

Featured Article-2

Educating about Past and for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina



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"Forgetfulness heals everything and song is the most beautiful manner of forgetting, for in song man feels only what he loves. So, in the kapia, between the skies, the river and the hills, generation after generation learnt not to mourn overmuch what the troubled waters had borne away. They entered there into the unconscious philosophy of the town; that life was an incomprehensible marvel, since it was incessantly wasted and spent, yet none the less it lasted and endured 'like the bridge on the Drina'."

— Ivo Andrić, ***The Bridge on the Drina***

Peace education has not been fully established in Bosnia-Herzegovina yet. 25 years after the war the country is still suffering from its consequences, which mainly include divisive memories for the past atrocities and the erasure of certain elements from that past. In this article I would like to reflect on one of these cases in order to shed some light on the importance of educating about the past and for peace.

Hotel "Vilina Vlas" was before the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina a well-known wellness center located in Višegrad, a beautiful town on the Drina river, best known as the setting for Ivo Andrić's famous book *The Bridge on the Drina*. The Hotel was named after a local species of fern ("Fairy's Hair") and before the war started in 1992 it was a popular resort for both local and foreign tourists. During the 1992-1995 war Hotel "Vilina Vlas" was turned into a concentration camp in which hundreds of Bosnian Muslim women were raped and tortured. Nowadays it is a wellness center again while its past function has remained only in the stories of survivors and (partially) the Hague verdict. *While thinking of this it is impossible not to ask yourselves if the current status of "Vilina Vlas" contributes to: memory or forgetting? Does it have the power to educate future generations on our difficult past? How can erasure of the innocent victims contribute to anything but pain and forgetting? Is there any way to acknowledge those victims and their suffering?*

The term "memorial site pedagogics" is a literal translation of German word *Gedenkstättenpädagogik* (*Gedenkstätte* from German- memorial site). According to Nicolas Berg (1996, 131), German terms *Erinnerungskultur* and *Gedenkkultur* refer to "culture of remembrance" which does not refer to the commemorations and memorials only but to all social individuals. Culture of remembrance outlines the past in general and is expressed by both individual and collective remembering which includes commemoration of extermination sites. In order for "Vilina Vlas" to be recognized as a memorial site it should be understood as a certain, topographically specified place which is in Weber's point of view "anchored in a particular manner in memory" (Weber 2008, 2). However, it should not be represented in memory only but in institutions, books,



works of art and other cultural artefacts and historical dates (Weber 2008). In such a way it will have the capacity to become a memory which survives over generations and helps us orientate while understanding intergroup relations, processes and identity formation. Thus it may serve the purposes of education in the area of memorial pedagogy which is in line with Nora's understanding of function of memorial sites as a space where a memory site pedagogy develops (Konczyk 2012; Nora 1996). Drawing on a memory for traumatic events as something that is prone to distortions that largely depend on position of the in-group, we can conclude that memorialization stands among necessity to defend one's own group and a moral imperative to remember and mark atrocities committed towards one's group. According to Assman (1995) structural amnesia involves forgetting those elements of the past that are no longer meaningful in relation to the present. Therefore, the Hotel "Vilina Vlas" (if we only consider the function it has now, as a hotel and centre for relaxation) ceased to mean a "place of conscience" for visitors, since the role it played in the war would neither be mentioned, nor visually presented. In this case, the process of remembering and forgetting occur in several directions: Hotel "Vilina Vlas" as the concentration camp where women were raped during the war, the hotel as a centre for recreation and relaxation, and the hotel as a "place of conscience". The choice of narrative in any situation depends on several factors, however, it is clear that there are several features in each of the three situations: omitting parts of the past, "distortion" of the past and the need to preserve the past (either in its original or modified form). Due to the presence of different discourses on the past, but also a different kind of silence about the past, memorials in Bosnia-Herzegovina still remain divisive political issues, but not a place to meet and talk about past.

The current status of "Vilina Vlas" contributes more to "amnesia" than to "conscience". Also, there are several different narratives trying to explain its function during the war, which makes the purpose of the hotel even more complicated. The situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina reveals that memorials and the anniversaries of suffering can contribute to cohesion in the country, but in most cases they contribute to an even greater rift. However, position of "Vilina Vlas" is different because it does not have the function of memorial but hotel and wellness centre, regardless of its past function. The presence of three different narratives and conceptions of truth hinders peacebuilding within the region. Therefore Hotel "Vilina Vlas" has become a place of amnesia more than a place of conscience with a main pedagogical function. Its story has only been told by movies. Until now, two movies were produced as a form of homage to the victims tortured and killed in "Vilina Vlas": "In the Land of Blood and Honey", directed by Angelina Jolie (2011), and "For Those Who Can Tell No Tales" directed by Jasmila Žbanić (2013). Both movies aimed at giving voices to those who cannot speak anymore and to serve resistance, justice and symbolic reparation. Besides these two artistic movies, one TV documentary about the "Vilina Vlas" was directed by Sotiris Danezis for the "War Zone" program, and it still remains the only documentary movie that tells the story of those who were killed and those who survived.

Even though art can contribute to reconciliation to the certain extent, these movies cannot really change the position of "Vilina Vlas" as it still remains hotel. As such, it cannot educate new generations that crimes against humanity were committed, while the obligation of the present and the future is to talk about it and to serve to the peace and pedagogy. Therefore "place of conscience" has a broader meaning than the pure memorial has – it exists to remind us of the past, to promote peace and empathy, and to change our perspective of the world and brutality. This



switch from amnesia to conscience can be made through education only. "Vilina Vlas" is an example of erasure of memories that happens on the surface, while the vivid memories of survivors and those of the families of the victims are still alive. While providing the safe space for those who need it we have to educate new generations on the difficult past and present its difficult remains. That is one of the purposes of peace education – to teach while provoking our conscience and making no space for forgetting.

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Press Release

Leveraging the Japan-Korea Collaborative for Peace and Disarmament Education:
Evidence-based Education Program Development, Implementation, and Evaluation

A Collaborative Research Project
Peace Research Institute, International Christian University
Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition, Nagasaki University

With generous support through a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) for the fiscal year 2020-23, International Christian University's Peace Research Institute, Mitaka-shi, Tokyo (Institute Director Toshiaki Sasao; hereinafter referred to as ICU-PRI), together with the Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition (Nagasaki Prefecture, Nagasaki-shi, Center Director Fumihiko Yoshida; hereinafter referred to as RECNA), initiated a joint research in April to formulate and implement peace and disarmament education, as well as evaluate evidence-based program evaluation research in collaboration with Japanese and South Korea universities and research institutes. This collaborative research is planned to be carried out for three years by a diverse team of experts assembled from ICU-PRI and RECNA. These experts specialize in the fields of international relations, international politics, social / community psychology, education, educational sociology and educational engineering. Within this structure, a variety of interdisciplinary theories and methodologies will be used for this joint research. Furthermore, we will form a research network with Korean universities and research institutes to conduct an elaborate joint research.

Project Scope, Purpose & Significance

The thorny issue of North Korea's nuclear armament after their declaration in October of 2002 brings geopolitical instability not only to the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia region, but also has an immeasurable impact on the lives of citizens in the countries concerned. To respond to this situation, the importance of "peace and disarmament education" is increasing in the field of education. "Peace and disarmament education" is a combination of conventional "peace education," and "disarmament education" which focuses on nuclear risk mitigation and denuclearization. "Peace and disarmament education" is also based on program methods and evaluation theories, and teaching about peace issues and a theoretical framework that increases its educational outcomes. In collaboration with the collaborators in South Korea, ICU-PRI and RECNA will jointly plan a "peace and disarmament education" aimed for youth in Korea and Japan, carry out rigorous program evaluation, and lay the foundation for policy research. In particular, we will broadly define educational settings and provide "peace and disarmament education" that is suitable for formal (formal education at universities), non-formal (collaboration with NPOs and civic groups), and informal (distance education, etc.) contexts.



"Peace education" has been long advocated and practiced for the purpose of peace building and maintenance, but designing and implementing its curriculum and instructional design have become hideous due to various conceptual and theoretical backgrounds represented, as well as regional and historical characteristics. In particular, peace education in neighboring countries such as Japan and South Korea face a widening recognition gap in problem setting and selecting priority issues, as it can be affected by differences in historical awareness, as well as recent political and economic tensions, even though they are neighboring countries. Considering such situations, this research will investigate an optimal solution by studying the following core research themes from both theoretical and practical perspectives: 1) What are the general definitions and understanding of "peace education" and "disarmament education"? 2) How can "disarmament education" (which is meant to achieve the mutual goal of avoiding nuclear risk) be incorporated into "peace education" to create synergistic effects for the realization of peace in East Asia? 3) What kind of integrated educational program for "peace education" and "disarmament education" can possibly contribute to "nuclear-free peacebuilding" in Northeast Asia, while overcoming the differences between Japan and South Korea. It should be noted that the above-mentioned theoretical and practical research on maximizing the synergistic effect of "peace education" and "disarmament education" that can possibly contribute to "nuclear-free peacebuilding" in Northeast Asia is a pioneering effort in the world. We believe that this effort has high academic and practical originality and creativity.

In this study, peace and disarmament education toward "nuclear-free peacebuilding" in Northeast Asia is not limited to merely providing knowledge and information, as well as just passing on historical awareness. The "Peace / Disarmament Education Program," which will correspond to various educational contexts and learning contexts rooted in the differences in the social contexts of real life and real world in Japan and South Korea, will be formulated in various educational settings and evaluated through various program methods.

This present program of research will consist of several activities and strands. First, we will analyze the contents and methods, as well as the program evaluation results of past / existing "peace / disarmament education" in Japan and South Korea. Second, we will use that knowledge as a basis to create a peace education program in collaboration with Japan and South Korea that is applicable to various educational settings, thereby prompting synergistic effects in sharing a sense of "nuclear-free peacebuilding" Evaluation research using quantitative and qualitative methods will use an empowerment evaluation framework. Third, our partners in Japan and South Korea will jointly and simultaneously conduct a peace and disarmament education program, identify the "Theory of Change," and revise and make improvements to the program through program evaluation and comparative examination within the framework of each context. Fourth, we will identify the most viable theoretical foundation for building a universal design of peace education programs in order to serve as a model for "peace / disarmament education" in Northeast Asia, as well as to contribute to peace education in countries in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, or Africa.

Updates

This research program began in April 2020 amid the novel coronavirus outbreak that is currently shaking up the world. Due to this COVID-19 pandemic, initial plans for research had to be reconsidered and changed. ICU-PRI and RECNA are currently holding regular meetings and moving forward in conducting the needs assessments for "peace and disarmament education" in Japan and



South Korea. By the end of this fall, we plan to come up with several theories in peace and disarmament education, determine the content and evaluation design of the educational program, and implement and evaluate the educational intervention program in Japan and South Korea in 2021. As an external event, we plan to hold an online "Peace and Disarmament Education" study group and a symposium during this year.

For further questions, please contact:

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