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Peace Education in Japan's Schools: A View From the Front Lines

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I think the Constitution of Japan is well formulated. The preamble starts out saying that we pledge perpetual peace: we are "resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government."

And, rather than defining peace just in this narrow sense, it goes on to say "all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want." This means that it advocates "the right to live in peace," while apparently holding within this vision poverty and starvation, disaster and disease, or various kinds of gaps as factors leading to social disintegration and conflicts.

From this idea of the right to live peacefully comes Article 25, stating that "All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living," which clearly speaks to every citizen's "right to exist" and "the obligation of the country to guarantee the right to live." When we consider peace we need to keep in view both "peace" and "the right to live in peace."

Peace Education

In many cases people understand "peace" as something that is directly opposite to war. It is the same with so-called peace education at the actual sites of education. What is happening peace education today? For example, let's look at "Heisei 17 Report on Research Results by the Hiroshima City Schools Education Research Group," as reported by the Research Association of Peace Education Practice and Exchange (Heiwa kyōiku jissen kōryū gakushū kenkyūkai 平和教育実践交流学習研究会).

The Board of Education of Hiroshima City states that "Not only the deterioration of children's basic knowledge and understanding about hibaku (exposure to a-bomb radiation), but lowering of motivation, attitude, and interest are observed, and that it holds 'Secure passing on of the experiences of the hibakusha as the most crucial assignment." According to the result of a 2004 questionnaire (34% return rate), addressed to all elementary and junior high schools in the prefecture, schools introducing such topics as the reality of a-bomb damage within annual study plans are 24%. This is approximately one fourth of those surveyed seven years ago. In junior high it was 12%. Calling this a "critical situation," the research association concludes that "even in Hiroshima schools creative and lively peace study is now difficult to achieve." The reasons are that, "the need to secure class hours and the busy schedule of school education make it difficult to create chances for on-campus workshops or to develop creative peace education". Moreover, "teachers themselves understand peace education in the narrow

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sense as pertaining to the study of the atomic bomb and the past war, and lack a clear vision for instructing children while stimulating their interest in it as today's issue that stems from there."

But there are also some cheerful topics. A Nagasaki high school student who was shocked to hear that Tokyo high school students of the same generation said that they didn't know anything about August 6 or August 9, wished to "let the young generation know about the bomb experiences in an easy-to-understand way," and completed a 5 DVD set called "Now we would like to pass down" (Ima tsutaetai 今伝えたい), which contains the testimony of 15 hibakusha. The student also involved members of "10,000 High School Student Signatures Activities" (Kōkōsei ichiman'nin shomei katsudō 高校生一万人署名活動), a student organization collecting signatures calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons addressed to the European Headquarters of the United Nations. Dividing up the work, the students visited hibakusha with video cameras. She heads the peace studies club in Kassui High School in Nagasaki, a school enthusiastic about peace education. She introduces her club activities with this positive expression: "I'd like people to know that peace advocacy is not dark but enjoyable." Club members reportedly increased to 41, a record number.[1]

Peace education can be positively conducted when combined with school trips to Hiroshima or Nagasaki, which experienced the atomic bomb disaster, or to Okinawa, which became a sacrificial stone with approximately one out of four prefectural citizens dying in the Battle. Another type of peace education focuses on school activities related to the country's defeat in the war, including the atomic bomb. These activities are left to the discretion of each school, however, and many schools now provide no peace education.

Education can make it possible for people to live their one life humanely, freely and actively, and to realize a society and a world that make this possible. In order to materialize "peace", which is free from the violence called war, "the right to live peacefully" is indispensable.

When we aspire to peace in this broader sense at the actual site of education, instead of handling it in limited school events as was the case with traditional peace education, we need to work toward the realization of peace in all academic subjects and in all areas of education so as to foster peace-oriented human beings.

There is one country in the world that carries out such education. It is Costa Rica, a small developing country in Latin America, which is known for having abolished the military. Costa Rica, since 1949, has advocated demilitarization. In 1983, the then President announced a policy of positive perpetual unarmed neutrality. Óscar Arias Sánchez, who succeeded him, stated that "Our country's peace cannot exist without peace in surrounding countries." He called for a cease-fire among Central American countries that were then embroiled in civil wars, for which efforts he was awarded the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize. We have much to learn from this country, known worldwide for its contributions to peace and human rights, such as suggesting the establishment of a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.[2]

Here I would like to report on events of the last decade that took place at the public high school where I have taught, and the peace consciousness of students seen through the practice of peace education. This is a general education high school with eight classes in each grade, roughly 45 percent of the students going on to college, 25 percent to junior colleges and 30 percent to professional schools.

Canceled School Trip to Okinawa

"I'm not interested in politics." "I don't like

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politics." These words are often spoken in society and among students. But what is often forgotten is that to live in these times is itself political. What made teachers and students keenly aware of this was the Okinawa trip planned for November 2001. A school trip takes place in the second trimester of the second year of high school. It is desirable to take the time to carefully discuss with students where to go. But since many schools plan trips to the same areas, to arrange for hotels and transportation, we have to decide on the destination as soon as new students enter in the first year.

One of the most popular destinations for public high schools in Kantō was Okinawa. Private high schools had been making overseas trips from long ago, but it was only 11 years since public high schools were allowed to travel by plane. For Okinawa, we can leave Haneda Airport on a morning flight, arrive by noon, and start our activities in the afternoon.

On the basis of a questionnaire, the destination of the school trip for students who entered school in 2000 was set for Okinawa. The trip was to be three nights, four days starting on November 4 the following year. We set out the following objectives:

1. Trading not only with China and Korea but Southeast Asian countries, the Ryūkyūan kingdom was once a country of a scale that allowed it to be known as a "maritime kingdom". We will study its history, climate, and its rich culture, all greatly different from those of the mainland due in part to its distant southern location.

2. In World War II Okinawa was treated as a sacrificial stone in order to delay the US landing on the mainland. One fourth of Okinawans were killed in the battle. Thereafter, 75% of US military bases in all Japan have been located on Okinawa. We will reflect on the society and peace of today's Japan through visiting war museums and through lectures by survivors.

We made reservations for the airplane, hotel and buses and a preliminary test trip by a school representative took place in March 2001. On the basis of this visit and documents, we made the following rough schedule:

Day 1: Leave Haneda Airport 10:40. Arrive at Naha Airport: 13:10. Visit the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum, Museum of Peace Resources, and Steles of Peace Memorial. Stay at a hotel in Naha City. After supper attend a meeting to hear the experiences of the Himeyuri survivors (student nurses).



Okinawa Prefectural Peace Museum

Day 2: After visiting Shuri Castle and the Himeyuri Museum, tour Naha City. Before reaching the hotel, stroll on the beach.

Day 3: Course by course experience learning. The options: 1. Agricultural experience; 2. Experience an isolated island; 3. Hiking to mountains and waterfalls; or 4. Beach combing.

Day 4: Visit a botanical garden. In the afternoon depart Naha Airport and arrive Haneda Airport in the late afternoon.

Prior to the trip, we planned to view a documentary called "Let's have a nuclear free 21st century" (Kaku no nai nijūisseiki wo 核のない21世紀を) and a movie called "Cave: Porcelain Lily" (GAMA: gettō no hana—月桃の

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花—).[3] The former is a persuasive documentary film summarizing the 20th century of war and nuclear weapons from a global perspective, and encapsulating prayers for nuclear abolition. The latter, produced with participation of Okinawa citizens, is a movie that can be called a crystalization of the Okinawan spirit. With prayers for peace and the current base issues in view, it casts in relief the cruelty of war by showing the suffering of an Okinawan family before and after the war. Whether or not we go to Okinawa, this is a must view movie for thinking about war and peace.

In September we finished the assignment of hotel rooms and airplane seating, and sent the manuscript for the travel guide to the printer. Then an incident occurred that shook the world: "synchronized multiple terror" in the US on September 11, 2001. This is the name used by the majority of the mass media. But it is a superficial one, which fails to grasp the essence of the incident. Here too, the absence of true journalism in the Japanese mass media is exposed. Rather, we should call it anti-American suicide terror. And why anti-American, and why they went to the length of suicide bombing—these are questions to be pursued.

> I thought somewhat distantly
> of the terrorist's sad heart—
> there is a day when it draws near me.

Unless we try to understand "the terrorist's sad heart" of which the poet Ishikawa Takuboku talks here, we will not be able to escape the traumatic chain of hatred creating hatred and blood washing blood.

"This is war. There are only enemies and friends. Countries that protect terrorists are enemies. For enemies there can only be retaliation," the US President responded immediately. And immediately the Japanese leadership offered comprehensive support. Japan, which until then, held a neutral position and retained good relations with Islamic countries, lost the precious chance to contribute to world peace through diplomacy. Now with total support extended to the US, which clamors about military attacks on Islamic countries, Japan naturally becomes as good as an enemy.

It was natural that fear of terror would emerge on Okinawa, which houses 75% of military bases in Japan. By September 27, only two weeks after 9/11, 54 schools had cancelled trips, which amounts to 9,200 students and teachers, and group tours involving roughly 6,000 people had also canceled.



US bases on the main Okinawan island

At my school, too, we had to consider whether to make the trip as planned. Already it would involve 5% for hotel cancellation fees. If we waited until less than one month before the trip, the percentage would rise, and we would have to pay other cancellation fees including transportation.

"Sensei! Are we really going to go to Okinawa?" students began to ask us, worried. When I asked my class of 40 students, ten answered that they were worried. Students

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spoke to me. “Sensei, my parents say, if they were school teachers, they would never take students to Okinawa.” “My parents ask, ‘What is the school doing?’”

I thought that this wouldn’t work. Who can say it’s all right? If pressed to answer whether we could guarantee safety, no one could reply “Yes.”

We had no choice but to cancel the trip. As teachers of the grade, we sent out copies of a letter, dated October 9 explaining the decision to parents.

Then, we received an amazing document. Dated October 16, it was issued by the Director-General, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and addressed to the Director-General, Bureau of Primary and Secondary Education, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. It was titled: “Concerning the carrying out of school trips to Okinawa Prefecture on the basis of the situation following the multiple terrorist attacks in the US.” Copies were sent to schools through prefectural boards of education.

“Due to the influence of multiple terrorist attacks, cancellations of school trips to Okinawa are occurring one after another, but the life of Okinawan people goes on as usual without any particular influence, and transport and sightseeing facilities are doing normal business. In carrying out school trips from now on, it is hoped that this situation on Okinawa will be given due consideration and trips will take place as far as possible according to plan.”

“Many schools are also changing their overseas to domestic trips. Due to problems of capacity of transportation and hotels, selection of substitute destinations is becoming difficult. Changing the destination to Okinawa from the mainland would be worth considering as an effective means to avoid having to cancel school trips entirely.”

What absence of recognition and imagination is this? We understand the great difficulty in Okinawa, enough to feel pain ourselves. Trying to stop the tour cancellations the prefecture is sending personnel and documents in the name of governor to airlines and travel agencies. However, what the country and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology should do is to study the factors that invited this situation, and try to direct politics and policies in the direction of overcoming those concerns.

At about the same time, a letter of October 20 came from the Okinawan hotel whose reservation we had canceled, referring to their painful situation in words that seemed more than just for business purposes, but also demonstrating concern about us.

“We sincerely regret receipt of your letter the other day about the cancelation of your school’s trip. We imagine that it must have been a difficult choice from the standpoint of the school having the care of many students.

“The dispute that started with outbreaks of terror in the States has exerted great negative influence in many areas, inside and outside the country, and now the situation is such that the blow to the economy, especially, is difficult to foresee.

“The Okinawan economy, which depends heavily on sightseeing, is now in a disastrous state due to cancellations of school and other trips from the mainland, leading to a matter of life or death for many tourist agencies.

“From next year onward, please select Okinawa, ”the island that can send messages of peace to the world,” and please select our hotel. Finally, we pray that this year’s school trip will be memorable for the students.”

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This is the phantom school trip of 2001. A full account of this, titled "The Tears of Okinawa: Behind the Canceled School trip," was included in the anthology of essays by graduating students. This has been subsequently as class material for thinking about peace.

Article Nine: A Debate

A debate is included in the comprehensive learning unit (once a week) for first year students at the high school where I taught. The debate is an intellectual game around one theme, in which students, divided by lottery into pro and con, strive to persuade. At the end, the judges hand down their verdict on the basis of which team argued more persuasively. This nourishes logical and objective thought, while helping develop sensitivity toward positions that differ from one's own. Again, the attempt to think widely from opposing points of view turns out to be practical learning of democracy.

In the lesson that was conducted in 2004, each teacher worked with twenty students. Each team had five students, one of whom served as monitor and timer while the remaining four debated. Ten remaining students served as judges. The students were to choose a theme from familiar issues about which opinion was easy to divide into pro and con positions.

In deciding on a theme, students raised such issues as whether to accept all students into high schools without examination, and whether to formally recognize the use of different family names for husbands and wives. Some also asked me for suggestions for a good theme. If we suggested a theme from the beginning, students would lose the chance to think independently. However, thinking it fine to make suggestions because this was after they had done some thinking, I responded that whether or not to change Article 9, an important current issue, might be interesting. This became one of the two themes.

After the theme was determined, there was one class hour to prepare, with the real debate one week later. To make it a real battle, it was important to look at many materials. Too much could not be expected, however, because students also have daily classes and extracurricular activities. I provided students with the text of Article 9, and, for reference, a printed copy of the same from a "New Translation of The Constitution of Japan," rendered into easy-to-read Japanese from the English original by the author Ikezawa Natsuki.[4] In addition to this class, the students prepared independently by developing their argumentation in written form, thought about anticipated criticisms, and drafted counter arguments to those criticisms, in ways that would enable every member to speak.

At the debate, partly because it was a difficult issue, students were not able to fully state their views in their own words. However, their handling was serious and they argued to the best of their ability. The time limit was 25 minutes. The judges were the ten students who observed the debate.

The side that won from the show of hands was the team that favored revising Article 9. I was somewhat disappointed by this result. Would those who favor constitutional revision eventually become the majority?

"Sensei," one student raised her hand, however, wanting to say something.

"I was in the team for revision and spoke in favor of revision. But in fact, I'm against it."

Then a few others said that that was also the case with them. I asked them to raise their hands to indicate what they really thought. Of the eight students who participated, one was for revision, six were against revision, and one did not know.

During the comprehensive learning hour the

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following week, students wrote 600 letter compositions introducing their own views. I would like to excerpt from them, to convey the unedited voices of ordinary high school students.

> For revision:
> "Today's Japan keeps armed forces and sends the SDF abroad. This situation goes against Article 9 and is contradictory. Given this, the constitution becomes meaningless, a mere token."
>
> Against revision:
> "Japan can take pride in the fact that it has not, since World War II, participated in war. It's thanks to the constitution that Japan has been protected and so far has been able to get along peacefully. We should not now change the constitution. During the debate, I had to support revision. While researching, I became aware of the problems of Article 9 as well. During the debate, in stating our views and refuting views against revision, I somehow found myself thinking that we should change Article 9. But in reflecting calmly, I think that after all we should not change Article 9. No matter what, war must be avoided. We high school students, too, have to think deeply about an issue like this, because it is not unrelated to us. This is an important problem that greatly affects the future of Japan."
>
> "The present Constitution of Japan can been seen as one created by America because Japan lost the Pacific War. We did lose, but Japan became egalitarian with old ideas like social status (mibun 身分) and house (ie 家) overcome. Here we can thank America somewhat. Besides, the constitution prohibited Japan from having the right of belligerency, which means the pro-peace principle. Thanks to this, we have until now been able to live without killing or being killed.
>
> "But now it's different. Despite the fact that America imposed on Japan the pro-peace principle, during the Iraq War it demanded that Japan send military forces. Although that is questionable, Japan sent Self-Defense Forces to Iraq. The SDF should perform self-defense. Doesn't this mean that it must not harm others? Just defending leads to defeat, so the next step is to go on the offensive. The greatest defense then turns out to be attack. And the conclusion will be to revise Article 9, I think that if Japan revises the constitution at this point, the only choice would be to follow America and fight. As a matter of fact the Iraq war shows this."
>
> "In foreign countries it was said that Japan is a country that only offers money. But I believe that the SDF does not exist for war. Rather, it is to act as a rescuer in disasters like an earthquake."
>
> "At the debate, the team arguing for revision said that it doesn't work just to be protected by another country and that just because Japan is protected, it is not necessarily safe. However, if Japan keeps its own armed forces and goes to war, then I think it's just repeating what old Japan did.

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If everyone thinks about world peace, we should not revise Article 9 and we should not have armies. As a country that never goes to war, I want Japan to lead the way so that other countries will be the same way."

"If we revise the constitution, there is a fear that Japan will repeatedly go to war as before (Sino-Japanese War, Russo-Japanese War, WWI, WWII). If we go to war, who will go to the battlefield from a Japan that is an aging society."

"Also, Japan has plenty of food because it trades with many countries. Japan's self-sufficiency rate is very low. If we go to war, we will suffer from a food shortage."

"There are many refugees in the world. Refugees are people who can no longer live normally due to war, natural disasters and so forth. If we went to war, we would be that way, too.

"What we in a peaceful country must do is not go to war but help those who are hurt by war."

Reading the essays, I was both moved and cheered. Despite the time restrictions, these first year high school students researched on the internet and at libraries. They grasped the issues better than expected, and expressed their thoughts in their own words.

The 2005 Okinawa School Trip

Students who entered in 2004 planned a school trip to Okinawa, and they were able to carry out the plan from December 1 to December 4. Starting in the first year, they began peace study and pre-trip learning: aside from the aforementioned "A Twenty-First Century Without Nuclear Weapons" and "GAMA: Gettō Flowers", they viewed the NHK Special "Okinawa: The Battlefield that Returned to Life Narrated by 2,500 Yomitan Villagers," and the movie "Himeyuri no Tō (ひめゆりの塔 The Himeyuri Monument), and read excerpts from Tamiya Torahiko's novel, "Okinawa no Shuki kara" (From Okinawan Memoirs).[5] On the basis of pre-trip learning, all students taking modern Japanese wrote on the theme of "What do you think war is? To construct peace, what is necessary, and, to achieve that, what should each person do?" I would like to excerpt representative essays.



The Himeyuri Memorial

"The screen images that we viewed and Okinawan memoirs that we read only convey the situation at that time in black and white images and verbal descriptions. Even so I received a frightening impression and almost wanted to turn my eyes away.

However, the screen images that remain only in black and white actually had color, smell and

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sound. I have never heard the boom of bombing that almost tears eardrums, nor have I smelled people's flesh rotting. After all, I don't understand the terror of war compared with people who really experienced war."

"I think that war is a cruel act which should never be on this earth. Many people die in war yet, in most cases, those who die are powerless ordinary citizens.

Why do the guiltless bear on their backs the war that portions of a country arbitrarily brought about? When I look at wars that are occurring in the world now, it really looks that way. Wars that occurred in Japan long ago seem to be the same.

In Japan, which has seen the sixtieth year since the war, Okinawa is pressed to undergo difficulties as before. But because we still have Article 9, Japan cannot go to war. I strongly support this, but there is fear about maintaining the constitution. We are now going to destroy our peaceful world with our own hands."

"What I felt while watching movies etc., is that war came into being due to negative feelings like hate, resentment, fear, and jealousy. The sadness of mutual hatred came across realistically while watching movies.

In order to build peace, the only thing that we can do now is to know and recognize each other. To coexist with others is absolutely necessary for human beings, but it is extremely difficult. Still, to continue to interact with others in various ways is life's pleasure, so how we feel about it will determine whether it will be war or peace."

"When I saw the film GAMA, for the first time I keenly felt how frightful war is. People were living between life and death without knowing when they would die, without a moment of relaxation or leisure. Even among the family, if a member was injured, it might be necessary to abandon that person to protect one's own life. Right before one's eyes, when on the run or when attention to enemy attack is lax, one's family members lose their lives. They lived that way for a long time. There were scenes so tragic as to be unimaginable. In reality, it may have been even worse.

After defeat in the war, Japan determined through the constitution never to go to war again. However, right now, the SDF is dispatched to areas where battles and suicidal terror occur. I suspect that this violates the constitution. In order to construct peace, those of us who have never experienced war must listen to the stories of those who experienced war and also learn voluntarily to pass down the tragedy of war to the next generation. Japan should be at the fore in the effort to keep countries from going to war."

"I felt greatly angered about the government long ago. If they were able to think about the future, they would not have brought about such tragic consequences.

No matter what the reason might have been, one should listen to the other party and also ask them to listen to one's own stories. War, I think, is sheer violence. Everyone is different. So sometimes there are disputes. That is not a bad thing. Expressing views clearly leads to recognizing each other. I was left with the impression that it would be nice if we could have a society in which everyone recognizes everyone else."

"Even if scars created by war might heal, scars in the heart never disappear from memory. Sixty years after the conclusion of WWII, those scars still torment people. Okinawa houses three quarters of US bases in Japan and people still live with a fear of war.

"In order to construct peace, the first thing is that Japan should never keep military forces.

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When such a movement occurs, we individual citizens have to oppose that firmly. We must not think that one individual's act opposing war is meaningless. Individual views can gain strength and eventually become all citizens' view."

"As we saw in the film, some consider that "war is just." I never think so."

"Unless we conclude from our own thinking, not from other people's thinking, that war is unnecessary, we tend to think of war as another's matter. Therefore, I would like to have many more opportunities like this to have us think about war through films and so forth."

The above are representative thoughts of students following the pre-trip learning. I always convey to my students that views differ from person to person, that they are encouraged to say freely what they wish, that they should express their views, and that I do not and cannot grade them. The above essay excerpts can be regarded as reflecting students' candid thoughts.

Next, students wrote on "their impressions, what they felt or thought about during the school trip to Okinawa (including pre-trip learning)." I would again like to excerpt representative passages.

"From the school trip, I realized that pre-trip learning was indeed helpful. We saw many screen images before departing for Okinawa, which made us feel like casting our eyes down, but when we actually went to the place, I was able to confirm those scenes with my own eyes.

"In the cave (gama) I was startled by how completely dark it was when we put out our flashlights. A person who experienced the battle told us what it was like at that time: civilians on Okinawa were not treated well by Japanese soldiers and the stench of dead corpses filled the cave.

Also, at the Peace Museum, I was exposed to many materials I had never seen before, and was able to see the horror of war with my own eyes. They included weapons and protective hats, books with testimonies of people who experienced the war. What especially terrified me were photographs from the battlefield. There were people expiring on the roadside and bodies without the top half. This peace museum is, I think, a place for reflecting on how cruel and tragic war is.

There were times when I thought that the school trip was just a trip. But I was convinced otherwise. I had never felt war close up as this time. I was able to come in contact with those who experienced the war and deepen my understanding of the terror of the war, while also learning about the history and culture of Okinawa.

According to what our travel guide said, the Japanese army lived in the farthest corner of the caves with escape routes prepared. They made ordinary people live toward the entrance of the cave. While the American army that entered was killing ordinary citizens, the Japanese soldiers ran away by the escape routes. Isn't this awful?

Listening to this story I felt very sad, wondering if the Japanese military should not have protected ordinary people. Having visited Okinawa, I realized afresh the horror and cruelty of war."

"When I think that the person who kindly lectured to us on the first day also lived in a cave, I can hardly believe it. To talk to us means to recall those days. Telling us about it means recalling the situation then, so it must be very painful. I thought that talking to us despite that meant that this person wanted us to never repeat the same thing. I thought that, for those who experienced this war, too, we must make efforts toward a peaceful world without war.

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I had no idea that military bases were that large. Learning that Japanese people were not allowed to enter, I could hardly think that those places were part of Japan. The sound of the fighters flying was very noisy and I think it causes great nuisance for residents who live near the bases. I wish that the US bases would promptly disappear and the areas would become the land of Japan.

Having come to Okinawa, I learned that there are many things in the world that have to be changed, and I thought that young people need to make those changes."

"When I touched the stone carved with names at the Peace Park, I felt as if the feelings and thoughts of people came to me from sixty years ago. When I saw the big bomb on display, I wondered how such a thing came to fall from the beautiful sky. The sky that day was so beautiful. Because we have a comfortable life with nothing wanting, I think that we should bear the dreams and hopes of those who died in the war, and do what we can do for the happiness of being alive.



Okinawan Peace Memorial Park

Because I want to always be with my friends, my family, my sweetheart, and everyone who is important to me, I want to make efforts not just for myself, but for Japan and the world. Thanks to the school trip I learned not just about the war, but the bonds with my classmates deepened. I was happy that I became better friends with them."

"According to the bus guide's story, when the simultaneous multiple terror occurred in the States, there were many American army people on the streets in Okinawa. Security near the bases was particularly tight and people felt tense every day."

"I felt keenly that peace is very important and that it is something we have to continue to protect. On the first day, when a survivor spent over two hours with us talking about experiences during the war, I felt quite scared thinking that the story would become a reality if Article 9 were revised."

Before they wrote their compositions, I asked the students to give overall impressions of the school trip. However, the majority used much of the space to discuss peace and war. Three common points appear in many of the essays:

•Was able to learn of the cruelty of war from the trip to Okinawa.

•There is a need to pass on the war experience across generations.

•We should never make war again. We must maintain peace into the future.

Looked at in this way, I feel that a school trip to Nagasaki, Hiroshima or Okinawa can be extremely effective in constructing peace in Japan and the world.

On March 8th this year, Prime Minister Stjepan Mesic of Croatia visited Hiroshima and said, "I knew of the damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but I first realized how tragic it was." "Thoroughgoing peace education will

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lead to the realization of world peace. I would like Japan to be a partner." He wrote in the guestbook, "People of every country should come here, to understand the importance of world peace."[6]

However, the number of students who visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki in school trips continues to decline. In 2005 the number of students who visited Hiroshima was about 560,000. This was 260,000 fewer than in 1996. As for Nagasaki, in 2005, approximately 410,000 visited, 300,000 fewer than in 1996.

The number of students visiting Okinawa continues to increase. From 160,000 in 1996 it increased to 420,000 in 2005.[7] However, recently, due to rising costs primarily of airfare, more schools are unable to send students to Okinawa. At the high school that I taught at, students who entered this year gave up Okinawa and decided on a trip to Kyushu.

Even if it is impossible to make all education expenses free as in Finland, I think that at least the state or the local government must come up with a budget to make possible efficient peace education. Everything is when peace is.

Toward True Education and the Realization of Peace

Many view today's Japanese children critically or negatively. For example they say, "They don't study" or "They lack the ability to think critically." On Dec 4, 2007, the results were announced of the Third PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) of the OECD. It made clear that achievement scores continue to fall. Even more worrisome is that "motivation and interest in learning is at the lowest level."[8] It's difficult to be motivated by study which emphasizes cramming in great masses of information with single minded memorization, that is, knowledge which can only be applied to the entrance examination and is forgotten the minute after the exams. Needless to say, no ability to think is acquired from such learning. "They do not read books." Naturally. From elementary school days, children are driven to cram schools and private lessons. They don't have time to read leisurely. Again, "They only watch television." "They only play games." A Survey on the actual situation of daily lives, conducted at the same time as PISA in 2004, indicates that second year students in junior high watch television 2.7 hours per day, the longest in forty-six countries.[9] We have to recognize that education and society are creating such children.

Ranked number one in the world in academic ability by PISA, Finland is drawing attention as among the advanced education countries. Although small, Finland's living standard is high, its economy is highly evaluated, and its IT industry is cutting edge. Intending to search the secret, many education groups visit Finland from all over the world. Many anticipate finding some kind of special schools and classes, but they report, "what we see is extremely relaxed classrooms in which some children stand up and walk around or rest on a sofa."[10]

The book "Experiencing Finnish Education" a composite parent-child report on the experience of a Japanese high school student, who stayed in Finland for one year from 2004 in his second year of high school, puts in relief today's Japanese education like a negative film.[11]

In Finland, there are no examinations for elementary school, junior high school and high school. There is no entrance fee or tuition fee. Lunches and snacks at school are free. Basically, school is entirely free. Many people send their children to a school near their homes. Finns don't understand why Japanese elementary, junior high and high school students go to cram schools after school and study for exams.

The "entrance examination war" for passing

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into universities also does not exist in Finland. All Finnish universities are state run. Students can receive scholarships from the state, and dorms are free.

What is the content of exams at high school? Tests are almost all essay type. English and Finnish aside, even chemistry, biology and music use essay type questions. The usual test format is to let students write their thoughts. There are no fill-in-the blanks questions, which were common in the majority of tests this student author used to take in Japan, and everything is descriptive. There is no time limit, and students can tackle the problems until they feel satisfied.

The author, who only used the study method for English so as to get good grades in Japan, at first could not get his meaning across in his English compositions. However, his yearend composition was evaluated as "excellent" with a comment, "You have improved amazingly in one year." Even so, the author ended at the bottom on the high school senior English test after returning to Japan.

Compared with Japanese education, there is such a great gap. Japan's bad results on the PISA tests have been blamed on yutori kyōiku (ゆとり教育, relaxed education), which was introduced in 2002 in reaction to fact-centered cram education, and the hours for comprehensive learning (sōgō gakushū 総合教育) were subsequently reduced. In fact, education in Finland is close to Japan's yutori kyōiku, and more hours are given to comprehensive learning than in Japan. Japan, on the other hand, can only come up with measures like assigning early morning or after school hours for academic activities, restoring Saturday classes, and shortening summer vacation, all of which increase class hours that were far more numerous than in Finland to begin with.

What we have to worry about is that this kind of system is being even more intensified by making schools and teachers compete. On August 29, 2008, the Ministry of Education announced the result of a survey on Japanese educational ability that was conducted in April. The meaning of this survey is questionable from the start, considering the circumstance that it was revived last year despite the fact that it was discontinued after 1964 for the reason that it invited overheated competition among schools and municipalities. Politicians and education administrators learn nothing from history but repeat history.

Like the year before, this year again, Osaka prefecture achieved much lower than the national average in every single subject. The Governor of Ōsaka harshly criticized boards of education and schools: "How did you manage this two years in a row? It's terrible. In a private company this would naturally cause salary reduction." Regarding the survey results by the municipality and each school, MEXT instructed not to publicly announce them to avoid excessive competition and ranking consciousness. However, throughout Japan there are motions petitioning to make the information public. Some prefectural governors are pressing municipalities that oppose disclosing this information, saying that "whether or not to open information provides an important guideline to budgeting."[12] It is feared that reactions similar to those in Ōsaka may be repeated in other prefectures and towns.

In the trend to tighter control over education, miscellaneous tasks increase, further reducing teachers' spare time. Students will after all be the ones to be sacrificed.

What is needed right now for Japan's education is to clearly recognize and analyze such differences between educational approaches, and for us to fundamentally recreate the ideal form of education.

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As a school teacher over thirty years, I have had contact with many students at college-bound schools, core schools, and part-time high schools. What I can say for certain from my experience is that students in fact seek genuine things, truth, or what leads to truth. If those things are provided for them, they take the initiative to understand, judge and try to grasp the truth.

As an instructor of Japanese. aside from textbooks, I have used many writings for class use from newspapers, magazines and books. This is because outstanding writings appear that I want today's school students to read.

I think that students participate in learning of their own accord in the following cases. (1) When they can feel that the material is important for their future lives; (2) When their intellectual curiosity and desire to explore are stimulated; (3) When their imagination or creativity can be put to use; (4) When they can assert their personality or presence.

How to make a forum that facilitates this is the question. In the case of formal classes, exploration and selection of teaching materials as well as how to develop them are the issues that affect the life and death of classroom teaching.

That was the case with the debate on article nine that I have reported on. In determining a theme, I tried to respect the independence of students. If students had not asked me if there might be some good themes, the theme of how to handle Article 9 might not have surfaced. Revision of the Constitution ultimately requires a plebiscite with the right to vote resting with citizens age eighteen and above. That means it begins precisely with third year high school students. This is an important issue that they ought to feel responsible for. We need to present such issues in ways that students can understand instead of pressuring them.

If only we provide necessary knowledge and guarantee a place for them to think on that basis and judge, then students, on their own seek to pursue truth and try to create the future. When I see such students before my eyes, I am ready to place trust in young people and experience relief and hope.

What is peace? Karen Olsen de Figueros, the wife of Jose Figueros Ferrer, who declared abolition of military forces in Costa Rica in 1948, defined peace using his expression, "Peace is endless struggle."[13]

At the time of the Iraq War in March 2003, the Costa Rican government, which had viewed cooperation with America as a pillar of diplomacy, joined the coalition of the willing that formed with the US as the center. However, citizens and the association of attorneys went to the constitutional court of the Supreme Court and on September 8, 2004 all seven judges unanimously ruled the government's conduct to be in violation of the Constitution, and against the permanent positive unarmed neutrality declaration and against international codes of human rights, and declared the action invalid. By this, the name of Costa Rico was deleted from the list of the coalition and Costa Rico's declaration of permanent neutrality was reasserted.[14]

"Peace Means Endless Strife." This expression, on the basis of this fact, seems to overlap with what our constitution states in Articles 12 and 97.

Article 12. The freedoms and rights guaranteed to the people by this constitution shall be maintained by the constant endeavor of the people, who shall refrain from any abuse of these freedoms and rights and shall always be responsible for utilizing them for the public welfare.

Article 97. The fundamental human rights by this constitution guaranteed to the people of Japan are fruits of the age-old struggle of man

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to be free; they have survived the many exacting tests for durability and are conferred upon this and future generations in trust, to be held for all time inviolate.

What is at the foundation of all basic human rights is the right to peaceful life and what guarantees it is the materialization of peace. In order for that, peace education is necessary in all areas and “citizens’ ceaseless efforts” and “endless struggle” are essential.

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Notes:
[1] Asahi Shinbun, August 6, 2008.

[2] Saotome Ai, et al. Heiwa wo tukuru kyōiku: ‘guntai wo suteta kuni’ Kosuta Rika no kodomotachi (Imawami Booklet, 2002).

[3] In the film, an old woman keeps silence for many years about what she experienced in the cave. She has an estranged daughter in the US. Despite her fierce objection, the daughter married an American pilot, now deceased. The daughter's son, age 22, visits Okinawa wishing to know what happened between his mother and his Okinawan grandmother. The old woman is reluctant, but finally tells him the story. At the cave, she lost her four-year old boy (when the cave collapsed under US attack), her husband (shot by Japanese on his way back from successful negotiation with US forces), then her one-year old daughter (she held her, perhaps too tightly to keep her quiet). When she was ready to use the grenade to kill herself, she heard a faint cry of another's baby and picks her up. That baby became her daughter, replacing the dead child. (tr.)

[3] Directed respectively by Katagiri Naoki, 2001, and Ōsawa Yutaka, 1996.

[4] Ikezawa Natsuki, Kenpō nante shoranai yo—to iu kimi no tame no ‘Nihon no Kenpō’ (Hōmu-sha, 2003).

[5] The NHK Special was broadcast on June 18, 2003. The film was directed by Kamiyama Seijirō, 1995. Tamiya Torahiko’s book was published by Shinchōsha in 1972.

[6] Asahi Shinbun, March 9, 2008.

[7] Yomiuri Shinbun, May 15, 2007.

[8] Asahi Shinbun, December 5, 2007.

[9] Fukuda Seiji, Kyōsō yametara gakuryoku sekai-ichi: Finrando kyōku no seikō. Asahi Shinbunsha, 2006.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Sanekawa Mayu and Motoko. Bungei Shunjū, 2007.

[12] Asahi Shinbun, September 11, 2007.

[13] See footnote 2.

[14] Maeda Akira, Guntai no nai kokka 27 no kuniguni to hitobito. Nihon Hyōronsha, 2008.

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