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**“HOW CAN WE PASS ON THE MEMORY TO THE NEXT GENERATION?  
REMEMBERING HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI”****Abstract**

As the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is fading away, people are struggling how we can pass on the experience to the next generation. While it seems the memory of hatred is much easier to pass on, it is more important for the world to remember the memory of peace and reconciliation.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki is a controversial issue especially in the United States and Asian countries because of the history of World War II. However, the memory of those two cities, civilian holocaust by nuclear weapons, should not be forgotten and buried in history. We remember not for retaliation but for not repeating it again. This experience should be taught in schools and in peace museums not only in Japan but also in other countries especially in nuclear states.

Peace Memorial Museums in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are vital for the preservation of the memory of what happened and for Nuclear Disarmament Education - but that these themes should also be central issues for the world's peace museums, and, beyond, for schools and other educational institutions everywhere. The paper explores how Hiroshima and Nagasaki can be taught at schools by using visual images especially videos/films. And the appropriate contents of the video for high school level students will also be discussed.

It has been 60 years since atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The survivors have been the centre of the peace movement and anti-nuclear activities in Hiroshima. However their average age is 73<sup>1</sup> and how the experience of the atomic bomb can be conveyed to the next generation has been repeatedly discussed for the last few decades. This must be an urgent issue not only for Hiroshima but also for other memorial places such as here in Guernica, Pearl Harbour, Nanjing and many others, where survivors with direct experience are disappearing.

I would like to explore what role education and peace museums can play in passing on the memory to the next generation.

**Why is the message from Hiroshima and Nagasaki important?**

Since their development 60 years ago, nuclear weapons have always been the key to international politics. Whether Iraq possesses any Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) or not

<sup>1</sup> Asahi Newspaper, <http://www.asahi.com/information/release/TKY200505170144.html>

was the original point for the war in Iraq and possible nuclear development is causing troubles for North Korea and Iran. Nuclear proliferation is a serious issue which all the nations have to tackle urgently. However, no cities on earth except Hiroshima and Nagasaki have experienced an attack with nuclear weapons so far, and one could say the fact of the unimaginable damage to those cities and their people prevented any further use of nuclear weapons in the world since 1945. When people forget about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it could happen again. People and nations must be constantly reminded what primitive nuclear weapons, compared to the current ones, did to human beings and must continue to question why humanity still needs to hold on to them.

Also, nuclear weaponry is unique in that the effect of the bomb does not end at the moment when it is used; radiation stays for so many years and the genetic effect lasts for generations. There are no such weapons like nuclear weapons in this sense. The message of the survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki who witnessed the horror should be heard because their testimony does not blame others but is a warning for the future. The entire world has to think about the meaning of holding nuclear weapons on our planet. It is not a matter for one nation but it matters for the entire world.

**Peace/ Atomic Bomb Education**

It is natural to think that much is taught about the experience of the atomic bomb in Japanese schools but this is not the case. If you live in Hiroshima or Nagasaki, there are still survivors around and one can read news related to the atomic bomb almost every day in the local newspaper. But once you are away from those places, it is rare to hear about it. There is a huge memorial ceremony every year in Hiroshima on August 6th and the city is surrounded by the sacred atmosphere for the entire day. However, that day is only one of the normal days in Tokyo and people do not pay much attention. For the pupils who live outside Hiroshima and Nagasaki, school education is an important resource for learning about the atomic bomb, but it is hugely dependent on how enthusiastic the teacher is. Even in Hiroshima, not all the teachers are enthusiastic about teaching about the atomic bomb, and one reason for it is due to the new generation of teachers. In Japan, peace education means atomic bomb education and it started out from the teachers who survived the atomic bomb. When those teachers were still at school teaching, they tried very hard to explain what it was like to live through the nuclear horror, but those teachers are now all gone from school. Almost all the teachers now teaching at school are of the post-war generations who have no experience of war nor of the atomic bomb. There are several other reasons that make it difficult to conduct peace/atomic bomb education as well.

In the case of Hiroshima, there are four main obstacles to peace education.

**Passage of time**

One cannot deny that 60 years is a long time and people do forget even if the event was very tragic and has historical meaning. People do not talk about the huge tsunami anymore which occurred just a half year ago. It seems that in so far as one is not affected directly, people tend to forget easily.

At school, there were many teachers who were survivors themselves and they were very keen on teaching students about the horror of nuclear weapons and the importance of peace.

But now, almost all teachers have not experienced a war and this is said to be one of the reasons that peace education is taught much less enthusiastically.

### Organizational problems

Confrontation between the Teacher's Union and the Board of Education is a serious problem for conducting peace education at schools. The Teacher's Union is seen as "left" wing by the government and the public in general. Actually this is a very complicated issue and I won't go too far into it here, but this confrontation even caused the suicide of the school principal of a high school in Hiroshima. Some teachers are against flag-hoisting and singing the national anthem because they were used during the Japanese atrocities in Asia during the war, but the government wants to make them do it. The principal was caught between the teachers and the Board of Education.

Control over teachers on what they can teach in the class is getting more strict; 71% of the public school teachers in Hiroshima feel peace education has declined especially after the teaching guideline was revised by the Ministry of Education in 1998<sup>2</sup>. If governmental organizations such as the Board of Education are not supporting the policy, it is very difficult for teachers to promote peace education in the class.

### Description in the history textbooks

This may be related to the previous one, but the discussion of the atomic bomb in history textbooks has been reduced over the years. The controversial history textbook for junior high school from the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, which was approved by the Ministry of Education, has only one line of description for Hiroshima and a half line for Nagasaki. There is even no mention of the number who had died by the bombs<sup>3</sup>.

### Pedagogy

It is said that some pupils in Hiroshima have "peace education allergy". Starting from primary school, children in Hiroshima usually learn about the atomic bomb. When the summer comes, they do similar things every year such as watching films, making paper cranes or hearing survivors' testimonies. If you learn something for the first time, it is very impressive, but if you keep learning about the same thing for over 10 years, many students are de-sensitized about the issue and they get tired of it. Teachers are already busy enough and it is the reality that they do not have time to provide some new peace program every year. Also, education style is traditionally quite passive in Japan. But only hearing survivors' testimony is not enough. Pupils need something hopeful at the end so that it makes them feel motivated to work towards world peace.

<sup>2</sup> Hiroshima Institute for Peace Education, <http://www1.ocn.ne.jp/~hipe/research/>

<sup>3</sup> Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, <http://www.tsukurukai.com/>

### What should be done?

I would suggest a new method of teaching especially for the secondary school level. Teachers should teach not only the facts about what had happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki but also teach nuclear issues in a wider context. To be more precise, pupils have not been taught issues such as why some countries still have nuclear weapons in the first place, and why there is more proliferation or what percentage of national budgets is for military spending and so on. Pupils are just taught that nuclear weapons are an absolute evil. This is not bad. But if one is not trained to think why she/he thinks so, they will not be able to understand the real danger of nuclear weapons. Secondary school students are old enough to understand the complexity of the issue and build up their own ideas. It is important to provide students with various perspectives on the issue and train students to think analytically and critically.

Although what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki is a long time ago and people may wonder why we have to care about nuclear weapons after the Cold War has ended, there are still nuclear issues and actually it is getting more serious than before. So by combining the experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the current situation of the nuclear issue, pupils will be able to link themselves with the events of 60 years ago and now.

And it is a must to leave some "hope" at the end. It is not rare at all that students feel powerless and helpless when they are faced with the reality of the nuclear issue but even if it is something small, there is always something that they can try and put into action. That's very important.

### Role of Peace Museums

Finally I would like to suggest what the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima can do to educate young people.

As I mentioned earlier, it is getting difficult to do peace education at schools in Hiroshima, and this is a serious problem: if one talks about peace, she/he is seen as "left". There is an urgent need to improve this situation but to use the existence of Peace Memorial Museum is a prompt solution. That is because educating people about the horror of nuclear weapons is a crucial purpose of the museum. There is an educational department within the museum which take care of the pupils who come from other parts of Japan on school excursions or simply answer questions from people. But that is not enough. When you click on some websites for the Holocaust Museums in the world, you find that they have "Holocaust Educators". I think there should be an expert in atomic bomb education also in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. And those experts in atomic bomb education can provide schools with nuclear disarmament education and they can also have workshops for teachers on how this issue can be addressed to pupils. There are volunteers in the museum who guide visitors and answer questions but we need educational professionals especially after all the survivors disappear.

It would be desirable for the museum to provide such an opportunity to train atomic bomb educators as well as carry out new projects.

The reality of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is not understood well, not only in Japan but in other countries. It would be great if peace museums in the world could have some displays about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, because that is so important for humanity.