

Evolving Conceptualizations of Peace Education in Hiroshima, Japan

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Japan is a world leader in peace education, and Hiroshima is one of the world's centers for peace. While the peer-reviewed literature on Japanese peace education is growing, few studies address how present-day peace educators in Hiroshima conceptualize peace education. This study aims to better understand how peace educators in Hiroshima (re)conceptualize, adapt, and apply their work. Using a grounded theory approach, we answer the following research questions: (a) How do contemporary peace educators in Hiroshima conceptualize their work? (b) How has this conceptualization changed or evolved over time? Interviewees presented convergent and divergent insights around three main themes: definitions of peace as a collective identity and constructivist process, metaphors for peace as informing pedagogy, and efforts to challenge taboos through a social justice lens.

Keywords peace education, Hiroshima, globalization, sustainable development, social justice

Introduction

For decades, Japan has been one of the safest (Institute for Economics and Peace 2017), healthiest (Central Intelligence Agency 2017), and highest academically performing (see PISA and TIMSS international comparisons) countries in the world. It has also been a leading actor in the development of peace education, given its own unique history (Davies 2008; 2014). Japan's experience of widescale societal violence before and during World War II has informed its broader approaches and contributions to peace education on the global and local levels. Peace education in Japan is informed by the norm of pacifism, which is also inscribed in the Japanese constitution via Article 9 (Gibson 2011; Ogawa 2011). Japan has also more recently embraced a broader focus on international education, in particular by promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), a concept that can be embedded within a peace education framework.

Currently, Japan has more schools promoting ESD than any other nation in the world (MEXT 2016) and has pursued a more decentralized educational system, giving educational leaders more autonomy and responsibility (Yamamoto, Enomoto, and Yamaguchi 2016) in pursuing these topics.

Given the reach of peace education and adjacent concepts in Japan, current studies in English-language peer-reviewed journals reflect the wide array of forms that peace education takes in the Japanese context, including curricula and school-based programs (Gibson 2011; Kester 2017; Langager 2009; Monobe and Ruan 2020; Murakami 1992), grassroots initiatives (Alexander 2008; 2009), museum education (Allen and Sakamoto 2013; Fields 2015; Lee 2018; Tanigawa 2015; Watanabe 2015), educational tourism (Ide 2007; Kang 2006; Sharpley 2020; Suzuki 2016), binational and transnational education initiatives (Geiger 2012; Herborn and Hutchinson 2014; Szczepanska 2017; Wang 2009), and philosophies of peace (Goulah and Urbain 2013; McGregor 2014; Urbain 2016). In addition, there is a growing body of literature around educational approaches adjacent to peace education, including anti-discrimination education (Nojima 2009), citizenship education (Arfani and Nakaya 2020; Mori and Davies 2015), global education (Fujikane 2003), plurilingualism and STEAM education (Pearce et al. 2020), and environmental sustainability education (Fredriksson et al. 2020; Ide 2017; Kitamura 2014; Kitamura and Hoshii 2010; Nomura and Abe 2010).

Despite the growth in studies on peace education in Japan, there has not yet been adequate attention given to documenting how contemporary peace educators in Japan are (re)conceptualizing, adapting, and applying their work and understanding of the field. Colonialism and the atomic bomb are perhaps two of the most significant experiences that have shaped peace education in Japan, leading to the “never again” campaign to abolish nuclear weapons and a lasting legacy of exploitation for Japanese peace educators to grapple with. Yet, there are few people alive today who have direct experiences with WWII and Japanese colonial aggression abroad. At the same time, international educational curricula have become easier to access, giving peace educators in Japan the opportunity to continually reassess their practice within a changing educational landscape (Dolby and Rahman 2008). This confluence is especially relevant in Hiroshima, which remains a hub of international peace education and has long promoted global nuclear disarmament.

Given that Japan has been a leader in peace education for decades, how contemporary peace educators in Japan conceptualize peace education has bearing on approaches to peace education more globally. As such, this topic deserves more attention, in particular with regard to the integration of ESD, as it expands and adds complexity to peace education practices and reflects a growing trend in Japan in diversifying peace education curriculum. The idea of thinking globally and acting locally lies at the core of ESD and aligns with international peace education in exploring the premise that the local and global are not

separate, but are linked and fluid, thus demanding more complex, experiential forms of learning and engagement. In this context, there are multiple facets of this concept at work, where learners explore issues of both personal and communal significance in a collaborative space and attempt to identify solutions (Fredriksson et al. 2020; Kitamura and Hoshii 2010; Nomura and Abe 2010).

In relation to peace education and sustainability, there is much the rest of the world can learn from the curricular and pedagogical approaches of Japanese peace educators. Certainly, there is value in further identifying how peace educators in Hiroshima are adapting their practice and rethinking their conceptualizations as they balance historical and local commitments with a growing international focus and evolving pedagogical engagement. This article aims to contribute to the peace education literature by examining the evolving insights of educators working in Hiroshima, Japan. This study begins with an overview of the peace education literature, including core issues and critical dimensions. This discussion is then expanded through a contextual focus on peace education in Japan more broadly, as well as in Hiroshima. The article then continues with an elaboration of the theoretical framework and methodology of the study, which involved interviews with peace educators in Hiroshima. The analysis of the findings from these interviews presents how peace educators in Hiroshima are (re)conceptualizing peace education. The article concludes with a discussion of these findings and their implications for the broader literature on peace education.

Literature Review: Core Issues and Critical Dimensions of Peace Education

The overarching aim of peace education is to support both the individual learner and broader society in developing the analytical frameworks, skills, values, and attitudes that facilitate a culture of peace (Jenkins 2019; Reardon and Cabezudo 2002). There are many forms that peace education can take, from the formal classroom setting to non-school-based institutional programming (e.g., museum education and national/local government programs) and non-formal grassroots initiatives (ibid.). While there is no unanimous vision for what a culture of peace might look like (Reardon and Cabezudo 2002), since its earliest years, the prevention of violent conflict has been a central concern of peace educators. In its many forms, peace education often emphasizes the need to analyze how power functions within systems in order to challenge militarism, injustice, and inequality. Peace education curricula often seek to equip students with the skills needed to examine the socio-political context of conflicts. This includes understanding the dynamics of international laws and treaties, investment patterns and economic structures, and global institutions such as the United

Nations (UN), while also helping students to develop a historical consciousness of the wide array of techniques and mechanisms that enable social and political change to occur in complex settings (Burns and Aspeslagh 1996).

Throughout the latter half of the 21st century and into the beginning of the 21st century, peace education became integrative of a wide range of issues, developing dialogically with evolutions in peace research, peace theory, and peace practice (Harris 2004; Zembylas, Charalambous, and Charalambous 2016). New issues have often been integrated in response to globally-felt crises and conflicts. As educators developed pedagogies to teach both about peace *and* how to develop a culture of peace, peace education came to encompass issues such as poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment (Jenkins 2019), human rights (Harris 2004; Reardon 1995), coexistence and reconciliation (Zembylas, Charalambous, and Charalambous 2016), social justice (Reardon and Cabezudo 2002), and decolonization (Kester et al. 2021). In recent decades, peace education has also increasingly incorporated environmental concerns focusing on climate change and other human/ecological drivers of conflict, pedagogical frameworks emphasizing interconnectedness and ecological responsibility (Bajaj and Chiu 2009), and the need to question approaches that neglect the interrelated dynamics of natural and human systems (Harris 2004).

Peace education is also the subject of critical reflection. Over the years, peace education curricula have incorporated critiques on the pedagogical violence of the banking model of education (Freire 1970) and on responses to the structural violences encompassed in racism, economic exploitation, colonialism, and toxic patriarchy/masculinity (Brock-Utne 1985; Jenkins 2019; Ragland 2021; Turner 2019; Williams 2017). Critiques of Western peace education have also emerged, questioning not only its constituent pedagogical approaches but also the nature of Western visions of peace. In particular, Ilan Gur-Zéev argued that Western philosophies incorporated into peace education are often rooted in the human capacity for enlightenment and an assumption of human rights with a focus on political rights, thus making them overly “universalistic, essentialist, and fundamentalist” (McGregor 2014, 160).

Japanese Approaches to Peace Education

Two decades into the 21st century, peace educators have developed a wide variety of pedagogical and philosophical orientations from which to conceptualize peace education. In Japan, peace education draws on many of the threads of broader peace education trends globally, but it is also shaped by the nation’s unique history with conflict and peace movements.

As is true of broader trends in contemporary peace education in the West, Japan’s contemporary experience with peace education can be traced back to the

first half of the 20th century. According to Gibson (2011), since before WWII, the Japanese education system has constantly navigated a tension between ultra-nationalism and militarism (rooted in the pre-war Meiji restoration) and the more pacifist orientations of the post-war period. Article 9 of the constitution has served as a central organizing imperative for the broader peace movement in Japan, and the codification of pacifism in Japanese law has had profound effects for how peace has become a “culturally embedded norm” in the country (Ogawa 2011, 374). Nevertheless, Langager (2009, 132) argues that while “Japanese students are confronted uniformly with the notion of peace and reflection” within national curricula, pacifist education in this sense should not be assumed to be one-and-the-same as transformational peace education, nor is it an uncontested space in wider Japanese society.

While peace education curricula in Japan pay particular attention to violence carried out at the interstate level, with a focus on the violence inflicted *upon* Japan during World War II, so too is the violence inflicted *by* Japan upon neighboring communities in Manchuria, the Korean peninsula, and South East Asia an important theme (Chun 2018; Langager 2009; Tanigawa 2015; Wang 2009; Watanabe 2015). The impact of the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in particular also still inform a robust peace education focus against nuclear weapons.

In Hiroshima, the direct traumatic experience of atomic bombing of residents of the city by the US during WWII has had a profound impact on the development of peace education in the city, and on its reach both across Japan and globally. Atomic bombing survivors (*hibakusha*) have played an active role in peace education in both school and museum settings. Through a recounting of their own experiences as well as those of loved ones and community members who did not survive the bombings, they illustrate the devastation of nuclear war with an urgency and immediacy that cannot be found in textbooks (Geiger 2012; Tanigawa 2015; Watanabe 2015). The value of their personal recollections raises another sort of urgency—that of the sustainable and thorough documentation of memory, particularly as the survivor community dwindles with each passing year.

Over the past five decades, educators in Hiroshima have worked to integrate a peace education curriculum into the formal education system throughout the city schools and launched numerous international and national peace education outreach projects. In addition to education in school settings in the city, one of the leading educational organizations in the city, the Hiroshima Peace Museum, was founded with the intention to convey to the world the reality of the atomic bombing and to lead the call for the abolition of nuclear weapons and the promotion of world peace. Prior to COVID-19, an average of about 1.5 million people would visit the museum each year to learn about the atrocities of the war and nuclear disarmament (Kyosuke 2021).

Peace education initiatives in Japan have also sought out ways to address the

violence inflicted by the Japanese state during the colonial and imperial period. Museums like the Kyoto Museum of World Peace and the Women's Active Museum of War and Peace in Tokyo play an active role in documenting this history (Tanigawa 2015; Watanabe 2015). Much as the testimonies of hibakusha have focused on peace education approaches to understanding the impact and aftermath of the atomic bombings, the testimonies of survivors of sexual slavery help to deepen discussions of peace, trauma, and reconciliation within Japanese peace education (Watanabe 2015).

In addition to these subjects, in recent years, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) has taken up greater focus on the concept of "Education for Sustainable Development," leading to Japan becoming a leader in ESD education (MEXT 2016) and opening up new avenues for synergy with broader Japanese peace education. ESD was first articulated at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa (Kitamura 2014). At its core is a recognition of global interconnectivity, not just of humans with other humans (interpersonally, structurally, societally), but also of humans with the broader natural environment and biosphere. Rather than facilitate rote acquisition of knowledge, the critical, participatory, and reflective pedagogy commonly associated with ESD encourages students to link their learning with the development of a more generative society (*ibid.*). In this way, ESD fits with the broader pedagogical commitments of peace education and shares an emphasis on recognizing global interconnectivity. Thus, under both peace education and ESD, "peace and the environment" come to be recognized as being "inextricably linked" (Bajaj and Chiu 2009, 449).

Purpose of the Current Study

This study seeks to better understand how contemporary peace educators in Hiroshima are (re)conceptualizing, adapting, and applying peace education in an increasingly changing world. Building upon previous research illuminating how Hiroshima peace educators adapt to global complexity, the current study explores how contemporary peace educators in the city are (re)conceptualizing and adapting their work and understanding of the field. The viewpoints of this population of educators are significant given that Hiroshima serves as an important global epicenter for teaching and learning about peace education.

Using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz and Belgrave 2019; Corbin and Strauss 2014), we seek to answer two research questions: (a) How do contemporary peace educators in Hiroshima, Japan, conceptualize their work? (b) How has this conceptualization changed or evolved over time?

Methods

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Our study employs a phenomenological approach rooted in grounded theory. Phenomenology traditionally employs in-depth interviews that produce narratives of the subject and “his or her knowledge and experiences related to the topic of study” (Lopez and Willis 2004, 727). The purpose of the narrative is to provide a thick description (Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe 2010) of the professional experiences of participants. In addition, we wanted to employ a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, because as outsiders (two of us have spent time living in Japan and are educators, but have not worked regularly as peace educators there), we were specifically interested in what themes might manifest for educators as they reflect on the key challenges and growing edges of their work in Hiroshima. As we approached this study without a pre-existing theory of change, hypothesis, or expectations of findings, and selected individual participants purposely, grounded theory (Charmaz and Belgrave 2019; Corbin and Strauss 2014) is an appropriate lens, given our epistemological intent. The advantage of this theoretical approach is that it allows for checking, refining, and identifying themes via coding of the qualitative data, allowing us to build out the frameworks educators are using to make sense of changes in their practice over time.

Participants

This case study design focuses on gathering the perceptions of peace educators working in Hiroshima, Japan. We aim to uncover the consistent and divergent viewpoints that exist within the work of peace educators in this historically important geographic area for peace education.

Participants were selected using a convenient sampling plan. The second author, having recently served as a US Fulbright Scholar in Kyoto, Japan, reached out to the director of the Osaka Fulbright Alumni Association, who forwarded our request to a professor who was familiar with the subject and was pivotal in recruiting all the participants in this study.

To capture divergent viewpoints of peace education in Hiroshima, we expanded our sample to include peace educators from middle and high school levels as well as the university level and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. To be selected for the study, participants had to have met the following criteria: (a) taught or be employed in peace education in Hiroshima for at least five years, and (b) teach peace education in secondary education (school), universities, or at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. These selection criteria were important because we wanted to contrast and identify similarities within the perspectives of the field. These criteria were also used to protect the identity of our participants, because the network of peace educators who work at the museum and in local universities is relatively small.

Design and Measure

As consistent with the applications of grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 2014), drawing upon the literature concerning contemporary peace education, we initially constructed fifteen interview questions, which were later refined and reduced to seven key questions for the interviews. Initially, we planned to conduct our interviews in Hiroshima in person, to be followed by classroom observations. However, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from being able to do so, as the second author, a US Fulbrighter, was required to return to the US unexpectedly, and the first author was unable to travel from South Korea to Japan during the pandemic. We decided to continue our study virtually, although this is a major limitation (to be discussed later). The local professor who assisted us with the recruitment of subjects suggested that we give participants the option of participating in the interviews over video or via email, with the latter option being potentially more comfortable for participants due to language barriers. Although email interviewing is certainly not preferable to in-person semi-structured interviews, it is a legitimate method of data collection that allows the research participants to contribute in their own space and with adequate time for reflection and interaction (Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez 2015; James 2015).

With this modification, we were able to conduct eight interviews at the heights of the COVID-19 pandemic. Three participant interviews were conducted via video conference (Webex) and the remaining five interviews were conducted via email exchanges. All video interviews were recorded and transcribed prior to analysis. We analyzed the qualitative data using open coding and axial coding. This analytic process involves deconstructing, labeling, and then selectively categorizing the emergent themes (Corbin and Strauss 2014).

Demographics

Of the eight peace educators who participated in this study, six were males and two were females. Three of the participants were employed in middle or high schools in the area, and the remaining participants work in higher education or at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum.¹ In order to protect the identities of the interviewees, we do not include names of the entities they represent or other signifiers that might indicate each interviewee's embedded positionality.

Results

We found that interviewees presented both convergent and divergent experiences and thoughts around three main themes: definitions of peace as a collective identity and constructivist process, metaphors for peace as informing pedagogy, and efforts to challenge taboos from a social justice lens.

Defining Peace Education

Participants were asked, “How do you define peace education?” All participants gave a clear definition of peace. Although there was variation in their descriptions, the following themes emerged: peace education is about establishing a collective identity as peacemakers, and peace education requires developing constructivist learning processes.

Peace is a Collective Identity: Over half of the educators we interviewed described peace education as an integral part of Hiroshima’s collective identity, something that can be employed as “a tool to train students, so that they will be able to practice peace in their daily life.” One interviewee, who is a classroom teacher, described it this way:

We are helping students cultivate an understanding of the world and their place in it...You are digging, looking for something that defines your place in the world. I’d like our students to be able to say, “I am from Hiroshima,” and to be able to explain what that means.

This shows the desire to cultivate a collective identity manifested in the learner’s interactions with others. In this view, people from Hiroshima have an important role to play in helping others from outside the city “never forget” the horrors of nuclear war and the urgent need to work toward disarmament. Another educator described the museum’s recent attempts to better personalize the issue of peace education at the museum:

When displaying personal effects of the atomic bomb victims, we present the victim’s portrait together with the narrative text describing the situation when the victim experienced the bombing. We never [did this before, but] we thought that the victims’ portraits help visitors feel them closer...We hope that visitors who view individual stories displayed in the museum can feel empathy for the victims by assuming that such event could happen to themselves. I saw a foreign visitor viewing the exhibition with tears, sympathizing with a mother who lost her little child.

The example above shows that peace education lies in the identity of the “other person.” In this way, the work of peace educators is manifested in the teacher as well as in the learner by engaging learners from around the world to facilitate empathy and seed a commitment to preventing violent acts in the future.

Within this collective identity of becoming a more peaceful person, the concept of thinking global and acting local, or being “glocal,” also takes root. As one educator explained:

People here have this identity of being a Hiroshima [person], and also being a Japanese person, but now we are beginning to develop this identity of being an Earth person, and that’s because we have some problems that are so large in scale that

they cannot be solved by individual nations, like climate change. I tell students, the government of Japan can do any policy it wants, but it won't do any good unless it does it collectively with other [international] governments.

All of the educators we interviewed embraced this concept of being glocal. One educator explained, "Global issues cannot be solved without local-based actions." Another educator described efforts to empower people on the ground by teaching them to use, make, and edit videos, so they could document their lived experiences and actions via social media. Notably, when asked about specific projects that they have been involved with, most educators described facilitating exchanges and relationship building between Japanese students and foreigners. However, only one educator mentioned facilitating his students to be involved with nonviolent actions or local campaigns related to peace education or other topics of social justice.

Many of the educators discussed how the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in particular have come to be incorporated into their curricula, reflecting the growing influence of ESD in Japan. Educators noted how this focus can push peace educators to engage more deeply and critically with the relationship between local action and global sustainable development. As one educator noted:

[I]t's one thing to [say], "Let's remember [the] SDGs." [It's another thing to say,] "Well, the companies that some of your parents might work at are involved in these practices which are against the SDGs."

One educator expressed hope that the focus on sustainable development might allow for wider adjustments to the peace education curricula by bringing in subjects beyond the aftermath of WWII. As the educator described:

[W]hen [my] current college students were in elementary school, they said Japan's peace education focused on [the] post-Pacific War period, especially [the] atomic bombing. However, now [the] SDGs issue is covered in various education programs, and diversity and cultural differences are also discussed. We may be able to expect some change [in peace education based on this].

In the context of this glocal turn, peace education nurtures a wider commitment to reflecting on our relationships with the natural world and with other people. This in turn cultivates a sense of collective responsibility for caring for our biosphere and fellow humans.

Even with this collective orientation, this work is also deeply personal. As one educator described:

[Peace education means] to make students recognize that the real issue of peace

might not always be something happening overseas at an international level. Rather it might sometimes be an issue at [a] personal or family level. If you are in the midst of a personal problem which may affect your life or death, I would say, “Forget about nuclear disarmament and concentrate on your own recovery of peace.”

Peace is a Constructivist Process: Several educators we interviewed mentioned that simply telling or lecturing at young people about peace education, and then expecting students to suddenly believe in peace, often does not work. Instead, developing a peaceful identity comes through a process of self-discovery and introspection that is facilitated by the teacher. As one educator explained, “[Peace education is] a program to learn and think about what peace is, what are the obstacles, what kind of practices are necessary to realize peace.” In this way, peace education becomes both a framework for and process of thinking, rather than the memorization of events and facts. Another educator explained it like this:

[A lot of people in Hiroshima have] had a negative experience as high schoolers, as junior high school kids growing up here with peace education...They felt like they were just given the right answer...They didn't feel free to question [others]...And so there was a kind of a cognitive distance. This is what they grew up knowing and what their grandfather and their father has instilled in them, [and now] what [their teacher] was telling them...Well, one of them is going to be right, and one of them is going to be wrong. So, I want to avoid that. So, [I try to] look at what happened, look at maybe why that happened, and then introduce different ways of thinking, different definitions of peace. [I ask,] “What do you think? How do you think we can avoid this? What could we have avoided?” You know, you can't give answers.

This example demonstrates that these peace educators are aware of the processes that the learner must go through themselves. In this way, peace education is an active process of self-discovery, facilitated by the peace educator. It requires learners to be involved in framing topics and problems related to peace as important—and these could be different than what educators are focused on. The expansion of the field over time comes in part from this wider collective meaning-making about which thematic areas require focus and which methodological approaches work best to build peace. Given Hiroshima's positionality as a global hub on these issues, educators are deeply embedded in global processes of learning that require them to adapt over time.

Metaphors for Peace as Informing Pedagogy

Participants were asked, “If you were to use a metaphor to describe peace education, what would you use?” Their answers illuminated several creative and divergent conceptualizations. One educator used a medical analogy:

Peace is similar to health. I always emphasize in the lecture, that I am not interested in making a catalog of peace, in which many rosy pictures are shown as [a] peaceful society, community, or world. It seems to me that to make a catalog of peace is as meaningless as to make a list of desirable indices of health without taking care of a patient in front of you who is suffering from a specific illness. What we need is [a] practical diagnosis to recover peace from [a] no-peace situation.

Here, peace education is a scripted, structured tool for problem solving, looking at multiple causes to take a holistic approach. Yet, the human suffering caused by direct and indirect (structural) violence is still considered deeply personal and critically important to both acknowledge and engage within the pedagogical process.

Another educator described his past work as an international peace educator as evolving from “harvesting crops” to “planting seeds.” He used this metaphor in reference to working on international projects outside of Japan, where interviewing local people who were living in “contaminated places” felt like a method of extraction, i.e., “to harvest stories” versus reconceptualizing his research projects to better bring more resources to local people most impacted by the issue of nuclear waste. He described it like this:

For a lot of people, [peace educators] are a later wave of colonialism. We are English speakers, there to harvest stories. We don’t want to look at ourselves in that way, but we are exactly that. So, now we’ve been trying to find ways to bring resources to these communities. We partly felt like we were going to places and we felt like we were harvesting crops, and now it felt like we were planting seeds. And so, the people in these communities were totally thrilled—they wanted to see young people engaged, bringing young people from [outside of Japan] to Hiroshima to build connections.

Another educator described peace education as an active struggle against war. He explained, “Peace education could be the absence of war education. You know, just like cold is the absence of heat.” Rather than just focus on the problems of war, peace education should focus on the qualities of peace as well.

Challenging Taboos Using a Social Justice Lens

We were particularly interested in how peace educators in Hiroshima have changed their approaches over time. From this framing, we found that nearly all of the educators we interviewed were engaged in a struggle to expand existing conceptualizations of peace education in Hiroshima, especially as related to nuclear nonproliferation, and to broaden the narrative to include the perspectives of non-Japanese people. This finding was consistent among the secondary school educators as well as the university educators and museum educators. One peace educator stated:

I don't think the situation in Hiroshima is desirable, just thinking "peace" is... recovery from the atomic bomb and the abolition of nuclear weapons. In particular, this narrowness of awareness causes the younger generation to think of [the] peace issue as an event in the distant past or by others. I think the role of peace education is to help young students think of peace as their own problem and to think not only of the atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima, but also of the people of the world.

This effort to expand existing ideas of peace appears to be particularly challenging for peace educators in Hiroshima. As one educator noted, "Especially, here in Hiroshima, peace is very narrowly defined. It almost always means the absence of a single weapon. So, I'm constantly working against that definition."

These peace educators in Hiroshima see the need to more systematically acknowledge how other groups of people have been harmed by Japan's past actions, essentially widening the collective lens of analysis. One educator explained:

One day, [a] Korean student came to me and said, "Teacher, what you have taught us is all true, but I have a complaint. Why [do] you teach only two lectures [about the impact of the war on Koreans]? You should allocate more lectures." I had to explain, but I was relieved. As for Japanese students, some students said that [the] Japanese government should not hide the unfavorable past, adding that [this university level class in peace education] was the first time for them to know Japan's bad deeds during the war, and the history should be more openly taught at school.

Nearly all of the educators we interviewed acknowledged that peace education in Hiroshima was previously only focused on nuclear nonproliferation, but in recent years, this conceptualization has broadened to include other topics and structures as well. One participant explained, "Peace is not a knowledge of conflicts or wars, but wisdom to keep our society healthy in that different views should be tolerated as long as they do not provoke any violence, and to prevent any violence from growing, either at [the] individual/local level, or at [the] national/international level." Another added that peace education is "not just something that's different for everybody. It is a certain thing in terms of negative and positive peace and a recognition of systemic violence." Another educator commented, "Peace education is about equality...Peace education is really about otherness, community across boundaries, and definitely must connect with ecological issues, gender, access to education, etc. We have to do this on a structural level."

One way to learn about peace education is for students to be involved in campaigns, attend public rallies and protests aimed at addressing structural issues, and be engaged in analyzing their impact in relation to the larger campaign. For example, one educator described, "[W]hen Black Lives Matter began, I just couldn't let that be. We took part in a BLM protest in Hiroshima. [We have taken

part in others like] global warming, migration, unrest...”

Our study also illuminated several contemporary topics of social justice that the peace educators we spoke to consider taboo, even within their own programs. The educators specifically mentioned Japan’s refusal to sign international treaties to ban nuclear weapons, the plight of “comfort women/girls” (*ianfu*), and gender discrimination in general. As it relates to Japan’s widespread use of sexual slavery during WWII, one educator lamented, “In meetings, I remember one teacher saying, ‘All countries did it, so it really shouldn’t be talked about.’” Another educator expressed similar frustration, “[Teach] about the plight of comfort women, and people have a problem.”

Although peace educators at both university and secondary school levels expressed frustration with the resistance to teaching these topics, for secondary school educators in particular, veering too far away from the canon also risks complaints from parents. As one educator lamented:

Quite often parents call up the school and say, “Why are you teaching about Koreans being killed?” Or, “Why are you teaching about what Japan did in China?” Or “Why are you teaching about comfort women?” They get upset [when we explore] different views of Hiroshima.

Yet, in recent years, peace educators in Hiroshima have found public support for the teaching of other topics concerning social justice and human rights, such as the Holocaust, Black Lives Matter, the UN SDGs, LGBTQ+ rights, and other global issues.

Their efforts are perhaps complemented by the renovation in 2019 of the Peace Memorial Museum’s permanent exhibition, which was entirely redesigned to create a more personal, interactive experience. Yet, not all peace education programs in Hiroshima have made such substantial curriculum changes. As one school educator described, “We’ve had a six-year curriculum for peace and human rights education respectively, which started in the mid-1970s and hasn’t changed much since then...Indeed, it’s changed according to the times, but it was only a minor change.”

Several educators admitted that their own teaching methods have not changed substantially over time. Peace education appears to continue to be largely taught through lecture, even at the secondary school level. One teacher describes, “...in [my] classes, a lot of it is just lecture, or they watch a movie and just write down their thoughts and feelings...[Students] sit there and wait for the information and take it in...”

However, many educators also embrace experiential learning and often use their curricula to prepare for field trips to area museums and to support international partnerships that bring young people together to explore issues of peace education. The university-level educators we spoke with had been involved

in a number of projects in the region, often leveraging technological resources to bring international students together to explore local (and global) issues of peace education, record oral histories, and promote peace-education-focused study abroad trips.

Discussion

The contemporary peace educators we interviewed in Hiroshima noted a shifting landscape of challenges and opportunities that shape their work and understanding of the field. Their conceptualizations have changed over time as national narratives evolve, curricula expand to include new frameworks (like ESD and social justice issues), and the ease of technology aids the development of stronger relationships locally and abroad. Overall, our results support the notion of peace education as an ever-evolving field that, while grounded in local experience and history, also demands a cosmopolitan focus on the well-being of people around the world.

Although our sampling plan does not allow us to generalize our findings to other peace educators in Hiroshima, using a grounded theory approach, we have identified four key components that help educators sustain ongoing reflexivity and openness to change in their peace education approaches. These findings may provide a path forward for subsequent research with peace educators in Hiroshima and across Japan.

Peace Educators Maintain a Collective Identity and Embrace Counter-Narratives

In recent years, some academics (Hagström and Gustafsson 2015) have criticized Japan's pacifist post-war collective identity for undermining the nation's own political and economic future of sovereignty, given the continued rise of other military nation-states in the region; however, we encountered a counter-narrative across interviews with peace educators in Hiroshima. The peace educators we interviewed have a collective identity that has evolved towards a more global, "Earth citizen" mindset. From this viewpoint, the success of Japan's future cannot be measured without considering the need for collaboration with other countries and taking seriously the ecological and social justice issues taking place both inside and outside of Japan. This hews closely with other pedagogical approaches like the globally-minded ESD, suggesting space for greater integration of peace education and ESD.

In Japan, a racially homogenous and collectivist society with a colonial past, this shift toward cosmopolitan and globalists views is significant. Reardon (1988, 2), a founding theorist of peace education, contends that the cosmopolitan shift toward a broader recognition of human dignity "best articulates the normative goals of our evolving field...a vision in which all human beings are accorded

respect of their fundamental human dignity.”

Peace Education Identifies and Transforms Structures

Peace educators have long argued that democracy depends on students developing a robust understanding of structural forms of injustice (Morrison 2015). The peace educators interviewed in this project demonstrated a similar perception. They not only emphasize the concepts of negative and positive peace, but they continue to search for ways to help students identify and become involved with thinking and responding to structural forms of injustice (Galtung 1969; 1990). Specifically, acknowledging the need for peace education in Hiroshima to better address issues of racial inequality, cultural diversity, and gender equity as well as environmental degradation remains a call-to-action for many in the field (Nario-Galace 2019).

Paying more attention to structural dimensions of conflict and inequality, as the peace educators we interviewed seek to do, aligns with broader conversations in the field about the need to analyze how power functions within systems in order to challenge militarism, injustice, and inequality. In our interviews with peace educators, this finding around the need for a greater focus on the structural components of peace suggests that today’s peace educators in Hiroshima are trying to bring peace education out from the shadow of ‘A-bomb’ education to allow for a consideration of peace that goes beyond the impact of direct violence in the aftermath of war.

Peace is a Constructivist Process

In the field of education, constructivism puts forward the premise that human learning is *constructed*, and that learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of their prior knowledge and their social context. Here, learning is built by the learner as an active process, rather than “merely being a simple reflection of external events” in response to their surroundings (Tobias and Duffy 2009, 336). This view contrasts with passive learning, or the top-down transmission of information from the teacher to the student, what Freire (1970) termed the “banking model” of education. Here, students are trained to become passive and uninvolved in determining the value of the curriculum, and thus became less confident in their sense of agency and their ability to articulate the things they think need to be changed in the world.

Arguably, passive learning is the dominant method employed in Japanese schools, as 91 percent of Japanese high school students feel that their classes are designed for the purpose of memorization content and less than 4 percent report positive experiences speaking out loud in class (Jiji Press 2017). Given this context, our findings suggest that peace educators in Japan have an additional challenge in establishing the elicitive, transformative, and reflexive pedagogy that Jenkins (2019, 3) indicates as being so foundational for peace education. In

Hiroshima, peace educators are likely going against the norm in their attempt to create a learning environment where students can openly explore divergent viewpoints and draw their own conclusions. Participants noted that this commitment to active learning is critically important to peace education, as learners must be involved in framing and solving problems for peace education to be relevant and effective in influencing change. The educators we interviewed clearly understand that peace education is as much a process as it is a destination and that the learner must ultimately feel creative ownership over that journey. Active learning presents complex challenges to peace educators who are engaging in more expansive ways not only with learners in the classrooms but also with people working on social justice, environmental sustainability, and other issues that are often global in scope.

Peace is Ever-Evolving and Ever-Expanding

The importance that the educators we interviewed placed on experiential learning suggests an understanding that such approaches (as opposed to lectures) create opportunities for students to better grasp complex global processes and the intersection of the local and global (Appadurai 1990). Our interviewees not only care about creating spaces for students to pose problems and work through responses, but also about diversifying the voices of those who are posing the problems in the first place. This call to include more diverse individuals and perspectives has been long supported by scholars in the field (Golding 2017; Zvobgo and Loken 2020). To broaden perspectives, many of our interviewees emphasized a glocal orientation, particularly as linked to sustainable development. These trends highlight how knowledge is constructed within specific social, political, historical, and ecological contexts that require diverse perspectives in order to effectively understand how to build appropriate curricula and pedagogy in peace education. Increasingly peace educators are attempting to build bridges for the exchange of knowledge across varied ontological terrain.

Although a robust body of research suggests that experiential education and active-learning approaches can increase student engagement and deepen learning, it became clear that, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the educators we interviewed had not had the same opportunities to create in-person or field-based experiential learning projects as they might under normal pre-pandemic circumstances. Rather, they had to depend more on critical thinking and constructivist approaches within the classroom via online learning formats.

Limitations

This study aimed to add much-needed knowledge around the evolving methodologies of peace educators in Hiroshima, even though it faced a number

of limitations. First, our study draws upon a relatively small sample of peace educators from Hiroshima, and our reliance upon a convenience sample means that our results are not necessarily generalizable to peace educators in other locales or even among all that work in Hiroshima. Second, the perspectives of peace educators were not examined in this paper by differences in gender or nationality, so the degree to which our results may differ between females vs. males, or Japanese vs. foreign-born, is not accounted for in this study. Because we chose not to indicate names or use pseudonyms for our participants to better protect their identities, we were unable to address how their positionalities impact their peace education curricula (Lauritzen and Nodeland 2017). Third, this study was conducted solely in the English language. As such, we were not able to draw on the Japanese-language peace education literature. Fourth, due to COVID-19, our study lacks triangulated methods because we were not physically able to conduct the research on-site, which limits the internal reliability of our findings and the ability for us to arrive at the level of thick description we had originally envisioned.

Conclusion

The field of peace education continues to evolve, influenced by the complex causes of violence and the demands of building peace (Jones 2004). Given the central role that Japanese peace education, and peace education in Hiroshima in particular, has had in developing the field more broadly, our study aims at expanding knowledge about how peace educators in this city conceptualize their approach to the field. Our results suggest that peace educators in Hiroshima continue to seek out and expand an alternative vision of peace and peace education as they attempt to come to grips with complex, fluid, and interrelated global problems. In particular, these peace educators in Hiroshima continue to actively seek opportunities to add more structuralist and global conceptualizations of peace to the long-established A-bomb and post-WWII curricula, all while responding to occasional challenges to their pedagogy from policymakers, administrators, and parents.

Given that Japan has been a global leader in peace education for decades, there is value in documenting how peace educators are grappling with both local and global concerns, and how they are adapting their practice over time. These adaptations include both the integration of connected curricular resources, like those being developed within the ESD space, as well as the inclusion of ethical and ontological insights into efforts to meet the demands of navigating a more interconnected world. These adaptations often include changes to educators' personal and collective senses of identity as well as their visions for their work. Our interviews showed how educators in Hiroshima make meaning in striking

ways, often through the use of metaphor. For example, for one educator, shifting the metaphor of peace education from “harvesting crops” to “planting seeds” was instructive for moving his pedagogy from an extractive orientation to a generative one. These findings around metaphor could open up space for further studies on the poetic dimensions of conceptualizing peace in peace education.

Our results suggest that there are peace educators in Hiroshima who continue to seek an alternative vision, developing new metaphors and a more integrated emotional, aesthetic, and political sense of interconnectedness as they attempt to come to grips with complex, fluid, and interrelated global problems. Thus, it is imperative to expand studies of how peace educators in the contemporary era in particular are (re)conceptualizing, adapting, and applying their approaches to peace education. Deepening this area of study will add to the material needed for tracking trends over time, increasing opportunities to identify linkages between the approaches of peace educators in Japan and those of their colleagues across the world.

Notes

1. Numbers not disclosed to protect the identities of the participants.

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