

Anti-discrimination Education in Japan: Buraku Sabetsu Simulation*

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THE STRUCTURAL STUDY of discrimination using the simulation method in school setting has pros and cons. This is true in the study of discrimination of a section of the Japanese population known as *Burakumin* (*Buraku* people). A famous Japanese professor on international education warned me against writing reports on this issue for a thesis-writing contest. He was apprehensive about the possibility of the institution that held the contest facing difficulties in case my thesis won.

His warning was based on the experience of researcher-friend who was unable to continue his research on the subject after receiving severe criticism from the *Buraku* liberation movement.

A school educator who used traditional pedagogy criticized the simulation method I used as too objective and not on the side of discriminated people. However, many participants in the 2009 International Institute on Peace Education held in Budapest, Hungary provided very positive suggestions on my research. One suggested the addition of the gender perspective in the research since behind the phenomenon of discrimination was the gender issue.

I have been using the simulation method in discussing the *Buraku* issue in my classes.

Considering the suggestions, particularly the gender perspective, I present the use of simulation method in human rights education activities that focus on *Buraku* discrimination.

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Vignette: Family Context

In marriage, the father in *Burakumin* family would often play the most decisive role. The situation differs depending on whether it is a marriage between a *Buraku* woman and a non-*Buraku* man or a *Buraku* man marrying a non-*Buraku* woman. Therefore, I develop the opening dialogue between Father and Son to suggest the existence of a gender problematique.

Here is a sample vignette about a father and a son who are in conflict about the possible marriage of the son to a woman from the *Buraku* community. The family is faced with a dilemma between love and established practice. This vignette is based on a book authored by Nobuhiko Kadooka, who declared that he was a *Burakumin*. He wrote the book entitled *Hisabetsu Buraku no Seishun* (Youth in Buraku Community).¹

Volunteer performers are asked to read in a skit style the following vignette, as an introduction to understanding *Buraku* discrimination (*Buraku sabetsu*) problem in Japan:

Son: Father, I would like to marry...
 Father: Oh, yes! It's a good news! Is she your nice girlfriend, Hanako?
 S: Yes!
 F: She is a good lady! You're lucky! What a good news!
 S: Father, and...I have to tell you, about...
 F: What?
 S: ...About her origin.
 F: What is it?
 S: She's from *Buraku* community.
 F: ... Oh, no, my son!
 S: She says she wants you to know it, before our marriage.
 F: No, it's impossible!
 S: Why impossible?
 F: It will damage our family's reputation! Absolutely, no!!
 S: Why does it damage our family?
 F: Because our family blood cannot be mixed with theirs!
 S: It's an old-fashioned way of thinking. Wrong belief!
 F: ...Though I would say OK, our relatives must be angry! It might damage their reputation, too. Do you want to cause any disadvantage at your cousin's marriage and employment?
 S: You cannot predict it!
 F: No, the public is not easy. And I know *Buraku* people have strong human rights movement, and I hear some of them have

very strong stance. I don't want our family to be involved in such complicated matters!

S : Well, give us time. We didn't think you would become furious.

F : Mmmm..., who on earth keeps such silly discrimination system?! We are annoyed!

S :Father, it's you!

Through this vignette, the facilitator encourages the participants to think about *Buraku sabetsu*. The facilitator asks the participants to think of the possible results that can arise in the case. Some possible results are the following:

- To overcome the difficulty, they marry with the full support of his family. This can be the happiest solution, but they all need to stay strong.
- They marry, but keep her origin secret from his relatives; being afraid of the disclosure. Kadooka's book presents an interview regarding a similar case; the people involved were superficially happy, but there was no complete solution.
- They marry and break off the relationship with their respective families. They became very independent and decided to stay away, but their families could not support them.
- Semi-gathered marriage ceremony (wedding ceremony with only the family of either the bride or the groom). The famous enlightening movie "*Hashi no Nai Kawa (River without a Bridge)*" demonstrates this sorrowful scenario.
- Separate ways - Probably, most cases have ended under this category.
- Judicial action - A coming-out reporter told her own case in court in a publication.
- Runaway, Suicide, ... etc.

These sad cases still happen.

At this point, the workshop defines *Buraku sabetsu* as discrimination against people from "Outcast" community in Japan.

This type of discrimination occurs at personal and social levels. At the personal level, it is mostly found in cases of marriage and employment. At the social level: those discriminated bear much difficulty in terms of social burdens and relegation of role to tasks not wanted by many people.

Simulation: Community Context

To realize the social structural context of discrimination, participants are asked to do a role-play of an imaginary community. This is a simulation of group negotiation and decision-making in a community about burden sharing, which are necessary to keep modern living standards.

In this simulation, fifteen cards are prepared for fifteen participants:

For Stage 1: Nine Serene Cards, and six Burden Cards are prepared and distributed through lottery. A Serene Card means the person has the privilege of living without being asked to carry any social burden. On the other hand, the Burden Card indicates living in 1) an isolated area of the town or city, 2) near a Nuclear Powerplant, 3) Humble House, 4) 3D-jobs (difficult, dirty, and dangerous jobs), 5) No Chance of Higher Education, and 6) Garbage Disposal Facilities. All the fifteen cards have similar design and color.

For Stage 2: two Elite Cards, ten “Happy?” Cards, and three Change Cards are prepared to construct social classes.

The simulation activity has three stages.

Stage 1: Fair Burden-sharing Community

At the first stage, everyone in the community draws a card. The card can either be the “Serene” card that ensures that the person will live in calm and “normal” life, or the “Burden” card that requires a person to bear some kind of burden that is necessary for the community (such as living in a place with “Garbage Disposal Facility,” “Isolation Ward,” “Crematory,” “Nuclear Powerplant,” etc.). People are requested to sit together in two groups – Serene Group and Burden Group.

Stage 2: Community with Social Class

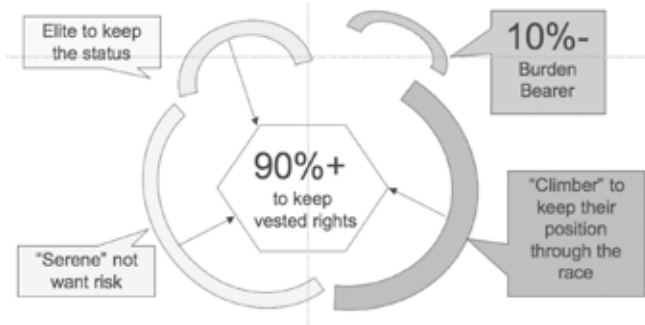
In each group, people are asked to compete with each other using the paper-rock-scissors game to get the Elite Card and Change Cards. People with the “Serene” card automatically earn the “Happy?” card, which symbolizes living happy life (without sharing social burden).

The Serene Group selects two elite people, who are responsible for managing the whole community. The members of the Burden Group race to get the “Change” card, which ensures changing the “Burden” card into “Happy?” card. The winner earns the second chance to live without social burden, while the loser gets more “Burden” cards, which are given up by the

winner in this group. As a result of the races in the two groups, the whole community is divided into four social classes:

1. Elite with Elite Cards and “Happy?” Cards
2. Serene (“Normal” citizen) and “Happy?” Cards
3. “Climber” with Change Cards and “Happy?” Cards
4. Burden bearers.

Chart 1



The people are required to make a decision as a community on whether to go back to Stage 1, where all social burdens are shared by lottery, or keep Stage 2 with the four social classes. Everybody votes to decide on what should be adopted. Other proposals or suggestions can be discussed also.

During the negotiation before the final vote, the Facilitator asks some key questions. Examples of possible questions are:²

- Who seems to be the most responsible among the members of the community?
- Who has the power to change?
- Do members of each social class share common opinion within the class?
- Why is this situation kept?
- Who gains from the system?

Stage 3: Community with Fixed Social Classes (the social classes remain forever, even for descendants)

Whatever the community’s decision is, the Facilitator asks everybody to imagine that the social class era continues into the future for many centuries. Further, the Facilitator asks them to express what they feel about it.

The central aim of the role-play is to realize the structural dimension of *Buraku sabetsu*. The imaginary community is a metaphor of one of the most serious and historic discriminations in Japan. There are many excellent teaching practices that encourage empathy in individual learners; however, *Buraku sabetsu* has become more invisible in the Japanese social framework due to reasons discussed below.

Therefore, we need resort to structure-oriented simulation studies, as well as moral education to transform this severe discrimination.

The Facilitator proceeds to discussing the *Buraku* discrimination history, the situation of the *Burakumin*, the current forms of *Buraku* discrimination, the anti-discrimination movements, the government responses and other issues. The Facilitator uses different audio-visual aids and other teaching-learning materials for this purpose.

I. Buraku Sabetsu - Origin and Status

A. *Kegare* (穢れ: Impurity in mind)

To realize the deep structure of *Buraku sabetsu*, the concept of *Kegare* should be understood. There are many theories analyzing its origin, but they agree at least on the following: in the 8th century, noble people privatized the land and social classes were created. Until modern age, “*Kegare*” exists in the deep structure of Japanese people’s minds that forms a kind of deep culture. “*Kegare*” means impurity in the mind, which can never be purified by physical actions. For example, while a container that had cow feces and urine could be washed and disinfected a thousand times, Japanese people might still think that impurity remains in it. The idea of *kegare* results in prejudice against people with specific occupations, such as funeral workers, executioners, sweepers, leather producers, and drum makers. People with those occupations are regarded as impure, since they touch the dead people or animals, or dirty things like feces or skin of dead animals.

B. Fixed Social Classes

The 17th century *Samurai* Shogunate fixed the social hierarchy: *Samurai* (Warrior), Farmer, Merchant, and Craftsperson. It also defined outcast people: “*Eta* (extreme filth)” and “*Hinin* (non-human)” classes. The Shogunate fixed the social classes in order to maintain the *Samurai*’s privileged status. Outcasted people were regulated in terms of social manners and communication with other classes.

C. Social Structure

Chart 2

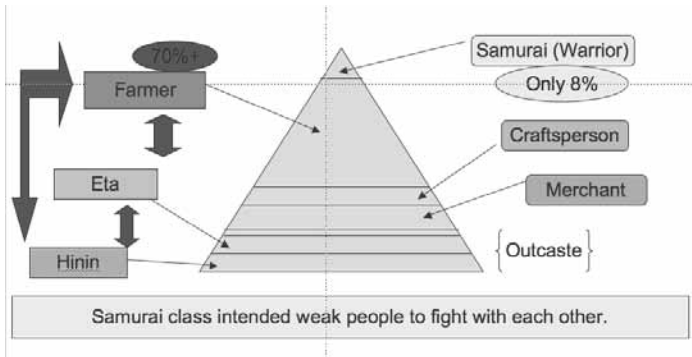


Chart 2 indicates how the *Samurai* (warrior) class designed the social hierarchy. The Farmer class had the absolute majority, and the critical point was how the Warrior class, constituting only 8 percent of the population, would control society. The people with power utilized the prejudice against the outcast classes (*Eta* and *Hinin*) to preserve this unstable hierarchical pyramid. Perhaps, many discriminatory systems in the world share common characteristics with the *Edo* class system.

D. Kegare Impurity Lasts Forever

Buraku people were discriminated against even after they passed away. For example, their gravestones show discriminatory posthumous names such as letters for animals or slaves' names. Buddhist priests record posthumous names called *kaimyo* (戒名), which means spending time after-death in another dimension of space, that are discriminatory to *Buraku* people.

E. Potential of Continued Discrimination

In the 19th century, the new Meiji Government prohibited any social class ranking, however class discrimination continued. In the era of capitalism and industrialization that followed, capitalists required cheap labor, and weak classes were forced to compete with each other. The idea of "*Kegare*" was even strengthened with the introduction in this period of then new western concepts of hygiene and eugenics.

F. The Enforced “Role” of Accepting Social Disadvantages

In the 20th century, in the era of modernization, social burdens such as garbage disposal facilities, isolation wards, crematories, and nuclear powerplants were often constructed in or near the *Buraku* areas. “3D-jobs,” unemployed persons, humble houses, people with no formal education, etc. were often found in *Buraku* communities. To explain the situation in another way, the modern government utilized *Buraku sabetsu* to put social burdens on this group of people. If, for example, 10 percent of the population automatically accepts those social burdens, the majority (90 percent) of the population could live without any risk of having social disadvantages (as shown in the simulation activity at the beginning of this workshop).

G. “Invisible People” - Why does it continue over the centuries?

The *Buraku* people are “invisible” in a certain sense, and yet they are still discriminated against. There are no distinctive physical features that distinguish them from other Japanese people. *Buraku* people cannot be identified in normal communication, and foreign observers often ask why this discrimination is possible. This discrimination is neither the remains of past bad legislation, nor the habit of the past feudal era alone; it is being reproduced even in the current modern era.

What explains this discrimination? It is caused by the perceived need of modern society to sacrifice the good of a minority for the benefit of society. It is a utilitarian calculation wherein the overall benefits to society outweigh the harm done to a minority. If a fixed group of people carried social burdens, the others would feel safe from the risk of carrying them.

There are three ways through which discrimination is sustained: *Koseki* (戸籍: family registration system³), *Buraku Chimei Soukan* (部落地名総鑑: underground publication of Buraku community address lists), and *Koshinjo* (興信所: private detective agencies). The first one, *Koseki*, a Japanese custom, identifies the Buraku people. Northeast Asian societies have the legal custom of permanent address registration, with the *Koseki* as its equivalent in Japan. Though people move away from their original place and change their residential address (*Jyuminhyou*), the *Koseki* remains unchanged. Second, the underground “Buraku list” publications were purchased by famous companies and ordinary people. The “Buraku list” indicates which permanent addresses are categorized as Buraku communities. Third, *Koshinjo*, private detective agencies search for people’s permanent address or family status. A law has been enacted to prohibit access to family records in local gov-

ernment offices, except by the members of the family or their authorized agents such as their lawyers. However, the discrimination has not totally been overcome.

II. To Learn Deeply from the Reality of Discrimination

To learn deeply from the reality of discrimination (「差別の現実によく学ぶ」: *Sabetsu no Genjitsu ni Fukaku Manabu*) is a common slogan of anti-discrimination educators in Japan. *Buraku sabetsu* in the modern age takes the following forms: pressure on marriage, pressure on employment, bullying, harassment, graffiti, discriminatory description in internet bulletin boards, and so on.

A. Statistics

Unfortunately, the 1990s statistics still indicate the difference between the “average” people’s living standard and the living standard of *Buraku* people. For example:⁴

- Prolonged absence in school: Average - 2.4 percent, *Buraku* - 4.5 percent
- Entry into university and junior college: Average - 40.7 percent, *Buraku* - 28.6 percent
- Households on welfare: Average - 1.4 percent, *Buraku* - 7.0 percent
- Company executives: Average - 6.0 percent, *Buraku* - 1.9 percent
- Annual Income of less than 0.5 million Yen: Average - 4.7 percent, *Buraku* - 10.3 percent

These situations seem to have improved a little at present; however, the gap still stands.

B. Ms. Hatsue Kobayashi’s (a coming-out writer) Talk in a TV Program⁵

A sensational TV discussion program broadcasted the challenging topic of *Buraku sabetsu*, and a coming-out writer, Ms. Hatsue Kobayashi introduced how *Buraku* people were discriminated against. She cited many examples, such as:

- » Bullying of her child in school (being excluded from lunch serving duty, getting locked inside the toilet, etc.)
- » Newcomers desperately explaining that they have no relatives in the area

» A small girl taking her grandmother to Ms. Kobayashi's home and explaining how evil she is, by pointing at the doorplate.

At the same program, Mr. Kenzo Tomonaga, the then Head Researcher from the *Buraku Kaiho Kenkyusho* (部落解放研究所: Buraku Liberation Research Institute⁶) introduced a statistic: 70 percent of nuclear powerplants in Japan were located in or near the Buraku communities. Ms. Kobayashi revealed as well that other public facilities have also been constructed in Buraku zones, and there have been serious power struggles between Buraku residents and the government. Due to the public's power to oppress, the apathy of the majority of ordinary people, and the customs that regard self-help actions as crude, she found no way to ensure respect for the human dignity of people in *Buraku* communities.

C. Current Main Cases of Discrimination

Buraku sabetsu shows its face in the modern Japanese society, such as in the following examples:

(1) Purchase by around one thousand six hundred companies, including big and famous companies, of private information from two detective agencies (1998)⁷ Many companies had contracts with the two detective companies to check individual information such as place of origin, personal beliefs, and political activities, when they recruit new staff members. The information was sent by fax, and disposed of immediately, in order to destroy the evidence.

(2) Compulsion on students to rewrite job interview report (2005). To improve the recruitment by companies of students from *Buraku* communities, schools requested students to report what were asked at the interview. Questions about place of origin, landmarks near their home, personal beliefs, for example, were regarded as inappropriate questions. A teacher instructed students to make false statements in response to such questions in order to save them from discriminatory treatment.

(3) Computerized *Buraku* lists (2006). As technology developed, *Buraku* lists were computerized that made it more difficult for people in anti-discrimination activities to find such **inappropriate publication**.

(4) Defamation in internet communication. The main method of bullying in school is in the internet or mobile phone e-mail communication. The attackers use fake names, and the bullied person cannot identify who has committed the humiliation. Bullying of *Buraku* people has also moved into

electronic communication. Many violent words are found on the internet bulletin boards, as well as bad words against foreigners and their countries.

III. Anti-discrimination Movements

The *Buraku* people, after a long struggle, started their own anti-discrimination movements.

a. Fruits of the Movements

A world famous declaration on human rights, *Suiheisha Declaration* (水平社宣言)⁸ was adopted in 1922 at the founding of Zenkoku Suiheisha (水平社: National Levelers League, 1922-1942). The declaration contained the principles of self-help, solidarity, being proud of one's self, etc. The flag of the movement (荊冠旗: Keikanki) had a crown of thorns design. The establishment of Zenkoku Suiheisha was an epoch-making event in the anti-discrimination movement history.

During the war period, Zenkoku Suiheisha faced extinction due to the unification of all parties in the war effort. At that time, they regarded unification as a significant opportunity to be recognized, by contributing to the effort to overcome the national crisis. It subsequently regretted this collaboration on the war effort. After the World War II, a National Committee for Buraku Liberation (部落解放全国委員会: Buraku Kaiho Zenkoku Iinkai, 1946-1955) was founded. Other organizations were also established as part of the movement.

b. Problems in Anti-Discrimination Movements

Unfortunately, the anti-Buraku discrimination movements faced some difficulties in recent decades. These difficulties are seen as having arisen from several factors:

1. Fragmentation of the movements that were supported by political parties.
2. Reports about alleged scandals involving a human rights organization and the administration of the human rights department in the local government.
3. Recent globalization of economy generated poorer people other than the *Buraku* people and focus seems to be weakening on the *Buraku* community.⁹

IV. Anti-Discrimination Laws

A. Special Legislation

Japan enacted in 1969 a special legislation (同和対策事業特別措置法: Douwa Taisaku Jigyō Tokubetsu Sochi Hou, Law for Special Measures for Dowa Projects) that mainly focused on the improvement of the economic status and living standards of Buraku communities, including the nomination of special areas and the provision of better social infrastructure. This law was amended several times that extended the period of implementation of the special measures to a total of about thirty years. In education, the Law for Human Rights Education and the Promotion of Enlightenment of Human Rights (人権教育及び人権啓発の推進に関する法律: Jinken Kyōiku Oyobi Jinken Keihatsu no Suishin ni Kansuru Houritsu) was enacted in 2000. This law was enacted in support of the United Nations' Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). This United Nations' Decade gained support worldwide.

B. Problems - the End of Special Legislation in 2002

This Law for Special Measures for Dowa Projects as amended expired in 2002. The government seemed to have taken the view that *Buraku sabetsu* had become less obvious and the *Buraku* communities seemed to have improved at least in the economic field. Recent thinking maintains that there should have been a basic law on the liberation of *Buraku* people and community. After the expiration of the special legal measure, anti-discriminatory lectures were no longer mandatory in the teacher licensure programs at the university, and about 40 percent of new teachers in private schools in Osaka have not learned about *Buraku sabetsu*.¹⁰ The recently published book of Kadooka, a *Buraku* writer, tells us that though discrimination became less severe in general, it still exists and violations of human rights continue.¹¹

V. Anti-Discrimination Education¹²

The anti-discrimination education movement had made much effort in empowering and supporting Buraku students by developing such systems as literacy education (識字教育: Shikiji Kyōiku:), free school textbook (教科書無償化: Kyōkasho Mushouka), and changes in the philosophy of scholarship (奨学金基準の変更: Shōgakukin Kijun no Henkou). Similar to the course guidance support material: the General Format of Curriculum Vitae

(統一応募用紙: Touitsu Oubo Youshi) required information on permanent address by writing the name of the prefecture only, and did not include other information such as identification of any ideology being supported, etc. The anti-discrimination education movement also carried out enlightenment education for the majority population.

Many teaching materials, reading materials, movies, etc., have been produced, and anti-discrimination educational programs have been introduced in the human rights education curriculum of schools. Recently, these human rights education initiatives have been linked to current trends in international education of using the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations International Year of Human Rights Learning (2009), etc.

A. Education of Empathy with Literature

Among many human rights education-teaching materials, the book entitled *Ningen* (にんげん、Human) is widely introduced in the Osaka area. It contains various stories on different topics such as: People with visual disabilities, Hansen's Disease, Antipersonnel Landmine, Ainu (Indigenous people in Japan), Zainichi Koreans (Koreans living in Japan), People with Special Needs, HIV carriers, Okinawans, Buraku discrimination, etc.¹³ The discussion of these themes, mainly during homeroom period or in moral education class, aims to develop the students' empathy with minorities or people in discriminated situation. The book is distributed to many schools in the Osaka area, and has an established reputation. However, the book does not focus much on the structural aspect of discrimination. The issues in the book have mainly been taught from the standpoint of humanities, not in a social science context.

B. Problems in Anti-discrimination Education

The anti-discrimination education program faced some problems. First, official support for human rights education weakened due to reduced budget after the expiration of the special legislation for empowering *Buraku* people and community. The printing of *Ningen* stopped and forced practitioners to distribute photocopies instead. The Osaka governor in late 2000s adopted the policy of minimizing the expenses of the Osaka prefectural government that led to reduced support for educational activities. Second, the expiration of the Law for Special Measures for Dowa Projects also contributed to the teachers' lack of knowledge about the *Buraku* issue, since university study

of the issue was no longer a mandatory requirement to obtain a teacher's license. Third, with many non-*Buraku* issues considered under human rights education, the *Buraku* issue was thereby de-mainstreamed. The expansion of the coverage of human rights education has many merits. Traditional anti-discrimination education practitioners regretted that the *Buraku* issue has come to be seen as much less important.

VI. Trial of the Structural Approach and the Viewpoint of Transformation (Simulation Study)

The anti-discrimination education program mainly employed humanistic ways of teaching that have good effect on students' reflection on their daily lives, and on mindset affected by prejudice.

But considering the issues involved, human rights education on *Buraku* discrimination requires more effective ways of teaching. The social-scientific view should be emphasized to overcome difficulties that still lie behind the superficial improvement in the understanding of the *Buraku* issue. While traditional education mainly focuses on the cultural violence aspect of *Buraku sabetsu*, there is a need to focus on its structural violence aspect under the new human rights education programs. People's actions and reactions around *Buraku sabetsu* must be included to uncover the structural violence aspect of the issue.

To observe the structural contradiction of conflict, simulation-styled class becomes prominent. In the structural approach of learning, the simulation of the *Buraku* issue discusses four social classes and explores the possibility of social change. The discussion stage re-evaluates the traditional society. The community discusses the important decision-making issues, including whether to go back to the stage of burden sharing or not. Other plans are of course welcomed. Human rights, especially regarding the *Buraku* issue, should be taught not just as a matter of personal ethics but also as a transformation of social structure, using the peace education perspective. This participatory method of learning should also be employed in other anti-discrimination issues.

A. Review of IIPE 2009 Simulation

The session at the 2009 IIPE was the first time that the simulation method was introduced to multicultural participants. The paper-rock-scissors game was too difficult for some participants from different cultures; how-

ever, many people cooperated in explaining the process, which has never been seen in my classroom. The discussion before voting produced various solutions: everybody should own some parts of the social burdens; responsibility should be shared on rotation basis, and so on. In one notable instance, one participant voluntarily owned some of the burdens of others (friends).

After the simulation exercise, the main topic discussed was the possibility of simulation method in teaching discrimination or human rights issues. My proposal was still a prototype and needed improvements; however the majority opinion maintained that the participatory method of human rights learning was worth trying.

In exploring the simulation study of discrimination using the 2009 IPE theme (Human Rights Learning as Peace Education - Pursuing Democracy in a Time of Crisis), the tension regarding the sharing of social burdens among participants (modified from the real discrimination situation) was presented as a crisis, while also raising the question: "Whose crisis?"

In support of democracy, the process should involve 1) discussion, 2) finding solution, and 3) transformation in democratic ways. Necessarily, this simulation study should aim at learning how to protect minorities from structural violence, and how to transform the distorted structure into a peaceful one, through peaceful means. This method is especially meaningful in multicultural situations, with human rights as the common language among peoples from many cultures.

B. Reviewing My Class

My fifteen years of experience in using this simulation method provides a basis for some conclusions regarding its use and for a review of the learning gained in addressing social problems in Japanese society.

The students' conclusions in sessions using the simulation method vary by group. Some classes were very positive, and adopted almost a unanimous agreement to change the situation in Stage 1. Other classes were negative to changing the situation in Stage 1, expressing lack of sympathy in their decision. The young people's flexibility leads to the discussion of many alternatives. For example, there were several ideas for transformation: rotating basis for burden sharing (as seen in 2009 IPE), introducing compulsory human rights education for people with "Happy?" cards, cutting the burden into smaller pieces to be shared by everybody, abandoning some industries or economic progress goals, etc. In all cases, the facilitator helped the students gain a deeper understanding of discrimination, using the technique

of comparing realities, finding the same phenomena in real disputes, etc. While not expected, the effects of empathy education were revealed through the simulation study; for example, deeper understanding of the victimized people, stronger motivation to know the realities, and so on. On the other hand, the readings-oriented approach of humanistic studies has attracted only sensitive students in my class.

In the process of developing this structural approach, I asked two expert teachers outside our school to review it. A very traditional teacher with rich experience gave a critical comment: it could be a little rude to simulate real wrenching discrimination situation as a “game,” it would be dangerous if a *Buraku* student would play the role of a victim, teachers could not always expect fruitful discussion among very young students, etc. The other, a middle-aged teacher, thought that this approach was rather necessary in the *Buraku* community because advocating for an appropriate concept of understanding the real system of discrimination could help overcome the discriminatory situation. Both comments provide very efficient guide in reviewing this type of teaching. Further, I had a couple of opportunities to demonstrate the method at teachers’ workshops in Japan, and had many comments of encouragement, and a few criticisms (including the fear of the possibility that the discussion could unwittingly become very serious).

Considering all the comments, I added as an improvement a short warm-up game before the simulation exercise to stimulate shy students and raise enthusiasm. Also, through facilitation, there should be affirmative response to any contribution by students to the discussion.

I have not used this simulation study in the *Buraku* community. However, I have asked two well-known researchers from the *Buraku* community to do so.

Conclusion

Buraku sabetsu has been discussed mainly at the individual level. For example, the traditional methodology in anti-discrimination education sees the overcoming of prejudice as an individual challenge to the victims. However, the structural approach is necessary. People belonging to the mainstream society should be involved in the process of overcoming social injustice and transforming the social structure.

Simulation studies can evoke positive attitudes among many people, especially the silent majority. Students can realize that democracy needs a wise

majority, including the majority's respect for the human rights of minorities, and its understanding of what the entire social system produces. This approach has the same orientation as conflict resolution in Peace Education, which aims to find ideas for transforming the contradictions in the societal structure.

The traditional approach of human rights education in Japan has often utilized humanistic methods of appreciation of written works of minority people. It has aroused empathy for the victimized people and their situation. This approach aims to transform the individual's mindset, values and way of thinking through reflection and change of perspective. On the other hand, the structural method emphasizes the objective and comprehensive understanding of the structure of discrimination, and encourages students to think of ideas on how to transform the entire system of the society. To educate on overcoming structural violence, like discrimination or oppression, the structural approach is preferable. Through participation as a player, winner, loser, bystander, etc., the students have a chance to experience the victims' perspective. After the simulation, students have a chance to look at the whole system of discrimination.

There are some critics opposed to the participatory method of human rights education as a kind of indoctrination.¹⁴ However, the process of discussion can include all types of values. With the conclusion of each simulation session, students have a chance to review the whole structure. Further, I find that the structural approach also very much nurtures empathy with the marginalized people.

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Endnotes

¹This vignette is extracted from real stories described in a book, *Hisabetsu Buraku no Seishun* (2003), by Nobuhiko Kadooka who came out as a Burakumin.

²The "Inquiry" method, which raises neutral questions to students in order to seek deeper problematique, is often used as Peace Education pedagogy. See Betty Reardon, "In order to create peaceful world - Human Rights, Gender, and Education," paper presented at a workshop held at Seisen University, Tokyo, Japan, 16-17 May 2009.

³It is the registration system for births, deaths, marriages and divorces of Japanese nationals.

⁴International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), IMADR-Japan Chapter, Buraku Liberation League (BL), and Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute (BLHRRRI), *Reality of Buraku Discrimination in Japan*, 2001. Full text of the publication available at http://blhrrri.org/blhrrri_e/Buraku_Reality/index.htm.

⁵“Jinken to Buraku Sabetsu [Human Rights and Buraku Discrimination],” *Asa made Nama-Terebi* (All-night Discussion TV series); TBS, 1989.

⁶The name of the institute has been changed to Buraku Liberation Human Rights Research Institute (BLHRRRI).

⁷This matter was not reported by the mainstream mass media since some of the mass media companies were also involved in the issue. Only the human rights movements reported this matter in their periodicals. Some local government leaders, for example the Minoo City mayor and chairperson of the municipal legislature, touched on this incident in their speeches at a public human rights overview meeting. The author learned about this from a veteran instructor of Shigaku Jin Ken (Human Rights) office.

⁸The full text of the declaration is available at BLHRRRI website (http://blhrrri.org/blhrrri_e/blhrrri/ebooksoo1.htm) and also at the HURIGHTS OSAKA website (www.hurights.or.jp/archives/other_documents/section1/1922/04/declaration-of-human-rights-in-japan.html).

⁹Information provided by a city hall staff from a local government in Shikoku area, interviewed at the workshop of Jinken Kyouiku Keihatsu Suishin Sentaa (人権教育啓発推進センター、The Center for Human Rights Affairs), 17 January 2008.

¹⁰This was revealed in a meeting for new teachers in the 2003 Shigaku Jin Ken, when the lecturer, Mr. Ninomiya Takashi, asked all the new teachers in Osaka Private Schools on the teaching of *Buraku sabetsu*.

¹¹Kadooka, op cit.

¹²This paragraph is mainly based on “Tomoni” and “Manabi” by Shigaku Jin Ken.

¹³Ningen Editing Committee, *Ningen: Hito, Kibou*, (2006). The publication of Ningen used to have the support of local governments until 2008.

¹⁴For example, Eiji Yagi and Osamu Umeda, *Ima Jinken Kyouiku wo Tou* [Now is the Time to Ask about Human Rights Education] (1999); Eiji Yagi and Osamu Umeda, *Jinken Kyouiku no Jissen wo Tou* [To Ask about Practices of Human Rights Education] (2002).