

**Do Peace Education Programs Have an Influence on High  
School Students?  
-Case Study of Hiroshima Jogakuin Jr. & Sr. High School in  
Japan-**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of peace education lessons on female high school students. Although peace education enriches the school curriculum and is becoming a more widely recognized field, not all educational institutions are involving students and educators in working toward a more just and peaceful world. This study is based on data obtained from a questionnaire administered to 244 female students in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades of senior high school at Hiroshima Jogakuin Jr. & Sr. High School, Japan, an institution that has been developing and merging peace education in its curriculum for more than 40 years. Findings reveal that students in the high school tend to have very positive opinions about the peace education lessons and approaches. The study also shows that students who have experienced peace education are more self-reliant, sensible, and independent in their understanding of social issues.

Key words: peace education, motivation, secondary education, female students

## 1. Introduction

Education constitutes the core of society; it is through education that countries ensure that they develop high quality manpower. Education also improves competitiveness and plays an integral role in human development. Yet, there are regions in the world in which individuals do not have the right to access education, whereby the population is left poor, illiterate, and vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Statistics consistently show that one-third of the population in the southern hemisphere is income-poor and one-quarter is poor in terms of the UNDP's Human Development Index (Pearce, 2000). Poverty reduces access to formal education, and in most cases wherein a population is neglected, the realization of their rights to peace and stability is hard.

Considering that education plays an important role in the development as well as achievement of peace, there is the question of whether it is important to blend formal education and peace education. The answer may appear to be very simple (i.e., yes, it is), because formal and peace education are interdependent. For example, peace, wherein life-sustaining needs and human rights are met, facilitates the development of literacy (Carter & Pickett, 2014). In this regard, the promotion of peace at the personal and societal levels should constantly be emphasized in education. This will lead to the full

development of the skills and attitudes of the students who are exposed to peace education, ensuring their becoming productive members of society.

The present study aims to test the effectiveness of a peace education program at Hiroshima Jogakuin Jr. & Sr. High School (hereafter "Jogakuin"), in Hiroshima, Japan, through analyzing and discussing students' opinions on the school's peace program to transform conflict by techniques and strategies such as conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation.

## 2. What is Peace Education?

Peace education is difficult to accurately define, as - due to being driven by a constant flow of knowledge and desire for improvement - it is flexible in nature. In fact, the definition of peace education is quite broad and multidimensional, because people understand peace differently depending on their values and lifestyles. Therefore, when defining and embarking on peace education, it is imperative to consider the nature of the school and its mission. However, thematically, peace education may refer to a field in which policies and resolutions are fostered in educational institutions, and in which schools are more aware of the importance of integrating conflict resolution, mediation, and reconciliation processes

into their curricula.

Despite its ambiguity, for the purposes of my research, I consider peace education to be both a philosophy and process that involves the teaching of skills including listening, reflection, problem-solving, cooperation, and conflict resolution (Harris & Morrison, 2013). It is a process, because it teaches people about the threats of conflict and violence. Although this may also be accessible in informal education through experience and observation, peace education explicitly espouses the required methods and skills to be learnt. Peace education also details strategies and techniques for problem-solving and promoting peace. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the teaching process focuses on the causes and roots of conflict and providing information on alternatives to violence. This will help create conditions for learning that will enhance the students' potential to discover ways to respond to conflicts nonviolently in a manner that promote inner transformation. The basic goals of peace education are to educate students on how violence affects society and citizens, to teach them the skills required for managing their conflicts nonviolently, and to motivate them to choose peace and deal with conflicts in non-harmful ways.

For educators, peace education represents an opportunity to implement strategies for reducing violence in schools. Thus, it builds a peaceful, just, and

harmonious learning environment. Justice and harmony go hand in hand in peace education, especially when educators teach conflict management and ways to avoid conflicts, which will help in realizing the vision of harmony in multicultural places.

The concept of peace includes a deep respect for life and the dignity of every human being in this world without any type of discrimination or prejudice. It does not merely refer to the absence of war, even though it may be an appropriate definition for developing countries affected by physical and structural violence. However, a place without war is not always peaceful; structural violence can manifest itself in high crime rates, hunger, poverty, violence, and circumstances that limit life and freedom. In such places, the concept of justice is absent or disregarded such that it is difficult to realize and enjoy peace.

Peace education must promote the development of peace culture, as much of the world is living through and facing difficult times, in the forms of hunger, disease, ignorance, and various forms of violence. Taking these facts into consideration, peace education is a strategy that must be applied in our schools and society in general. However, before they can teach about peace, all teachers must be trained in peace education. The most suitable way to propagate peace culture is through education in schools. However, this should not remain within the four walls of the

school but should emanate out to the students' families and finally society at large. In the future, schools should become the classrooms and laboratories for peace.

### **3. Culture of Peace**

To teach peace education, it is also necessary to create a space for the culture of peace. The United Nations, in its Resolution on the Culture of Peace defines this as “a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behavior and ways of life based on: (a) Respect for life, ending of violence and promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation; (b) Full respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States and non-intervention... (c) Full respect for and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms; (d) Commitment to peaceful settlement of conflicts; (e) Efforts to meet the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations...” (UNGA, 1999).

There will always be hostilities, disagreements (different points of view), and arguments (different opinions) in society. However, the goal of peace is not to eliminate or fight against them. Rather, the only way to reduce their adverse impact will be to resolve such situations nonviolently without the use of physical or

armed force. At the national level, peace implies law and order, self-control, respect for others, and the guarantee of human rights. At the cultural level, artists create peaceful images to counteract some of the violent images distributed by the mass media communication industries. At the institutional level, administrators use organizational development techniques to resolve conflicts. At the interpersonal level, individuals learn how to handle conflicts and negotiate agreements. At the psychic level, peace implies a certain calm and spiritual connectedness to other forms of life (Harris & Morrison, 2013). It is important to note, based on the previously mentioned information, that peace is cheaper than war, and economic benefits will significantly boost the peace dividends.

Teachers play an essential role in peacebuilding, because peace education provides a way to both promote the needed peace within the human mind, and develop the proper knowledge of peace-making strategies and skills that will enable human beings to learn nonviolent alternatives to dealing and coexisting with each other.

### **4. Brief Historical Background of the Need for Peace Education in Hiroshima, Japan**

Japan has been touted an example of recovery and peace to the world. It is

currently positioned as one of the best economies, but its journey to peace has not been easy. For example, in the 1931 Manchuria incident, when Japan invaded northeast China known as Manchuria, many factors were taken into account before making such a decision. These include Japan's deep economic depression after World War I, the Great Kanto earthquake, and the United States' great depression, which expanded and affected the economies of countries all over the world in 1930. These situations left the Japanese elite with no option but to invade China and establish a colony there.

After the invasion, Japan was completely isolated and later expelled from the League of Nations. This initiated a dark era for the Japanese military forces and citizens in general. Incidents started bubbling in the Manchurian occupied land causing casualties on both the Japanese and Chinese sides; the situations was further aggravated by the explosion of World War II involving Germany, Italy, Great Britain, United States, Russia, and Japan (that had to fight with an already weakened army) as well the breakout of the Pacific war with Pearl Harbor, which became a death sentence for Japan.

During this time, Hiroshima was a very active city and port for Japan in terms of commerce, and it was also a departure point for soldiers to be sent to different war

fronts. Since it had such importance, it was completely under the control of the military. It was an extremely difficult situation for locals and especially for foreigners since they were considered as spies. However, the worst was yet to come. On August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945 the United States dropped the first atomic bomb over Hiroshima on a normal working day at 8:15 A.M. under the pretext of limiting the casualties of both Japanese and North American soldiers, but until today, this aspect remains unclear. Though there is no exact information on how many perished in the bombing, it is estimated that approximately 140,000 died by the end of December 1945.<sup>1</sup> Hiroshima was reduced to ashes and desolation after this event.

#### 4.1 Peace Education in Hiroshima

A peace education guideline was published in 1971 by the Hiroshima City Board of Education focusing on its atomic bomb experiences. The main objective was to make students aware, understand, and value the preciousness of life and to respect the dignity of each person. Hiroshima continues to be a member of the International Peace and Culture City, which seeks to motivate and realize long-lasting peace (Ikeno, 2009).

In 2004, as the *hibakusha*<sup>2</sup> started

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/www/contents/1111638957650/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> *Hibakusha* is the Japanese word for the atomic bomb survivors of Hiroshima and

aging, their testimonies were collected and compiled as the “True Inheritance of the Atomic Bomb,” and this compilation was distributed to all schools in Hiroshima. Another important activity was the “Children Peace Summit”<sup>3</sup> wherein people gathered to listen to the testimonies.

At present, there is an integrated peace education program formulated for the Hiroshima municipal elementary, junior high, and senior high schools in the city. The framework of the program<sup>4</sup> includes the following:

- Knowledge about the actual state of the atomic bombings, nuclear weapons, war, etc.
- Ability to critically think, judge, and express ideas in an appropriate way
- Honor oneself and others and develop the skills to foster interactions among one another (Urabe, Yamasaki, & Ishii, 2013)

Norio Ikeno (2009), a Japanese professor at the Faculty of Education in Hiroshima University, examined some problems and prospects of peace education in public elementary schools of Hiroshima. He concluded that peace education was not merely concerned with facts, but also the recognition of values and creation of new

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Nagasaki.

<sup>3</sup> For further information regarding the summit, please check the following website <http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/www/contents/1418094048249/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> Urabe and others analyzed the effects of the

ideas/things, ensuring that the students are free to choose the aspects suitable for them.

## **5. Hiroshima Jogakuin Jr. & Sr. High School: Road to Peace**

Japanese reverend Teikichi Sunamoto, a converted Methodist who returned to Japan from the United States, desired to open a Christian girls’ school; this led to the establishment of Jogakuin, which opened its doors to the public in 1886. During the initial stages of its establishment, the reverend taught the girls reading, moral studies, and English (Hiroshima Jogakuin Jr.& Sr. High School, 1976). A year later, a United States missionary named Nannie B. Gaines (1860-1932) joined him, and she later became the first principal of the school.

Although Jogakuin has a long prestigious history, it faced strong oppression during war time. However, the reasons for Jogakuin becoming a target of the military in the 1940s are not clear. The military might have begun persecuting and harassing the school, as most of the teaching staff had come from the United States intending to spread the gospel of God to Japan. The students were

new program based on the students understanding of peace using a survey, and obtained successful results from it. See the references for further information.

constantly bullied by the military personnel and others to switch schools rather than continue at a “United States spying school.” However, the teachers bore the brunt of it, because they were persecuted severely and followed by the secret police. They were not free to move around comfortably within the city; there were continuous arbitrary checks by the military personnel regarding their movements.

The school was severely damaged by the atomic bomb the United States dropped over the city, which killed around 350 students and teachers and completely destroyed the building.

### **5.1 Peace Education in Jogakuin**

Jogakuin is a pioneer in girls’ education in the whole prefecture, being one of the oldest schools with 131 years of history. They have also witnessed the devastating effects of the atomic bomb on their own skin, and this experience deeply shapes their meaning of peace and peace education within the institution. The beginning efforts first came to light thanks to the school staff who, after World War II, began participating in peace movements. In time, the students also joined them. In 1958, a group of people from Jogakuin called the “Hiroshima Paper Crane Association,” began dedicating themselves

to constructing the now world-famous Children Peace Memorial, in honor of Sadako Sasaki, a symbol of innocent children victims all over the world. Sadako Sasaki was a survivor of the atomic bomb attack who later died of leukemia due to the radiation exposure from the bomb. The committee was guided by Mr. Ichiro Kawamoto, the caretaker of Jogakuin (Hiroshima Jogakuin Jr.& Sr. High School, 1976).

In 1967, even before peace education began to be considered and studied by the education boards of the prefecture, Jogakuin had already had some experience in it. During the initial stages of the program, the school invited guest speakers every July. The staff also published a book, *Natsugumo* (or Summer Cloud), that was later translated to English by the school’s English department.

The following table shows Jogakuin’s 2016 peace education curriculum.

## **6. Methodology**

This section of the study contains the research model, sampling population, data collection method and process, and data analysis.

Table 1. Main Contents and Purposes of the Peace Education Program in Jogakuin

Grade	Main contents and purposes of the program
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Jr	Students learn about Hiroshima and the school during the war time, focusing on significant historical events such as the atomic bomb attack.
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Jr	Students focus on developing active listening skills, improving their communication skills, and understanding and accepting other opinions.
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Jr	Students learn debate and public speaking skills, and to state opinions firmly and publicly about social issues, especially regarding nuclear weapons and conflict resolution. Students have the opportunity to participate in field trips to Nagasaki in Japan or abroad to Myanmar, Australia, and USA.
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Sr	Students transition from theory to practice and focus not only on the historical events of Hiroshima, but also of other places, thereby inculcating problem-solving techniques in the students.
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Sr	Students learn the meaning of peace in society and what a culture of peace is; the contents re-focus on Japanese historical facts, especially in Okinawa. Students participate in a field trip to Okinawa.
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Sr	In the last year of the peace education and senior high school education, students are asked their opinion on national or international social issues and to describe the pro or cons. They have to write an essay on their thoughts on how to build a peaceful society, how to disseminate the message of peace, and how to accomplish the abolishment of nuclear weapons.

## 6.1 Research Model

This study employs a quantitative methodology, and explains phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using statistical methods (Mujis, 2005). The current study considered female students' opinions toward the peace education lessons in Jogakuin.

## 6.2 Sampling Population

The population included 244 female students, aged between 15 and 18, divided into six groups of approximately 40 in each. The students belonged to the first, second, and third senior high school levels of Jogakuin, located in Hiroshima city, Hiroshima prefecture, Japan.

## 6.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The study was conducted onsite from September 26<sup>th</sup> to October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The quantitative tool implemented was a questionnaire with eight questions that were prepared by the researcher according to the purpose, research topic, and population selected. From the eight, four were selected for this study. Statistical procedures were used to analyze the 244 questionnaires. The researcher collected students' opinions through both open-ended and close-ended questions. The data then obtained were analyzed using content analysis, which refers to a set of procedures for the systematic and replicable analysis of text (Newbold, Boyd-Barrett, & Bulk, 2002).

After content analysis, the data were coded, themes were determined, and the

data were organized in accordance with the codes and themes. Two themes were developed based on the four research questions: students' appreciation of peace education lessons and the contribution of peace education lessons to the students' way of thinking

## 7. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the results obtained from the questionnaires. The students' opinions are directly quoted; however, the entries remain anonymous.

Table 2 shows the students' opinions on whether or not they liked the peace education lessons. The first grade students provided an overall positive answer, wherein 77% of the students answered that they actually liked the peace education lessons and activities; the second grade students also had an overall positive attitude toward the lessons with 66% of the

students answering that they liked the lessons; and a similar response was found for the third grade students as well with 65% of them expressing that they liked the lessons.

From the information provided in the table, it is clear that the students in general did enjoy and like the lessons they received, particularly about Japan's role as a victim and a perpetrator during the war. Rather than presenting the students with mere historical facts that they would have to listen to and study, both sides of the events were presented in an open-minded manner so that they could have the opportunity to analyze the historical facts more closely. However, it is important to note that the percentage was higher in the first grade and gradually declined in the second and third. At first glance, it seems that the reason might be that the students were really busy, especially in their third year when they have to prepare for entrance examinations to universities.

Table 2. Respondents Results for the First Question: "Did you like the peace education lessons?"

Students per grade	Question 1		
	Yes	No	No Answer
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	65 (77%)	19 (23%)	0 (0%)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	54 (66%)	27 (33%)	1 (1%)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	51 (65%)	23 (30%)	4 (5%)
Total	170 (70%)	69 (28%)	5 (2%)

However, it was also partly because of what was mentioned before. The students mentioned that the images and videos they saw during the lessons were really dreadful and that it was very difficult for them to watch and assimilate the material. One of the students with a negative opinion stated the following: “To watch the film about the war was very difficult for me; I know we might not understand what happened unless we watch these films, but, it was a traumatic situation for me” (a student from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade).

In Table 3, we see that 92% of the students generally agreed that the peace education lessons helped them understand and increase their awareness on issues of international understanding, peace, and cooperation. It is widely known that peace education is a means to teach about and develop these three strands. The results show how useful these activities can be; 96% of the first graders answered positively to the question; 93% of the second grade students answered that they

are now more aware of these concepts; and 87% of the third graders also answered positively to the question.

An interesting feature in Table 3 is that the number of positive respondents in the first grade is higher compared to the other two target groups. To understand this occurrence, it is necessary to take a quick look at the syllabus of the program. As mentioned in it, in the first grade of senior high school, the students transition from theory to practice, and the contents not only focus on the historical facts of Hiroshima, but also on other places that have suffered during the war such as Cambodia and Myanmar. They were also provided the opportunity to go on field trips to those places, and it is important to note that these aspects provide the students with a broader perspective, by not only focusing on their immediate surroundings but also learning from other cultures and their past. Unfortunately, in the two final years of senior high school, the focus of peace education shifts again to Japan and

Table 3. Respondents Results for the Second Question: “Are you beginning to think differently about issues of international understanding, peace, and cooperation?”

Students per grade	Question 2		
	Yes	No	NA
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	81 (96%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	76 (93%)	6 (7%)	0 (0%)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	68 (87%)	9 (12%)	1 (1%)
Total	225 (92%)	18 (7%)	1 (1%)

there is not enough room to learn about other places with similar historical backgrounds, which might account for the decreasing pattern revealed in Table 3.

Table 4 shows that students did learn useful knowledge for their lives through the peace education lessons. They became aware of Hiroshima’s background and how the prefecture had overcome major obstacles to become the worldwide example of peace they are now. Another important component of the lessons is the fostering of a set of values and skills that the program promotes such as empathy, peaceful coexistence, critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership. Regarding the fourth question, in the first grade; 62% of the respondents answered affirmatively; a similar response was observed among the second graders wherein 77% answered positively; and finally 86% of the third graders also responded yes to the question.

In Table 4, it is clearly seen that the positive responses from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade are slightly lower than that of the 3<sup>rd</sup>

grade. To explain this result, it is necessary to understand the cognitive and socio-emotional development of the students. It is well-known that adolescent students are more capable of handling complex and abstract situations and ideas in their final years of education. The students’ perception and consciousness develop corresponding to their physical maturity. In their final two years of education, the students have a stronger physical and social development. This leads to the appearance of their self-concept, i.e., awareness of intangible ideas or thoughts. Thus, the responses of students in the final year show a marked difference.

Table 5 shows the participants’ positive and negative evaluations of the influence the peace education lessons had in the school. From this, the relevance of the lessons at an individual level is deduced.

This deduction relies not only on the yes/no answers, but also on students’ comments, which are a key source of valuable insights in this research. All

Table 4. Respondents Results for the Third Question: “Did you learn anything that will be useful for you in class or in daily life?”

Students per grade	Question 3		
	Yes	No	NA
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	52 (62%)	32 (38%)	0 (0%)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	63 (77%)	19 (23%)	0 (0%)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	67 (86%)	11 (14%)	0 (0%)
Total	182 (75%)	62 (25%)	0 (0%)

Table 5. Respondents Results for the Fourth Question: “Did the peace Education lessons have any influence on you or your classmates?”

Students per grade	Question 5		
	Yes	No	NA
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	50 (60%)	34 (40%)	0 (0%)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	64 (78%)	18 (22%)	0 (0%)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	63 (81%)	14 (18%)	1 (1%)
Total	177 (73%)	66 (27%)	1 (1%)

groups in general responded positively to the question, as clearly shown by Table 4, 60% of the students in the first grade considered peace education to influence their lives; 78% of second graders answered in a similar way; and 81% of third grade participants answered positively. As expressed by the participants, a gradual change in their mindset was observed over the years, and they became more aware of situations that were practically invisible to them in the past. The concept of peace gained relevance, and the students’ role switched from a passive to a more active one in their final year when they felt they could give strong opinions regarding social issues such as nuclear weapons, conflict resolution, and especially the power of nonviolence as a means to deal with and solve conflicts. This clearly shows that peace education contributes to the health of modern societies by teaching students about alternatives to violence and by empowering them to contribute to public debate on various issues and proactively take action (Harris & Morrison, 2013).

Two students with positive opinions

expressed the following:

*“I started to take actions even if it was something small; I also take the time to listen to others’ opinions.”* (a student from the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

*“It might also be an influence of living in Hiroshima; I became more sensitive to news about nuclear weapons and tests. I began to actively participate in peace-related activities.”* (a student from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade)

Without doubt, empowerment plays an essential role in peace education. In the case of Jogakuin, this is particularly relevant as well, because the program in the school seeks to develop the students’ capacities to become active citizens in society. Both teachers and students work together in debating about social problems and finding peaceful solutions to create a more peaceful environment.

## 8. Conclusions

The study aimed to examine students' views about the peace education program. It is clear that the students participating in the study during the autumn semester of 2016 generally had positive feedback about the program in the school. The students' responses reveal their optimistic perception of the peace education lessons and the fact that they consider it important to learn such knowledge at school.

However, there were also a few negative evaluations of the lessons; some respondents claimed that the activities and lessons were not very active and that they spent time primarily studying Hiroshima's case leaving no room for analyzing other social issues outside the prefectural borders. Undoubtedly, the most common issue was the shocking multimedia and audiovisual resources shown in the class, these uniform opinions show some of the issues caused by lesson planning and the resources used for teaching.

This study, which aimed to examine the influence peace education lessons have over the youth, reveals that there is an effective contribution and impact on the students' personal life and academic achievement. Yet, these effects are at the cognitive level, and further research should be conducted to determine changes at the behavioral level.

## 9. Recommendations

- The sample size should be increased so that opinions about the peace education lessons may be sought from a larger group.
- For this study, only senior high school students were selected; elementary and junior high school students can also be included in further studies.
- This study is limited to the Hiroshima Jogakuin Jr. & Sr. High School; future research should include students from other educational institutions, both private and public, to verify the generalizability of the findings.

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### **Appendix 1. Questions selected from the questionnaire survey for this research**

1. Did you like the peace education lessons? If yes, what did you like the most? If no, what did you dislike about the lessons?
2. Are you beginning to think differently about issues of international understanding, peace, and cooperation?
3. Did you learn anything that will be useful for you in class or in your daily life? If yes, what did you learn?
4. Did the peace education lessons have any influence on you or your classmates? If yes, in what ways were you influenced?