



Book Review of Abnormal School Behaviors: China Vs. South Korea

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Dr. Yu Yanyan recently published *Abnormal School Behaviors: China vs. South Korea* based on her doctoral dissertation. Using diverse sources of information, including legal frameworks, in-depth interviews, and other empirical evidence, Dr. Yu Yanyan compares school violence in China and South Korea. The discussions center specifically on school violence. However, the book's title uses the general term "abnormal school behaviors." The publisher is North American Business Press, New York.

Significantly, an analysis and comparison of the laws of South Korea and China reveal significant differences regarding school violence, how it is perceived, and how it is dealt with the outbreaks of violence. In South Korea, laws concerning violence in schools have a long history, and the legislation deals with education within a social context. As a result, strategies, policies, and the legal framework are tailored to the specific activity. As Dr. Yanyan Yu observes, "School violence is more than adolescent deviance, but is a social problem." As a result, in South Korea, significant attention is devoted to what is called Humanity Education, that "aims to develop a proper perception of reality, foster students' abilities to respect, accept, self-control and regulate themselves, and nurture empathy and respect for others." Although the author indicates that such initiatives are not perfect, they are intended to deal with the uniqueness of education and the educational system.

Like South Korea, China considers school violence to be a crime. Still, in many ways, the Chinese legal framework reflects more general codes of law and generic remedies instead of being explicitly tailored around education. Thus, we are told, "In China, school violence is also currently defined as a crime, but no independent law exists to prevent and control school violence. Therefore, the law does not explicitly define the concept of school violence". This legal framework appears less focused than its Korean counterpart. Thus, "there is currently no specific legislation on school violence in China." "The documents published by the central government specify the prevention, countermeasures, and procedures for dealing with school violence in great detail."

These orientations appear to influence the strategies used to control or prevent school violence. "In Korea, under the School Violence Prevention Act, the central government, local governments, the office of education, schools, and various organizations are working in an organic relationship to address all aspects of school violence." By doing so, these programs appear to acknowledge and deal with the uniqueness of the educational process and the distinctiveness of children.

Many of these issues are addressed in China, although the focus appears to be more generalized and regimented. Primary and secondary schools are well organized, with clearly defined roles, well-developed systems, and significant effects of peer management. The Chinese government has long utilized a policy of re-educating individuals who stray from acceptable norms to transform their behavior and thoughts in ways that are evaluated as proper. Such an orientation appears to be applied to education: thus, the Chinese often attempt to “establish student organizations such as the Communist Youth League, the Young Pioneers, class leaders, and student unions. Doing so appears to be following “tried and true” techniques that the Chinese have often employed in other contexts instead of tailoring unique strategies that revolve specifically around education.

I am a substance abuse counselor and hold a degree in the field. I have lived and worked in China (although my work in China was not as a therapist). I understand that the Chinese methods of dealing with substance abuse are an application of general methods the government routinely uses to deal with a wide range of deviant behavior and thoughts. As a result, I have been told that this generalized approach to addiction is not as practical as it could be. Likewise, school violence appears to be dealt with in generic ways in China. Perhaps, as with addiction therapy in China, the strategies employed are ineffective because they have not been tailored to the situation.

Korea, in contrast, appears to be more flexible and more willing to tailor campaigns regarding violence. Hence, they can better address the situation and the specific conditions encountered. Thus, China tends to utilize general approaches that rework old tactics, while South Korea is more likely to rely upon individual policies and strategies that explicitly deal with specific circumstances.

Throughout the world, violence in the classroom has emerged as a blight that inhibits young people from attaining their potential and/or living with dignity. Such situations have both moral and economic implications. I strongly recommend this book to all educators worldwide, especially those in primary and secondary education, to read for better solutions to handling school violence. Hopefully, this monograph will contribute to the need for peaceful and practical instruction.