

Concerning Japanese Government's Violation of the Article 13, "Right to Education"

It is not scholarships but loans that Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), an independent administrative corporation, offers. Its scholarship programs are far from supporting young people who have difficulties pursuing their studies due to financial reasons. Instead of giving them financial assistance, JASSO has degraded itself by driving them deeply in debt, gaining undue profit from them and blasting their hopes for learning.

In *Third Periodic Reports by the Government of Japan under Articles 16 and 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the Japanese Government says;

“For those endowed with both the desire and talent, but hampered from attending university because of their financial situation, the Japan Student Services Organization (an independent administrative corporation) awards scholarships in accordance with the provisions of the Act on the Japan Student Services Organization. In addition, municipalities, local governments, and non-profit public-interest corporations also operate scholarship programs. Moreover, national, public, and private universities waive or reduce tuition for needy students.”¹

On the contrary to what is said above, however, it may be said that there are no substantial scholarship programs in Japan.

First, JASSO is undertaking almost all the scholarship enterprises in Japan. Other organizations cover only a very small part. Although JASSO almost monopolizes the enterprise, what it's actually operating is nothing more than giving students loans. Its scholarship programs are only in name. It does not grant scholarship, but lends money. Seventy-six percent of its recipients borrow with interest. That is, JASSO is extracting profits from poor students.

Second, there are not a few graduates who cannot find satisfactory jobs and whose annual income is less than 2 million yen. It is difficult or impossible for them to pay back the loans. Nevertheless, JASSO mercilessly demands repayments from them. When repayments get in arrears, it adds 10% overdue interest. JASSO is no better than a vicious moneylender.

In addition, the tuition of Japanese universities is expensive. The average fee of national and public universities is 530,000 yen a year, and as for the average private one, it will exceed one million yen. It is reported that, under such circumstances, about half of the Japanese university students receive loans from JASSO in order to pay tuition.

Furthermore, the job market in Japan is near to collapsing. Students go to universities to get a good job, but it is getting more and more difficult for young people to get a satisfactory job when they graduate from college. Recently more and more young people have given up pursuing their studies for fear of accumulating debts and JASSO's harsh collection accompanying the debts.

In conclusion, JASSO is an organization whose business is to get money from people in poverty. Instead of aiding young people, it is crushing their dreams for the future and is accelerating poverty of our country.

We request you to advise: The Japanese government should immediately establish a true (awarded) scholarship system which has a wide range of application, and at the same time it should stop JASSO's strict collection and introduce a system to give some years' grace and/or waive requirements for the people below some specific income.

¹ The Government of Japan. (December, 2009). *Third Periodic Reports by the Government of Japan under Articles 16 and 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. p.89.