

Urgent need to expand career and employment education for ‘returning’ Koryo youth

‘Specialized training for mainstream high school,’ National Tomorrow Learning Card should also be made available to Koryo-saram high school students

The 2024 Specialized Course on Broadcasting Media for Multicultural Youth Graduation Ceremony, held at Korea Polytechnic University (Incheon campus), on Nov. 29 was special. Of the 19 graduates, 17 were Koryo youth. This is because Korea Polytechnic University allowed F-4 (Overseas Koreans) as foreign nationals in the applicant qualifications for the first time.

Koryo-saram Global Network (KGN, President Chae Ye-jin) worked closely with Incheon Polytechnic University for the recruitment of students for the selection process. Thanks to this, the university was able to recruit students easily, and Koryo youth successfully completed “nationally funded” vocational training. Everyone in attendance applauded the “Korean language graduation speech” of a young Koryo student, whose Korean had been very poor before the student took Korean language classes, alongside the course.

KGN presented the book “Koryo People Stories Together” (Истории корё сарам живущих среди нас), published by the Asia Development Foundation in Korean and Russian, to 17 Koryo youth graduates on Oct. 26. This is because the proud history of Koryo migration (Part 1), examples of consultations with Koryo compatriots about life in Korea (Part 2) and daily Korean language skills (Part 3) were all created with content necessary for Koryo youth living in Korea.

Ninety Koryo students attending Onyang Yonghwa High School in Asan, South Chungcheong Province, also received the book “Koryo People Stories Together” as a gift. Choi Eun-hyeok, a Korean language teacher at Onyang Yonghwa High School, consulted with Koryo students and found that they were very interested in the specialized training for mainstream high schools (National Tomorrow Learning Card) supported by the Korea Employment Information Service. Choi found out that students could apply at the end of the second year and learn skills at a confectionery and baking school for 10 months, from March to December, of the third year, and then get a job. However, Koryo students, who are classified as “foreigners” with an F-4 visa for overseas Koreans, were prevented from even applying for the National Tomorrow Learning Card.

The Asia Development Foundation (ADF) (Chairman Kim Jun-il), which recognized the urgency of career and employment education for Koryo youth who immigrated midway through their education,



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signed an agreement with the Korea Hotel and Tourism Vocational School (Hanhojeon) in Ansan and will begin an eight-week confectionery and bakery education and training program for Koryo youth between January and February 2025. As soon as the announcement was made, 22 people applied in just one day, exceeding the 20 spots available. Although it is shorter than the six-month specialized course at Incheon Polytechnic University, Hanhojeon’s eight-week confectionery and bakery education program is also expected to have good results.

“Career and employment education for Koryo students is necessary starting from middle school. We need to promote specialized high schools that operate Korean language classes and dormitories.”

This is the unanimous opinion of activists who have counseled Koryo youth in Koryo villages across the country. However, many Koryo students, who already have difficulty adjusting to school itself, are attending humanities high schools. Korean society is severely lacking in personnel in specialized technical fields, which are called “foundation industries” in the country. Parents who work late into the night do not have the capacity to guide their children. If we cannot guide them properly, won’t it inevitably become a great burden to Korean society in the future?

We need to better promote specialized high schools known to Koryo students. In addition, the Ministry of Employment and Labor should allow foreign national youth of Korean descent to use the National Tomorrow Learning Card so that they can get jobs through specialized training at general high schools, including alternative schools with academic credit recognition, just as Korea Polytechnic University provided education and training opportunities to foreign nationals of Korean descent. Only when “returning” Koryo youth can put down their roots in this land can we all be happy. [장]