

Human Rights Education Initiatives in Osaka

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The Kansai region in Japan has been known for its long-period of engagement in Dowa education, the anti-discrimination education focusing on the *Buraku* people. However, there are other initiatives that exist in this region that focus on education regarding other human rights issues. They also relate to human rights education in schools. Following are some of the initiatives in Osaka city.

Children Information Research Center

The Children Information Research Center (CIRC), established in 1977, is a group comprised of citizens whose goal is to create a society in which both adults and children are respected.¹ One of the ways CIRC has advocated the rights of children is through the release of *Harappa*, a magazine which counsels children who are having truancy problem, gives needed information on raising children, and promotes research on child rights. Some of CIRC's counseling services include Child Line Osaka, a hotline that allows children to make anonymous phone calls regarding their daily lives. As a worldwide hotline with sixty operations in Japan alone, Child Line Osaka does not focus on lecturing children, but rather advocating for a child's right to be heard by listening to the child's opinions and ideas. CIRC also provides the Children Family Counseling Room, which aids families in developing specific solutions to their problems while focusing on their children's best interests. The Children Family Counseling Room is connected with the Victim Relief System for School Children and Students, which helps prevent and deals with the consequences of physical punishment, bullying, and sexual harassment in schools.

Empowerment Kansai for Women and Children

Empowerment Kansai for Women and Children is a non-governmental organization that focuses on the protection of children against violence.² It implements projects on violence prevention and human rights education, and provides information regarding these projects. It holds study groups to make men and women become aware that they are members of society and should participate in social activities. The ultimate aim of Empowerment Kansai for Women and Children is the creation of a society that does not tolerate human rights violations against the weak, such as women and children, and also a society where everyone's rights are respected despite race, gender and age. All these efforts and activities aim to empower adults and children to work together to increase their ability to live in and contribute to the creation of a prosperous civil society.

It founded the Children's Empowerment Support Program in 2006, which aims to help children develop the ability to protect themselves against violence, while respecting the rights of children. This teaching program is the first of its kind in Japan. Empowerment Kansai for Women and Children provided train-

ing for first and second grade primary school teachers to enable them to use the teaching program in their classes. The program focuses on four areas, namely, topics regarding a sense of belonging, boundaries, emotions, and power. These four topics are further categorized into ten different groups out of which teachers can choose the ones they feel are the most useful given their present situation.

Osaka Prefectural Association of Human Rights Education in Private Schools

The Osaka Prefectural Association of Human Rights Education in Private Schools³ was established in 1969 as an organ of the Osaka Prefectural Education Institute for the Promotion of Private Schools. It includes all private schools in the junior and senior secondary school associations as well as the primary school association in Osaka Prefecture.

In the beginning, the Association consisted of five headmasters' working groups under the Headmasters' Committee. Expert members were elected from among the members in each of the working groups. These expert members then played major roles in organizing teacher training to increase their awareness on human rights. The working groups began to have full-time trainers and secretariat staff in 1971. Committees to study on specific topics were also organized to intensify the activities. These Committees continue to be active today.

At a time when "internationalization," "multi-culturalism" and "information" have become key words, the Association continues to find ways to put into practice diverse and multi-faceted human rights education, taking into consideration the challenges raised in the previous activities.

Currently, there are seven committees on specific topics, working closely with the working groups, to reach out to the specific activities in each school:

- 1) Committee on Dowa and human rights education exchange – this develops lesson plans for homeroom sessions on Dowa (Buraku discrimination) and human rights, and shares practices and initiatives on Dowa and human rights education to schools. It also studies, analyses and holds awareness-raising activities on various situations of private schools that are problematic and involving discrimination.
- 2) Committee on studies on career security – this actively promotes career guidance for students who face discrimination in private senior secondary schools in the prefecture. It also studies and discusses (in cooperation with relevant organs and bodies) the elimination of discrimination and the means to ensure employment and career-building among students. Furthermore, it studies ways of supporting career security for students who are enrolled but do not attend school, or who have dropped out of school.
- 3) Committee on studies on resident Koreans – this conducts studies on education for resident Korean children and students to enable them to strengthen their ethnic identity, and for Japanese children and students to overcome ethnic prejudice and discriminatory ideas. It aims to strengthen international understanding, so that they can call each other by their true names.
- 4) Committee on studies on the supplementary reader, *Ningen* - this studies and discusses matters related to education, focusing on the supplementary reader, *Ningen*, used in Dowa and human rights education in private primary, junior and senior secondary schools in the prefecture.
- 5) Committee on studies for voluntary student activities - this supports activities of students, who participate in clubs and groups related to human rights, as well as those who are interested in human rights. It also

organizes exchanges among schools to strengthen the activities. At the same time, it cooperates with other bodies to support the students' activities.

- 6) Committee on studies on issues of persons with disabilities – this conducts studies on educational practices and exchanges with the schools to support the independence of children and students with various disabilities, to ensure the right to learn not just in school but also in the society, and to develop human relationships between children and students with and without disabilities to live and learn together.
- 7) Committee against sexual discrimination – this organizes awareness raising activities and studies to realize a society in which men and women share responsibilities, and are able to exercise their full personalities and potentials regardless of gender. It also develops teaching materials from which students and teachers learn issues on sexuality. It produced *Sexual Harassment Prevention for School Children: A Picture Story Performance, Can You Say No?*⁴ This large-sized picture story consists of five different themes: “I feel uncomfortable being touched!,” “What is manliness and womanliness?,” “Please don’t do things I don’t like!,” “Express your feelings!,” and “I’m growing up!” The material allows children to participate in the stories by encouraging them to come up with answers to the questions that the stories address. The material also provides explanations to make it easier to use in class. The Committee also developed a sexual harassment prevention audiovisual material entitled *For a Comfortable School Life* (in DVD format) for junior and senior secondary students.

The Association works closely with the Gender Equality Foundation Planning and Promotion Group. This group believes that the most effective way to develop children’s perspective on gender equality is to utilize the influence of teachers on their students. It organizes workshops for teachers on materials that help form a gender-equal perspective on their students.

These workshops are attended by primary and secondary (junior and senior) teachers, whose various backgrounds have been taken into close consideration in order to effectively confront gender equality issues.

ZUTTO⁵

ZUTTO is a non-profit organization formed on the basis of the belief that “a better society begins with life-long gender equality.” It was established in 2005 by bringing together the non-profit section (research on work and lifestyle of women, training for women to support their reentry into the labor market, activities related to gender equal society) of a company called Johonowa (established in 1984) and the activities of HEAL-Holistic Kyoiku Jissen Kenkyusho (established in 2001) on 1) providing lectures to women’s centers in different areas, 2) implementing projects to realize gender equal society, 3) program development, 4) administrative and civil society leadership development and (5) cooperation with other organizations. ZUTTO has the following objectives: 1) To raise awareness and provide training on gender equality; 2) To provide employment support and human resource development for women’s independence and empowerment; and 3) To engage in program development and implementation for healthy development of children.

It has a number of activities, namely,

1. Awareness raising and training on gender equality - training on gender equality for staff working in facilities related to women
2. Employment support and human resource development for women’s independence and empowerment. This include lectures for further mental and economic independence of women and information exchanges and study meetings for empowerment
3. Program development and implemen-

tation for the healthy development of children, and includes promotion of physical exercise games using English.

ZUTTO has recently organized the Japan-British Partnership Project against Bullying, which involves several workshops where Junior Secondary School students from Japan and Great Britain create presentations targeting bullying and solutions to bullying.

Speaking Out⁶

Save the Children is working all over the world including Japan. Its Japan office is engaged in an educational project called “Speaking Out” for the children in the country.

“Speaking Out” is a participatory learning program that aims to develop a deeper awareness of “international understanding” and “child rights” among children in Japan. Speakers (volunteer lecturers) take the leading role in the program.

The program aims to create a starting point for education for international understanding, human rights education and international cooperation in the “integrated learning” classes (*sogo gakushu*), events, and other activities in school.

The intended participants are mainly primary to senior secondary school students. Ten or more students participate in a program (with 45 to 90 minutes duration) held in the primary, junior and senior secondary schools, volunteer centers, event sites and other places where students get together. There can be a series of sessions in schools if agreed upon.

Save the Children Japan trains volunteer speakers on how to speak before the students in schools and other places. They also train on how to hold group work.

There are no particular qualifications required for the volunteer Speakers (such as prior related experiences or language capabilities). Enthusiasm is the main requirement, as well as willingness to give time. Volunteer speakers may be asked to continuously join the activi-

ties for six months or up to one year, and be available during day-time. This program is currently being held in the city centers of Tokyo and Osaka.

Project with Matsubara Senior High School

The Osaka Prefectural Matsubara Senior High School conducts “Speaking Out” each year since 2004. The sessions in the school started after students visited the Osaka Office of Save the Children in the same year. Since then, the students of Matsubara Senior High School have been volunteering to do the activities of Save the Children Japan.

Since the academic year 2005, Save the Children Japan has been holding another program in Matsubara Senior High School, the program called “Child-to-Child.”

“Child-to-Child” is a program where students who have participated in “Speaking Out” go through program development and practice sessions on speaking out to other students. It is a program that facilitates the action decided by the “Speaking Out” participants on their own to speak about children in other parts of the world and child rights to other students. Students participating in this program think about “what” and “how” they will speak to other students, and create their own original classes.

In the academic year 2006, a total of eight “Child-to-Child” programs were held in three months (September to November) as part of the “World Watching” course, one of the elective courses for Third Year students.

Birth of secondary school speakers

Students were given training on how to become speakers in the “Child-to-Child” program. They went through several training sessions. In the first session, the students

prepared for a “Speaking Out” program for primary school students. In learning about child rights and children’s issues around the world, some were concerned, “I am not sure whether I can do this,” but others were more confident, saying, “I learned a great deal. The content as well as the way used to present the issue to other people can be used when I am speaking in front of other people;” “I want to participate as volunteer and act, not just think;” “Responsibility comes with knowing about an issue, so I would like to act on it.”

In the second session, the students were taught ways (programming skill) that were necessary in creating classes for primary school students. They discussed what they would like to tell the students, and they came up with four issues, “education,” “war,” “poverty” and “orphans.” The students divided themselves into four groups, each group taking up one topic.

In the third, fourth and fifth sessions, they discussed the “aim” and began to develop the program in each group. In creating the programs, the students were told how to collect and present the information obtained. The students worked on their programs in each group, thinking about ways to explain the issues to the students.

Through the training sessions, the students experienced the difficulty of reconciling the different views in a group and clarifying the issues for the student-participants, while at the same time feeling the need for further discussions. They said, “there are too many views, so I can’t follow them, and I don’t know which is right. We must discuss more;” “It was difficult to decide on an aim. How much would a 5th grader understand?”

A public rehearsal was held in the Matsubara Senior High School just before the actual “Speaking Out” session at the primary school. The groups presented the programs they prepared. The audience included the head master, members of the Education Committee as well as Speaking Out volunteers. After the

presentations, they all evaluated the programs. As a result, the group that prepared the program on “poverty” obtained the highest votes, and thus would go to the primary school to implement the program.

Secondary school students holding “Speaking Out” session

The “Speaking Out” (Child-to-Child) session by senior secondary school students was held for twenty-one fifth graders of the Matsubara Municipal Ega Minami Elementary School. The student-speakers looked nervous in front of the many primary students at the beginning. But they gradually lost their tension and embarrassment seeing the students’ lively response, and continued with their program.

The student-speakers presented the current global situation on the distribution goods among the different regions using a game involving distribution of sweets among supposed representatives of the regions of the world. The primary students voiced amazement at knowing the global gap between regions. They commented, “A person from Asia/Africa jokingly said, ‘give me one,’ but I didn’t think the gap was really this wide;” “When I wasn’t given the sweet, I thought this must be how the people of Asia and Africa must have felt;” “I thought America and Europe were stingy. It is unfair, because Asia and Africa should be given the same amount;” “The people of Asia were given only one sweet, but I thought that this was what was really happening now.” With such views from the primary students, the student-speakers were able to achieve the aim of their program.

Through the “Child-to-Child” program, the student-speakers learned the difficulty of respecting and accepting the views of others they work with while ensuring that the audience understand the program by being careful in presenting the program content and words used. They said, “It was difficult to speak out

and accept the views of others;” “It is difficult to speak, because you have to think about the listener.” It can be said that they gained experience in giving consideration to others, not just knowledge. Other views were heard, such as, “It was hard work, but it was interesting, because I came to understand a lot of things in preparing the program;” “I want to make use of what I learned in the future.”

Endnotes

¹ The information on CRRC program is taken from Dawn, the newsletter of the Dawn Center, December 2007, page 7.

² Text taken from Dawn, *ibid.*, page 8.

³ Text taken from www.shigaku-jinken.gr.jp (Japanese language).

⁴ Text taken from Dawn, *op. cit.*, page 6.

⁵ Text taken from www.npo-zutto.com (Japanese language).

⁶ Text taken from www.savechildren.or.jp (Japanese language).