

# Education for Peace : Successful Multi-Cultural Programs from Around the World May Hold Keys for Peace Education in Japanese Schools

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## Introduction

The hot August sun in Japan has for more than half a century come with a predictable wave of “peace” proclamations and programs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, lest we forget those terrible days that ended the second World War with the world’s first (and so far, thank heaven, only) use of atomic weapons. Upper elementary school children in Western Japan have for decades dutifully toured the Peace Museums during their school excursions - to feel the horror of the tragedy, and perhaps wonder how to better the fortunes of mankind in their own lifetimes. But the simple anti-nuclear war sentiment has become a stale movement in the rush of multiple historical pushes and pulls in one direction or another. How do children, especially, navigate to a sense of relevance and empowerment in the complex waves of media and messages they are exposed to? The Daily Yomiuri proclaimed in a bold editorial on August 15, 2003, “Peace education needs review.” The editorial noted that beyond developing the simple “war is horrible” emotional anti-war sentiment, what is needed is a “drastic review of principles of peace education and of the way such education should be conducted.” (1)

This research paper will endeavor to review some of the principles of a number of peace education programs which have shown not only promise, but delivery of positive social change in some of the most challenging and violence-prone areas of the world. The key elements in each of these programs will be noted, and suggestions made about how these elements might be adapted and adopted into curricula suitable to Japan’s new phase of education with the aim of preparing students to play effective roles in international development and peace building in the global society.

### **A Global Overview of Peace Education :**

JICA (Japan International Cooperation Association) has been carrying out various projects endeavoring to take a significant role in the development of peace and prosperity around the globe. As all who take part in such pioneering efforts have found, limitations and inexperience often lead to less-than-hoped-for results. Nevertheless, each project is a stepping stone to better foresight and better methods in future endeavors. A Seminar on Peace Education was held in Tokyo in February, 2003 as a training activity especially for JICA employees. Participants included the worldwide head of Peace Education for UNICEF, Cream Wright.

Mr. Wright noted that various countries have approached “peace education” in relation to their particular needs. These approaches range from **prevention** (needed everywhere), to **construction** (building systems that are needed as changing circumstances emerge), **mitigation** (needed once conflicts exist), and **reconstruction** (rebuilding relationships after the “worst” has

occurred.) He noted that the flow of people between countries is causing everywhere new circumstances of social diversity that require a new vision of citizenship, both local and global citizenship. Thus, even countries and communities which consider themselves at peace should take both a preventative and constructive approach to peace education (2).

In designing peace education programs there is a need to look at local circumstances. Some people are still “raw” from recent conflict. They need healing and rebuilding. People who feel “cheated” or “oppressed” need hope, and a peace education that provides skills in conflict management, and constructive barrier removal. People in such communities can take constructive action, rather than destructive action when they understand their issues, their rights, and how to negotiate and work toward elimination barriers of discrimination. In areas where the “majority culture” feels little connection to conflict, however, preparation for global and local changes to patterns of cultural diversity are still needed. Life skills and empowerment, education for gender equality, education for citizenship, human rights awareness, knowledge, advocacy and communication skills for consensus building are aspects of peace education at every level.

Mr. Wright mentioned that often what communities feel are constraints in their attempts to educate are, in fact, the very opportunities that invite successful “peace education” paradigm shifts. Globalization accentuates inequality, but invites us to think broadly about fairness and justice aspects such as distribution of wealth. Cultural diversity can create conflict, but it is also a dynamic force for cultural consolidation, appreciation and true enjoyment of a rich cultural life unparalleled in the past. The seeds to victory and peace are to be found in any crisis. Successful interventions in critical situations around the world have shown that the concepts of “peace education” must be an integral part of quality education – both in formal and non-formal educational settings. Schools must be “child-friendly” and in many countries need to be more equal for girls and boys. Curricula should include communication skills that help children to be negotiators, arbitrators, peace-makers able to analyze and adopt positive agendas, advocate for human rights, social improvement, as well as economic reform. The number one requirement is reform in curriculum and teacher education. Many of these things can be done by building global, regional and national partnerships linking common efforts at peace education.

Looking into examples of programs in various regions, what strikes this researcher is that in the most challenging, violence-prone areas, some of the most successful programs exist. Yet in the “Land of Wa,” Japan, the rising incidence of bullying and violence by young children is greeted with shame and hand wringing, but little systematic effort. Is it Japan’s conception of itself as culturally homogeneous that is actually its stumbling block to cultural harmony? Perhaps with a wider view, and an appreciation of the dynamics of unity that is born of diversity, a clear and practical focus for a change in approach could be discovered. Let us take a brief glance at some peace education projects in progress around the globe.

#### **The Middle East :**

Salomon and Baruch, (3), in Israel, took up the challenge of studying goals for “peace education in the context of intractable conflict.” How, they wondered, can a generation of peace-makers be raised in a region that has not yet given up war as a means of solving conflicts? They concluded that the central key was working on changing the perception of the concept of “others”. They quoted Maria Montessori that “education frees the spirit and promotes the love of others. It removes the climate of ‘compulsory restriction.’” In other words, even when social barriers

exist, a proper education can free the mind to “legitimize” those who are “outsiders” to the community through reading “their collective narrative” – that is, studying each “others” history from their own perspective. This builds empathy. Secondly, each side can take responsibility for examining the contributions their own side has made to conflict. This promotes rather than shames the natural feeling of empathy for the suffering of others. Finally, they can begin to engage in non-violent activities together. The open-minded approach, seeking to make relevant connections, and progressing toward experiences of “bridge-building” between antagonistic groups has been tried, and has had measured success. But it depends very much on teachers who are willing to acquire and pass on values, attitudes, skills and behavioral tendencies that are inclusive rather than exclusive. The researchers made note of projects carried out between Israeli and Palestine children that created new lines of peaceful action, communication and commitment to peaceful social change. They promoted what they termed an “ethical mindfulness” – in all human relations, consider the sensitivities and imagine the pain of others.

In a chapter of Salmon and Baruch on “Peace Education Program Evaluation,” Nevo and Brem, (4), noted that programs which enhance conflict resolution skills resulted in reduction of aggression. Those that enhance a “pro-social skill orientation” reduce violence. Those that enhance “political and social efficacy” reduce delinquency. Programs that promote “value-oriented attitudes” and “tolerance of diversity” reduce stereotyping and ethnocentricity. In other words, there is a corresponding decline in unwanted behavior and harsh, narrow attitudes, when positive skills and inclusive attitudes are conscientiously taught. Their study of nearly 80 peace education programs around the globe, including those in Israel, showed that 80 to 90% of them were effective or at least partly effective in achieving their aims. Those which were non-effective could also be viewed as learning experiences, because it was clear in many cases, that the fault was not in the goals, (although in some cases programs aimed to attain too much in too little time), but rather in the methods (simulations and experiential learning were much more effective than “didactic” or purely lecture-style approaches), or in research design (some programs did not have adequate statistical designs or data). The good news, though, that upwards of 80% of peace education programs can be shown to be effective should encourage all those who look toward a better future for their children.

#### **Education for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina :**

In September, 1999, Landegg International University (based in Switzerland) was invited by education officials of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) “to bring its expertise in conflict resolution and peace education to the region.” (5) With a grant funded by the Government of Luxembourg, a project was begun. The Education for Peace (EFP-BiH) program was to contribute to the process of collective recovery from the recent wars (1995-1999) by assisting the younger generation, with the help of their teachers and parents to become peacemakers. The two-year pilot project was to involve 6,000 students, 400 school staff and 10,000 parents and guardians from three different cities representing the three main ethnic groups (Bosniak, Croat and Serb).

The program began with a period of questioning both within and between those involved to develop a common ground of understanding about the viability of peace, the nature of human beings, their hopes for the future and for the project itself. Participants were asked to express their views on how such a highly educated people from an advanced society could commit such terrible acts ; how could they regain their integrity? Can people really change? How could

religions such as Christianity and Islam which are based on principles of love and peace explain such acts of aggression on the part of their followers? How can children of parents who participated in war atrocities grow up to be different? In designing the program the facilitators took into account the various states of mind of the participants. Many participants were very still suffering from trauma and many were skeptical about the possible effectiveness. But the skepticism disappeared as they continued through the program and its healing processes.

To create a "culture of peace" people were asked to commit themselves to trying the program for two years, using a universal curriculum, applied across all subjects in every classroom, every day. The program required universal participation - all students, all parents, all staff and teachers - either directly or indirectly through public education programs on the principles of peace. The program was to be funded by the government, certain foundations and businesses so that it could be offered free to all participating schools, and also be eventually accessible to all via the internet.

The first challenge was to create a "culture of healing" between the communities that had been both victims and victimizers in recent periods of conflict. A process had to be created that would help severely traumatized individuals overcome the after-effects of such psychological and social wounds while establishing a lasting and genuine peace with people hitherto viewed as "enemies." Such community healing had been tried using other methods in other places (for example in South Africa) but not yet where wounds were so fresh and the relationships so complex. The main elements of the program helped all participants gain a broad insight and an inclusive and integrative outlook on the nature of peace, itself. Participants were introduced to an integrative curriculum in which all courses were approached with a universal worldview of the oneness of mankind and the nobility of human nature. All were encouraged to reflect on this view and its expression in all of their relationships. Teachers were encouraged to draw attention to these principles as they related to all subjects they taught. A universal code of ethics was introduced based on truthfulness, unity in diversity, justice and service. An integrative perspective on human rights based on survival (food, shelter, health, security), association (dignity, equality, justice, freedom) and meaning (purpose, creativity, transcendence), was promoted. An integrative concept of freedom and democracy, free from all types of prejudice, segregation and oppression and characterized by equality, inclusiveness, rule of law and consultative decision-making was introduced. A method of "conflict-free conflict resolution" was taught and practiced that safeguards both individual and group integrity.

The program started with cultivation of local human resources, intensive training in EFP fundamentals to 24 on-site faculty. Through all phases of the program the participation of the entire school community was requested. Students, parents, teachers and school staff - including janitors and office staff were drawn into various aspects of the program. Creativity was introduced into the learning process so that new learning and new understandings were often expressed through arts, paintings, role plays and drama, music, science experiments, writing assignments, and then shared with participants from other schools. Interschool exchanges were promoted among students, teachers and parents from each community - the Bosniak (Muslim), Croat (Catholic) and Serb (Orthodox). Public Peace Events were arranged to extend the spirit of EFP to the community-at-large. Public officials and the media were invited to attend and each classroom was given tasks and opportunities to present dramatic, literary, musical or other

expressions of one or more of the peace concepts they had learned. In many cases, it was the first time participants had crossed lines into the "others" territory. In telling their stories to each other, a mutual reframing took place within the context of their new understanding of principles of peaceful and positive human relationships.

Step-by-step, students and teachers began to show increased skills in making decisions, helping to care for others within and outside of their groups, sharing positive stories of overcoming prejudice and hard feelings. Teachers became less authoritarian and increasingly creative, as well as able to share and consult on problems and projects with other teachers and to take consultative approaches to dealing with their students. Many participants expressed that they had gained feelings of inner peace, hope and improved relations in their families, among their peers as well as created new friends in other ethnic communities. After only one year of the program the results in terms of community harmony and violence reduction were such that the BiH Ministers of Education requested that the EFP program be introduced to all schools in Bosnia. When the BiH officials reported their results to the United Nations, Secretary-General Kofi Annan asked that the EFP-BiH program be adapted for schools and communities in Africa, and the BiH officials eagerly recommended it to the whole world.

#### **Los Angeles Children's Enrichment Program :**

Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, race riots in Los Angeles, California in 1992, had encouraged another "peace education" project based on similar principles. The Full-Circle Learning Program (6) started as an after-school program for children in one of the neighborhoods that was affected by racial violence. Students in this area suffered from low self-esteem and low academic achievement, among other privations. The after-school program promoted a melding of academics and altruism. "The Children's Enrichment Program (CEP)" as the "Full-Circle Learning Project" became known, helps children embrace their role as society's helpers and healers through summer school and after-school programs that integrate academic and arts enrichment with character education, conflict resolution and community service." Note the similarities in the key elements of this project to the previous projects : Character education in this model consists of infusing positive "habits-of-heart" (including such virtues as courtesy, respect, tolerance, empathy, helpfulness) into service-oriented academic and arts projects. Students from age 6 to 16 work on various linked lesson plan activities or projects that express "heart habits." Oneness and wholeness of human relationships is stressed as the students, far from seeing themselves as "deprived," reach out to others in need of service. In one project students practiced the art of "tenderness" while studying biological life cycle and visiting homes for the elderly. In another, the students learned to paint portraits using combined lessons in math (proportions) and art. They created paintings of missing children and displayed their work in a holiday parade as a service to the families of the missing children. Imagine the sense of "social efficacy" that was gained as at least one of the missing children was found through their efforts.

In addition to the academic and arts enrichment that help students to put their talents to work for the community, the children are taught to resolve problems large and small through a "conflict resolution bridge". The bridge consists of 5 steps on each side. Children who are trying to solve a problem stand on opposite sides of the bridge. Each one begins by explaining "what I want..." to the other in a few words. Then, taking a step toward the center of the bridge, each one describes how he or she feels at that moment. On the next step each one explains the reason why

they feel the way they feel. Step four is called the “empathy step”. Each one paraphrases what they have heard the other child say : “My understanding of you is?” This one may require some help to gain clarity if the understanding is not accepted by the other. The teacher or other students who are watching the exercise may offer help. But when this understanding is clear each child steps to the last step, “Maybe we should...” The challenge is to come up with at least three ideas for solution to the problem. Then the two “protagonists” are to try to agree on the best of the three solutions that best resolves both of their difficulties. When all is agreed, they walk off the bridge together as friends.

Children are taught to use the bridge first with hypothetical problems. But soon they are bringing their own playground or classroom conflicts in for a real try, and often learning to solve their difficulties, or their friends’ difficulties (sometimes even their parents or families difficulties) with little or no help from their teachers. Many parents ask the program to teach them the skills that the children are learning, so impressed are they with the changes they see.

Another essential aspect of the Children’s Enrichment Program is its focus on introducing children to careers that fit with the children’s own sense of mission. The children are not merely practicing academic or social skills with no relevant connection they can see to their own future in the society around them. They are encouraged to express their ideals and hopes, and are introduced to people who are doing various jobs using those ideals and hopes. The children are then taught the kinds of skills that are needed in that vocation and profession and encouraged to prepare themselves through their present learning. With their learning connected to their own sense of mission, of efficacy and ideals, the children’s learning motivation soars.

Eighty percent of the after-school program students increased their ranking in national reading and math tests over the course of a year. One hundred percent of the parents of summer program students report that their children showed increased in reading and other areas of study. Math performance increased for 85% of the children. The CEP web site reports that “ratings for behavior and global awareness are unanimously high.”

Requests from schools who wish to duplicate the “Full-circle Learning” model into both after-school and regular school curricula are increasing. As with the EFP projects above, the main bottleneck to spreading such positive programs is funding to train (or retrain) teachers and other personnel to carry out learning activities in an integrated paradigm that addresses the attitudes, the skills and the behaviors that create sound human relationships.

#### **Western Australia - Peace Pack :**

Yet another initiative that has taken off in Western Australia where religious education is a required part of the school week. To accomplish religious education in a multi-cultural, multi-religious society, schools offer a certain amount of time (about 1 to 2 hours per week) to representatives of the various religious groups to offer courses to those students who wish to take them. In general, children of Christians go to the church-sponsored lessons, Jews go to the lessons offered by the Jewish community and so on. However, the Baha’i Community has offered a unique program that has become very popular because it teaches respect for the foundations of all religions, and teaches children fundamental skills needed for working toward peace in a multi-cultural world. The weekly exercises include focus on virtues such as love, respect and appreciation of diversity, peace-making and peacefulness. the program contains some of the same essential elements that make up the above successful programs : the foundation of respect for

the oneness of humanity, building on the power of virtues as habits-of-heart to be developed and exercised, arts as a means of expressing inner values and individuality, encouragement of academic skills not just for their own sake or for passing of exams, but to be employed in service to society, and useful communication skills for building friendships and resolving differences. In upper grade levels, global issues such as race and gender equality, economic justice and disparity are introduced as children begin to analyze the world that is, and the world that they themselves are helping to create.

The project started out as a local endeavor in a small community, and soon outgrew the community's ability to provide teachers. Eventually five Peace Pack books outlining 3 years of lesson plans for the upper-elementary level were printed (7). This enabled even untrained teachers who were not Baha'i to carry the project to some 3000 children in the racially and ethnically diverse region of Western Australia. The reports from the teachers is that they appreciate this material because it stresses unity, and helps children to gain a greater appreciation of each other, thus reducing violence and improving their problem-solving abilities.

### **The Virtues Project :**

The final project in this report has become so widespread and diverse that it can not be pinned down to one place, though it originated in Western Canada. **The Virtues Project** (8) started in 1991 as a project "to do something to counteract the rising violence among families and youth." Drawing from the wisdom of the world's sacred literature, over 360 virtues at the heart of all people's beliefs about the purpose of life were identified. Drawing on sound methods of child-rearing supported by social science research and solid experience, the team developed five strategies to teach virtues :

1. Recognize teachable moments : Often what looks like a problem or a failure is the best time to learn how to fill a gap by teach a positive virtuous action or attitude. The program teaches parents and educators in general how to stay positive and use those precious "difficult" moments to bring children to a new level of understanding.
2. Use the language of virtues : Define the words, describe what they look like in action, and use those words positively when calling the children to better behavior and actions.
3. Set clear boundaries : Children thrive on clearly set guidelines, and fair rules that let them know what they CAN do, as well as what they should not do. Consequences for not following guidelines should be firmly and fairly carried out as part of the educator's or parent's task of guide, coach, and authority. This helps to train the child's own inner guidance system.
4. Honor the spirit : Create within the family or classroom time and space for quiet reflection, times for honoring and celebration, times for experiencing a sense of the sacred and times for sharing that reverence within a sharing circle. This can be done within any religious tradition, or without reference to religion, simply appreciating the simple beauty that surrounds us all.
5. Learn and practice the art of spiritual companioning : Learning to communicate with empathy and encouragement helps to release a great deal that is positive and energies hidden in each heart.

The methods of the Virtues Projects have been shared through books, and courses throughout the world and have been woven into and adopted as part of "education for peace" projects in over 85 countries. A virtues guide for educators (9) has been produced that shares classroom ideas for bringing out best behaviors, attitudes and skills in children, gathered from teachers around the world who have found such practical methods useful.

### **Back to Japan :**

There have been Virtues Project workshops held in Japan, and The Virtues Project Educator's Guide (9) is soon to be translated and published in Japanese. The Education for Peace Project in BiH which has been supported in part by grants from the Japanese government, has begun to explore the possibility of initiating projects in Japan. Some educators have expressed interest in translating portions of the Peace Pack from Western Australia and the Children's Enrichment Project seems to have aspects that would fit well in Japan's new curriculum. Education for Peace or Peace Education, Character Education, Education of the Heart, Education for World Citizenship, Human Rights Education, all are similar "magic" threads with which to reweave the worn moral fabric of society for a new day. The integration of these common threads creates the warp and woof of successful peace educational endeavors.

### **Common threads in successful education for peace programs include :**

1. A universal view of mankind as a whole made up of a diversity of cultures with a common desire to live in harmony on our one planet with equal rights, freedoms and dignity.
2. A universal ethic which recognizes the need to develop our sense of dignity, our nobility and the practice of such positive "habits-of-heart" as tolerance, justice, truthfulness, peacefulness, love, service, and excellence.
3. A universal appreciation of our uniqueness and diversity - from the individual to the cultural level - that can be expressed in positive ways from the earliest years of a person's life through arts (including sports, crafts, and creative technologies) and through education.
4. A universal appeal to relevance that makes academic achievement a door to advancing abilities for service to society and the future-not merely "dry bones" on the skeleton of no longer viable traditions or educational systems.
5. The shared power to communicate in such ways as to create lasting bonds of friendship and to solve problems and conflicts in a way that reinforces unity rather than continues separation or erosion of social relationships.

Given Japan's proclivity to take the best that the world has had to offer and to make it uniquely their own, often more simple and beautiful, it is my hope that the adaptation of a new form of "peace education" will be another one of Japan's great successes.

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