“KOREAN” SCHOOLS AND ZAINICHI IDENTITY IN JAPAN

Cody Purchase
Thesis:
Recent cuts to funding are unconstitutional; action to formalize, equalize, and sustain educational funding is necessary.

Conclusion:
Issue is representative of larger struggle for acceptance of ethnic identities and narratives; recognition of variety within Zainichi identities is essential.
History of “zainichi”

• 2 million Koreans came/were forced to Japan
• Today about 466,000 permanent residents
  • Number shrinks due to “naturalization” and emigration
• Diachronical identity
  • Generational differences
• Loss of any citizenship following WWII
• Zainichi organizations founded “Korean” schools
“ZAINICHI” identity

- Comprised of generations of ethnic Koreans
  - Can be characterized by generational differences

- Associated language unique to demographic

- Hugely varied
  - accept and embrace along spectrum
    - political activism, festivals, pop culture icons
    - denial of, ignorance of
    - “naturalization,” adaptation of/to Japanese names

- Well known in Japan as referring to all ethnic Koreans
朝鮮学校 (chousen gakko)  “Korean School”

- Recent complete funding cuts from national gov’t

- Self-determined curriculum and textbooks
  - History, geography, language
  - Unique uniforms

- Classification as vocational school (clause 83)
  - Previously, unofficially supplied with financial assistance from national gov’t

- <80 schools established since end of WWII
  - Zainichi child enrollment: public > chousen gakko
  - Numbers decreasing
Exclusion from cost-free education

• Chousen gakko ONLY

• Prevalent reasoning includes
  • Fiscal issue
  • Anti-Japanese curriculum
  • Association with N.Korea
  • “vocational school”
  • Inability to verify curriculum
Why exclusion is unjust

- Subjective assessment of “anti-Japanese” curriculum
- Opinions inform interpretation of law
- Only chousen gakko excluded = clear discrimination
- Three fundamental rules of constitution
  - Democracy
  - Respect of fundamental human rights
  - Pacifism (defense only)
- Support for education does not equal support for N.Korea
- Availability of curriculum through subsidy applications/education licensing
- Status of funding for “international schools” etc.
What chousen gakko can do

• Funding from Zainichi organizations and local governments

• Navigation of historical lessons free of national control
  • Curriculum and textbook freedom of choice
  • Education that includes historical narratives/events

• Foster awareness of identity
  • One’s own (zainichi)
  • Of identity diversity within Japan
  • Of issues associated with identity acceptance

• “Same or higher academic ability” [upon graduation from high school, compared with Japanese public graduates]
What if chousen gakko did not exist?

- Possibility of reinforcing discrimination
- Loss of vessel for cultural/historical narrative
- Loss of voice against unjust practices
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