

# PEACE EDUCATION: LESSONS FROM POST-WAR JAPAN

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## ABSTRACT

The experience of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombing during World War II is the main feature of Peace Education in Japan. The historical significance of nuclear bombing is unique to Japan. Therefore, this paper aims to understand the impact of constructive approaches in a post-war traumatized society on Peace Education. The research seeks to explore Peace Education as being the most relevant and constructive approach for building a peaceful society. Therefore, this study will explore lessons learnt from post-war Japan. This study has primarily employed qualitative methods, with simple quantitative methods such as frequency and spatial analysis to investigate the study. The findings are expected to contribute towards the use of education to build a peaceful society. This research will also attempt to inculcate a positive attitude towards moral values.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Whilst there exists multiple means of constructive approach this research attempts to understand which approaches are most suitable in a post-war traumatized society for the furtherance of Peace Education. Connecting with victims and perpetrators is the most sensitive and complex issue in the peacebuilding process within a post-war context. Peacebuilding processes provide several mechanisms to prevent recurrence of war and rebuild the traumatized society with peace and justice. It requires long term solutions which require tools that positively impact the society and achieve sustainable peace. Long term goals of sustainable peace must direct its attention to society by incorporating gradual positive interactive, inclusive and communicative approaches. There are several approaches of understanding the potential for peacebuilding. This research seeks to explore Peace Education as being the most relevant and constructive approach. Therefore, this study will conduct its investigation by exploring lessons from the post-war Japan experience.

The objective of this paper is to examine how effective the Peace Education method can be in transmitting the message of peace message and thereby establish a peaceful society. Therefore, this paper will first review Japan's Peace Education methods and use a case study sample to gauge the effectiveness of the peace method. Finally, the paper will conclude by stating which of Japan's Peace Education methods was most effective in passing the message of peace to the next generation in order to build a peaceful society. This study has primarily employed qualitative methods together with simple quantitative methods. As this study was conducted in Hiroshima it will analyze the Peace Education practices adopted in Hiroshima Prefecture. This research also, will bring to light how education provides positive structural changes to a war affected society.

## 2. PEACE EDUCATION IN HIROSHIMA

The experience of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombing at the World War II is the main feature for Peace Education in Japan. United States dropped atomic bombs in Hiroshima on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1945 and subsequently on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1945 in Nagasaki. The atomic bomb destroyed the city in its entirety and took with it almost all public infrastructure including transportation and communication facilities and destroyed all buildings in its vicinity. The number of people that died in the Hiroshima bombing is still unknown. However, at the time of the bombing it was calculated that approximately 350,000 people in the city had perished [Project \(2015\)](#). The people of Hiroshima underwent severe trauma ranging from the bones of residents turning black due to radiation poisoning, their skin dangling from the bone, children with blood soaks cloths, etc. Hiroshima was covered in a cloud of grief and loss so much so that even today the people of Hiroshima are still in pain and paying for empty graves. Learning and teaching atomic bombing experience thus becomes an effective and powerful method of education for peace in Japan [Schäfer \(2008\)](#).

The curriculum of Peace Education that was developed in Hiroshima was a result of the bitter post war experience of the city. In 1949, in line with the wishes of the survivors of the atomic bombing, the "Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law" a governmental statute, was passed by the Japanese Diet unanimously [Matsuo \(2016\)](#).

General recognition of Hiroshima as the 'city of peace' provided the conceptual and institutional framework for a wide variety of city groups and organisations to put into effect the widely-held desire of Hiroshima people to work towards peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons, which was commonly expressed through the slogan 'No More Hiroshimas'. From the very inception, the city's educational establishment was deeply involved in attempts to develop the city of Hiroshima as a city of peace. Senior education officials participated in discussions about the future direction of city policy and students in schools learnt about the horrendous experience of the atomic bombing from the survivors, the "Hibakusha". In 1968, the first official

guidelines for the teaching of the subject of Peace Education to elementary, junior high and senior high schools was published by the Hiroshima Municipal Board of Education. These guidelines have undergone frequent revisions and update, with the fourteenth edition being distributed to schools in March 2004 [Project \(2015\)](#).

### 3. MORAL EDUCATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Moral education was reintroduced to the school curriculum in 1958 as an independent subject, Dotoku (literally "the path of virtue") which was scheduled to be taught for one hour per week to all students. The primary aim was to ensure that the "spirit of human respect" was supported [Yamane \(2014\)](#). Moral education was separated from social studies which shifted away from experiential investigations toward academic explanations of Japanese society and culture. Moral education is implemented throughout all educational activities, with the moral education class being the primary period with an objective to develop students' attitude for thinking about moral problems by sincerely addressing values, including when diverse values are in conflict, in a way that is appropriate for the students' stage of development and without pushing any particular set of values [Short \(2005\)](#).

The closest equivalent to a direct Citizenship Education for Japanese children is the moral education programme in school<sup>1</sup>. Moral education in modern Japanese schools is comprised of six fundamental objectives:

1. to foster a spirit of respect for human dignity and awe of life,
2. to nurture those who endeavour to inherit and develop traditional culture, and create a culture that is rich in individuality,
3. to nurture those who endeavour to form and develop a democratic society and state,
4. to nurture those who can contribute to realizing a peaceful international society,
5. to nurture those who can make independent decision,
6. to foster a sense of morality (MEXT, 1989a).

Lectures of Peace Education are conducted every year towards the end of the first academic term, usually in late June and July. Japanese Students in schools used to undergo 1-2 lectures per week for a total of six weeks on the subject prior to the major national educational reforms that came into effect in April 2001. Pursuant to the inception of reforms, Peace Education classes (in Japanese called Heiwa Gakushu) have taken the form of Integrated Studies lessons (Sogo Gakushu) (MEXT, 1989a: 105).

At high school level, individual school principals have had more freedom in recent years to arrange the scheduling of Peace Education classes for their own schools as

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<sup>1</sup> See for more details: [www.city.hiroshima.jp/kikaku/kikaku/g-plan/index.html](http://www.city.hiroshima.jp/kikaku/kikaku/g-plan/index.html)

they see fit. Further developments have also been made to increase the adoption of a whole-school education policy which seeks to bring aspects of the subject into many facets of school life. Under this policy, issues dealing with the suffering caused by war and the need for increased international reconciliation to facilitate world peace are being addressed in classes of Social Studies and Moral Education and more emphasis is being placed on creating an international outlook through student exchanges and charity campaigns.

The experience of Peace Education can be further enhanced by scheduling School trips to the cities of Hiroshima or Nagasaki, which as well - known are the sites of the Atomic Bombings in Japan. Additionally school trips to Okinawa which has a sacrificial stone with the names of one out of every four prefectural citizens who died due to the battle, engraved in it, helps to further enhance of the effectiveness of Peace Education [Short \(2005\)](#).

#### **4. HOW IS HIROSHIMA WORKING TOWARDS PEACE EDUCATION TO ARCHIVE PEACE?**

Hiroshima has implemented several Peace Education methods to deliver the message of peace to future generations encourage to “say no to war”. Following are some of the successful Peace Education methods which have been used:

#### **5. TRAINING ATOMIC BOMB LEGACY SUCCESSORS**

The city of Hiroshima started a three- years training program for Atomic Bomb Legacy Survivors in 2012 and applicants are publicly recruited every year. Since the survivors are now elderly it has become imperative that their experience of the Atomic bombing is passed down the generations their wish for peace is sustained. This training program at their first year in 2012 had registered 137 applicants [Project \(2015\)](#).

#### **6. SHARING TESTIMONIES OF SURVIVORS WITH VISITORS TO HIROSHIMA INCLUDING STUDENTS**

Visitors to Hiroshima including students of elementary, junior high and high schools on field trips are provided opportunities to listen to Atomic bomb survivors’ testimonies. Thirty-seven atomic bomb survivors are commissioned by the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation in every year and several thousand hundred individuals have listened to their testimonies (<http://www.pv-hiroshima-soka.jp/en/what-we-do/>).

## **7. HIROSHIMA PEACE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

The year 1999 saw the inception of the citizens volunteer training program which publicly recruited volunteers to provide visitors with detailed explanations about the exhibits at the peace memorial museum and the monuments in the peace memorial park. The number of registered volunteers was 191 and they offer guidance on a rotating basis [Project \(2015\)](#).

## **8. RECORDING AND UTILIZING VIDEOTAPES OF SURVIVOR TESTIMONIES**

Since the year 1986, survivors' testimonies have been recorded on videotapes to preserve as many testimonies as possible for future generations. The number of recorded testimonies as of 2014 are 1195 [Project \(2015\)](#).

## **9. HIROSHIMA PEACE FORUM**

In the year 2002, Hiroshima peace Forum was conducted with the aim of providing citizens with opportunities to ponder of the effects of atomic bombings and war through the means of lectures and discussions, and enabled them to contemplate on how they can contribute to the course of peace. Since 2009, the forum has been held in cooperation with Hiroshima City University. More than 100 citizens and students from all age groups (from teenager up to 60s and 70s) take the course which consists of six sessions. As in the previous year, a Hiroshima City University course "Peace Studies in Hiroshima: Learning Practical Measures" was held in conjunction with the forum, to learn from Group Discussion. At the First Meeting of the Peace Forum outside specialists about the inheritance of Atomic bomb experiences and hands-on peace activities, and the two complemented each other, enhancing the content of the course. In addition, the results of the group discussions were presented in a symposium format, so there was a very lively exchange of views<sup>2</sup>.

## **10. PEACE CLUB FOR JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

It has been held since 2002 to provide an opportunity for junior high and high school students to understand the effects of atomic bombing and the importance of peace. Each year, approximately two dozen students attend up to 15-16 lectures and events held throughout the year.

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<sup>2</sup> See for more details: [http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/hpcf/heiwabunka/pce67/english/67\\_04E.htm](http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/hpcf/heiwabunka/pce67/english/67_04E.htm)

## **11. PEACE STUDY PROGRAM AT ELEMENTARY, JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL**

Peace Study Programs are conducted by through the medium of lectures in schools in the city of Hiroshima with the intention of introducing the reality of atomic bombing and measures for the abolition of nuclear weapons. In 2013, the programs were offered at a total of 49 schools [Project \(2015\)](#).

## **12. MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD OF PEACE MESSAGE WAS TRANSMITTED TO THE SOCIETY**

In order to gauge the most effective method among other methods to pass the peace message to society, this research used quantitative techniques on the case report of the 19<sup>th</sup> Study Tour for peace, during which fifty (50) students participated comprising of primary, junior high, high school students and twenty (20) people, who listened to the atomic bomb survivors' stories and experience in it from the Chugoku and North-Kyusyu area [Wijegoonawardana \(2020\)](#)<sup>3</sup>. One of the main objectives of the tour was to understand the atomic bomb survivors and war survivors' stories and experience, in order to pass them on to the next generation. Since this research also investigates how effective the peace message was transmitted to society this study used 15 students ranging from all grades of School to compile interview reports in order to generate results. The qualitative data software "Atlas.Ti" was used to facilitate the process of coding and analyzing the interview content and peace tour report.

## **13. RESULTS OF FREQUENCY ANALYSIS**

A summary of the results of frequency analysis revealed that, the number of times in the selected sample of interview records of the 15 school students ranging from all grades, the students used the word "no war" a total of 140 times and mentioned the word "peace" a total of 90 times, after they had listened to the bomb survivors' testimonies.

Atomic bomb survivors are getting older and older, and it's difficult to listen to their testimonies. However, under such circumstances, peace museums continue to play important roles to promote Peace Education. It is encouraging to see the students who changed their attitude after listening to the atomic bomb survivor's testimonies [Yamane \(2014\)](#). They also committed that they would need to convey what they learned from atomic bomb survivors to the next generation.

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<sup>3</sup> See details of full stories of peace study tour; N. Wijegoonawardana Trans. 2020, Tour of Peace: The Experience of listening Hiroshima Atomic- Bomb Survivors' Stories Agahas Publisher

## 14. CONCLUSION

In the above context it is clear that Hiroshima used its history to better promote a viable means for peace and reconciliation through Peace Education. Peace museums continue to play important roles in promote Peace Education. The frequency analysis clearly depicts the effect peace education has on the younger generation of Japan and also shows effective means of ensuring that history is not forgotten and how history is used for positive change.

This research can therefore conclude that Peace Education supported by peace activities such as trips to peace museums, and listening to bomb survivors' testimonies, peace volunteer's forum sharing survivor testimonies with visitors including student has brought more effect towards building a peaceful society in post-war Japan.

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