

Okinawa: Minister orders defiant school board to adopt conservative textbook

Thursday 7 November 2013, by [Kyodo News](#) (Date first published: 19 October 2013).

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Education Minister Hakubun Shimomura instructed the Okinawa prefectural education board Friday to take action over the refusal by a small town school board to adopt a conservative junior high civics textbook.

For the second school year in a row, Taketomi town has rejected a textbook by Ikuhosha Publishing Inc. selected by the textbook adoption council for the town and adjacent island municipalities.

The law covering the distribution of free textbooks has an article that requires the same teaching resource be used in the region under the adoption council.

The education ministry judged that Taketomi town is violating the article. The minister issued the instruction to the Okinawa prefectural education board in the first invocation by the state of the Local Autonomy Law to seek redress in educational affairs.

After a corrective action order, the local government will be statutorily required to consider a response but no penalty will be imposed if it does not comply with the order.

The Taketomi town board has opted for a textbook by Tokyo Shoseki Co. in place of the Ikuhosha textbook, known for its conservative overtones, as shown in a relative lack of references to Okinawa's burden of hosting U.S. military bases.

Since Taketomi opted out of a free textbook, it has been financing its textbook cost with private donations. The town with a population of about 4,100 needed less than 30,000 yen for around 30 textbooks this year.

Education minister Shimomura told a press conference Friday, "We have given instructions repeatedly to Taketomi town. I hope they will abide by the rules in a country ruled by law."

Taketomi has not indicated any change in its policy and if it continues to refuse, the ministry is said to be considering bringing the case to court.

Taketomi belongs to the textbook adoption region that also includes Ishigaki city and Yonaguni town. The Ikuhosha textbook was first chosen by the region's council in August 2011 for the 2012 school year.

The council was chaired by an official picked by conservative Ishigaki Mayor Yoshitaka Nakayama, who was elected with the backing of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito party. Taketomi officials objected to the council's decision, taking issue with the selection process that sidelined teachers, unlike the previous years. The Ikuhosha book was not so popular among teachers in Okinawa, where antiwar sentiment remains strong.

The local education administration law says each municipal school board has the authority to adopt textbooks, while the textbook law requires the same resource be used within a given district,

covering several municipalities. Given this discrepancy, the education ministry is planning to revise the textbook law to ensure uniformity within the district.

The Okinawa prefectural education board is scheduled to discuss the minister's instruction in a meeting on Wednesday.

Kyodo News, October 19, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131019p2g00m0dm015000c.html>
