

## Refugee Review Tribunal

### AUSTRALIA

#### RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

**Research Response Number:** PRK17177  
**Country:** North Korea  
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Keywords: North Korea – Education – Schools – China – Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture – Languages

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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#### Questions

1. Do you have access to any general information on education on North Korea? For example, is school compulsory and if so for how many years, and what is the standard curriculum?
2. Also please provide any information on the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, re language spoken, ethnic composition etc.

#### RESPONSE

1. Do you have access to any general information on education on North Korea? For example, is school compulsory and if so for how many years, and what is the standard curriculum?

Information accessed from the UNESCO website outlines the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's [North Korea] Socialist Constitution's provisions relating to education. Article 45 states that:

The State shall develop universal compulsory 11-year education which includes a compulsory one-year preschool education at a high level in accordance with the trend of modern science and technology and the practical requirements of socialist construction ('Education: North Korea: Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Socialist Constitution' (adopted) 1948, UNESCO website, revised 27 December 1972, April 1992 and September 1998 [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=12324&URL\\_DO=DO\\_PRINTPAGE&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12324&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html) – Accessed 18 January 2005 – Attachment 1).

#### Education in the 1980s

According to a 1993 Library of Congress country study on North Korea:

...In 1975 the compulsory eleven-year education system, which includes one year of

preschool education and ten years of primary and secondary education, was implemented; that system remains in effect as of 1993...(Library of Congress 1993, 'Education' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> - Accessed 18 January 2005 – Attachment 2).

On educational themes and method the Library of Congress study states:

*Chuch'e* is a central theme in educational policy. According to Kim Il Sung, "in order to establish *chuch'e* in education, the main emphasis should be laid on things of one's own country in instruction and people should be taught to know their own things well."...(Library of Congress 1993, 'Educational Themes and Methods' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> – Accessed 18 January 2005 – Attachment 3);

and

Closely tied to the central theme of *chuch'e* in education is the "method of heuristic teaching" - a means of developing the independence and creativity of students and a reaction against the traditional Confucian emphasis on rote memorization. "Heuristics give students an understanding of the content of what they are taught through their own positive thinking, and so greatly help to build up independence and creativeness."...(Library of Congress 1993, 'Educational Themes and Methods' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> – Accessed 18 January 2005 – Attachment 3).

The Library of Congress study continues on primary and secondary education:

In the mid-1980s, there were 9,530 primary and secondary schools. After graduating from people's school, students enter either a regular secondary school or a special secondary school that concentrates on music, art, or foreign languages. These schools teach both their specialties and general subjects...(Library of Congress 1993, 'Primary and Secondary Education' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> – Accessed 18 January 2005 – Attachment 4).

The Library of Congress study also covers issues surrounding social education, higher education and adult education (Library of Congress 1993, 'Social Education' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> – Accessed 18 January 2005 – Attachment 5; Library of Congress 1993, 'Higher Education' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> – Accessed 18 January 2005 – Attachment 6; Library of Congress 1993, 'Adult Education' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> – Accessed 18 January 2005 – Attachment 7).

The US State Department in a human rights report for the year 1984 states that:

The populace is subjected to continuous indoctrination, designed to shape individual consciousness. Preschool children are drilled in homage to Kim Il-sung and his family, while youths and adults are required to participate in daily ideological training conducted by youth organizations or at places of employment. The propaganda requires rote recitation of party maxims and positions and strives for ideological purity. At least two North Korean security organizations enforce these controls (US Department of State 1985, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1984 – Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, February, p.792 – Attachment 8).

A similar view is presented again by the US State Department in respect of the 1989 year (US Department of State 1990, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1989 – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, February, pp.879-880 – Attachment 9).

Also, in the 1984 report, the US State Department reported:

The North Korean Government provides 11 years of compulsory free education to its citizens and claims to have eliminated illiteracy...(US Department of State 1985, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1984 – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, February, p.796 – Attachment 8).

It is of interest that the US State Department writes:

Since the late 1950s, the regime has divided society into three main classes: “core,” “wavering,” and “hostile.” Security ratings are assigned to each individual; according to some estimates, nearly half of the population is designated as either “wavering” or “hostile.” Loyalty ratings determine access to employment, higher education, place of residence, medical facilities, and certain stores. They also affect the severity of punishment in the case of legal infractions. While there were signs that this rigid system has been relaxed somewhat in recent years, it remained a basic feature of KWP political control (US Department of State 2004, ‘Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence’ in *Country Reports for Human Rights Reports for 2003 – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, 25 February – Attachment 10).

## **Current situation**

In a 2002 report submitted to the United Nations the North Korean government included an outline of its education policy (United Nations 2002, ‘Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Addendum: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’, *Economic and Social Council*, E/1990/6/Add.35, 15 May, pp.30-34 – Attachment 11).

The North Korean government’s submission stated that:

...Every child, boy and girl, receives compulsory education between 6 and 16 years of age (United Nations 2002, ‘Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Addendum: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’, *Economic and Social Council*, E/1990/6/Add.35, 15 May, para.93/p.32 – Attachment 11).

The submission also noted that the education system in 2000 comprised a higher class of kindergarten (1 year); primary school (4 years); secondary school (6 years); specialised school (2-3 years); and college/university (3-6 years) (United Nations 2002, ‘Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Addendum: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’, *Economic and Social Council*, E/1990/6/Add.35, 15 May, Table 18/p.32 – Attachment 11).

The UK Home Office has provided brief information on the educational system, including nurseries for pre-school children (UK Home Office 2003, *North Korea Extended Bulletin 1/2003*, February, paras.4.34-4.36 – Attachment 12).

In a report for the year 2003, the US State Department wrote:

The State provides compulsory education for all children until the age of 15. However, some children were denied educational opportunities and subjected to other punishments and disadvantages as a result of the loyalty classification system and the principle of “collective retribution” for the transgressions of family members...

Like others in society, children were the objects of intense political indoctrination; even mathematics textbooks propound party dogma. In addition, foreign visitors and academic sources reported that children from an early age were subjected to several hours a week of mandatory military training and indoctrination at their schools. School children sometimes were sent to work in factories or in the fields for short periods to assist in completing special projects or in meeting production goals (US Department of State 2004, ‘Children’ in *Country Reports for Human Rights Reports for 2003 – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, 25 February – Attachment 10).

Also, the most recent Human Rights Watch report concerning North Korea states:

North Korea’s politically determined classification system restricts nearly all aspects of education, labor, and health care. Although all North Korean children are required to attend school for eleven years, it is generally children of the “core” group who are allowed to advance to college and hold prominent occupations. Those belonging to “wavering” or “hostile” groups have very limited or no choice in education or work (Human Rights Watch 2005, *World Report 2005 – North Korea*, January – Attachment 13).

**2. Also please provide any information on the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, re language spoken, ethnic composition etc.**

Information on the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture accessed from China’s Jilin provincial government’s website states:

Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture bordering Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the east of China's Jilin Province, administrates six cities: Yanji, Tumen, Dunhua, Longjing, Hunchun and Helong; and two counties: Antu and Wangqing. Its capital is Yanji City. Yanbian covers an area of 42700 square km. and has a population of 2.15 million, of which 39.7% are Korean. It is the key place inhabited by China's Korean nationality (‘Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture’ (undated), Jilin government website, <http://www.jilin.gov.cn/en/sxfrm/xz.htm> - Accessed 19 January 2005 – Attachment 14).

Additional information on the Prefecture was accessed on the Wikipedia website (‘Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture’ (undated), Wikipedia website [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yanbian\\_Korean\\_Autonomous\\_Prefecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yanbian_Korean_Autonomous_Prefecture) - Accessed 19 January 2005 – Attachment 15).

The Wikipedia website notes the ethnic composition of the Prefecture as: 39.7% Korean (about 60% in Yanji); Han 57.4%; Manchus 2.4%; Hui 0.3%; and other nationalities 0.1% (‘Demographics’ in ‘Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture’ (undated), Wikipedia website [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yanbian\\_Korean\\_Autonomous\\_Prefecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yanbian_Korean_Autonomous_Prefecture) - Accessed 19 January 2005 – Attachment 15).

On language in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Wikipedia states:

The Korean language Yanbianese use is purely in Hangul, without any Hanja. Like peninsular Korean language, Yanbianese Korean has Western punctuation, and not Chinese ('Culture' in 'Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture' (undated), Wikipedia website  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yanbian\\_Korean\\_Autonomous\\_Prefecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yanbian_Korean_Autonomous_Prefecture) - Accessed 19 January 2005 – Attachment 15).

## List of Sources Consulted

### Internet Sources:

Google search engine

UNHCR      *REFWORLD*      UNHCR Refugee Information Online

### Databases:

Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

## List of Attachments

1. 'Education: North Korea: Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Socialist Constitution' (adopted) 1948, UNESCO website, revised 27 December 1972, April 1992 and September 1998. ([http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=12324&URL\\_DO=DO\\_PRINTPAGE&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12324&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html) – Accessed 18 January 2005)
2. Library of Congress 1993, 'Education' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June. (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> - Accessed 18 January 2005)
3. Library of Congress 1993, 'Educational Themes and Methods' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June. (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> – Accessed 18 January)
4. Library of Congress 1993, 'Primary and Secondary Education' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June. (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> – Accessed 18 January 2005)
5. Library of Congress 1993, 'Social Education' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June. (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> – Accessed 18 January 2005)
6. Library of Congress 1993, 'Higher Education' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June. (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> – Accessed 18 January 2005)
7. Library of Congress 1993, 'Adult Education' in *A Country Study: North Korea*, June. (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> – Accessed 18 January 2005)

8. US Department of State 1985, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1984 – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, February, p.792,796. (RRT Library)
9. US Department of State 1990, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1989 – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, February, pp.879-880. (RRT Library)
10. US Department of State 2004, ‘Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence’ and ‘Children’ in *Country Reports for Human Rights Reports for 2003 – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, 25 February.
11. United Nations 2002, ‘Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Addendum: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’, *Economic and Social Council*, E/1990/6/Add.35, 15 May, pp.30-34.
12. UK Home Office 2003, *North Korea Extended Bulletin 1/2003*, February, paras.4.34-4.36.
13. Human Rights Watch 2005, *World Report 2005 – North Korea*.
14. ‘Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture’ (undated), Jilin government website. (<http://www.jilin.gov.cn/en/sxfm/xz.htm> - Accessed 19 January 2005)
15. ‘Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture’ (undated), Wikipedia website. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yanbian\\_Korean\\_Autonomous\\_Prefecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yanbian_Korean_Autonomous_Prefecture) - Accessed 19 January 2005)