

History and Present of Evening Junior High Schools (*Yakan Chugaku*) in Postwar Japan: Focusing on Learning to Liberate Marginalized People in Osaka

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This paper examines the significance and potential of educational practices of evening junior high schools (yakan chugaku). After World War II, evening junior high schools were established for children who could not attend daytime junior high schools, and later those who had not completed compulsory education beyond school age began to study there. After the Act on Securing Educational Opportunities Equivalent to Ordinary Education at the Stage of Compulsory Education was enacted in 2016, new evening junior high schools have gradually begun to be established. This paper provides an overview of the history and present of evening junior high schools and then discusses the case of Osaka Prefecture, where the most advanced emancipatory educational practices, so-called “liberation education (kaiho kyoiku),” have taken place since the 1970s. It focuses on the practice of Kim Hyangdoja, a second generation Zainichi Korean who teaches at an evening junior high school in Higashi-Osaka City. She and her colleagues have sought a way for marginalized people, especially first-generation Zainichi Korean women, to become aware of their historical and social position. We considered the significance of her practice, “Writing my history with photos,” similar to Paulo Freire’s literacy education. We clarified that this practice is not only for making personal history, but is also an arena for expressing the identities of different social groups.

Keywords: evening junior high school (*yakan chugaku*) / Zainichi Koreans / liberation education / marginalized people / writing my history with photos

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Introduction

This study examines the significance and potential of learning in the emancipation of marginalized people by focusing on the educational practices of evening junior high schools (*yakan chugaku*), a unique educational institution established in post-war Japan. These schools primarily aim to provide compulsory education for students who have been out of or absent from school for a long time and those who have not completed compulsory education. Many of these schools have been positioned as night classes or branch schools in junior high schools. The legal basis for their establishment remained unclear for a long time; however, the need for establishment and expansion was clarified in the Act on Securing Educational Opportunities Equivalent to Ordinary Education at the Stage of Compulsory Education in 2016. As of April 2022, there are 40 schools in 15 prefectures with approximately 1,800 enrolled students.

Most previous studies on evening junior high schools have either discussed the significance of specific student groups such as *Zainichi* Koreans and newcomers (Seo, 2012, Sakuma, 2015) or outlined the institutional transition and educational movements (Otawa, 2017). In contrast, this study focuses on the fact that a diverse group of people excluded from the institutions and practices of modern schooling have become students in evening junior high schools. Furthermore, it seeks to identify the dilemmas that arose in each era and the potential for educational practices emerging therefrom which aim at the emancipation of minorities.

First, this paper provides an overview of the history and current situation of evening junior high schools in Section 1, presenting educational practices in the case of Osaka Prefecture for the emancipation of marginalized people based on the historical consideration in Section 2. Then it focuses on the practice of a female *Zainichi* Korean teacher, Kim Hyangdoja, with reference to the philosophy of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher, to examine the significance and potential of her educational practices.

After clarifying the historical background of educational practices in Higashi-Osaka City and Kim's life history in Section 3, the paper describes how the educational practices of evening junior high schools have made the students reflect on their living conditions by using photos and personal history in Section 4.

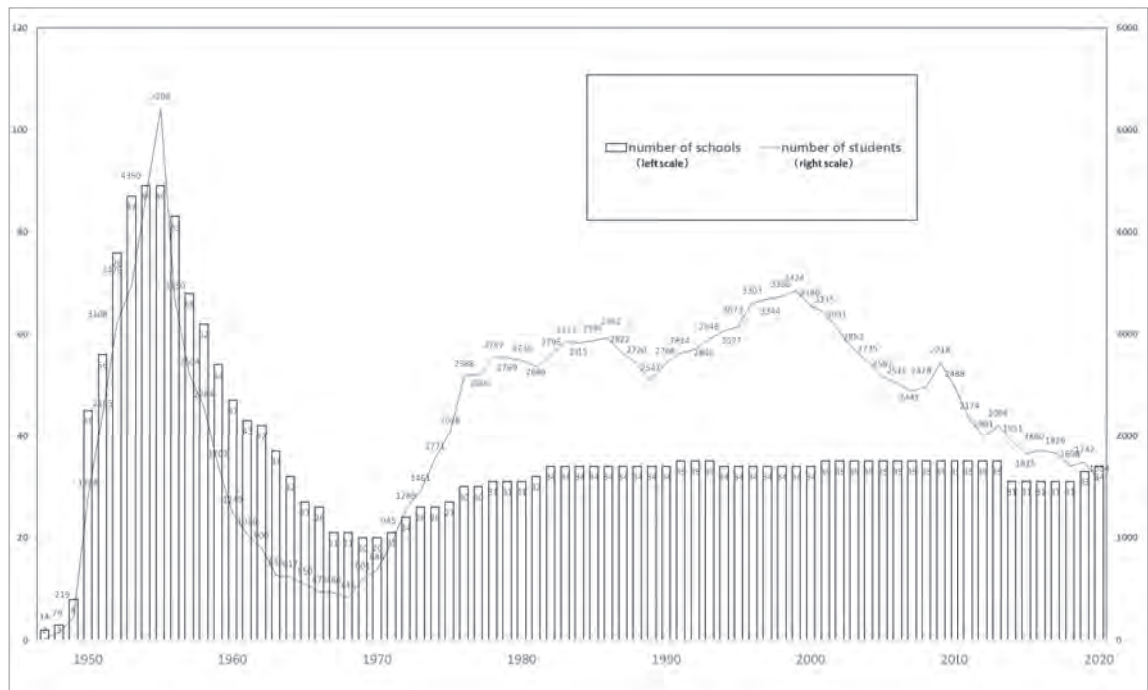
1. History and Present of Evening Junior High Schools

1.1. Postwar History of Evening Junior High Schools

This section reviews the history of evening junior high schools in postwar Japan¹. The number of these schools increased rapidly from the end of the war to the 1950s, and then began to decline, but increased during the 1970s, taking on a new role; it has since remained at approximately 30 schools established nationwide (Figure 1).

After Japan's defeat in WWII, the Basic Act on Education and the School Education Act were enacted in 1947, setting forth the principles and framework of the education system, and a new single-line school education system was adopted. Compulsory education was extended to nine years, stipulating that after elementary school, all citizens must attend junior high school for three years. However, numerous social problems existed at that time, includ-

Figure 1 Changes in the number of evening junior high schools and students (1947–2020)



ing the devastation of the country and economic poverty, the mass migration of people following the collapse of the “Empire of Japan,” and the presence of orphans who had lost their parents in the war. Many children were working during the daytime, and evening junior high schools were established at the grassroots level to help them.

Subsequently, the number of students who had not completed compulsory education increased in these evening junior high schools. However, in 1966, the Administrative Management Agency requested the Ministry of Education to abolish evening junior high schools because they were no longer needed. Under these circumstances, Takano Masao, a graduate of a Tokyo evening junior high school, opposed the abolition. Born in Manchuria, he had lived as an orphan in various cities in post-war Japan, had never attended school, and could neither read nor write. He was over 20 years old when he established his family register and attended school for the first time in an evening junior high school; thus, he was keenly aware of the need for these schools. Finally, he launched a nationwide campaign to screen films shot at his alma mater and emphasized the significance of evening junior high schools.

Thanks in part to these efforts, from the 1970s onward, evening junior high schools have continued to exist. For a long time, however, national and local governments did not fully recognize the need for such schools, and accordingly, they were concentrated in large cities, such as Tokyo and Osaka, and did not exist in many other areas. The National Association of Evening Junior High Schools (NAEJHS), organized by teachers, has appealed to the national and local governments since the 1970s to establish at least one evening junior high school in every prefecture to guarantee the right to learn for those who need it.

In the 2010s, the government and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) began to establish and expand evening junior high schools as a

policy, partly because of these movements. Subsequently, in 2016, the Equal Opportunity Act was enacted. Thus, it became a matter of social consensus that those who had not completed compulsory education should be guaranteed the opportunity to receive basic general education in schooling. Currently, new evening junior high schools are gradually beginning to be established, mainly in areas where citizen movements have arisen.

1.2. Transition of Demographics of Students—Focusing Particularly on Zainichi Koreans and *Chugoku Zanryu Koji*

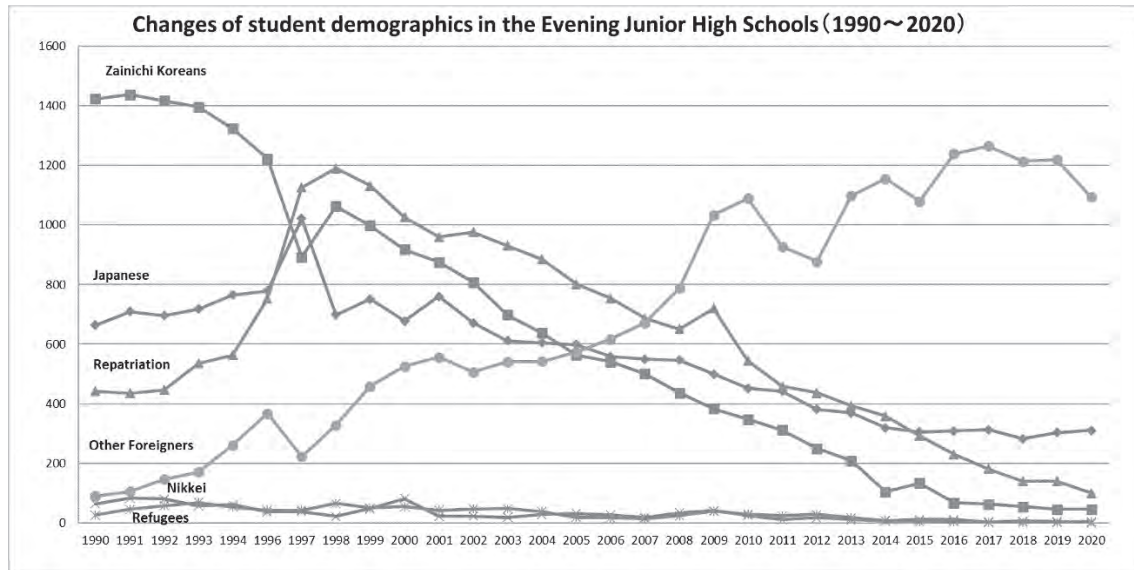
Next, we review the demographics of the student population. Until the mid-1960s, most students were Japanese. After the 1970s, the enrollment of Japanese and other minorities increased, such as those known as *burakumin* (with roots in the Japanese caste historically subjected to discrimination; see pp.35-36), those with disabilities, those who had been non-attending students, *hikikomori* (shut-ins), those from Okinawa, and Zainichi Koreans. In addition, there were students from outside Japan, including *Nikkei*², repatriates who could not return immediately after WWII and had remained in Korea or China, refugees from countries such as Vietnam and Afghanistan, and various other newcomer foreigners³. They needed to learn Japanese before learning the basic subjects.

Figure 2 shows the student demographics, as published by NAEJHS. In 1990, a large percentage of the population consisted of Zainichi Koreans, Japanese, and repatriates. However, in the late 2000s, due to globalization, other foreigners accounted for the largest share. Although most foreign residents are of Asian descent, there are also people from Africa, the Middle East, Central and South America, and other parts of the world. Among other foreigners, the number of young students who are children of foreigners who came to Japan as laborers have been increasing. Many of them have a family stay status and need to enter high school to lead a stable life in Japan. However, since many of them are past school age and cannot enter Japanese junior high schools, evening junior high schools support their career paths. (Enoi, 2022, p. 184).

The number of people from colonial Korea who arrived in Japan amounted to approximately 2 million in 1945. Following Japan's defeat and liberation of Korea, many returned to their home country; however, due to the intensification of the Cold War and the Korean War, approximately 600,000 remained in Japan. The first-generation Zainichi Koreans were often unable to attend school either in colonial Korea or in Japan, especially in the case of women, many of whom were illiterate (Kim, 2005). They sought ethnic education to learn their native languages and cultures, so ethnic schools were established in Japan. However, as the Cold War intensified, the Japanese government and General Headquarters, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ), suppressed ethnic education. In addition, after the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, the Japanese government unilaterally stripped Zainichi Koreans of their nationality and did not guarantee their right to education (Kim, 2010). In the 1970s, many Zainichi Koreans began studying at evening junior high schools as they became increasingly inclined to settle in Japan. Thus, some evening junior high schools in Osaka had 80% to 90% Zainichi Koreans for a while.

Another large group enrolled since the 1970s is the *Chugoku zanryu koji* and their families. Japan launched the Manchurian Incident and established the puppet state of Manchukuo in northeastern China in 1932. With the encouragement of the Japanese government, approximately 270,000 Japanese people went to Manchuria, known as the *Manmo-kaitaku-dan* (pio-

Figure 2 Changes in student demographics since the 1990s



neers of Manchuria and Mongolia). In 1937, the Sino-Japanese War began, and the Japanese who traveled to Manchuria were caught at the forefront of the war. The Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan coincided with Japan's defeat in 1945, and some children, abandoned by the Japanese military, were raised by adoptive parents in China. Those who returned to Japan after the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China in 1972 were called *Chugoku zanryu koji* (Asano & Tong, 2016). They and their children often had to hide their roots as Japanese because the Chinese were not well disposed toward the Japanese due to memories of the war, the Cultural Revolution, and other factors. After returning to Japan, they needed opportunities for basic education, including Japanese language education, and accordingly they enrolled in evening junior high schools.

Evening junior high schools have accepted many people as a result of global change. This has led to the practice of liberation-oriented learning that supports their lives and survival, deepens their historical awareness, and promotes identity formation.

2. The Philosophy and Practice of Liberation Education in Osaka's Evening Junior High Schools

2.1. Liberation Education and Education for Zainichi Koreans in Osaka

The educational practice of evening junior high schools in Osaka was established from the perspective of "liberation education (*kaiho kyoiku*)," which emerged from the teachers' involvement in the Buraku liberation movement. Let us examine the process of expanding the perspective of liberation education to include the issue of education for Zainichi Koreans.

In Japan, status discrimination during the early modern period continued even after the modern period. In the discriminated sections of the population, school attendance and long-term absenteeism rates were high and education was not adequately guaranteed. The Suihei-

sha, a national organization of burakumin, was established in 1922, and the Buraku liberation movements spread. In response to these movements, the Japanese government initiated certain improvement projects. However, fundamental improvements were not made until after the war. After the war, some conscientious schoolteachers conducted education aimed at eliminating buraku discrimination, the so-called Dowa education, but its official status remained ambiguous.

In 1965, the Council for Discrimination Against Buraku established by the national government issued a report that proposed a solution to the Buraku problem as a national issue. In doing so, emphasis was placed on the role of Dowa education. Furthermore, radical teachers who understood the issue of Buraku liberation in the context of various discrimination problems in modern society and sought the social emancipation of all minorities called their practice “liberation education.” They approached the reality of discrimination behind the problems of minority children in school and worked to improve their harsh living conditions, guarantee academic achievement, and develop their ability to move toward liberation from discrimination. Simultaneously, this was linked to the transformation of the perceptions of the majority of children and the self-transformation of their teachers. This liberation education was an attempt to redraw boundaries in the sense that it critiqued the school culture that had been built around the majority, broadened the scope of the educational practices that teachers considered, and redefined the restoration of minority rights as an important teacher mission. One area in which such liberation education was most extensively practiced was Osaka (Gordon, 2008).

A major challenge faced by Osaka public school teachers who worked on liberation education in the 1970s was the issue of the education of Zainichi Korean children. Most of them were educated not in ethnic but in Japanese public schools. As Dowa education progressed, the need for a unique education for Zainichi Korean children became increasingly recognized. In 1971, a group of volunteer teachers in Osaka formed the “Association for the Education of Korean Children and Students in Japanese Schools” (AEKCSJS), which demanded that the local government provide better measures. Furthermore, the Osaka City Board of Education’s “School Education Policy” stated that ethnic education for Zainichi Korean children should be promoted. In addition, extracurricular ethnic classes were established to provide a place for Zainichi Korean children to learn the language and culture of their ethnic groups. The Japanese teachers and the Zainichi Korean teachers who taught ethnic classes were neutral in their approach to education as the Cold War continued, taking the perspective of reflecting on the history of Japan’s colonial rule as the background for the division of North and South Korea (Park, 2008).

The most symbolic of these educational practices was “true name education.” The Japanese government adopted a policy of assimilation during its colonial rule in Korea and in 1940 established the system of *soshi kaimei* (renaming policy) to force Koreans to adopt Japanese-style names, thus depriving Koreans of their unique names. Even after Japan’s defeat in the war, most Zainichi Koreans continued to live under aliases due to serious discrimination. In Japanese society, Zainichi Koreans, who are physically similar to the Japanese, often took Japanese-style names and hid their Korean identity under the pressure of assimilation. While discrimination potentially existed, many Zainichi Korean children concealed their own ethnicity in school. Therefore, it was essential to create an environment in which they could use their true (Korean) names as symbols of their ability to exercise their ethnic subjectivity.

The act of calling them by their true names was also emphasized so that Japanese teachers and children could understand their history and ethnic subjectivity and live together in harmony by accepting one another's differences. This perspective was also emphasized in the practice of evening junior high schools.

2.2. The Beginning of Education for Zainichi Koreans in Osaka's Evening Junior High Schools

In Osaka Prefecture, more than a dozen evening junior high schools were closed by the mid-1960s, with only one school remaining in Kishiwada City. However, as a result of Takano's movement, evening classes were established at Osaka Municipal Tennoji Junior High School in 1969. By 1976, seven new evening junior high schools had been established, making it the prefecture with the largest number of evening junior high schools in Japan.

Teachers at Osaka's evening junior high schools could not simply use the Courses of Study⁴ or existing junior high school textbooks to teach their students, who varied in age and learning experiences. Therefore, they developed teaching materials and curricula according to their students' circumstances. In particular, the percentage of Zainichi Korean students had increased dramatically since the mid-1970s. Many of them were female and illiterate in Japanese and Korean. Teachers needed to meet the learning needs of these women while simultaneously providing education based on their historical backgrounds.

Teachers oriented toward liberation education believed that it was critical to provide learning toward liberation in evening junior high schools, rather than merely transmitting basic knowledge and skills. These teachers worked to educate Zainichi Korean students to "use their true names." They also prepared independent teaching materials to teach Korean history and attempted to learn Korean. Despite numerous practical difficulties, the evening junior high schools aimed toward education that would allow Zainichi Koreans to regain their pride.

Inatomi Susumu was a leading teacher at evening junior high schools in Osaka during this period. Inatomi began practicing Dowa education in junior high schools in Osaka City in the 1960s and was the first president of the AEKCSJS. He was from Tokunoshima, an isolated island in the Amami region more than 1,000 km away from Tokyo and Osaka, and felt the need for special education for minorities in conjunction with his background. He became an evening teacher at Osaka Municipal Tennoji Junior High School in 1974, when the number of Zainichi Korean women enrolling in the school was rapidly increasing. He acquired his perspective on the education of Zainichi Koreans from his students (Inatomi, 2013).

3. Practice of Kim Hyangdoja in Higashi-Osaka City

3.1. Curriculum and Practice of the Evening Junior High School in Higashi-Osaka City

This and the following section will historically and philosophically examine the educational practices of Kim Hyangdoja, who became an evening junior high school teacher in Higashi-Osaka City in the 1990s. First, we examine the characteristics of evening junior high schools in Higashi-Osaka City.

Higashi-Osaka Municipal Choei Evening Junior High School was established in 1972 and is located near the Zainichi Korean community, adjacent to Osaka City. Therefore, in the 1980s, it had the highest number of Zainichi Korean students. The population of Hi-

gashi-Osaka City is approximately 500,000, with a percentage of foreigners remaining around 4%. For a long time, most of them were made up of Koreans, but the breakdown has changed, with an increase in *Chugoku zanryu koji* and their families in the 1990s and an increase in Vietnamese in the 2010s. Higashi-Osaka City is one of the most active cities in Osaka Prefecture in implementing multicultural policies, positioning evening junior high schools therein in recent years (Higashi-Osaka City, 2003, 2022).

Historically, Zainichi Koreans established ethnic schools after the end of WWII in Higashi-Osaka City. An ethnic class was established with Zainichi Korean teachers at Taiheiji Elementary School after the forced closing of ethnic schools by the Japanese government and the GHQ in 1948. Educational policy for Zainichi Koreans established by Higashi-Osaka City in 1982 indicated education for democratic and international individuals to overcome ethnic prejudice and discrimination. In 1996, the Higashi-Osaka International Exchange Festival was held for the first time, and evening junior high school students read essays on stage and presented songs and ethnic dances (Hayashi, 2019).

In 1993, some of the students moved to a branch class located in a different school because of the ballooning number of students in Choei Evening Junior High School. However, students requested the independence of this branch class because it was in poor condition. As a result of many years of students' demands to the Board of Education, a new evening junior high school, Taiheiji Evening Junior High School, was established in 2001. Seo explains the points for the success of this action: Education for ethnic pride as human rights education, the ability to express opinions in Japanese, and a student council as a place to express opinions (Seo, 2012, p. 162).

Furthermore, teachers began to create a "curriculum for evening junior high schools." The 1999 curriculum set "making personal history," "recognition of social position," and "ascertainment of identity" as learning goals. To achieve these goals, teachers established five subjects (expression, history, modern society, ethnicity and culture, and life) and created original educational materials. Making a personal history does not only include merely looking back at one's own history but also developing the ability to make one's own history to improve life after graduation. For instance, recognition of social position means the consciousness of existence as a minority in Japan. Ascertainment of identity means a conversion from negative to positive identity. Moreover, this curriculum focuses on the recognition of ethnic identities (Higashi-Osaka Municipal Choei Evening Junior High School, 1999).

"Recognition of social position" in particular integrates personal and social problems. This concept arose in the Buraku liberation movement and was situated as the goal for liberation education in the 1970s, requiring improved scientific recognition ability with regard to the structure of discrimination in modern society and re-realizing one's own, parents', or friends' personal history and lives while empowering the group to fight against discrimination. This concept resembles Paulo Freire's philosophy, discussed below (Mori, 2001).

3.2. Kim Hyangdoja's Life History and Educational Practice

Here, we focus on the practice of Kim Hyangdoja, a second-generation Zainichi Korean who has been a teacher at Higashi-Osaka Municipal Choei and Okibe Evening Junior High Schools since 1993.

First, based on her books and two interviews, we discuss her life history (Kim, 1998).⁵ She was born in Osaka City in March 1945, where many Koreans lived. Her family was

poor, so her parents earned income from picking steel scraps. Kim went to Japanese public elementary and junior high schools. However, some teachers were prejudiced against Koreans. According to Kim, a teacher at the elementary school said, “Your parents are dirty and uneducated.” A junior high school teacher did not offer any assistance in job hunting, assuming that no companies would hire Koreans. Therefore, her ethnic identity was damaged in the school, just as experienced by other Zainichi Koreans.

Against this background, by the time she entered high school, Kim was forced to become aware of her ethnicity, even if she did not want to. At that time, she was influenced by the democratic movement in South Korea. She established a seminar on Korean culture and participated in an ethnic organization. Moreover, she met by chance a Japanese university student who respected her ethnicity and remained in touch with her for a long time. Around this time, she visited her parents’ hometown in Korea for the first time with her mother and met her relatives, prompting her to reexamine her roots. Thus, she was able to face her own ethnicity little by little, even while she saw it only as a negative image.

Subsequently, she obtained her teaching license through night courses at a junior college. She became acquainted with Inatomi Susumu, who worked at Tennoji Evening Junior High School, where women of the same generation as her mother were learning to read Japanese. Subsequently, she supported the class as a part-time instructor until 1991. She met third- and fourth-generation Zainichi Koreans in the ethnic school and was involved with the first generation in the evening junior high school. Therefore, she became aware of her historical position as the second generation and began thinking about undertaking a role specific to her there. Moreover, she realized again that first-generation Zainichi Korean women were illiterate and understood the importance of evening junior high schools.

Kim started teaching at Choei Evening Junior High School in 1993. As of 1990, it was a large school with 390 students and 24 teachers and staff. Of the students, 373 were female and 291 were 55 years old or older, accounting for roughly three-quarters of the total. By nationality, 48 were from Japan, 337 from Korea, two from China, one from Vietnam, one from Thailand, and one from the Philippines, with Korea accounting for approximately 86% (Higashi-Osaka Municipal Choei Junior High School, 1989).

At first, Kim was expected to be a teacher of Korean language, but she gradually undertook various educational practices focused on ethnicity and culture. Kim was influenced by “the evening junior high school curriculum” and created educational material from the perspective of Zainichi Koreans to enable students to state their opinions freely.

4. Writing My History with Photos—Memory and Learning of the Second-Generation of *Chugoku Zanryu Koji*

4.1. Literacy Education as Dissimilation, Photography as Mirror, by Paulo Freire

This section interprets Kim’s recent practice based on Paulo Freire’s theory. Freire focused on the education of adult literacy because “reading” means that oppressed people can reflect on their living conditions and the society around them. This reflection promotes liberation and change. Therefore, Freire’s works have contributed not only to literacy education, but also to feminism, post-colonialism, and so on.

The pedagogy of the oppressed is forged with, not for, the oppressed (whether individu-

als or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 22). Freire argues that the central problem is how the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation (ibid.). They must discover themselves as the hosts of the oppressor so that they can contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy. “The pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanization” (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 22).

Freire attempted to analyze dialogue as a human phenomenon. Consequently, he discovered the word as the essence of the dialogue itself (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 60): “But the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible.” Freire shows reflection and action as the constitutive elements of the word. Simultaneously, there are no true words without practice. Therefore, “to speak a true word is to transform the world” (ibid.). As Seo argues, for Freire, literacy education is a kind of political practice that means practice for liberation (Seo, 2012, pp. 163-164).

For liberation, Freire appealed to the need to identify issues. He calls these issues generative themes that inaugurate the dialogue of education as the practice of freedom (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 69). These themes are contained in limit situations (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 75). Limit situations mean that people are directly or indirectly served by these situations. “In order to achieve humanization, which presupposes the elimination of dehumanizing oppression, it is absolutely necessary to surmount limit situations in which people are reduced to things” (Freire 1970/1993, p. 76). To overcome these limitations, generative themes can be used in dialogue. The themes selected from the limit situations are presented using illustrations. According to Satomi, the presentation of themes has a distancing effect (Satomi, 2010, pp. 166-167). Generative themes in limit situations evoke a feeling of shock by detaching generative themes from the ordinary context.

4.2. Writing My History with Photos, by Kim Hyangdoja

At first, Kim taught Japanese language because Zainichi Korean students could not read or write it. Students wanted to be able to write their names and addresses in Japanese. However, Kim thought that they had to learn their native language (Korean). This is because the Korean language as the language of the nation was taken away from them during colonial rule and because they had developed a negative perception of Korean in that context, so learning their native language was considered important to regaining their national identity and pride. Learning one’s native language is also important for maintaining good relations with one’s family and ethnic community. Therefore, Kim adopted Korean language education as “ethnicity and culture” in the curriculum, which contained other subjects as well.

“Writing my history with photos” refers to learning Japanese using students’ photos. Students write about habits, customs, friends, family life, and so on while looking at their photos. She tried this pedagogy with Zainichi Korean students, and later began to do so with students from different backgrounds, including a project in 2021 with second-generation *Chugoku zanryu koji* students at Okibe Evening Junior High School. The number of students in 2021 was 62; by nationality, there were six students from Japan, 45 from China, three from Korea, one from Vietnam, four from Nepal, and three from the Philippines (Okibe Junior High School [Evening], 2021).

The students brought photos taken while living in China. According to Kim, “Writing

my history with photos” is not only for learning Japanese, but also for writing a personal history. They were born in China and came to Japan as adults with their first-generation *Chugoku zanryu koji* parents. Therefore, although their native language is Chinese, they have roots in Japan and seek to learn Japanese to live in Japanese society. Kim believed that it was important for these students, who lived between Japan and China, to deepen the awareness of their historical and social positions and acquire expression in Japanese through telling of their personal histories.

Through writing personal histories, students try to show other students and teachers how they lived in China and Japan and take their first step toward understanding their limit situations. This practice has the same points as Freire’s generative theme. As stated above, generative themes were selected from the limit situations. For students, the limit situations contain not only their ordinary life but also the historical conditions in which they tend to overlook their limit situation. In addition, by using photos, students can find their themes from the limit situations through writing personal histories, because photos keep students distant from their personal histories and can make them reflect on their lives.

In writing their history, students deal with not only good stories but also painful stories, because writing only good stories cannot be self-transformative. Students must tell the truth about their experiences as second-generation *Chugoku zanryu koji*. Kim explains that this practice is not the end but a departure point for students to consider how they will go through their lives and acknowledge and confront society.

4.3. How Do the Students Themselves Feel?

First, Kim reminds students about their past by writing texts and looking at photos. The second-generation of *Chugoku zanryu koji* had complicated memories of China, Japan, and their families. Kim attempts to provoke these memories through “writing my history with photos.”⁶

In this class, a student named Wang recalled childhood experiences. For instance, when she was an elementary school student in China, she was afraid of writing her mother’s name because it was Japanese. Wang kept her mother hidden from the Chinese in order to avoid bullying for being Japanese.

Another student called Li said, “I reaffirm our history through this class.” During the height of the Cultural Revolution, had it been revealed that her family was related to the Japanese, they could have been persecuted. Therefore, she burned letters written in Japanese.

Hence, students can reaffirm their historical position through “Writing my history with photos.” Importantly, students’ concerns are oriented not only toward the past, but also toward the future. For instance, Li said that she was able to see her history for the first time by studying at an evening junior high school. As a child, she had listened to history related to Japan and China from her mother but was not interested. She decided to continue studying history and wars from then on.

In this dialogue, students other than *Chugoku zanryu koji* also learned about the history of Japan and China. They never knew what had happened to the students who were children of *Chugoku zanryu koji* before the conversation in this class. Therefore, through “Writing my history with photos,” the classroom becomes an arena in which members of subordinated social groups can communicate. This practice is not only for making personal history but also provides an arena for expressing the identities of different social groups.

Conclusion

Considering the case of the evening junior high schools in Osaka discussed in this paper, it becomes clear that learning has been practiced in such a way that marginalized people become aware of their historical and social positions, regain their self-esteem and identity, and become liberated. Importantly, self-transformation and social transformation are the two wheels of this process. These practices were born out of the dilemma faced by evening junior high schools in the 1970s as they enrolled a new student population and earnestly searched for the learning that the students in front of them needed. These educational practices are also connected to the theory and practice of critical pedagogy, which has emerged since the 1970s (Giroux, 2020).

There are two remaining research questions. One is to examine how these educational practices for emancipation can be carried out in the future of evening junior high schools. It has been discussed that respect for cultural identity is important in the education of newcomers as a foundation for moving toward learning (Shimizu & Shimizu, 2001). However, the veteran teacher Kim Hyangdoja was concerned that it would be difficult to continue previous practices because they require a certain level of Japanese skill. However, few teachers are concerned about the social injustice which excludes students who cannot communicate in Japanese. Therefore, especially in the new evening junior high schools, it will be necessary to communicate the significance and methods of educating students from diverse linguistic and social backgrounds toward emancipation.

The other is to carefully re-examine the hard-to-see dilemmas impregnated in educational practices for liberation. It has been pointed out that in some aspects of ethnic education, personal identity has been suppressed by cultural essentialist tendencies (Kim, 2010). Even in evening junior high schools, where students' ethnic backgrounds are becoming more diverse, it is necessary to reconsider the nature of education that respects identity.

As students studying in evening junior high schools remain marginalized in Japanese society, continuing education for their liberation is essential. Compared to the theory and practice of critical pedagogy, we must examine its significance in a global context.

Notes

- 1 The following description is based on Eguchi (2020).
- 2 The term "*Nikkei*" here refers to the descendants of the Japanese who immigrated to South American countries, mainly Brazil and Peru, from the late 19th to late 20th century. The year 1990 saw a rapid increase in the number of *Nikkei* coming to Japan after the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act was amended to allow them to work legally in Japan.
- 3 Following the increase in the number of foreigners who came to Japan as laborers since the late 1970s, they came to be referred to as "newcomers," while *Zainichi* Koreans and others who originated from Japan's colonial rule came to be referred to as "oldcomers."
- 4 Japan's Courses of Study must be followed by all regular schools, as stipulated in Article 1 of the School Education Law, and they are considered legally binding. However, because they do not fit the actual situation of evening junior high schools, in 2017, MEXT established a system allowing for special curricula in evening junior high schools, and the previous flexible curriculum is now official.
- 5 Interviews were conducted twice: on March 11, 2022 (Eguchi & Lee) and May 20, 2022 (Eguchi).
- 6 The following interview with Ms. Wang and Ms. Li, Kim's students at Okibe Evening Junior

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