

Sexism, Ageism and Racism Prevalent Throughout the South Korean System of Education

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The various -isms in the numerous facets of the Korean system of education can very well hinder the ethical and moral development of the system so that students of all genders, sexual orientations, social backgrounds, races and ages could attend school without being discriminated against based on their dissimilarities. Moreover, a development could bode just as well for female and younger candidates alike for being instated into school principal positions at all Korean schools.

Korean society has for long been shaped by Confucian ideologies wherein age and gender among other factors predetermine one's position in relation to others among friends, family and society as a whole. Especially the determiners pertaining to age and gender lead to sexism and ageism which in essence encompass the widely spread prejudicial treatment of individuals in society based on their age and gender. In all segments of society older males hold the highest ranks while younger females hold the lowest positions. Moreover, since foreign and mixed racial children are not considered to be a part of the normal sphere of 'Korean society', these groups of students are regarded to hold even lower positions than the youngest of Korean females. 'Full-blooded Korean' homosexual children fair even worse due to the lack of tolerance for homosexuality in traditional Korean society. The prejudicial treatment of the above mentioned individuals is not absent from the system of education in Korea. In essence it is well ingrained in not only a significant number of parents, students and teachers alike but also the very system of education that should in essence rise to the occasion in protecting the children who often find themselves victims of intolerant attitudes as well as the female and younger teachers who are discriminated against by means of institutionalized sexism and ageism respectively.

Not until these problems are resolved can the Korean system of educational truly call itself reformed. Unless the attitudes and institutional practices built on discrimination and intolerance are totally weeded out, the Korean system of education will have difficulty nurturing world leaders like Ban Ki-moon that can rise to the challenges of today' global world. After all, with globalization in mind, multinational companies require multinational attitudes, for without such non prejudicial attitudes multifaceted organizations and businesses are simply unsustainable in the long run on a globe as

multifaceted and multicultural as the one we are living on. Simply put, if constructive changes are not made, healthy and sustainable relationships will be increasingly impossible to maintain as time goes on.

Therefore, the task of creating open minded global leaders falls in the hands of the Korean system of education. For this to happen, the kind of unethical discriminatory acts and practices described henceforth in this article must be avoided at all costs in all facets of Korean education. Even if certain individuals are prone to possess such attitudes, the system of education must not tolerate it within its rightful jurisdiction.

Basic Signs of Improvement

It must be said though that Koreans have come a long way since the Korean War and the periods of autocracy and democracy that followed it, as well as the rule of the authoritarian military regimes from 1961 to 1993.

With the inauguration of the first civilian government in 1993, Korea started a very fast process of democratization. Citizen's awareness of their rights have gone up, while the national government has devised various systemic mechanisms to ensure their protection. As a result of such democratic development, democratic citizenship has also risen, and Korean citizens increasingly participate in the decision making process forming various organizations. Education plays a key role in Korea's continuing efforts to promote democratization as schools are the primary vehicle for transmitting positive attitudes toward political democratization to the next generation.

(Kim, Kim, Kim, and Kim, 2006-2007:9)

Therefore, it is fundamental that all educational institutions eliminate any differential treatment of minority groups and females both as students and employees. Although progress has been made on these fronts, as outlined by the quote above, much more needs to be done for the inequalities of a substantial portion of Korean residents to be eased and the –isms to become distant memories of the past.

The Various -isms and their Confucian Roots

For the most part, Korea is a Confucian society (Underwood, 1998:85). According to Cortazzi, 'Confucianism, with its emphasis on ... respect for age and learning, has been particularly influential on the Korean way of life' (Cortazzi in Finch, 2000: Ch. 2.4.2). Although Confucians put a high value on education, it was not until 1443 when King Se-Jong created 'Hangul' the Korean phonetic alphabet that common people learned to read and write.

...after this new alphabet was created, the government engaged in a tremendous amount of publication activity to educate the entire population so that everyone would live according to Confucian teachings. (Yum, 1987:76)

Generally speaking, Confucianism in Korea has remained ingrained in modern Korean society. Consequently, since Korean society has such deep roots in Confucianism which has no devised conduct for the treatment of foreigners (Yum, 1987:84), it would no doubt help explain why foreigners are treated according to a set of different standards in Korea. People of other races and even mixed races would no doubt fall into this very same categorization whereby their treatment is not governed by any longstanding moral code of conduct.

As for ageism, one of the five moral codes of Confucianism; the "orders between elders and youngers" (Yum, 1987:74), otherwise known as the "respect for age" (Corazzi in Finch, 2000: Ch. 2.4.2) plays a major role in determining the ranks people of different ages fall into in Korean society.

What is more, in order to understand the roots of sexism in Korean society, one must read the "original meaning of the five moral principles ... better described as: father-love, son-filiality; elder brother-brotherly love, younger brother-reverence; king-justice, subject-loyalty; husband initiative, wife obedience; and friends mutual faith" (Yum, 1987:75). Nowhere is there a mention of daughter or daughterly love. In fact, wife is only mentioned in the context of obedience. Generally speaking, in Confucianism the eldest males hold the highest ranks while the youngest females are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Ageism; a long standing predicament

Due to the tendency in Korean society for older generations to be placed into positions of power and authority, the younger generations may have less motivation to better their performance both at the workplace and in academic institutions for they know they will mostly reach positions of authority prescribed by age and not by achievement. Concurrently, Alan Timblich, head of the Seoul Global Center, states the following with regard to Korea:

There is the issue of ageism. The respect for hierarchy results in the decision-taking process migrating to the top of the ladder. Even if one does not subscribe to 'the Peter Principle' ("in a hierarchy, every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence") there is evidence to suggest that older people have less energy, less incentive to succeed, and more investment in maintaining the status quo than younger, up-and-coming dynamos. That means that a society run exclusively by those at the top of the age ladder is likely to be more resistant to change, slower to generate new ideas, less flexible and less well equipped to survive in today's rapidly shifting commercial, political and social milieus.

(Timblich, 2008)

In agreement with Alan, I am unhesitant to state that the Korean system of education would fare better if an increasing number of younger and more ambitious personnel, regardless of gender, would be placed into leadership roles as school principals. As recent as 2005, Korean schools were largely headed by personnel in their 50s and 60s (See Table 1). As a matter of fact, the majority of principals were 55 or older. Since change is slow to take effect, as is exemplified by the lack of shift that took place from 1996 to 2005, it is highly unconceivable that the trend has dramatically changed in the last three to four years.

All in all, it is fair to state that the majority of schools in Korea are headed mainly by the older generations. It is true that the principals are chosen according to years of service, with most principals having at least 30 years of service (See Table 2), therefore, the argument could be made that these are the personnel with the most experience and thus the highest levels of knowledge in the field. Nevertheless, this remains a case of pure ageism which automatically places younger generations into lower positions, regardless of their qualifications and performance levels.

Table 1 Ages of Elementary and Secondary School Principals (1996–2005)

Category		2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	Total
ELEMENTARY	Total	5614 (490)	5505 (423)	5422 (377)	5350 (373)	5286 (381)	5232 (367)	5506 (309)	5680 (279)	5713 (260)	5726 (241)	55,034
	Under 50	13 (4)	14 (4)	19 (4)	27 (6)	38 (6)	25 (3)	9 (4)	8 (4)	5 (2)	8 (2)	166
	50 - 54	549 (54)	529 (31)	543 (25)	619 (29)	754 (37)	558 (28)	219 (17)	230 (18)	296 (19)	332 (12)	4,629
	55 - 59	3206 (272)	2862 (227)	2809 (213)	3037 (218)	3234 (234)	3174 (237)	1938 (130)	1719 (90)	1666 (81)	1732 (70)	25,377
	Over 59	1846 (160)	2100 (161)	2051 (135)	1667 (120)	1260 (104)	1475 (99)	3340 (158)	3723 (167)	3746 (158)	3654 (157)	24,862
MIDDLE	Total	2582 (255)	2534 (249)	2495 (250)	2431 (248)	2361 (228)	2357 (206)	2416 (182)	2431 (173)	2428 (165)	2418 (163)	24,453
	Under 50	32 (7)	39 (6)	37 (6)	42 (7)	34 (6)	24 (5)	22 (5)	14 (2)	11 (3)	8 (2)	263
	50 - 54	297 (43)	257 (39)	257 (34)	266 (36)	241 (37)	199 (29)	63 (10)	45 (7)	54 (9)	69 (7)	1,748
	55 - 59	1401 (142)	1226 (110)	1102 (105)	1127 (120)	1157 (116)	1125 (112)	649 (58)	560 (48)	575 (41)	661 (55)	9,583
	Over 59	852 (63)	1012 (94)	1099 (105)	996 (85)	929 (69)	1009 (60)	1682 (109)	1812 (116)	1788 (112)	1680 (99)	12,859
GENERAL HIGH	Total	1329 (98)	1300 (77)	1232 (66)	1204 (67)	1142 (58)	1139 (59)	1123 (60)	1100 (58)	1092 (57)	1042 (50)	11,703
	Under 50	60 (9)	46 (7)	42 (6)	42 (7)	39 (6)	44 (6)	34 (5)	21 (4)	19 (5)	19 (3)	366
	50 - 54	146 (11)	126 (9)	112 (9)	127 (11)	117 (9)	121 (8)	69 (5)	49(5)	42 (3)	42 (5)	951
	55 - 59	644 (43)	582 (31)	486 (25)	476 (20)	505 (16)	479 (21)	254 (19)	208 (15)	205 (12)	206 (10)	4,045
	Over 59	479 (35)	546 (30)	592 (26)	559 (29)	481 (27)	495 (24)	766 (31)	822 (34)	826 (37)	775 (32)	6,341
VOCATIONAL HIGH	Total	688 (34)	703 (34)	696 (27)	711 (26)	723 (26)	733 (25)	721 (19)	743 (18)	752 (22)	752 (23)	7,222
	Under 50	22 (5)	23 (6)	22 (4)	23 (7)	20 (7)	24 (5)	14 (4)	14 (4)	11 (4)	14 (5)	187
	50 - 54	69 (7)	63(6)	70 (6)	83 (2)	81 (2)	81 (1)	47 (1)	26(2)	29(3)	39 (5)	588
	55 - 59	354 (10)	346 (9)	302 (7)	314 (11)	345 (10)	346 (11)	165 (8)	136 (6)	148 (8)	153 (5)	2,609
	Over 59	243 (12)	271 (13)	302 (10)	291 (6)	277 (7)	282 (8)	495 (6)	567 (6)	564 (7)	546 (8)	3,838
Total	10213 (877)	10042 (783)	9845 (720)	9696 (714)	9512 (693)	9461 (657)	9766 (570)	9954 (528)	9985 (504)	9938 (477)	98,412	
Under 50	127 (25)	122 (23)	120 (20)	134 (27)	131 (25)	117 (19)	79 (18)	57 (14)	46 (14)	49 (12)	982	
50 - 54	1061 (115)	975 (85)	982 (74)	1095 (78)	1193 (85)	959 (66)	398 (33)	350 (32)	421 (34)	482 (29)	7,916	
55 - 59	5605 (467)	5016 (377)	4699 (350)	4954 (369)	5241 (376)	5124 (381)	3006 (215)	2623 (159)	2594 (142)	2752 (140)	41,614	
Over 59	3420 (270)	3929 (298)	4044 (276)	3513 (240)	2947 (207)	3261 (191)	6283 (328)	6924 (323)	6924 (314)	6655 (296)	47,900	

Source : Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development & KEDI. Statistical Yearbook of Education, for respective year.

Note: numbers in parentheses indicate the number of female principals.

Table 2 Career in Education of the Elementary and Secondary School Principals (1996–2005)

Category	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	Total	
E L E M E N T A R Y	Total	5614 (490)	5505 (423)	5422 (377)	5350 (373)	5286 (381)	5232 (367)	5506 (309)	5680 (279)	5713 (260)	5726 (241)	55,034
	Under 25 yrs.	8 (5)	10 (5)	8 (6)	14 (6)	18 (8)	54 (9)	12 (8)	8 (5)	34 (5)	23 (8)	189
	Under 25-30 yrs.	54 (12)	39 (5)	53 (8)	48 (6)	79 (6)	78 (2)	23 (5)	45 (3)	37 (2)	36 (0)	492
	Under 30-35 yrs.	913 (67)	1034 (53)	1109 (35)	1177 (45)	1259 (51)	904 (37)	351 (22)	504 (26)	420 (16)	460 (21)	8,131
	Over 34 yrs.	4639 (406)	4422 (360)	4252 (328)	4111 (316)	3930 (316)	4196 (319)	5120 (274)	5123 (245)	5222 (237)	5207 (212)	46,222
M I D D L E	Total	2582 (255)	2534 (249)	2495 (250)	2431 (248)	2361 (228)	2357 (206)	2416 (182)	2431 (173)	2428 (165)	2418 (163)	24,453
	Under 25 yrs.	38 (11)	42 (10)	38 (9)	54 (10)	38 (6)	78 (11)	36 (4)	29 (3)	37 (6)	34 (4)	424
	Under 25-30 yrs.	191 (21)	187 (25)	185 (20)	192 (19)	184 (24)	191 (23)	96 (18)	134 (16)	141 (9)	143 (6)	1,644
	Under 30-35 yrs.	1120 (113)	1053 (92)	1016 (91)	936 (94)	864 (77)	857 (57)	512 (36)	641 (32)	582 (29)	694 (46)	8,275
	Over 34 yrs.	1233 (110)	1252 (122)	1256 (130)	1249 (125)	1275 (121)	1231 (115)	1772 (124)	1627 (122)	1668 (121)	1547 (107)	14,110
G E N E R A L H I G H	Total	1329 (98)	1300 (77)	1232 (66)	1204 (67)	1142 (58)	1139 (59)	1123 (60)	1100 (58)	1092 (57)	1042 (50)	11,703
	Under 25 yrs.	64 (17)	60 (15)	63 (13)	65 (14)	66 (11)	80 (10)	50 (10)	51 (13)	50 (12)	46 (11)	595
	Under 25-30 yrs.	128 (11)	116 (6)	91 (4)	100 (8)	117 (5)	119 (8)	81 (8)	83 (5)	81 (4)	81 (4)	997
	Under 30-35 yrs.	475 (22)	455 (20)	433 (23)	407 (18)	376 (16)	384 (14)	239 (12)	296 (12)	266 (12)	264 (9)	3,595
	Over 34 yrs.	662 (48)	669 (36)	645 (26)	632 (27)	583 (26)	556 (27)	753 (30)	670 (28)	695 (29)	651 (26)	6,516
V O C A T I O N A L H I G H	Total	688 (34)	703 (34)	696 (27)	711 (26)	723 (26)	733 (25)	721 (19)	743 (18)	752 (22)	752 (23)	7,222
	Under 25 yrs.	33 (11)	33 (13)	33 (11)	38 (11)	37 (10)	43 (8)	27 (9)	34 (9)	35 (6)	35 (7)	6348
	Under 25-30 yrs.	53 (2)	55 (4)	60 (2)	62 (1)	68 (4)	78 (5)	57 (3)	56 (5)	55 (7)	63 (8)	607
	Under 30-35 yrs.	276 (11)	278 (7)	284 (5)	283 (8)	284 (6)	278 (8)	174 (5)	194 (3)	170 (3)	199 (4)	2,420
	Over 34 yrs.	326 (10)	337 (10)	319 (9)	328 (6)	334 (6)	334 (4)	463 (2)	459 (1)	492 (6)	455 (4)	3,847
Total	10213 (877)	10042 (783)	9845 (720)	9696 (714)	9512 (693)	9461 (657)	9766 (570)	9954 (528)	9985 (504)	9938 (477)	98,412	
Under 25 yrs.	143 (44)	145 (43)	142 (39)	171 (41)	159 (35)	255 (38)	125 (31)	122 (30)	156 (29)	138 (30)	1,556	
Under 25-30 yrs.	426 (46)	397 (40)	389 (34)	402 (34)	448 (39)	466 (38)	257 (34)	318 (29)	314 (22)	323 (18)	3,740	
Under 30-35 yrs.	2784 (213)	2820 (172)	2842 (154)	2803 (155)	2783 (150)	2423 (116)	1276 (75)	1635 (73)	1438 (60)	1617 (80)	22,421	
Over 34 yrs.	6860 (574)	6680 (528)	6472 (493)	6320 (474)	6122 (469)	6317 (465)	8108 (430)	7879 (396)	8077 (393)	7860 (349)	70,695	

Source: Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development & KEDI, Statistical Yearbook of Education, for respective year.

Note: numbers in parentheses indicate the number of female principals.

(in Kim, Kim, Kim and Kim, 2006-2007:117)

Sexism; a traditional way of thinking

Looking at Table 1 & 2, it is evident that it is not only the older personnel that have better chances of being employed as principals, but there also appears to be a disproportionate number of male principals in Korean schools. As a matter of fact, up until the year 2006, the highest percentage of female principals was found in middle schools where females occupied a mere 11.1% of the total number of positions in 2006 (See Table 3).

Category		2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	Total
Elementary School	Total	5,695	5,614	5,505	5,422	5,350	5,286	5,232	5,506	43,610
	Female	531	490	423	377	373	381	367	309	3,251
	%	9.3	8.7	7.7	7.0	7.0	7.2	7.0	5.6	7.4
Middle School	Total	2,642	2,582	2,534	2,495	2,431	2,361	2,357	2,416	19,818
	Female	294	255	249	250	248	228	206	182	1,912
	%	11.1	9.9	9.8	10.0	10.2	9.7	8.7	7.5	9.6
General High School	Total	1,375	1,329	1,300	1,232	1,204	1,142	1,139	1,123	9,844
	Female	86	98	77	66	67	58	59	60	571
	&	6.3	7.4	5.9	5.4	5.6	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.8

(Kim, Kim, Kim and Kim, 1006-2007:115)

The lack of female principals seems to be even more inexcusable since the majority of teachers, especially in elementary schools are female. As a matter of fact, in 2006, 70% of all elementary school teachers were female (Korea Beat, 2008). This is a strong improvement from 1970 when female teachers accounted for only 29% (Korea Beat, 2008). It must be said though that the higher number of female teachers nowadays is not due to a lack of opportunities for male teachers in elementary schools but rather due to the lower status elementary school teachers are afforded as compared to teachers employed by middle schools and high schools. Nevertheless, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education (SMOE) is seeking a reversal trend to increase the proportion of male teachers in Korean schools, however, it is promoting a misguided and rather sexist justification to do so (See Kang, 2007). SMOE

claims that “female teachers’ dominance could cause a negative effect on students” (Kang, 2007). Moreover, many female parents themselves think that female teachers are unable to control children as well as men can (Kang, 2007) (Korea Beat, 2008). These attitudes mirror the view that male domination is only natural and that females are less capable of holding any positions of authority.

On the whole, just like nursing, elementary school teaching is not viewed by a significant portion of the Korean male population as being an attractive career, therefore, it may be imprudent to turn the system on its head in an effort to reverse the trend since the trend is based on free will and not on discriminatory practices. Furthermore, non-sexist excuses need to be devised to base any possible future action on.

What is more, the situation surrounding the lack of female principals in Korean schools is dissimilar. Rather for them it is the lack of opportunities to land themselves in positions of authority, since it is the older males who are more or less guaranteed the highest chance of getting these elitist positions.

The same is true for females who seek positions as professors in Korean universities. As a matter of fact:

According to a 2005 analysis of faculty at 4-year or higher colleges by Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development, women professors represent 18.2% in private schools, but only 10.7% in national universities. Notable is the fact that for full time lecturers, women account for 29.4%, relatively higher than the average while 19.5% for assistant professors, 14.4% for associate professors and 12.2% professors. It means that fewer women are found climbing up the faculty ladder. A comparison with the figures in 2000, 5 years ago, suggests that the ratio of women full-time lecturers has grown as much as 20% while the ratio for women full professors, only 4%.

(The Korea Shadow Report, 2007:29)

Of course, once again, it is likely that females are afforded a better chance to become lecturers as opposed to the lack of opportunities to become professors (See Table 4), due to the fact that lecturers earn approximately 50% of that earned by professors who tend to be mostly males. This is undoubtedly sexism near its highest peak. Much needs to be done for this situation to be remedied.

Table 4: Proportions of Female Professors, Instructors and Scientists in South Korea (Percent)

	<i>Institutions</i>	<i>Private Schools</i>	<i>National Schools</i>	
	2005	Positions	All Professors	
Men		81.8%	89.3%	
Women		18.2 %	10.7%	
<i>Institutions</i>		<i>Private and National Schools</i>		
Positions		Professors	Associate Professors	Assistant Professors
Men		87.8%	85.6%	80.5%
Women		12.2% (Approx. +4% from 2000 Figures)	14.4%	19.5%
2000	Men	Approx. 91.8%	N.A.	N.A.
	Women	Approx. 8.2%	N.A.	N.A.
2005	Positions	Lecturers		
	Men	70.6%		
	Women	29.4% (Approx. +20% from 2000 Figures)		
2000	Men	Approx. 81%		
	Women	Approx. 19%		
	Positions	Tenured University Positions		
	Men	** 14%		
	Women	** 86%		
2002	Positions	Scientists	Researchers Outside of Administrative Jobs	
	Men	* 88.4%	* 89.3%	
	Women	* 11.6%	* 10.7%	
2004	Men	* 89.6%	* 89.5%	
	Women	* 10.4%	* 10.5%	

(Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development / *Ministry of Science and Technology (2002-2005) in The Korea Shadow Report (2007); ** Kim, 2005)

In the context of this paper, I am including discrimination toward homosexual students in the Korean school system under the heading ‘sexism’. All in all, students with homosexual tendencies suffer a great deal in Korean schools due to the high levels of intolerance toward them by not only a significant proportion of students but also by a number of teachers themselves. To put things into perspective, “according to the 2003 research of Jang Jae-hong and others, 11% of teens (4.1% of boys, 12.2% of girls) are confused and anguished over whether they might have gay tendencies” (Korea Beat, 2007).

Therefore, since there is such a apparent tendency for Korean teens to have confusion with regard to their sexual orientation, would it not be time for the Korean school system to put in place the necessary measures to ensure the protection of these children.

Perhaps the lack of incentive for any positive change in this area is due to the basic ignorance of officials with regard to the phenomenon. That is to say; an official from the Sexual Minority Culture and Rights Center, Han Chae-yun proclaimed that “during adolescence there are neither homosexuals nor heterosexuals.” He argues that “if you see people expressing their gayness you might become gay, if you only watch straight media you’ll be straight.” (Korea Beat, 2007) Conversely, according to the scientific community this does not appear to be the case:

Writing in the scientific journal Archives of Sexual Behavior, researchers from Queen Mary's School of Biological and Chemical Sciences, and Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm report that genetics and environmental factors (which are specific to an individual, and may include biological processes such as different hormone exposure in the womb), are important determinants of homosexual behaviour.

(Newsmax, 2008)

“Overall, genetics accounted for around 35 per cent of the differences between men in homosexual behaviour and other individual-specific environmental factors (that is, **not societal attitudes, family or parenting** which are shared by twins) accounted for around 64 per cent.”

(Dr Qazi Rahman in Newsmax, 2008)

All in all, the attitude of Han Chae-yun, advocating that if homosexuality is quietly swept under the rug, out of view, children will simply not become homosexuals, seems to be mirrored by the Korean system of education as a whole. This intolerant attitude is extremely damaging for children with homosexual tendencies as it promotes their isolation and exclusion from normal social circles within the Korean school system. Take the individual case of a Korean student with homosexual tendencies as an example:

This year 18-year old Jae-min (male, not his real name) de-schooled. When he was a third-year middle school student he came out to his family. But when he was in the first year of high school his father committed him to a mental hospital. When he went back to school there were rumors that he was gay. Students were whispering and the teachers didn't understand. He had no choice but to drop out. Lack of understanding from family and being treated as an outcast by their peers pushes gay teens out of school. They drop out of school and run away from home. In Kang's research the time of coming out can be negative and has a great danger of violence, but being outed poses a high danger of losing one's friends and of committing suicide.

(Korea Beat, 2008)

Another two examples are as follow:

A third-year high school student testifies that she suffered group beatings from her friends. Ten of her classmates beat her in front of the classroom while saying, "how can a lesbian go to school?" Her shoulder was dislocated and her ankle tendons became swollen. But she was the one who was punished. She was suspended from school for a month due to fears of a second beating and must be on her best behavior in class — because to complain about this unfair treatment means coming out. ...

As a teenager Jeong-hye (female, not her real name), a freshman at university this year, struggled alone with her doubts. As a church-going middle school student wrestling with confusion she reached out to her priest for help. She appealed to him, saying, "I'm a girl but I love other girls, it's so hard," but the priest 'answered' her with, "you dark child, get out of here!"

(Korea Beat, 2008)

Overall, this kind of prejudice needs to stop once and for all. There is absolutely no excuse for it at all. However, if a priest is known to react this way what do we expect from other students and teachers? Obviously much needs to be done to alleviate the sufferings of homosexual children in the

Korean school system. After all, it should be in the interest of all Koreans for they owe it to themselves to ensure that all members of society in all spheres, including the education sphere, are ensured equal rights and the necessary means of protection from discrimination and physical harm.

Racism; an internationally condemned moral dilemma

Not only does there need to exist a complete set of equal rights and opportunities for females and homosexuals in the Korean education system, but Koreans also need to devise the same measures for the increasing foreign population on the Korean peninsula. In addition, Korean children of 'mixed races/nationalities' need to be protected under the same umbrella. Consider the following quote:

In the survey that questioned 1,725 elementary and middle school students in Seoul and Gyeonggi Province, only 40 percent of them perceived children born out of international marriages as Koreans. Almost half of the students said they have difficulties in maintaining friendships with students from multicultural backgrounds. Of them, 24.2 percent cited the difference in skin color as the reason for their problem with getting close to biracial children. It was followed by a fear of becoming an outcast among their fellow students with 16.8 percent and a feeling of embarrassment with 15.5 percent.

(Cho, 2009)

What is more a Korean American male who has a 'multi-national' daughter born in Korea after having moved to Korea with his Greek-American wife had the following to say with regard to the racism he found her daughter facing in a Korean school:

My 8-year-old daughter, who was born and raised in Korea, (her mother is Greek American) and has never herself even left Seoul metropolitan area, had in elementary school last month here in Korea. Her teacher told her to "go back to your own country" and accused her of being "Western scum", after she was (with some "pure" Korean girlfriends) caught whispering in class. My daughter knows no other country but Korea, and she is a loyal Korean citizen. She sings the

Korean national anthem every morning in class with all the other students, and who is passionately loyal and patriotic to Korea. She is culturally and in every other way emotionally Korean. She (regrettably) knows no English nor speaks any other language but Korean. So her teacher's comments were incredibly bigoted, racist and ignorant, especially in view of the fact that the other girls who committed the same infraction were not even reprimanded. I know from first-hand knowledge that my daughter's experience is by a small fraction of the institutional racism and bigotry that mixed-blood, native-born children (and adults) such as herself experience here in Korea.

(Choi, N.D.)

It is highly unscientific to build a hypothesis on a few isolated occurrences of racism in any society and claim that they represent the norm where as in actual fact they should be considered as being out of the ordinary and a regrettable set of occurrences. However, these do not appear to be isolated incidents since they occur on a more or less a regular basis according to the 'mixed couples with mixed children' that I have had the pleasure of knowing. Moreover, the survey carried out in Seoul and Gyeonggi province does statistically and clearly show that there appears to be a widespread racially prejudiced attitude, at least conclusively by Korean students, toward children of mixed races. Nevertheless, this type of attitude is not a product of its own, therefore, it might be safe to conclude that children acquire it from their parents. After all, Allport (1954) contents "that children's identification with their parents moderates the intergenerational transmission of prejudice" (Dunn and Lowery, 2004). What is more, "prejudice is contagious" (Anti-Defamation League, 2009). Consequently, with Korean society being so entrenched in Confucianism with one of its moral codes being the "respect for age" (Corazzi in Finch, 2000: Ch. 2.4.2) which encompasses the respect a child is likely to have for his/her parents, one might then reasonably assume that there would be an expected transfer of prejudicial attitudes (if any) from parent to child in traditional Korean society.

Tragically, "kids who have been the victims of prejudice not only suffer deeply themselves, they may also start causing others to suffer in return" (Anti-Defamation League, 2009). As such, prejudice becomes a never ending cycle of life if there are no checks or measures put in place, in the system of education, to prevent it from spiralling out of control.

My Korean wife is expecting 'multi-racial/cultural' twins early next year, and we are highly concerned with the findings of the Seoul/Gyeonggi survey. We sincerely hope that our children will not be subjected to ill treatment as a result of any negative attitudes toward mixed-race children in Korea. After all, they are growing in numbers according to new government research, thus, needing increased levels of protection against racist treatment by certain 'pure-blooded' members of the Korean society. The fact is that according to Korea Immigration Services, "together with short-term foreign residents, the number of expatriates living in Korea reached more than 1.17 million as of Sept. 30" (Cho, 2009). What is more "that figure is projected to jump to 2.9 million by 2020, taking up more than 5 percent of the total population" (Cho, 2009). These numbers alone should make it increasingly urgent for the Korean system of education to weed out any potential bias toward mixed race children since the Korean population is becoming increasingly made up of mixed races. After all, Korea certainly needs more children, whatever race, since it has the lowest birth rate in the entire world at 1.2 children born per female (Lee, 2009).

All in all, Koreans can no longer afford to have biased attitudes toward 'multi-national' children as well as children of other races for the baby boom generation is becoming older and the tax money that can be collected from well integrated multinational individuals in the work force alone will surely go a long way in supporting the aging Korean population. If not for the sake of genuine compassion, Koreans should make every effort to integrate people of all races into the Korean society as they are a genuine asset to the Korean society.

As for foreign teachers and professors alike, the biased treatment needs to come to an end. I will not go into describing this subject in detail as I have already laid out a complete body of reasoning and evidence stating why the biased treatment of foreign instructors and professors is counterproductive to Koreans in general, in my articles "Why Korean Universities Have Low International Rankings" and "Why Korean Universities Have Low International Rankings – Part II: The Student Side of The Equation", published by Academic Leadership, the Online Journal, Volume 7, Issues 1 and 3.

Conclusion

Taking the aforementioned body of evidence and reasoning into consideration, it needs to be said that even though the majority of Koreans are decent, loving and genuinely caring individuals, a significant portion of the Korean society is still prejudiced toward certain minority groups and this gives the entire country a negative image on the international front. All in all, society needs to ensure that the

bad apples do not taint the representation of the whole nation in leading the world to think that Koreans are racist and/or prejudiced.

More to the point, all minority groups based on age, race, gender and sexual orientation need to be treated with respect and dignity so that they can have equal chances for fair and impartial treatment in Korean society by all individuals as well as all public and private institutions. The aim of this article is to promote such an environment in especially the Korean system of education so that all members of society can have normal and hassle free lives in every Korean school. This is important for Korea as a nation, since education plays such a huge role in shaping people's attitudes and preconceptions toward others.

Furthermore, females need to be given more opportunities to obtain leadership roles in the Korean system of education so that the roughly 50% female population does not suffer from bias. After all, it is hard to argue that male principals can fulfill their duties to a higher standard than female principals can. Thus, there is no reason why men constitute for more than 90% of positions set aside for principals in Korean schools.

What is more, one must not assume that with age come better leadership skills and higher qualifications. Candidates for leadership positions should be judged more on criterion related to performance and educational background rather than merely on age, length of service and gender. The latter are simply inappropriate standards by which personnel are chosen for leadership roles.

Being an expecting father of 'multi-cultural' twins (Korean-Canadian), I find it highly disconcerting that mixed-race children are still ostracised in modern Korean society. My wife and I are strongly considering leaving Korea as soon as the children are old enough to be effected by such prejudicial treatment. After all, we do not wish our children to start out life with their self confidence already in shambles. Our hope is for Korean attitudes to change, but seeing the lack and speed of constructive change, we are inclined to leave Korea and further shrink the birth rate of the already record low birth rate overall. Korea needs children of all races, after all when they grow up and become integral parts of the Korean society their tax contributions will help support the older generations of Koreans no matter what background they happen to come from. On the whole, Koreans need to look toward the future and weed out any prejudice that may essentially damage Korean society.

By and large, bias needs to be eliminated in all its forms from the Korean system of education. There is simply no good excuse for bias, especially the ignorance of the basic facts that distort the

general population's views on any one or a combination of minority groups. Overall, open attitudes create warmth and equal opportunities for all parties involved. More importantly, the Korean industry would fare better internationally if it had a higher number of flexible and unbiased leaders ready to face the ever changing challenges of today's global world which is characterized by multifaceted, multinational and multicultural ideals.

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