“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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