

“SCHOOLS FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN” AS A SPECIFIC FORM OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN FAR EAST COUNTRIES (China, Japan, South Korea and Singapore)

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Abstract. *“Schools for Ladies and Gentlemen” is a term commonly used to determine a non-formal educational institution in some of Far East countries where the students are taught mainly abroad ethics and aesthetics. Such educational institutions can be considered a vestige of the foreign countries` presence on the territory of the countries under consideration in the 19th-20th century, since it was the social activity of some European countries and US that largely determined the shape and value orientation of the education system in China, Japan, South Korea and Singapore in particular. The second half of the 20th century in the countries considered is characterized by a revision of foreign educational trends, which led to the departure of the abroad educational experience from the mass formal education. However, the social prestige of “foreign education” and the introduction of a child to “foreign ethical and aesthetic canons” as an indicator of financial well-being and social elitism has been preserved and has found its expression in the sphere of non-formal education in the form of clubs, circles, the services of private tutors, etc. The article examines the exact forms in which this trend is present in the educational sphere of one or another country in the Far East.*

Keywords: *China; Japan; non-formal education; Singapore; South Korea.*

Introduction

The colonial era in East Asia, marked by the influence of Western powers, has left a lasting imprint on the region's education systems. Despite the complexities and challenges associated with colonial rule, the policies implemented by foreign countries have had several positive impacts, shaping the educational landscapes of China, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. These impacts continue to resonate in contemporary educational practices and achievements. The legacy of colonial educational systems continues to permeate

various aspects of modern educational landscape of the countries under consideration, including non-formal education. While much attention is often given to formal educational institutions, such as schools and universities, the influence of colonial-era policies and practices on non-formal education is equally significant and today manifests itself in creation of new forms of educational institutions that have European-American trends in their philosophy and/or structure (mainly of the late 19th - first half of the 20th century), but are designed to serve completely different social goals: increasing social elitism and being an indicator of well-being of the family, that can afford such an education service for the child; additional educational opportunities for the student; eliminating gaps in formal education etc. The aim of this article is to introduce the concept of "Schools for ladies and gentlemen" as a distinctive occurrence of refined informal education within the Far Eastern nations, stemming from colonial legacies. Furthermore, it seeks to explore the practical manifestations of this notion in the contemporary educational landscapes of countries like the People's Republic of China, South Korea, Japan, and Singapore. In crafting this article, the authors used the research methods commonly found in compelling works within the realms of comparative pedagogy. One notable aspect of the scientific research method employed in this article involves utilizing a territorial and historical approach to juxtapose similar realities within the pedagogical practices of a single country. This method aims to discern the specificities of their genesis and historical development within the country.

Literature review

The entire amount of literature used in writing this article can be divided into 2 large groups. The first group includes publications that highlight the general trends of the influence of the colonial policy of foreign countries on the educational sector of colonial countries in Asia region. The works devoted to these aspects, are articles of Chuong Dang Van (2018), Engriyani E. and Madhakomala R. (2023), Harper T. (2009), Smith M. (2001). The second group includes publications that highlight the history and present of non-formal education in the countries selected for analysis (Bag Myeong Hui, Baeg Il U (2016), Kim Y. for South Korea (2016); Bagnall R. For Japan (2017); Shi L. For China (2019); Sun W. and Xue L for Singapore (2021). Data and information from the official websites of the Singapore Ministry of Education (2024), the Shanghai Association of Non-Governmental Education (2021), the Japanese city Matsue (2021), and others were also used to determine the current state of non-formal education and the characterization of "schools for ladies and gentlemen" as special educational institution in the countries determined for consideration.

Methodology

Researching "schools for Ladies and Gentlemen" as a specific form of non-formal educational institutions in Far East countries like China, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore, the authors employed a combination of several research methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic chosen. In particular: literature review (to understand the current state of research, identify gaps, and refine your research questions); case studies (to see the practical side of such educational institutions' functioning and to determine their role in the educational system of the country under consideration); observational research (as all the authors are orientalist by their educational and professional background, the article contains information which was gathered by the authors during their work and study in the countries under consideration); content analysis (to provide insights into their educational objectives and areas of focus of such educational institutions); comparative analysis (to identify similarities and differences in forms and functions of such educational institutions in the countries under consideration); policy analysis (examine of government policies, regulations, and initiatives related to non-formal education in each country was used to predict the future of this specific form of educational services in the countries chosen)

Research results

Throughout history, the colonial era has left a profound mark on the societies and institutions of countries that were once under foreign rule. While much discourse rightly focuses on the negative consequences of colonialism, it is also essential to acknowledge the positive impacts, particularly in the realm of education. Despite the often exploitative and oppressive nature of colonial rule, the education systems established by colonial powers have had lasting positive effects on the development and progress of former colonies. Before colonisation, education in many societies was informal, mainly introduced through oral traditions and apprenticeships. The establishment of regular education institutions (schools, professional education schools, institutes, universities) by colonial administrations provided access to structured learning opportunities for a wider segment of the population (Smith, 2001). It should also be mentioned that the very idea of regulated education, women's education, educational level, compulsory education and some others, as well as seeing education as the natural right of a person in society, was also mainly introduced by the colonists (Sun & Xue, 2021). This laid the foundation for the modern education systems that exist in many countries of the world (which are former colonies).

Colonial education policies often emphasised the adoption of Western languages and academic curricula. While this was a means of cultural imposition and navigation of local educational and cultural achievements, it also facilitated

communication and exchange of the countries under the colonial regime with the wider world and between each other. Thanks to such abroad countries' active presence, the educational and business-principal background of under-colonial countries was somehow levelled-up which gave these countries great benefits in post-colonial period (through economic unions and equity of language-education background) (Harper, 2009). Proficiency in languages such as English, French, or Spanish enabled former colonies to engage in international trade, diplomacy, and academic discourse, opening up avenues for intellectual and economic advancement as an independent state entity and quickly finding its place in the global economy.

Moreover, colonial education systems played a significant role in the dissemination of scientific knowledge and technological advancements. Colonial powers introduced modern scientific principles, methods, and technologies (the ones that were up-to-date for the period of active presence of the colonizers) to their colonies, which contributed to the development of local industries, healthcare systems, and agricultural practices (as they got the concentrated and already tested and approved methods of managing and operating, skipping somehow the evolutionary process of R&Ds and starting their independent activity in this field from the higher technological and scientific position in the post-colonial period) (Chuong, 2018). And while colonial education systems often promoted social mobility and meritocracy to some extent (it sanded for other "key features" of a person to access to education: f.e. being a Christian to be selected for a school attached to a foreign mission) it was often stratified along racial, ethnic, or class lines and talented individuals from all backgrounds could still rise through the ranks based on academic achievement (at least, at institutions, attached to the colonizers). This provided opportunities for upward social mobility and contributed to the emergence of a new educated elite in many post-colonial societies.

China: During the late Qing Dynasty, China experienced significant encroachment by Western powers, particularly in the aftermath of the Opium Wars. The imposition of unequal treaties and the forced opening of treaty ports exposed China to Western ideas and educational models. One positive outcome of this colonial influence was the introduction of modern educational institutions and pedagogies. Missionary schools and Western-style universities were established, providing access to a broader range of subjects, including science, technology, and humanities. These institutions played a crucial role in fostering intellectual curiosity and modernisation efforts in China (Spires, 2017). Today, the legacy of these educational reforms can be seen in China's emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education and its investment in research and innovation (Noah's Boat, 2022). The remnants of colonial influence on non-formal education in modern China are evident in various aspects of educational practices and institutions. One notable example is

the persistence of informal study groups and community-based learning initiatives, which can trace their roots back to the missionary schools and grassroots educational movements of the colonial era. These non-formal educational settings often emphasize practical skills, vocational training, and values of Western educational philosophies and sociology. “Schools for Ladies and Gentlemen” is a striking example of a special educational service in modern China (especially in regions which are traditionally associated with the foreigners’ colonial activity and presence: Shanghai, Guangzhou, Macao, Hong-Kong, Shenzhen, Xiamen etc.). At such institutions of additional education children learn a foreign language (mainly - English), how to eat with a knife and fork, horse-riding, tennis, European manners, ballroom dancing (the list of disciplines differs from school to school and depends on teachers’ abilities and parents’ ideas), understanding European painting and art, together with teachers (or private tutors) students attend concerts of classical European music, exhibitions, etc. The activities of such schools (or they also can be called “social clubs” as this term better reflects their idea) are aimed at training students with European manner of behavior and formation of their aesthetic picture of the world based on European classical art (Shi, 2019). Typically, students on the territory of such a club communicate exclusively in a foreign language, wear a uniform (which in appearance is similar to the uniform of private European schools). The target audience of the school is usually children of 3-10/12 years old because after the child enters the middle grades of secondary school, the school load in formal education makes attending of additional educational structures almost impossible. Attending of such a “school of ladies and gentlemen” has no practical access to the formal education in China (since it belongs to the sphere of non-formal education), is a completely paid service (on average, about 2 thousand US dollars for a child per month with visiting the school 4 times a week (including Saturday) for 3 hours each time) (Shanghai Association of non-government education, 2021) and, due to such a high cost, is more appealing to creating an image of elitism for parents and is an indicator of the family’s material well-being.

Japan: Being a country with tangible colonial ambitions, Japan, on the one hand, was subject to Westernisation trends (particularly in education), on the other hand, it itself sought to impose its own ideas and views on the regions that were dependent on it (mainly Korea and Taiwan). Not being a colony in the classical sense of the word, at the end of the 19th century Japan, in order to achieve its economic goals, could not help but reform its own views on education (levelling and non-perception of the British-American education system as a concept would have lead to the inability to obtain and operate industrial technologies, in which Japan at that time of its development was extremely interested in) (Bagnall, 2017). This feature of the Japanese educational system gives us the right to talk about the colonial tendencies of foreign countries (mainly the USA and Britain) in the field of education in Japan in the mid and late 19th century. As for the form of non-

formal education under study, it can be said that Japan, on the one hand, has included such educational institutions in the system of non-formal education to profile the skills of children (art, sport and language schools), but on the other hand, there are also institutions like clubs, which also retain the functions and educational purposes inherent in the "Schools for Ladies and Gentlemen" (known as "kouminkan"). Kouminkan ("community centres" or "public halls") are multipurpose facilities established by local governments to serve the needs of residents within a community. Kouminkan also offers a wide range of educational programs and classes to residents of all ages, including children. Japanese kouminkan are primarily sponsored and funded by local governments, such as municipalities and prefectures. Courses and programs for each kouminkan often include master classes or longer courses in painting, gastronomic preferences, and new US literature (mostly). Also, courses in golf, tennis, classical ballroom dancing, etc. can be organised (Official site of Matsue-city kouminkan, 2021). Visiting Kouminkan is a traditional form of leisure for the Japanese, which they install in their children to promote community well-being, fostering social connections, and enhancing the quality of life for residents in Japan. As for more traditional forms of non-formal education (courses, clubs, etc.), they are also widely represented in Japan. Recently, the work of international schools has intensified, providing their educational services in the Japanese market (training at an international school is a full-fledged, albeit very expensive, alternative to formal education in the country). Mostly, in Japan there are international schools with a central office outside Japan. Such schools are located mostly in Tokyo (Sunnyside International School, Tokyo International School, Nishimachi International School) and Kobe (Canadian Academy). These schools copy the system and educational principles of schools in the country of the head office, are private, and prestigious from a social point of view (Official site of Sunnyside International School, 2024). "International School of the Sacred Heart" (ISSH) (a school for girls) and St. Mary's International School (a school for boys) can be seen as a unique example of colonial traditions in education preservation. Both schools are located in Tokyo, follow a Catholic-based curriculum and provide a rigorous academic program along with extracurricular activities and community service opportunities.

South Korea: South Korea's education system has been profoundly influenced by its colonial history, particularly under Japanese rule from 1910 to 1945. Despite the oppressive nature of Japanese colonialism, the period also witnessed the modernisation and expansion of education infrastructure in Korea. Japanese colonial authorities invested in the establishment of schools, the standardisation of curricula, and the promotion of literacy among the Korean population. These initiatives laid the groundwork for South Korea's post-war economic miracle and its emergence as a global leader in education. Informal (mainly, private) education began to take shape in the country back in the days of

the first missionaries who arrived in Korea from Western countries. Until 1910, there was a significant number of private educational institutions on the territory of the Korean Peninsula, which were established by the missionaries. After 1945, the private sector became active because parents were willing to pay for additional education opportunities, as they saw education as the only mechanism for their child to achieve a high social level (Bag & Baeg, 2016). Since the middle of the last century, the demand for private education has increased significantly as lifestyles have become westernized and the country's population has modernized due to rapid social changes and economical development. "Hagwon" is a term used in South Korea to refer to private, for-profit academies or cram schools that offer supplementary education outside of regular school. Hagwons typically offer a wide range of educational services, including tutoring, test preparation (such as for college entrance exams like the CSAT), language classes (especially English), and enrichment programs in subjects like mathematics, science, and the arts. There are hagwons catering to students of all ages, from preschoolers to adults. Some hagwons specialize in specific subjects or target particular age groups, while others offer a broader range of educational services. (Good Job Korean, 2023). Studying in hagwon is considered elitist and an indicator of the family's financial capacity and its high social level (in 2022, families with an average monthly income of 8 million South Korean won (about 5,500 Euros) spent an average of 648,000 (450 Euros) per month on their child's private education (Statista, 2023). The beginning of hagwon education in its modern form dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, when Korea began to adopt Western culture. The first hagwons were youth schools, educational institutions, and academies. In Seoul, the first institution of such kind was established by Hwang-Sang Young Men's Christian Association in 1903 (Kim, 2016). In addition to studying the Bible, students could attend math and English classes. They also were taught modern European music and art. As more than 100 years ago, today's hagwons emphasize the study of mathematics and English. Programs of ethical-aesthetic, musical and artistic directions are represented by playing the piano, violin, flute, etc. (Good Job Korean, 2023). Taking into account the development of modern art and trends coming to South Korea from Europe and the US, hagwons began to introduce classes in modern illustration, 3D design and visualization, clay crafting, origami, ribbon art, etiquette lessons, and more (Kim, 2016). Hagwon physical education offers include various sports such as taekwondo, aikido, kendo, swimming, golf, table tennis, dance, figure skating, and soccer. This can be explained by the fact that Korean society actively observes sports life and news from abroad, and also tries to develop various types of sports, especially Olympic ones, in a European manner.

Singapore: As a former British colony (in the 19th century the country served as a strategic trading post for the British East India Company), Singapore's education system bears the imprint of colonial policies aimed at producing a

skilled workforce and fostering social cohesion. The emphasis on bilingualism and multiculturalism in Singapore's education system reflects the colonial legacy of diversity and inclusivity. While formal education institutions play a significant role in shaping the educational experiences of Singaporean students, non-formal education settings also reflect the remnants of colonial influence, particularly in units that operate in English and provide students with European aesthetic views, such as teaching European art and dances. (Yiteng Education, 2020). Community Centers (for children age 4-15) and Specialized Enrichment Centers (for teens and youth under 21) form a vivid network of non-formal education institutions located throughout the island, which offer a variety of enrichment programs and activities, including academic enrichment (such as mathematics, science, and language tuition), arts and music education, sports training, and leadership development. (Engriyani & Madhakomala, 2023). While non-formal education programs and activities may not lead to formal academic qualifications, they are still valued and financially sponsored by the Singaporean government as part of lifelong learning initiatives. Additionally, participation in non-formal education activities is often recognized and encouraged as a means of holistic development and lifelong learning for schoolchildren. In the framework of our research we are very much interested in experience of SOTA - a specialised independent school in Singapore that offers a unique curriculum focused on the arts, including visual arts, music, dance, theatre, and film. Established in 2008, SOTA provides a platform for talented students to pursue their passion for the arts while receiving a rigorous academic education. SOTA is a publicly funded institution, meaning that it receives government funding to support its operations. However, like other specialised schools in Singapore, SOTA charges fees for its educational services. The exact fees vary depending on factors such as citizenship status and household income of the student's family. SOTA is a specialised institution focused on the arts and is recognised as a mainstream secondary school in Singapore that provides also core academic subjects required for the Singapore-Cambridge GCE Ordinary Level (O-Level) examinations. While SOTA primarily emphasises the development of students' artistic talents, it also exposes them to European aesthetic views through courses in Western art history, classical music, film, painting, visual arts and ballet (Official site of Ministry of Education of Singapore, 2024). It should be noted that because of more dense and wide adoption of foreign (British) educational practices, in Singapore elements of "schools for ladies and gentlemen" exist as an organic part of formal educational programs and additional educational services, which, however, are regulated and sponsored by the state.

Conclusions

In conclusion, while the colonial era is rightly remembered for its injustices and exploitation, it is important to recognise the positive impacts that colonial education policies have had on former colonies. From the establishment of formal education systems to the dissemination of scientific knowledge and the promotion of social mobility, colonial education has played a crucial role in shaping the intellectual, cultural, and economic landscapes of post-colonial societies.

The legacy of colonial education systems somehow continues to shape educational institutions and practices in former colonies today. Many universities, schools, and administrative structures established during the colonial era remain operational, albeit often adapted to suit local contexts. The influence of Western educational philosophies and pedagogies can still be seen in curriculum design, teaching methods, and administrative practices across a wide range of disciplines. In the countries which are under consideration in this article, we can see quite a unique remnant of it: appeared a new type of educational philosophy and practice (which mainly copies by structure the classic western schools of the XIX cent.) for introducing better educational opportunities for today's students. the positive impact of colonial policies on the education systems of China, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore is evident in their modern educational achievements and practices. By acknowledging and building upon this colonial legacy, East Asian nations continue to strive towards excellence and innovation in education, contributing to their ongoing success on the world stage.

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