Spoken Paper

Cultural diversity or core culture? Politics and German music education

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Global migration challenges countries worldwide. The right of asylum competes with the fear of citizens to lose economic privileges and cultural identity. While this is certainly an international phenomenon, each country faces its very specific challenges, based on its history and political situation, including its educational institutions. In Germany, intercultural education and intercultural music education have for more than three decades tried to provide concepts and methods to offer spaces for intercultural encounters and learning. However, the notion of Germany as a non-immigration country has never changed. Rather, the educational vision of cultural inclusion and diversity was facing competition in terms of the notion of core culture (Leitkultur). This concept describes the idea of a guiding German culture, based on significant cultural and political ideas. The core culture tries to define what being German politically and culturally means, what every German citizen needs to know, particularly if someone has a migrant background (Migrationshintergrund). Leitkultur (core culture) - although it represents a contested notion and the debate is still going about what should be part of it - is an important point of reference for policy and schooling in Germany. This has been particularly challenging for intercultural music education which aims at fostering cultural diversity and integration and is a rather marginalized part of German music education. Even though the German term Leitkultur (core culture) implies that this issue is a German phenomenon, it rather represents an international development. In many countries worldwide, defining what the core culture is and putting the interests of the home country first, has become most common nowadays and supports politically the marginalization of cultural diversity. This presentation investigates from an interdisciplinary perspective some aspects of the tension between the
notion of a German core culture and acknowledging cultural diversity in German music education, with an emphasis on the political context. It thereby addresses aspects of inclusion and exclusion in music education, but also the connection between politics and music education. Since countries worldwide are struggling with similar issues, the insights from the German situation could be useful for the global music education community.