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Integrating Ma Coong (Bru–Van Kieu) cultural values into preschool materials to develop children's socio-emotional competencies in Vietnam

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the current situation and propose directions for integrating Ma Coong (Bru–Van Kieu) cultural values into preschool materials to develop socio-emotional competencies in children. The study employs a survey design combining quantitative and qualitative methods, with the participation of 29 preschool managers and teachers and 166 parents at a preschool facility in a mountainous area. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis, then processed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. The results indicate that core values of Ma Coong culture, such as community spirit, respect for nature, courage, and family cohesion, align with components of socio-emotional competencies and have potential for integration into materials. However, implementation is limited due to a lack of appropriate materials and guidelines. The study proposes integration directions to contribute to the development of socio-emotional competencies and the preservation of cultural identity in preschool education

Keywords: Ma Coong cultural values; Preschool materials; Socio-emotional competencies; Culturally responsive education; Indigenous culture

1. Introduction

Socio-emotional competencies are widely recognized as one of the core foundations for the comprehensive development of children, particularly in the preschool stage - a period that is decisive for the formation of social behaviors, emotional regulation abilities, and the establishment of positive relationships. Research has shown that socio-emotional competencies are closely related to children's readiness for learning and adaptability in school environments (Denham, 2006). Reviews and meta-analyses also affirm that programs supporting the development of socio-emotional competencies have positive impacts on learner's social behaviors, academic outcomes, and psychological health (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). According to UNESCO (2023), preschool education needs to promote children's comprehensive development through meaningful learning experiences, in which the integration of cultural elements is considered an important component to ensure appropriateness and equity in education.

In recent years, culturally sensitive educational approaches and culturally sensitive social-emotional learning have increasingly received attention in educational research and practice. Studies have indicated that the development of socio-emotional competencies is significantly influenced by cultural contexts, and integrating cultural values into educational environments can contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of developing these competencies (Jagers et al., 2019). The OECD report (2024) also emphasizes that socio-emotional skills not only affect academic outcomes but also play an important role in social integration and long-term individual development, while being influenced by cultural and living environment factors.

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From the perspective of socio-cultural development theory, children's development is closely linked to the process of participating in the cultural practices of the community. According to Barbara Rogoff (2003), social interactions in specific cultural contexts play a central role in shaping children's cognitive, social, and emotional competencies. This viewpoint suggests that integrating local cultural values into preschool education not only contributes to preserving cultural identity but also facilitates children's comprehensive development.

In Vietnam, preschool education is oriented towards competency-based development, in which socio-emotional competencies are identified as an important component. However, practice shows that current preschool materials are mainly universal in nature and do not fully reflect the cultural characteristics of local communities, especially in ethnic minority areas. This leads to a lack of connection between educational content and children's cultural contexts, limiting the exploitation of cultural resources in supporting the development of socio-emotional competencies.

In that context, Ma Coong (Bru-Van Kieu) culture contains many values meaningful for the development of socio-emotional competencies, such as community spirit, sharing, and social behavioral norms. However, the integration of these cultural values into preschool materials has not yet been researched and implemented systematically. Although international studies have affirmed the important role of socio-emotional competencies and cultural contexts in children's development, there is still a lack of studies focusing on integrating ethnic minority community cultural values into preschool materials in the Vietnamese context. Therefore, this study is conducted to contribute to clarifying the theoretical and practical basis for integrating Ma Coong cultural values into preschool materials, thereby supporting the development of socio-emotional competencies in children.

2. Research content

2.1. Literature review

Socio-emotional competencies are considered one of the important foundations for the comprehensive development of children, especially in the preschool stage. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2020), SEL is the process through which children develop the ability to recognize and regulate their own emotions, understand and empathize with others, establish and maintain positive relationships, as well as make responsible decisions. This competency framework includes five core components: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Many empirical studies have demonstrated that developing SEL in early childhood is closely linked to positive social adaptation, reduction of negative behaviors, and improvement of academic outcomes in later stages (Denham, 2006; Mahoney, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2018). In particular, these competencies are primarily formed through social interactions, play, and experiences in children's daily living environments, highlighting the important role of educational environments in supporting SEL development (Denham & Brown, 2010). From a policy perspective, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018) also emphasizes that socio-emotional competencies are essential factors contributing to personal development, social integration, and lifelong learning.

In addition to formal educational environments, studies have indicated that cultural contexts play an important role in the development of children's socio-emotional competencies. Culture provides a system of values, norms, and behavioral patterns that shape how children perceive, express, and regulate emotions, as well as how they establish social relationships (Rogoff, 2003). On that basis, culturally responsive education is considered an important approach, emphasizing the integration of learner's cultural elements into the educational process to enhance learning effectiveness and promote comprehensive development (Gay, 2018). Recent research also shows that integrating cultural elements into education contributes to strengthening cohesion, sense of belonging, and socio-emotional competencies in children, especially in multicultural contexts (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Borowski, 2019; Lynch & Simpson, 2021). At the same time, UNESCO (2019) affirms that education linked to indigenous cultural contexts not only contributes to preserving cultural values but also promotes personal identity development, enhances self-confidence, and improves children's social interaction competencies.

In that context, the culture of ethnic minority communities is considered an important educational resource, particularly in supporting the development of socio-emotional competencies in children. The Ma Coong people, belonging to the Bru-Van Kieu ethnic group in Vietnam, have a distinctive cultural life with prominent values such as community spirit, cooperation, sharing, and social behavioral norms based on respect and mutual support (Nguyen, 2016). These values align with the core components of socio-emotional competencies, especially the ability to establish relationships, empathize, and exhibit positive social behaviors. However, existing studies on the Ma Coong people mainly focus on cultural descriptions and preservation, while the exploitation and application of these cultural values in preschool education have not received adequate attention.

The overview of research works shows that, although the role of socio-emotional competencies and culturally responsive education has been clearly affirmed in international studies, the integration of indigenous cultural values into preschool materials to develop socio-emotional competencies in children remains limited, especially in the context of ethnic minority communities. In Vietnam, to date, there has been no research focusing on building and implementing preschool materials integrating Ma Coong cultural values linked to the goal of developing socio-emotional competencies in children, nor empirical evidence on the effectiveness of this approach. This gap highlights the necessity of conducting studies to exploit the potential of indigenous culture in preschool education, contributing to both preserving traditional cultural values and enhancing the effectiveness of developing socio-emotional competencies in children in the current educational context.

2.2. Cultural values of the Ma Coong people and their significance in integrating for the development of socio-emotional competencies in preschool children

2.2.1. Cultural values of the Ma Coong people

The Ma Coong people, an ethnic group belonging to Bru-Van Kieu, reside mainly in the mountainous western region of Quang Tri Province, with a significant concentration in Thuong Trach Commune, located in the core area of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park. This community has a modest population, estimated at a few hundred households, living dispersed across 18 villages in the commune. Tan - Thuong Trach Preschool currently has 320 students, with 12 school sites spread across Thuong Trach Commune. Among them, the Ban Village school site in Thuong Trach Commune was inaugurated in November 2023 to meet the learning needs of children in the area.

The Ma Coong people use the Bru language, belonging to the Mon-Khmer language group in the South Asian language family. In terms of customs, practices, and beliefs, this community shares many similarities with other Bru groups such as Van Kieu, Tria, and Khua, but maintains its own identity, clearly expressed in community activities, festivals, and cultural communication forms. The natural conditions in Thuong Trach Commune are relatively harsh with rugged mountainous terrain, while the economy mainly relies on subsistence agriculture, combined with hunting, gathering, and small-scale livestock farming. Nevertheless, the spiritual life of the Ma Coong people is rich, closely attached to nature, mountains, forests, and village communities, reflecting harmony between the living environment and traditional cultural values.

The Ma Coong community in Thuong Trach Commune possesses many distinctive cultural values, which can be classified into three main groups:

First, material cultural values. The Ma Coong people live in traditional stilt houses, with simple structures suitable for the mountainous climate. Clothing is mainly hand-woven from cotton fibers and dyed with natural colors. Handicrafts such as weaving, basketry, and forging are still maintained, though somewhat fading, reflecting the community's traditional skills and aesthetics. Cuisine is closely tied to forest and mountain products, typical examples including bamboo-tube rice, grilled stream fish, c n wine, and dishes made from cassava, corn, and forest vegetables. Community meals during festivals not only provide nutrition but also express the spirit of cohesion and sharing in the community.

Second, spiritual cultural values. The spiritual life of the Ma Coong people is based on polytheistic beliefs, believing in the presence of spirits in mountains, forests, rivers, streams, and trees. The community maintains many traditional agricultural rituals such as offerings for new rice, rain-praying ceremonies, and forest worship, aiming for bountiful harvests and peaceful lives. Notably, the Drum-Beating Festival, held on the full moon night of the first lunar month each year, was recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2019, reflecting aspirations for fertility, favorable crops, and harmony with nature, while affirming the unique cultural identity of the Ma Coong community amidst the Truong Son mountain range.

Third, social cultural values. The social structure of the Ma Coong people is based on strong village community relationships, governed by village elders - individuals with prestige and experience. Community behavioral rules emphasize solidarity, mutual support, respect for the elderly, and care for children, creating a sustainable ethical foundation. Communication culture stresses sincerity, openness, valuing promises, and hospitality. In collective activities, the sounds of panpipes, gongs, and xoang dances become symbols of connection, joy, and community vitality.

2.2.2. Significance of integrating Ma Coong cultural values in developing socio-emotional competencies for preschool children

The cultural values of the Ma Coong people contain many profound humanistic elements, which can become important resources in developing socio-emotional competencies for preschool children. In the current educational context,

incorporating indigenous culture into nurturing, care, and educational activities not only helps children develop harmoniously in emotions and society but also contributes to preserving and disseminating ethnic cultural identity in the community (Nguyen et al, 2023; Dam, 2015).

First, the traditional cultural values of the Ma Coong people, expressed through the drum-beating festival, singing, dancing, and folk storytelling, create meaningful socio-cultural contexts for the emotional development of preschool children. Through participation in culturally oriented social interactions, children have opportunities to experience, recognize, and express emotions appropriate to community norms. At the same time, values such as cohesion, love, and respect contribute to nurturing positive emotions and empathy competencies, helping children gradually regulate emotions and behaviors according to social expectations. Therefore, integrating Ma Coong cultural values into preschool education plays an important role in forming and consolidating competencies in recognizing, expressing, and regulating emotions, creating a foundation for the development of socio-emotional competencies in early childhood.

Second, Ma Coong cultural values contribute to promoting the development of communication skills, cooperation, and community spirit in preschool children. The characteristic community life based on solidarity, sharing, and mutual support creates important social models for children's social learning process. When integrated into educational activities through folk games and group activities, these values provide opportunities for children to practice communication, coordination, and working towards common goals. This process contributes to forming a sense of responsibility, community awareness, and essential social skills, thereby enhancing children's adaptability to learning and social environments.

Third, the traditional cultural values of the Ma Coong people contribute to forming compassionate qualities, respect, and empathy in preschool children. Cultural norms such as respecting elders, loving children, and mutual support create important social models for the development of children's emotions and social behaviors. When these elements are integrated into education through folk stories and morally meaningful educational situations, children have opportunities to recognize and internalize values such as gratitude, respect, and compassion. This process contributes to developing empathy competencies, promoting caring and sharing behaviors, and forming positive social behaviors, thereby creating an important foundation for the development of socio-emotional competencies and personality in early childhood.

Fourth, integrating the indigenous cultural values of the Ma Coong people into preschool education contributes to enhancing cultural identity and self-confidence in children. Through participation in learning and play activities linked to the community's traditional cultural elements, children have opportunities to form understanding and pride in their origins, thereby positively developing personal cultural identity. At the same time, learning in familiar cultural contexts helps children feel safe, recognized, and a sense of belonging to the community, thereby promoting self-confidence and active participation in social activities. This process not only contributes to forming attitudes of respect for cultural diversity but also enhances children's adaptability in multicultural educational environments, which is particularly meaningful for ethnic minority children.

Fifth, integrating the indigenous cultural values of the Ma Coong people contributes to improving the effectiveness of preschool education in a culturally appropriate direction. When educational content and forms are linked to familiar cultural contexts, children tend to participate more actively and with greater interest in the learning process. At the same time, this approach creates conditions to strengthen connections between schools, families, and communities, thereby forming a consistent and meaningful educational environment for children. As a result, socio-emotional competencies are developed naturally, continuously, and sustainably, suitable to children's cultural characteristics and living contexts.

Thus, integrating Ma Coong cultural values into preschool education contributes to promoting the development of children's socio-emotional competencies, including communication abilities, cooperation, empathy, and emotional regulation, while consolidating cultural identity and self-confidence. This indicates that integrating indigenous culture is not only an effective approach in personality education but also meaningful in preserving and promoting ethnic cultural identity. These results also emphasize the role of coordination between schools, families, and communities, along with appropriate pedagogical orientations, to transform cultural values into meaningful educational content for preschool children.

2.3. Current status of integrating Ma Coong cultural values into preschool materials to develop children's socio-emotional competencies

2.3.1. Research methods

The study was conducted at Tan - Thuong Trach Preschool, Thuong Trach Commune, Quang Tri Province, a mountainous area where over 95% of children are Bru-Van Kieu, mainly from the Ma Coong group, typical for preschool education contexts in ethnic minority communities. The survey aims to assess teacher's and parent's perceptions, determine the level of Ma Coong cultural integration in educational activities, and analyze difficulties and support needs in implementation.

The study uses a cross-sectional survey design with convenience sampling, including 166 parents and 29 managers and teachers at the research facility. Data were collected from September 2025 to February 2026 using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, consisting of four content groups: perceptions, implementation levels, difficulties, and support needs. The tool was validated by experts and pilot-tested to ensure content validity. Survey participation was voluntary and ensured confidentiality and anonymity.

Data were checked, coded, and processed using SPSS 26.0 software. Descriptive statistics, including mean (Mean) and standard deviation (SD), were used to assess agreement levels and interpreted on five levels from very low to very high.

2.3.2. Reliability of the scale

The scale was constructed based on the CASEL (2020) social-emotional learning competency framework, combined with studies by Susanne A. Denham (2006) and the OECD (2018) global competency framework. On that basis, observed variables were selected, adjusted to suit the research context, and designed on a 5-point Likert scale.

The reliability of the scale was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to evaluate internal consistency. The results show that the scale with 30 observed variables has a Cronbach's Alpha of $\alpha = 0.968$, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70 as recommended by Joseph F. Hair Jr. et al. (2018), indicating very high reliability. At the same time, the corrected item-total correlation coefficients all meet requirements, and the Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted does not increase significantly. Therefore, the scale ensures reliability and is used for subsequent analyses.

2.3.3. Research results and discussion

Table 1 Descriptive statistics on preschool teacher's perceptions, current status, views, and readiness levels in integrating Ma Coong cultural values into materials to develop children's socio-emotional competencies

Survey content	N	MEAN	SD
Perceptions of the role of SEL in preschool education			
Socio-emotional competencies are very important in preschool education	29	4.62	0.56
Children need to practice communication, cooperation, sharing in activities	29	4.59	0.57
Education on empathy and respect for differences is necessary	29	4.55	0.57
Cultural experience activities help enhance SEL	29	4.59	0.50
Children's socio-emotional skills			
Children communicate with peers and adults	29	2.97	0.68
Children cooperate in joint activities	29	3.03	0.68
Children know how to share toys and items	29	3.07	0.70
Children respect peers and adults	29	3.41	0.63
Children know empathy (comforting, supporting...)	29	3.24	0.69
Children know how to manage emotions in conflicts	29	2.62	0.73
Ma Coong cultural values for sel development			
Ma Coong culture contains many educational values	29	4.59	0.63

Young children need to learn about ethnic minority cultures	29	4.59	0.50
Cultural activities (festivals, music, games) can be incorporated into the classroom	29	4.52	0.57
Indigenous cultural education contributes to preserving ethnic identity	29	4.66	0.48
Ma Coong culture can help children practice communication skills	29	4.41	0.57
Ma Coong community activities can enhance cooperation – sharing	29	4.41	0.63
Values of respecting elders and traditions help develop respectful attitudes	29	4.38	0.68
Indigenous cultural experiences help children develop empathy	29	4.48	0.51
Integrating Ma Coong culture into preschool materials			
People believe it is necessary to integrate Ma Coong culture into materials	29	4.52	0.63
Should integrate through folk storytelling	29	4.55	0.51
Should integrate through ethnic music – instruments	29	4.66	0.48
Should integrate through folk games	29	4.55	0.51
Should integrate through festival activities – cultural experiences	29	4.55	0.57
Integrated content should be divided by age groups (3–4; 4–5; 5–6)	29	4.52	0.63
Difficulties and challenges			
Lack of Ma Coong cultural materials suitable for children	29	4.45	0.57
Teachers lack knowledge about Ma Coong culture	29	4.24	0.69
Parents have not paid attention to cultural education	29	4.41	0.50
Difficult to determine content suitable for 3–6-year-old children	29	4.41	0.50
No visual illustrative materials (images, videos, instruments)	29	4.38	0.49
Teacher's readiness for integration			
Who is ready to participate in training on Ma Coong culture	29	4.69	0.60
Who is ready to use cultural materials in the classroom	29	4.59	0.57

The research results show that preschool teachers have a very high level of perception regarding the role of socio-emotional competencies in preschool education, with mean scores ranging from 4.55 to 4.62 and low standard deviations ($SD = 0.50-0.57$). This result reflects high consensus among teachers on the importance of developing socio-emotional skills in children, such as communication, cooperation, empathy, and respect for differences. This finding indicates that teachers have a favorable perceptual foundation for implementing SEL educational activities in practice.

However, in contrast to the high level of teacher's perceptions, the level of children's socio-emotional skill manifestations only reaches an average level ($M = 2.62-3.41$, $SD = 0.63-0.73$). In particular, emotion management skills in conflict situations have the lowest mean score ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 0.73$), indicating this is an area with many limitations. This result shows the existence of a gap between teacher's perceptions and children's actual manifestations, while suggesting that the organization of SEL educational activities in the research context may not yet be truly effective or systematically implemented.

Regarding the role of indigenous culture, teachers highly evaluate the value of Ma Coong culture for socio-emotional competency development, with mean scores ranging from 4.38 to 4.66. In particular, the content of indigenous cultural education contributing to preserving ethnic identity achieves the highest mean score ($M = 4.66$, $SD = 0.48$). This result shows that teachers clearly recognize the potential of indigenous culture not only in preserving traditional values but also in supporting the development of socio-emotional competencies in children, such as communication, cooperation, and empathy.

In addition, teachers express a high level of agreement with integrating Ma Coong culture into preschool materials, with mean scores from 4.52 to 4.66. Highly rated integration forms include music, folk storytelling, games, and festival

experience activities. This indicates that teachers highly value the role of cultural experience activities in supporting the development of socio-emotional competencies in preschool children.

Nevertheless, the study also identifies some significant difficulties in implementation, including lack of suitable materials ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.57$), limitations in teacher's cultural knowledge ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.69$), and lack of family support ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.50$). These difficulties suggest that factors related to resources and professional support may be important barriers to integrating indigenous culture into preschool education.

Notably, despite existing difficulties, teachers still demonstrate a high level of readiness to participate in training ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 0.60$) and use cultural materials in educational activities ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.57$). This result shows that teachers have a positive attitude towards integrating indigenous culture and are ready to engage in related professional development activities.

Overall, the research results indicate that teachers have positive perceptions, highly value the role of Ma Coong culture, and demonstrate high readiness for integration into preschool education. However, practical implementation may be affected by limitations in materials and professional support. This highlights the necessity of developing appropriate materials and enhancing teacher training to improve the effectiveness of integrating indigenous culture in educating socio-emotional competencies for preschool children.

Table 2 Parent's perceptions, attitudes, and readiness levels for collaboration in integrating Ma Coong cultural values into socio-emotional competency education for children

Survey content	N	MEAN	SD
Ma Coong cultural values			
The Ma Coong people have a spirit of solidarity, attachment, and mutual support in daily life	166	4.57	0.62
The family holds a central role in the spiritual life of the Ma Coong people	166	4.49	0.67
Mother plays an important role in caring for, raising, and educating children	166	4.51	0.65
Cultural values and traditional customs are maintained and passed down through generations in the family	166	4.48	0.69
Ma Coong children are educated through labor, daily activities, and real experiences with the family	166	4.42	0.47
Children's socio-emotional skills			
The child knows how to greet, say thank you, apologize	166	3.67	0.81
The child knows how to share toys or food with peers	166	3.54	0.83
The child cooperates in group work	166	3.61	0.79
The child knows how to control emotions	166	3.58	0.85
The child knows how to care for and comfort others	166	3.55	0.88
Parent's perceptions of ma coong culture			
Ma Coong culture has many beautiful features that need to be preserved	166	4.54	0.78
Cultural activities like festivals, singing, games need to be introduced to children	166	4.53	0.81
The family can help the child learn about Ma Coong culture	166	4.53	0.79
Cultural experiences help children communicate more confidently	166	4.47	0.70
Festivals and community activities help children learn cooperation and sharing	166	4.46	0.74
Children learn respect for elders through traditional culture	166	4.42	0.75
Indigenous cultural activities help children become more empathetic and loving	166	4.40	0.82
Level of agreement when the school integrates Ma Coong culture into the classroom			

Parents support the school incorporating Ma Coong culture into learning activities	166	4.49	0.67
Parents want their child to learn through folk storytelling	166	4.41	0.81
Parents want their child to experience playing ethnic instruments and singing.	166	4.43	0.74
Parents want their child to participate in Ma Coong folk games	166	4.40	0.80
Parents want the school to organize cultural festival activities for children	166	4.48	0.72
Parent's concerns and worries			
Being concerned that cultural content may be too difficult for children	166	4.25	0.89
Parents do not yet understand enough about Ma Coong culture to support my child	166	4.20	0.94
The family lacks documents/images to guide the child	166	4.39	0.77
Parents want clear, easy-to-use materials for young children	166	4.41	0.83
Parent's level of participation support			
Being ready to collaborate with teachers in cultural activities	166	4.48	0.75
Being ready to attend festivals or cultural activities with my child	166	4.51	0.66
Parents can provide suggestions or share cultural experiences with the school	166	4.47	0.74
Cultural values of the Ma Coong people			
The Ma Coong people have a spirit of solidarity, attachment, and mutual support in daily life	166	4.40	0.78
The family holds a central role in the spiritual life of the Ma Coong people	166	4.40	0.82
Mothers play an important role in caring for, raising, and educating children	166	4.46	0.78
Cultural values and traditional customs are maintained and passed down through generations in the family	166	4.42	0.82
Ma Coong children are educated through labor, daily activities, and real experiences with the family	166	4.48	0.78

The results in Table 2 show that parents in Quang Tri have a very high evaluation of Ma Coong cultural values, with mean scores ranging from 4.42 to 4.57 and relatively low standard deviations ($SD = 0.47-0.69$). This reflects strong consensus and unified perceptions among parents regarding the core characteristics of traditional culture, especially community solidarity ($M = 4.57, SD = 0.62$) and the family's role in child education ($M = 4.49, SD = 0.67$). In contrast, parent's evaluations of children's socio-emotional skills only reach a moderately high average level ($M = 3.54-3.67, SD = 0.79-0.88$), indicating that competencies such as sharing, cooperation, and emotion control have not yet developed commensurate with the educational potential from the indigenous cultural environment.

In addition, parent's perceptions of the role of Ma Coong culture in child education reach a very high level ($M = 4.40-4.54, SD = 0.70-0.82$), showing that parents believe cultural activities contribute to promoting self-confidence, cooperation abilities, and empathy in children. The level of agreement with integrating culture into the educational program is also very positive ($M = 4.40-4.49, SD = 0.67-0.81$), reflecting widespread support for forms such as folk storytelling, games, and traditional festivals.

However, parents also express some significant concerns, particularly the lack of full understanding of culture ($M = 4.20, SD = 0.94$) and lack of supporting materials ($M = 4.39, SD = 0.77$), indicating an urgent need for appropriate guidance documents. Nevertheless, parent's readiness to participate remains very high ($M = 4.47-4.51, SD = 0.66-0.75$), demonstrating great potential in establishing collaboration between families and schools.

Overall, the results affirm that parents not only highly value traditional cultural values but are also ready to actively participate in the educational process. However, the gap between parent's positive perceptions and the level of children's socio-emotional skill development highlights the necessity of systematically designed cultural integration programs, while enhancing specific support and guidance for parents to sustainably promote educational effectiveness.

2.4. Proposals for principles of integrating Ma Coong cultural values into preschool materials

Based on the theoretical foundation and survey results on teacher's and parent's readiness levels and the current status of material use, the study proposes some solutions to integrate Ma Coong cultural values into preschool materials to promote the development of children's socio-emotional competencies. Previous studies affirm that culturally responsive education plays an important role in supporting children's emotional and social development, especially in ethnic minority community contexts (Rogoff, 2003; Gay, 2018).

First, develop a system of materials integrating Ma Coong cultural values. It is necessary to design and supplement materials reflecting the cultural characteristics of the Ma Coong community, including folk tales, songs, games, images of festivals, clothing, and community activities. These materials need to be constructed in line with socio-emotional competency development goals, creating opportunities for children to recognize and express emotions, practice communication, cooperation, and exhibit positive social behaviors. The use of culturally appropriate materials contributes to increasing the meaningfulness of learning activities, promoting children's participation and sense of belonging (Gay, 2018; UNESCO, 2019).

Second, integrate Ma Coong cultural values into educational activities in an experiential direction. Cultural elements need to be incorporated into daily educational activities such as literature activities, music, role-playing games, and group activities. Through activities like folk storytelling, festival simulations, and community games, children have opportunities to experience social norms, thereby developing communication, cooperation, empathy, and emotional regulation abilities. This experience-based approach aligns with the socio-cultural learning perspective, emphasizing the role of social interactions in children's emotional and social competency development (Denham et al., 2012; Dam, 2015).

Third, enhance teacher's capacities in exploiting and using indigenous cultural materials. It is necessary to organize training programs to improve teacher's awareness and skills in selecting, designing, and using materials integrating Ma Coong culture. Research shows that teacher's competencies in implementing culturally responsive education directly influence the effectiveness of developing children's socio-emotional competencies (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Gay, 2018).

Fourth, strengthen coordination between schools, families, and communities. Integrating indigenous culture requires the participation of parents and local communities in providing cultural materials, organizing experience activities, and building culturally appropriate educational environments. Coordination among stakeholders contributes to creating a consistent educational environment and supporting children's comprehensive development (Epstein, 2011; UNESCO, 2019).

Fifth, build educational environments suitable to local cultural contexts. Educational environments reflecting familiar cultural elements help children feel safe, enhance self-confidence, and promote positive social behaviors. This is particularly important for ethnic minority children, as culturally appropriate educational environments can effectively support socio-emotional competency development (Rogoff, 2003; Gay, 2018).

Sixth, orient cultural integration in developing preschool programs and materials. Educational institutions need to systematically integrate indigenous cultural content into educational plans and material development, suitable to the preschool education program and local cultural contexts. This is considered an important approach to ensuring equity and quality in ethnic minority children's education (UNESCO, 2019).

In summary, the research results show that integrating Ma Coong cultural values into preschool materials needs to be implemented through developing culturally appropriate materials, organizing experience activities, enhancing teacher capacities, and strengthening coordination between schools, families, and communities. These solutions contribute to building culturally responsive educational environments, thereby supporting the development of socio-emotional competencies and children's comprehensive development.

3. Conclusion

This study has systematized the theoretical and practical basis for integrating Ma Coong cultural values into preschool materials to promote socio-emotional competencies in ethnic minority children. The results show that core values of Ma Coong culture, including community spirit, sharing, respect, and cooperation, are compatible with SEL components and can be exploited as important educational resources to support children's positive emotional and social behavior development in culturally appropriate educational environments.

Survey data also show that teachers and parents have a high level of agreement with integrating indigenous culture into preschool education. However, children's SEL competencies currently only reach an average level, and practical implementation faces difficulties due to lack of appropriate materials, limitations in teacher's cultural exploitation capacities, and lack of parent support documents. This reflects the gap between the educational potential of indigenous culture and implementation practice.

On that basis, the study proposes directions for developing culturally integrated materials, enhancing experience activity organization, and improving teacher's capacities, while promoting coordination between schools, families, and communities. These directions contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of developing socio-emotional competencies in children and supporting the preservation of ethnic minority community intangible cultural heritage in the globalization context.

Academically, the study contributes to supplementing the theoretical basis for culturally responsive preschool education in Vietnam and providing practical evidence for developing programs and materials integrating indigenous cultural elements, towards children's comprehensive and sustainable development.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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