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TOM TOM ENGLISH



Patriotism or Nationalism?

VOCABULARY

Curriculum

=

The subjects comprising a course of study in a school or college

Reminiscent =

Reminds us of something (from the past)

Stilted =

(Talking in) a self-conscious or unnatural manner

Imperial

Rescript =

An edict, decree or official announcement (n.b legal definition is slightly different)

Read the article overleaf and discuss these questions:

1. What do you think about Tsukamoto kindergarten's ideas? Are they good or bad? Why?
2. Do you think 3-5 year olds are too young for this kind of education? Why? Why not?
3. What is different about Meiji era/ Confucian values compared to modern Japanese values?
4. Do you think this kind of education contributed towards militarism? Why? Why not? Do you think it might in future? Why? Why not?
5. DO you agree with Principle Kagoike that article 9 of the constitution should be revised? If so, how should it be changed? If not, why not?

VOCABULARY

Filial =

Relating to a son or daughter

Abolish =

To formally stop something, or put an end to a practice

Moral Certitude

=

Absolute confidence in something, or unquestioning belief in something

Tenet =

A principle or belief (especially for religion)

At first glance, Tsukamoto kindergarten in Osaka looks like any other school in Japan, but its unique **curriculum** is **reminiscent** of pre-war Japan. The private school, which has been visited by Akie Abe, wife of the Prime Minister, aims to instil in its 3-5-year-old students a sense of patriotism with a curriculum focused on Japanese traditions and culture.

Its mornings start with uniformed children singing the national anthem in front of the country's flag and reciting in **stilted** Japanese the pre-war **Imperial Rescript** on Education, containing commandments set out in 1890 to nurture "ideal" citizens under the Emperor Meiji. These embody Confucian virtues and demand devotion to the emperor and sacrifice for the country.

"Be **filial** to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters," they chant. "Should emergencies arise, offer yourselves courageously to the state."

After World War Two, occupying U.S. forces **abolished** the rescript, which many saw as a source of the obedience and **moral certitude** that helped fuel Japanese militarism. In 1947, the government passed the Fundamental Law on Education to bolster the liberal and democratic values of the postwar pacifist constitution.

Tsukamoto kindergarten introduced the **rescript** 15 years ago, although school officials say it is not intended to fuel nationalism. "What we're aiming to foster in education is patriotism or 'Japanese-ism', expanding Japan's spirit all over the world, not so-called nationalism. These are totally different," said Yasunori Kagoike, principal of the kindergarten. Kagoike heads the Osaka branch of Nippon Kaigi, a nationalist lobby group with close ties to

Abe and his cabinet and for which education reform is a key **tenet**.

Cultural activities at the school, where the walls are lined with images of the imperial family to which students bow throughout the day, include learning traditional Japanese musical instruments, martial arts and board games. Students also take trips to military bases.

Kagoike hopes other schools will adopt their **curriculum** so children are prepared to protect Japan against potential threats from other countries. "If an imperialist nation is trying to harm Japan, we need to fight against it. For that, revising Article 9 of Japan's Constitution is necessary and should be carried out as soon as possible,"

Article 9 of the U.S.-drafted constitution renounces war and, if read literally, bans the maintenance of armed forces, although Japan's military, called the Self-Defence Forces, has over 200,000 personnel and is equipped with high-tech weapons. Revising the constitution is one of the key policy targets of Abe's Liberal Democratic Party..

Teacher Chinami Kagoike (the principal's daughter) said she teaches students it is necessary to fight against threats to protect themselves and their families.

"Strengthening Japan would be subject to severe criticism from various countries. But instead of pulling away from this, I teach them that the Japanese government has clearly demonstrated its will, so you also need to break silence and go forward and say you want to protect your family."

The kindergarten plans to open a primary school next year and Akie Abe will be the honorary principal, according to school brochures.