South Korea is not losing its cultural diversity. In fact, South Korea seems to have the opposite problem. The foreign population in South Korea was relatively small only about ten years ago at approximately 430,000. In 2013 that number nearly tripled to over 1.14 million people. (Education in South Korea, n.d.)With that large of a jump, South Korea is having a little bit of a crisis. Korean’s national identity is so strong, that there are several issues that people who are not born in South Korea have in South Korea that I will address; employment, schooling, and politics. One of the things that I find most interesting is that this also includes Koreans who are born in China, or North Korea as well.

The first issue that people are having that are not born in South Korea are having is employment. While the overall rate of unemployment hovers a little over 3.5% for the past couple of years according to the CIA fact book, the North Korean born population unemployment is over 12% with only about 24,000 North Korean defectors currently, with about 2,000 to 3,000 more coming annually. (Education in South Korea, n.d.) There are a couple of reasons for this with one of them being education which will be discussed later. Another problem facing foreigners is that although English is taught in almost all schools, Korean remains the official language. Those who do not speak or understand the language face many difficulties including difficulties expressing themselves and being understood, which can understandably lead to many frustrations. (Kang, 2013) The other major problem facing not only foreigners but multiracial families (i.e. Korean father, Japanese mother) is discrimination. In 2012 almost half of multicultural families had faced some type of discrimination. (Kang, 2013) Since they have a parent that is from South Korea, it is hard to believe that the number is so high. The problem is even faced by those who are Korean, but born in other countries as well.

This brings us to the next issue, education. As I stated in the Education assignment, South Korea has a very high education rate, including a 99% enrollment rate for primary school. This number is really impressive. However, I found that numbers can be deceiving. 20% of multicultural children drop out in middle school, with 40% of multicultural high school children have dropped out. (Howe, 2013) Some of the children drop out due to bullying including; speaking accented Korean, looking different including skin color, and physical aggression for the same. (Howe, 2013) Unfortunately, the solution for South Korea seems to be to segregate multicultural children into private preparatory schools for international children. (Aljazeera, 2013) I do not believe that segregating the children will solve the problem, but at least the government is looking for solutions as opposed to sitting around doing nothing. Who knows, in 20 years where more than 10% of South Korea is foreign population according to growth rates, maybe the issue will be a nonstarter.

The last issue that I have found in the changing cultural diversity is in politics. In 2013, South Korea elected its first female president in the country’s history. One thing I was not aware of, however, is that there is a total of one person born (Jasmine Lee) with a foreign background in the South Korean National Assembly. (Aljazeera, 2013) I think this speaks volumes to how South Koreans feel about foreigners in general. South Koreans do not take kindly to any policies that incorporate multiculturalism. Jasmine Lee feels the need to support policies for multicultural support from the government. (Aljazeera, 2013) I personally find it hard to disagree with her. I think if there were more people with multicultural backgrounds, and it is going to happen, then more things can change in the government of South Korea.

There is an old Korean proverb. It says, “In ten years, even the rivers and mountains change”. (Howe, 2013) I think that South Koreans should follow the directions of their proverb, and embrace multiculturalism. Cultural diversity is going to take a while to figure out for South Koreans, but in the end I believe that it will be worth it, as South Korea has a lot to offer globally. South Korea can lead the world

and show it how to co-exist peacefully as it has with the many religions based in their country, and bring it to cultural diversity. I am truly impressed that between the influx of foreigners and the multitude of religions, that South Korea has shown us that whatever happens, you do not need to destroy your own country with wars and infighting, and I think we can all be proud of South Korea for that, but that doesn’t mean that there isn’t room for improvement.

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