

The Association between Education and Society: The Educational Struggle for Korean Identity in Japan 1945-1948

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This study attempts to elucidate the idea that education reflects the contemporary social structure. This inference is focused on the educational struggle for Korean identity led by the Korean Federation in Japan (KFJ) during 1945-1948. The KFJ disseminated the educational movement for Koreans in Japan (Zainichi). The General Head Quarters (GHQ) suppressed Korean identity education (KIE) and tried to disrupt the activities of the KFJ. KIE was identified and destroyed during the HanShin educational struggle as part of the conflict with the GHQ. However, HanShin movement survived to form the basis for the new start of the Korean educational movement in Japan and has served as the cornerstone of KIE. This case elucidates the ways in which education is strongly associated with the social structure and the status quo.

Key words: education, society, HanShin educational struggle, Korean identity education, Korean Federation in Japan

Introduction

Education is a reflection of the social structure; history is the communication between the past and present and gives birth to future directions. However, little research has been published on the issue.

The aim of this study is to evaluate the idea that education reflects the contemporary social structure and status quo. To evaluate and test this notion, the cases of the educational struggles for Korean identity, led by the Korean Federation in Japan (KFJ)¹ from 1945 to 1948 were selected.

Approximately two million Koreans were residing in Japan as workers and students on August 15, 1945 (Wagner,

1951). Opportunities to learn to read and write in Korean during the era of Japanese imperialism during 1910 – 1945 were largely denied or absent. After the Japanese surrender in 1945, the American Military Administration (AMA) started to rule Japan. Implicit in the AMA's early democratization program was the emancipation of Koreans from the oppressive and discriminatory controls under which they had lived in during the occupation (Wagner, 1951). Soon, they adopted the ruling idea that the social structure and system should be as the same as that under the Japanese system except for the imperial system and the issue of Korean identity education². Koreans in Japan (Zainichi Chosenjin: Zainichi) were swept up in the wave of euphoria accompanying the liberation and maintained a strong desire to implement Korean identity education. They organized the KFJ in 1945 and disseminated the Korean identity educational movement for Koreans throughout Japan. During this process, the HanShin educational movement became part of the conflict between KFJ and the General Head Quarters of the AMA (GHQ).

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In terms of Korean identity education in Japan, some results have been reported: an assimilation concept based on the historical material approach (Ozawa, 1988); a chronological approach (Kim, 2002); a field survey approach (Yang, 1994; Park, 1979; Eo, 1998); and an approach with the issue of North Korea at the fore (Cho, Ryou, & Han, 2002) have all been used.

To make a logical inference regarding the links between education and society, this interpretation is based on the holistic view of the Korean identity encompassing South and North Korea. It applies the chronological approach using previous primary materials and survey materials: the description of the administrative and societal conditions in Japan and the review of primary materials on their activities according to the three-stage concept of the KFJ (Kim, 2007). It starts with a description of the education for Koreans in Japan before liberation, using the cessation of World War II as a backdrop. It is followed by an interpretation of the educational movement of KFJ as a sprout of Korean identity education in Japan. Finally, it is highlighted by the interpretation of the HanShin educational struggle as a major piece of evidence for the interplay between education and society.

Education for Koreans in Japan before Liberation (before 1945)

During the Japanese colonial period, the Japanese education system consisted mainly of public schools for an assimilation education in both Japan and Korea; it also had night schools for Korean workers in Japan. The Japanese imperialists believed that Koreans could be assimilated and remodeled by this type of education and portrayed this policy as being progressive. However, Korean nationalists and liberalists thought that night schools focused only on literacy and education for children.

From Assimilation Education to Japanese Imperialism

As the population of Korean children increased in Japan, problems related to education worsened. Ozawa put forth the following statement:

“According to the Primary Education Act, Article 32, the education for Korean children in Japan should be mandatory. Compared to the children in Korea, it

seemed to be the complimentary treatment” (Lee, 1999, p. 96).

The number of Korean students attending these schools was very small and what they learnt was essentially how to live as Japanese rather than Koreans. The objective of this mandatory education was to prepare its students for the Japanese military and stifle any feeling of Korean nationalism (Chosen University, 1987). This form of mandatory education can be interpreted differently according to the given social structure: as military education for imperialism; as education undertaken by a dictatorship; or as citizenship education within a democracy.

Independent Schools for Korean Workers

As many Koreans moved to Japan to work in the 1920's (Chosen University, 1987), night schools were established to train such workers in basic. Table 1 shows the increasing trend in the number of Korean immigrants in Japan from 1920-1950. Korean immigrants increased to one million in 1940 and were up to more than 1.9 million in 1944, because Japan was preparing for the Pacific War. Since the number of Korean families increased in 1930, the objective of the night schools became increasingly geared to the education of these immigrants' children. There were many night schools in Tokyo, Osaka, Hyogo, Kanagawa and Fukuoka; of them all, Osaka was the most active because of the huge numbers of workers. It was speculated that night schools were built as an alternative to the regular schools, because Korean workers were not able to go to regular schools due to having no time and low incomes as well as the fact that they retained strong sentiments regarding their Korean identity. As a result of many Koreans' moving to Japan through the KyoseiRenko process, (the forced mobilization of Korean laborers) in 1940, night schools gradually faded out. The decreasing trend of night schools indicates clearly that the social situation also influences all types of education.

Osaka night schools were both public and private. The former started in May, 1924. The Japanese Korean cooperation association (Naisenkyowagai) was organized to support Japanese Imperialists. In Osaka, Naisenkyowagai organized public schools to promote the living standards of Koreans and to 'develop' their character. It opened night schools along with boarding houses and help with finding jobs. The length of the course was three years; it was

Table 1

Trends of the Number of Koreans in Japan during 1920-1950

Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1921	38,651	1931	311,247	1941	1,469,230
1922	59,722	1932	390,543	1942	1,625,054
1923	80,415	1933	456,217	1943	1,882,456
1924	118,152	1934	539,695	1944	1,936,843
1925	129,870	1935	625,678	1945	1,115,594
1926	143,798	1936	690,501	1946	647,006
1927	165,286	1937	735,689	1947	598,507
1928	238,102	1938	799,878	1948	601,772
1929	275,206	1939	961,591	1949	597,561
1930	298,091	1940	1,190,444	1950	535,236

available to Koreans who were over the regular educational age. The number of students in this school was 150 (Higuchi, 1986). The Korean Trade Union in Osaka, which agitated against Japan, also founded a night school in Uro-Cho in July 1928 for the purposes of fortifying the trade union. Further independent schools were founded by private Korean residents. Some of these schools were similar in size to Japanese public schools; their levels of financial backing also rivaled their counterparts. Kosei Kakuin in Huse and Kansai-Kyomei Kakuin in Hikashinari-Ku were founded for children in 1930 and 1931, respectively; these schools provided education for students who had previously had no access to schools. At these independent schools, Korean workers were taught to value their Korean heritage. The teaching of Korean history; math; Korean culture and the history of the labor movement were stressed (Kim, 1997). Through these schools, some Koreans developed into workers with a class consciousness. These cases show that different social groups organized different educational programs in accordance with their separate ideologies.

Korean Identity Education after WWII

Due to the changed situation following the surrender of the Japanese imperialists, Korean identity education for Zainichies was led by the Korean Federation in Japan (KFJ) and is highlighted by the HanShin educational struggle.

The Korean Federation in Japan (KFJ)

A great many Korean organizations sprung up spontaneously, hard on the heels of the Japanese surrender, all of them seeking to protect the lives and property as well as to promote the rights of Koreans residing in Japan (Wagner, 1951).

The KFJ was organized in Tokyo in October 1945 (Kim, 2007). Due to an administration vacuum for Koreans in Japan, Koreans in Japan needed an organization that could help them to return to Korea and to survive in Japan. It represented all Zainichies regardless of political standpoint; it organized programs to help those wishing to return to Korea. It fought for the improvement of the everyday lives of Zainichies. It independently undertook many Korean identity educational programs. It also found many Korean schools for Zainichies who wanted to live in Japan.

Dissemination of Korean Identity Education by the KFJ

In preparation for their return to Korea, Koreans independently started to take Korean programs in Tokyo, Osaka and Kobe just after the liberation in 1945 (Table 2). There were more than 200 programs with the number of students totaling more than 20,000 by the end of 1945. Text books for Korean programs were prepared independently:

Table 2
Korean Learning Programs in Tokyo, Osaka and Kobe in 1945

City	Area	Founder
Tokyo	Kanda	Korean YMCA
	Adachi	Yoon, Byung-ok
	Totsuka	Lee, Jin-kyu
	Arakawa	Kim, Bo-hyun
	Idabashi	Chung, Ku-il
	Toyoshima	Eo, Dang
Osaka	Ikaino	Church
	Yasakacho	
Kobe	Nishikobe	Factory of Odeng

the most famous one was the “Text Book of Korean” edited by Lee Jin-kyu (Eo, 1998, p. 108). After liberation, Koreans wished to learn about their Korean identity as opposed to the kind of education for assimilation they had already

experienced. These Korean programs show how education adapts itself to a rapidly evolving status quo.

The KFJ started to organize Korean identity education actively from October 1945. They gathered previously dispersed resources and fortified their organizational power for these educational activities. Table 3 shows the activities of the KFJ for Korean identity education from 1945-1948. Their activities were three-fold: nurturing teachers, publishing textbooks and opening schools. The KFJ was very active in nurturing teachers: it organized “Continuing education courses for teachers” in December, 1945 and opened the first Korean language seminar for teachers. After discussing future teaching programs and practicing teaching skills, all 15 participants were dispatched to the Korean educational programs in Tokyo to work.

The second special general assembly held in February, 1946 decided to install a committee for educational taskforces. Its roles were two-fold: nurturing teachers and publishing textbooks (Kim, 2002). The second central committee in the assembly decided to install a committee for

Table 3
Chronological Activities of Korean Federation in Japan (KFJ) for Korean Identity Education during 1945-1946

Time	Title	Feature
October, 1945	Foundation of KFJ	Chair, Yoon Keun
November, 1945	Support for cultural activity (Document)	About textbooks and teachers
December, 1945	1 st Seminar for Korean	For teachers
February, 1946	2 nd Special General assembly	Decision about the publishing textbooks and nurturing teachers
March, 1946	Kenkoku technical school	Osaka
April, 1946	Learning by stage	3 stages by two grades
April, 1946	Teachers union	Osaka
June, 1946	Chosen teachers Institute	Osaka
October, 1946	Chosen middle school	Tokyo
October, 1946	3rd Special General assembly	Desion on organizing School management Union
December, 1946	Teachers union	Tokyo
July, 1947	Educational system	Same as Japanese 6-3 stystem
August, 1947	Korean Teachers league in Japan	Member: 1,200 Chair: Choi young-keun
October, 1947	4th Special General assembly	Decree of education Issue on education about democracy
January, 1948	13 th central committee	Substantiality of facilities, systems and contents in schools

Table 4

List of Textbooks about Korean and History Published during 1945-1946

Subject	Title	Feature
Korean	Korean for primary school	Published by Korean Federation in Japan (KFJ)
	Teaching manual for primary school	KFJ
	Korean for children	KFJ
	Korean Spelling	KFJ
	Text of Korean	KFJ
History	Draft of Chosen history I, II, III	KFJ
	Chosen history I, II, III *	KFJ, Written

* *Note.* Chosen history was written by Lim Kwang-cheol and had the same context as “Chosen socio-economical history” by Paik Nam-woon and “Chosen societal history” by Lee Chung-won.

primary school text publication in the department of culture. They agreed on bylaws for the committee: it consisted of four chapters, thirteen articles in relation to publishing textbooks in eight subject areas, encompassing Korean, math, science, history, geography, music, art and morals. The committee installed in February, 1946 was guided through the leadership of the chair, Lee Jin-kyu. Table 4 shows the details of the list of textbooks pertaining to Korean and history published during the time period of 1945-1946. The members of the Korean Student Federation, Korean Artist Association and the Society of People’s Culture collaborated in these activities. As these activities grew, the courses were divided into three categories according to the age group: low (first and second graders), middle (third and fourth graders) and upper (fifth and sixth graders). According to the vision of the KFJ, the text books were focused on Korean language and Korean History. The nature of these textbooks shows that education is deeply linked to social needs.

In terms of nurturing teachers, the second special assembly decided to found several institutes including the 3.1 Political Institute in Tokyo and the 8.15 Youth Institute in Osaka. Other institutes included the Central Institute of the KFJ, The Central Teachers Institute of the KFJ, The Osaka Chosen Teachers Institute and Dressmaking School for Women of the KFJ. During the period between 1945 - 1946, it also opened many schools: 525 primary schools with 42,182 students and 1,022 teachers; and 12 advanced schools for adolescents with 724 students and 54 teachers. The number of schools increased to a total of 578 by October, 1947: 541 primary schools, 7 middle schools, 22 schools for

adolescents and 8 high schools (Lee, 1999).

In the third general assembly held in October 1946, four major tactics were adopted for Zainichies: first, the promotion of a better life; second, education and enlightenment; third, the installation of a temporary government in Korea; and finally, the strengthening of the organization (Park, 1983). The priority lay on education and enlightenment. During the fourth general assembly in October, 1947, they discussed the issue of Korean schools. They established an agreement on “The decree of education” and “The direction of democracy education” (Park, 1983, p. 24). It was focused on two issues: first, how they can cope with the interference of the GHQ and the Japanese government upon Korean identity education; and second, attaining financial freedom from the Japanese government in order to maintain their rights to independent education (Kim, 2006).

It has been speculated that these activities were based on the idea of independence and the concept of education for democracy through learning, teaching and managing education. These activities show that a well organized society with common objectives can lead a well organized educational movement to meet common targets.

The HanShin Educational Struggle

The HanShin educational struggle refers to the two big struggles for Korean identity education in Osaka and Kobe in 1948. The goal of providing Korean identity education for Koreans in Japan was not able to be realized in Kobe and Osaka in Japan under the GHQ, because Japan was

unwilling to allow the existence of a Korean society lead by the left. The Hanshin educational struggle shows that education always touches the social structure per se and must exist within the governing politico-economical system.

Social Constrictions

Just after the Japanese defeat, the GHQ assumed an indifferent attitude to the Korean identity education of Koreans in Japan. They changed their policy in October, 1947: Koreans schools in Japan had to follow the direction of the Japanese government. This triggered the HanShin (Osaka and Kobe) educational struggle. The GHQ had this to say,

The Japanese government was directed to ensure that all Korean schools in Japan should comply with all pertinent Japanese directives, the general rules of Ministry of education in Japan. The only exception was to teach the Korean language as an addition to the regular curriculum (Kim, 1988, p. 449).

The GHQ had been planning to institute radical changes in the structure of the Japanese school system and chose this occasion to bring Korean schools within the pale of Japanese law (Wagner, 1951). The Japanese ministry of education directed that Korean schools should get permission for opening schools and use Japanese textbooks. Although the KFJ contacted the Japanese government and discussed this with the GHQ, there were only negative responses. The Japanese government circulated a statement of policy with regard to Korean-operated schools, announcing their position in the document entitled "About handling the establishment of Korean schools" in January 1948 (Kim, 1988, p. 450). The order was for all Korean children to attend accredited schools and for all teachers to comply with Japanese government regulations. The only consolation for Koreans was the fact that their schools should be accredited, and that the Korean language could be taught as an extra-curricular subject (Wagner, 1951). I speculate that this policy could be interpreted as "The first order to close Korean schools." It was this attempt at oppressive control which was the source of the conflict between the rights Koreans to independently educate for the maintenance of Korean identity and the GHQ.

The Struggle for the Autonomy of Korean Education in Osaka and Kobe

Under the leadership of the KFJ, strenuous efforts were made to maintain the autonomy of Korean education. The KFJ organized a Counter Measure Committee on Korean identity education; participation was by representatives of various Korean groups. They developed a four point "principles of autonomy for the Korea education" program:

- 1) Instruction in the Korean language;
- 2) The use of textbooks compiled by a Korean committee and censored by the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers;
- 3) The administration of schools on an individual basis by Korean parents;
- 4) The teaching of the Japanese language as part of the required curriculum (Kim, 2007, p. 202).

The Japanese government released another document in March, 1948. It said that if the first order were not accepted, they would close down Korean schools. I believe that this move can be described as "The second order to close Korean schools."

The first struggle against this order occurred in Yamaguchi-Ken on March 31, 1948 (Park, 1989). It took the form of a demonstration in Yamaguchi-Ken consisting of more than 10,000 Koreans waiting to return to Korea. They rallied throughout the night in an attempt to negotiate with the administrative authorities of the district. Finally, the administrative authorities withdrew their previous order. From then on, various struggles occurred in Hiroshima, Okayama, Hyogo, Osaka and Kobe.

Table 5 shows the detail procedures of the HanShin educational struggle. In Osaka, a Korean gathering opened against the oppression of Korean schools and developed into a rally on April 23, 1948 (Park, 1989). They tried to negotiate, but ended in failure. The leaders of the rally were arrested and sent to jail in Osaka. The next day, a demonstration took place in front of the police station, asking for the release of those arrested. More Koreans were arrested in that rally. Koreans in Osaka organized a big rally again and tried to negotiate with the administrative authorities. A big gathering of more than 10,000 Koreans was organized in Otemae Park on April 26; the authorities gave the crowd the ridiculous order to disperse within three minutes. When the crowd did not comply, the Osaka police

Table 5

Procedures of HanShin Educational Struggle in 1948

City	Date	Event
Kobe	April 7	Order of closing Korean schools
	April 11	Korean Gathering asks for withdrawing the order.
	April 15	70 Koreans were illegally arrested.
	April 16	Asking for releasing the arrested and withdrawing the order
	April 20	Meeting the governor. Governor suddenly closed the meeting.
	April 21	GHQ and mayor disclosed the evacuation of teachers.
	April 23	GHQ and city authority started to close Korean schools.
	April 24	A big rally in Hugo-Ken. The governor accepted the request of Koreans.
	April 24	Declaration of situation of emergence
	April 25	Mass were arrested.
Osaka	April 23	Big gathering of Korean people Leaders were arrested.
	April 24	Sporadic rally. More people were arrested.
	April 26	A big Korean Gathering
	April 26	Brutal suppression by police.
		Kim Tae-il was killed.

mobilized more than 8,000 policemen including police school students and shot at the demonstrators. Kim Tae-il, aged 16, was killed and many were arrested. The latter were tried under the American court-martial and Kim Seok-song was forcefully exiled to Korea. The Osaka struggle was characterized by brutal suppression. This demonstrates that the state never gives up willingly the power for governing: they will kill and exile people if need be in order to maintain power.

In Kobe, the order to close down Korean schools was given on April 7, 1947. Parents of students protested against the order by blocking the school gates and a big rally of more than 10,000 attendants was organized, which forced the government to withdraw the order on April 24. The problem of the Japanese government's attempts to suppress Korean identity education remained. On April 24, the GHQ declared a state of emergency in Kobe. Kobe became a nightmare for Koreans. On April 24, the Koreans in Kobe misinterpreted the event as a victory against the GHQ. The Kobe case shows that the government never negotiates with an anti-government group: education is an indispensable means for them to maintain power stability.

The HanShin educational struggle, as shown in Table 5, seems to have failed accompanied with great sacrifice: one

million people attended rallies; 212 were injured, one killed; more than 3,000 arrested; 212 prosecuted; and 36 jailed. A final solution to the problem of the conflict between the KFJ and the GHQ in terms of Korean identity educational was reached only with the destruction of the KFJ itself more than a year later. The HanShin Korean identity education struggle shows that educational problems should be resolved after taking into consideration the social and political issues in a given society.

Epilogue

After the HanShin educational struggle, the minister of education in Japan and the representative of the Counter Measures Committee of the KFJ agreed to make an exchange of notes to the effect that Korean identity education should be governed by the directives of the Japanese Ministry of Education. Thereafter, independent Korean identity education temporarily disappeared; however autonomous Korean identity education recommenced after the Korean War. The present Korean Identity Class in Osaka is one of the legacies of the HanShin educational struggle for the autonomy of Korean identity education.

In order to maintain its leadership in the new era after

WWII, the United States of America hoped that Japan would take a central role in Eastern Asia. The oppression practiced by both the GHQ and the Japanese government of Korean identity education increased. It was natural that the KFJ, freshly invigorated with a sense of liberation and democracy would strongly rise against such oppression. The KFJ organized rallies to secure the right of autonomy in Korean identity education throughout Japan, but failed. In the 5th general assembly of the KFJ in October 1948, the KFJ designated April 24 as “a memorial day of education”, as a day of remembrance for preserving the Korean language (Kim, 1979, p. 109). The legacy of the HanShin educational struggle gave Zainichi Koreans in Japan the future direction for the autonomy of Korean identity education: Korean language, independent education, democratic education and cooperation with Japanese educators who were of a democratic persuasion.

Conclusions

Under Japanese colonization, the education for Koreans in Japan was mainly that of assimilation by Japanese imperialists; it provided Koreans with the opportunity to spread Korean national identity via night schools for workers. After the Japanese surrender, the Korean independent education movement pushed Koreans to learn the Korean language. It also strengthened Korean organizations including the KFJ. The Korean identity educational struggle, peaking with the Hanshin education movement was indispensable under the AMA, which was more favorably disposed to the previous Japanese regime.

Education is the process of developing knowledge, skills and character. Korean Identity Education focused on instilling the knowledge of where Koreans came from, who they are, how they think, and how they communicate with each other. Korean identity is composed of a common language, cultural and ethnic background. These features are rooted in the socio-cultural situation. Hence, education can not be totally separated from the social system. Education reflects the most conspicuous ideology of the governing social structure as the subsystem of the total system such as the politico-economical system. The HanShin educational struggle shows that any type of education may be permitted under the legal regulation of a given society in order to

preserve and maintain the social system. This study shows that education reflects the social, cultural, economical and political structure of any society. The impact of education on society and its feedback functions are extremely important for the future direction of the society in question.

Notes

1. “Zainichi Chosenjin Renmei” is translated as “The Korean Federation in Japan (KFJ)”, although it was translated as “The Korean League” and /or “The league of Korean residing in Japan” by Wagner (Wagner, 1951, p. 50).
2. “Korean identity education” represents the education about Korean national identity. Since “Korean nationalism education” could make a chauvinistic misunderstanding, I preferred “Korean identity education” instead.

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