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Effects of Intercultural Music Courses on Ethnic Identity, Intergroup Attitudes and National Identity Among Adolescent Students from a Multi-Ethnic Area in China: A Mix-Methods Intervention Study

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Abstract

Drawing on the musical identity theory and the four dimensions of ethnic identity, this mixed-methods intervention study has explored the impact of an intercultural music course on ethnic identity, intergroup attitudes and national identity among junior high school students from Yi, Han, Mongolian and Tibetan ethnicities in a multi-ethnic area in China. The study involved collecting qualitative data before, during and after the intervention (the intercultural music courses). In the initial phase of the study, collected qualitative data were collected to explore potential barriers before the intervention began. Then during and after the trial, further qualitative data were collected (i.e., observation, interview, focus group and reflective dairies) to understand the participant students' experiences with the intervention. At the baseline, at the mid-point of the trial, and at the end of it, quantitative data were collected using three questionnaire surveys.

The quantitative results showed that the intercultural music course (intervention group 2 and 3) significantly enhanced the ethnic identities, intergroup attitudes and national identity of junior high school students from four ethnicities, while the regular music courses (intervention group 1) and non-music intervention (control group) did not significantly affect ethnic identity, intergroup attitudes and national identity. The qualitative findings suggested that the ethnic music and native languages, the local music teacher and culture bearers, the discussions, interactions and close relationship between students and teacher, and the collective musical engagement might play an important role in the construction of ethnic identity, intergroup attitudes and national identity for the participant students from Yi, Han, Mongolian and Tibetan ethnic groups.

Ultimately, this study argues how to balance educational resources and realize educational equity in multi-ethnic areas in China, and explores the potential of developing intercultural music courses in similar contexts. Furthermore, this study develops three analytical frameworks from ethnic identity, intergroup attitudes and national identity respectively, and discusses the theoretical and practical implication of them to the future research.