolled cohorts of students specifically in Tangka painting and choreography, directly channeling regional cultural demands into the formal curriculum. This institutional network—linking the university with local government and ethnic minority communities—mobilized social capital to secure educational resources and define curricular content. Moreover, the university's designation as a national training base for ICH inheritors since 2015 has enabled it to host multiple training workshops for Tangka practitioners from Aba and Ganzi Prefectures [31]. These workshops bring village-based inheritors into the educational field, where their embodied cultural capital is both transmitted to students and subjected to the university's institutionalized certification. Through these sustained interactions, the university converts its social capital—its network of governmental and community partnerships—into enriched cultural capital: expanded curriculum, diversified teaching resources, and a deepened pool of embodied knowledge. As illustrated in Figure 4, the opening ceremonies of these training workshops visibly demonstrate the cross-field collaboration between the university, local cultural authorities, and community-based inheritors, underscoring the tangible operation of social capital in this educational field.



Figure 4. Institutional activities related to Tangka training and cultural dissemination at Southwest Minzu University: (a) opening ceremony of the second Tibetan Tangka popularization training workshop, as indicated by the banner; (b) opening ceremony of the third Tibetan Tangka advanced training workshop, as indicated by the banner; (c) exhibition view of “Chinese Medicine in Tangka”; (d) workshop

participants observing Tangka creation; (e) detail of Tangka painting in progress; (f) opening ceremony of the “Chinese Medicine in Tangka” exhibition. This institutional initiative brought together university faculty, local cultural officials, and village-based Tangka practitioners from Aba and Ganzi Prefectures, exemplifying the cross-field flow of social capital and the positioning of the university as a central node in the network of ICH transmission. Image courtesy of Southwest Minzu University News Network. Source: [30–32].

In the practical field of ICH skills education, the accumulation of cultural capital provides students with profound cultural heritage and professional skills, the accumulation of social capital provides students with broader development space and opportunities, and the accumulation of symbolic capital enhances the social status and influence of the university. The three promote each other and jointly promote the development of the university and the growth of students.

6. Discussion

6.1. Capital Transformation with “Emotional Persons” Participation

ICH skills education has unique functions in cultural inheritance, and its particularity is not only reflected in the teaching of ICH skills, but also in the transmission of the core values, emotional identity and social norms of local culture. In field theory, the accumulation of cultural capital originates from the process of individual contact and learning with specific cultural forms. As an important carrier of local culture, ICH skills education can vividly display the hidden historical memory, cosmic concept and social structure through various elements such as skill expression, music rhythm and clothing characteristics. Therefore, in the ICH skills education field, students are not only inheritors of skills, but also carriers of cultural symbols. As “emotional persons” with emotional characteristics, students continuously construct their own cultural identity and social identity in the learning process. The deepening of this identity makes ICH skills education present a unique path in capital accumulation.

From the perspective of teaching field expansion, the case university has formed a relatively stable institutional habitus in long-term practice, that is, teachers dynamically adjust teaching strategies and enrich teaching methods according to the actual needs of students and the accumulation of cultural capital, so as to promote the transformation of cultural capital into symbolic capital and social capital. In the teaching field, the participation structure of teachers and students as “emotional persons” and the generation of relevant habitus are still in the process of dynamic shaping. In recent years, the university has carried out relevant explorations in educational practice. For example, in the teaching process, students not only learn ICH skills, but also deeply experience the inherent charm of regional culture through participating in multi-dimensional practices such as field investigation, team collection and folk activities. In this process, students not only enhance their emotional identity and understanding culture depth through cultural experience, but also improve their own cultural capital in practice.

The cultivation of “emotional persons” is institutionally embedded and discursively reinforced. The official news reports on Tangka training programs at Southwest Minzu University consistently employ emotionally resonant language, describing participants as “not disappointing the expectations of the nation and the university” and striving to “contribute to the inheritance and development of ethnic culture” [32]. This discourse frames technical skill acquisition within a narrative of cultural mission and collective identity. Correspondingly, the university’s 2024 talent training program mandates the cultivation of “profound national sentiment” and “a sense of community for the Chinese nation” as overarching educational objectives across all majors [29]. The explicit inclusion of such affective objectives in the formal curriculum demonstrates that the formation of

habitus in this educational field is deliberately steered toward emotional identification. Students are not merely trained in techniques; they are socialized into becoming emotional persons—actors whose practice is legitimated by their demonstrated commitment to cultural heritage and national identity. This emotional investment, validated by institutional discourse, intensifies the authenticity and perceived value of the embodied cultural capital they accumulate.

In future educational practice, how to make the reproduction of cultural capital further promote the generation of habitus related to “emotional persons”, and how to form a circular interaction and mutual shaping with the habitus of the existing teaching system will become an important topic for the current teaching field construction and educational practice development.

6.2. Individual Interaction and Capital Accumulation

Field theory points out that the interaction between field and habitus constitutes the complex interweaving relationship between individual and social environment. This theory not only clarifies the position of individuals in the social structure, but also reveals how the social structure realizes dynamic evolution through individual actions. Bourdieu emphasizes that individual actions are not completely determined by the external social structure, but formed in the interaction between field rules and individual habitus, which constitutes the core mechanism of social practice. In the practice of ICH skills education, as active actors, students’ personal artistic perspectives and learning habits not only affect their own development, but also deeply affect the cultural atmosphere and teaching mode of the field through collective interaction and practice feedback.

The unique artistic perspective and innovation consciousness formed by students in the learning process have injected new vitality into the inheritance and development of ICH skills. In classroom teaching, students are no longer just passive recipients, but actively participate in knowledge co-construction through questioning, discussion, practice and other ways. This interaction not only improves learning effectiveness, but also urges teachers to continuously adjust teaching methods to respond to students’ needs. By participating in social practice projects, students explore new expression forms of ICH skills in the contemporary context through team cooperation and project-based learning. Such innovative practices not only enrich the connotation of ICH art, but also promote the renewal of field culture.

At the same time, the interactive collaboration of students in the field further strengthens the innovation atmosphere. By participating in ICH shows, academic exchanges and club activities, students have accumulated rich social capital, improved their professional ability, and also promoted ideological collision and cultural dialog. This collective interaction not only promotes the growth of individual students, but also promotes the transformation of teachers’ teaching paradigms. Through continuous interaction with students, teachers constantly adjust teaching strategies, introduce innovative methods such as project-based learning and flipped classroom, and enhance students’ autonomous learning ability and practical literacy. The innovation of teaching mode not only improves the learning experience, but also promotes the continuous evolution of field culture, reflecting the dynamic mutual construction between individual actions and field structure.

6.3. Reflection on Capital Appreciation Path

The habitus in ICH skills education field has adaptive characteristics, guiding individuals to perceive, think and act in a way that meets the requirements of the field. However, habitus is not completely passive to adapting to the field, and the behaviors and choices made by individuals through habitus also react upon the operation and development of

the field. The shaping of habitus by symbolic capital and the expansion of the field by social capital all reflect the interactive relationship between field and habitus. The dynamic nature of the relationship between the ICH skills education field and habitus shows that the current development stage should avoid internal opposition and conflict, and instead promote the benign and dynamic development of the educational practice field through the external extension of social capital.

The appreciation and transformation of cultural capital, symbolic capital, and social capital should focus on the expansion of external social capital and the generation of corresponding habitus structure. For example, students gradually build widespread social recognition by participating in domestic and foreign ICH skills competitions, academic exchanges, and cultural display activities. This accumulation of symbolic capital further strengthens their cultural and social identity, enabling them to achieve higher achievements in the art field, and then obtain richer social capital, forming a virtuous cycle. The teacher level is also worthy of attention: teachers guide students to win numerous awards with their professional expertise, and these achievements are transformed into symbolic capital with extensive influence, promoting their career development and the appreciation of various capitals.

The above practices show that at present, when the protection and inheritance of regional ICH culture have achieved remarkable results and the internal teaching system of colleges and universities tends to be stable, the habitus of social capital extending outward to promote the reproduction of cultural capital and symbolic capital has gradually taken shape. How to further interact with other social organizations or fields, and draw on successful experiences of cross-cultural and cross-field exchanges at other institutions, will become an important direction for the future development of ICH skills education practice. This requires the education field to actively build an outward expansion mechanism while maintaining internal stability, and realize the sustainable development of ICH skills education in the contemporary context through the effective circulation of capital and the adaptive adjustment of habitus.

7. Conclusions

This study examined the dynamic interaction of field, capital, and habitus within ICH skills education using Bourdieu's theoretical framework and a case study of Southwest Minzu University. The findings directly answer the two research questions.

First, the ICH skills education field is a composite space where the native cultural, educational institutional, and cultural reproduction fields intersect. Within this field, embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital are sequentially transformed into symbolic and social capital through teaching practices, creative production, and institutional certification. This transformation is regulated by both explicit rules such as evaluation rubrics, and implicit cultural authority.

Second, "emotional persons"—actors whose habitus is infused with regional cultural identity and affective attachment—play an endogenous driving role in capital reproduction. Their practice is legitimated not merely by technical competence but by demonstrated commitment to cultural heritage, which enhances the symbolic value of the capital they accumulate.

These findings demonstrate that ICH skills education is not a simple transmission of techniques but an educational practice with profound significance for cultural reproduction. It reflects both the institutional absorption of traditional culture by the modern education system and the adaptive vitality of regional culture in the contemporary context.

8. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, as a single-case investigation situated within the specific institutional context of Southwest Minzu University, the transferability of the findings to other intangible cultural heritage education settings requires further empirical examination through comparative or multi-case designs. Second, the analysis draws primarily on documentary evidence, teaching artifacts, and observational field notes; the absence of systematic interview data from students and village-based inheritors constrains the capacity to capture the subjective and emotional dimensions of actors' experiences. Third, Bourdieu's framework foregrounds power and capital dynamics while leaving the embodied, sensory, and spiritual aspects of skill transmission less fully addressed, suggesting the value of complementary phenomenological approaches in future research. Finally, the cross-sectional design offers a snapshot of the field at a particular institutional moment, and longitudinal inquiry would be valuable for tracing how the field–capital–habitus configuration evolves in response to policy and curricular change.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

ICH intangible cultural heritage

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