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Nationalism and Multiculturalism in Asian Country's Music Education: Focus on South Korea, Japan, Singapore, and China

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Abstract

Most Asian countries started music education from the mid-19th century through schools built by Western Christian missionaries. The music education was centered on Western music until the middle of the 20th century and was a tool for religious ceremonies. However, since 1950, music education in Asian countries has increased interest in their own traditional music, and recently, music education has emphasized their own ethnic music and multicultural music.

China considers the harmony of Chinese community music and multicultural music in music education(Wai-Chung Ho, 2016, 40). Japan is shifting its focus from international education to national education by mandating the teaching of four Patriot Songs every year in Japanese elementary school music textbooks(文部科學省, 2017, 54). And Singapore strengthens nationalism by setting up National Education Songs and incorporating them into music textbooks(Jong Mo Yang, 2014, 28). In addition, Korea emphasizes national music by maintaining a high proportion of traditional music in music textbooks at 32.3%(Hyun Jung. Kim, 2014, 133). In music education, the issues of ethnicity and multiculturalism have been used to raise national identity in the native language of music (Dong Eon Rho, 1991; Cheng-Ji Jin, 2002) and to have basic skills as citizens of the state (Jong Mo Yang, 2014).

The purpose of this study is to compare and understand aspects of nationalism and multiculturalism in Asian countries' music education. Music is a medium that expresses people's thoughts and feelings, and music used in a particular country contains the thoughts and feelings of certain people, which can be music unique to the nation, and make it possible to have a national identity through music. This study notes this point.

The content of this study is to compare and analyze the music of music textbooks in various countries. The research subjects are music curriculum and music textbooks from four countries including Korea, Japan, Singapore, and China.

The conclusions of this study are as follows. First, Ho & Law (2009, 439) reconfirmed the conflict between nationalism and multiculturalism found in Chinese music education. Second, Korea compares the proportion of traditional music and music in the world among Asian countries, balancing nationalism and multiculturalism in music education. Third, Singapore is a multi-ethnic country, where Chinese, Indian, and Malaysian folk songs appear as nationalist music, emphasizing national music to reinforce national consciousness. The music of the world deals with European music, American music, and some Asian music. Fourth, Japan shows that traditional music is limited, but compulsorily contains music that can reinforce national consciousness.