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Teaching a Topic Without Presenting It In-depth: Conflicts Regarding Teaching about Kamikaze Missions Among Social Studies Teachers

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Abstract

Although kamikaze missions are not frequently taught in history education, plays focusing on kamikaze are widely used in school education. This study examined the conflicts regarding teaching about kamikaze missions among junior high school social studies teachers in Kagoshima Prefecture, Japan. We investigated why social studies teachers believe that handling kamikaze missions in social studies is challenging while handling them in other activities, such as kamikaze plays, is comparatively easy. We interviewed eight teachers in Kagoshima Prefecture who had experience teaching about kamikaze missions in social studies classes. We conducted a qualitative analysis using NVivo14. The results revealed that teachers had emotional and epistemological conflicts in teaching about kamikaze missions in social studies, whereas these conflicts were less likely to occur regarding kamikaze mission plays. Furthermore, teachers attempted to create new lessons despite their conflicts. Our findings indicated the necessity to establish an environment for teachers to discuss the implications of teaching kamikaze missions in school education. Moreover, teachers require support from the educational administration and researchers to create lesson plans on controversial issues and difficult histories.

Keywords: Difficult history, Kamikaze mission, Teaching conflict, History education

Introduction

Kamikaze was a military operation organized by the Imperial Japanese Army at the end of the Asia-Pacific War. Kagoshima Prefecture was the central base of operation, with the largest number of sorties. Therefore, several museums are located in areas used as bases for kamikaze missions, such as Chiran, Kanoya, and Bansei. Many documents, including the wills of the kamikaze pilots, have been preserved. The Chiran Peace Museum, built on the former site of the Chiran Air Base, is one of the most visited museums in Japan, despite being located in a small town with a population of 13,000 people (Fukuma, 2015). Due in part to efforts to remember kamikaze missions and honor the people involved, kamikaze are considered an important part of history by many Kagoshima residents. However, perspectives regarding the way that kamikaze should be remembered, including whether the deaths of kamikaze pilots should be regarded as dying in vain or martyrdom and whether kamikaze

pilots who supported or fought against the war should be remembered, vary. Perceptions of these issues have changed over time; however, kamikaze remain a controversial subject (Fukuma, 2019). Thus, kamikaze history is considered difficult in Japanese society (Epstein & Peck, 2017).

Yamamoto (2022), a junior high school social studies teacher in Kagoshima Prefecture, found that social studies education regarding kamikaze missions in Kagoshima Prefecture is limited; however, many schools include kamikaze plays in educational activities outside social studies. The Period for Integrated Studies, which was implemented in primary and secondary schools in 2000, is a cross-curricular learning activity that allows students to voluntarily study cross-cutting and integrated issues. These activities are generally conducted on an individual grade basis and address contemporary issues, such as peace and international understanding, as well as issues related to the students' careers and personal future. Teachers of all subjects in that grade participate in this class.

Previous studies have examined teachers' struggles with teaching difficult history (Kello, 2016; Zembylas & Kambani, 2012; Zembylas & Loukaidis, 2021). These studies demonstrated that teachers experience epistemological and affective challenges, including emotional discomfort with teaching views that contradict national narratives, in dealing with difficult history in the classroom.

This study examined the conflicts and challenges in teaching about kamikaze missions among junior high school social studies teachers in Kagoshima Prefecture, Japan, and the role of history education in teaching about difficult history.

Literature review

Changes in Memory Regarding Kamikaze

Kamikaze operations were organized by the Imperial Japanese Army during the final stages of the Asia-Pacific War (October 1944). Kamikaze was an operation based on the assumption that the crew would die in the mission. The U.S. military did not expect kamikaze operations to be conducted regularly, and better results were achieved with early than conventional operations (Kurihara, 2015). However, due to the low performance of aircrafts, decline in pilot skills caused by the increasing number of deaths, and improved countermeasures against kamikaze missions by the U.S. military, the missions gradually became less successful. Although kamikaze missions became less effective against the U.S., they improved the morale of the Japanese people and continued to be used in the war (Koukami, 2017).

Previous studies have examined the emotions of pilots who participated in kamikaze missions, including whether they volunteered or were coerced. Testimonies and records of kamikaze operations, such as Records of Kamikaze Special Attack Units (Iguchi & Nakajima, 1951), describe whether the pilots volunteered or were coerced (Kurihara, 2015). Recent data, such as evidence of facilities for detaining pilots who failed kamikaze missions and returned as well as violence by superiors against pilots returning from kamikaze missions, suggest that pilots were likely not volunteers (Onuki & Watanabe, 2018). Moreover, studies have investigated the suffering and conflicts of Korean people forced to become kamikaze pilots under Japanese colonial rule (Kwon, 2022). In Japan, the deaths of kamikaze pilots are perceived as the foundation of postwar peace and prosperity (Ichinose, 2020). However, describing kamikaze missing and the deaths of kamikaze pilots is not simple, and comprehending this requires a complex historical understanding.

Research on how people in Japan remember kamikaze missions is also increasing. Fukuma (2007) analyzed the way kamikaze missions were remembered in Japan after the Asia-Pacific War and noted a tendency to judge the past based on the present perspective in discussions about whether kamikaze attacks represented martyrdom or death due to dogma. The martyrdom image of kamikaze missions projected in the media was multifaceted, with some questioning the war responsibility of the people and the Emperor himself for allowing the inhumane operation of kamikaze missions to be sustained. However, the way in which kamikaze missions are remembered in Japan has gradually changed. Recently, *The Eternal Zero* (Hyakuta, 2009), a novel about kamikaze pilots, has become popular. Kamikaze pilots' actions have been described as self-sacrifice. Chiran has been used as a location for self-development for athletes and employees (Inoue, 2019). More than 70 years after the Asia-Pacific War, most people who experienced the events first hand have disappeared, placing importance on not only the succession of memories of kamikaze but also the succession of wills of messages received from kamikaze pilots (Inoue, 2015). The succession of wills refers to a phenomenon in which, as war survivors pass away, their complex emotions, such as guilt and conflict, disappear; this leaves only the message passed on from the dead (Inoue, 2021). Thus, the perceptions and acceptance of kamikaze in Japan have changed dramatically with time.

Kamikaze Plays

Although research on kamikaze missions has been active in the fields of history and historical sociology, few historical educational practices use such research. Yamamoto (2022) reported on his educational practices regarding kamikaze in social studies and the Period for Integrated Studies. Likewise, Shinzawa (1998) described junior high school education in this field, whereas Yasui (2008) described university education. However, historical education focusing on kamikaze in postsecondary education is scarce. Some conservative educational groups have published special features on kamikaze in educational magazines. For instance, *Gendai Kyoiku Kagaku* (Modern Educational Science) ran a special feature in December 2011 on "Considering the Death of Kamikaze Pilots." Nevertheless, lesson examples are lacking, and teaching about kamikaze is challenging (Tani, 2006). A collection of elementary school lessons, including five social studies classes, was published in Kagoshima Prefecture, which had several key bases of kamikaze operations. However, these lessons focus on understanding the emotions of kamikaze pilots and do not consider the process of mobilizing the kamikaze attack crews for missions, namely whether they volunteered or were forced, questioning whether kamikaze missions were necessary (TOSS Kagoshima, 2003). This suggests that teachers may be hesitant to discuss kamikaze missions in class or publish about these lessons.

Nevertheless, kamikaze missions can be included in school education outside social studies. Many schools in Japan offer peace education, including school excursions to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some schools hold peace plays as part of their peace education. No systematic research has been conducted on the use of kamikaze plays in education. In Kagoshima Prefecture, kamikaze plays, which focus on the sortie of kamikaze pilots and their lives at the base, are popular. *Letters from My Brother*, scripted by Yamamoto (2022), has been re-enacted at more than 20 school festivals. Moreover, kamikaze plays have been reported in newspapers and other media. Kamikaze plays may be conducted as part of peace education during the Period for Integrated Studies or performed as club activities, such as in drama clubs. Thus, Kagoshima Prefecture explores kamikaze in educational activities outside of history education.

Theoretical Framework

The difficulty in teaching about kamikaze missions is likely related to the teacher conflict inherent in dealing with difficult history (Epstein & Peck, 2017). Previous studies have evaluated teachers' stances on dealing with controversial issues and revealed varied factors influencing their decisions to express their views (Iwasaki, 2016; Kawaguchi et al., 2022). Studies have demonstrated the relationship between teachers' perceptions of political neutrality, risk of addressing controversial issues, and beliefs about overcoming them. Several studies have shown that teachers intentionally avoid controversial issues due to community or school policies (McCully & Kitson, 2005; Miller-Lane et al., 2006). Some teachers also cite low confidence as a factor in their avoidance of controversial issues (Yoshida, 2022).

The conflict of teaching difficult history includes not only political neutrality and risk but also the teacher's emotional discomfort in challenging the dominant state narrative in the context of the powerful nation-state structure (Zembylas et al., 2012) and emotional dilemmas of breaking social and moral ties with their communities (Zembylas & Loukaidis, 2021). Moreover, the relationship between a teacher's identity and the issue being addressed influences teaching and teachers' positions (Kello, 2016).

However, teaching about kamikaze may involve a nuanced pattern of conflict, which has not been demonstrated in previous studies. Teachers in Kagoshima tend to struggle with teaching about kamikaze in social studies classes but not in other educational activities. Studies investigating the relationship between the conflict of teaching about difficult history and educational activities other than social studies are lacking. This could help resolve conflicts regarding difficult history in education.

Following Lewin (2017), we define conflict as "a situation in which two forces acting on a person are opposite in direction and almost equal in strength" (p. 258). Lewin (2017) classified conflict into three categories: (1) approach–approach, in which one can only choose one of two desirable options; (2) avoidance–avoidance, in which one must choose between two undesirable options; and (3) approach–avoidance, in which one must choose between two options that have both positive and negative aspects. As teaching kamikaze missions is challenging in history education but possible in other educational activities, this can be considered an approach–avoidance conflict.

Victimhood nationalism likely influences the ambivalent type of conflict that occurs when teachers teach about Kamikaze missions (Lim, 2022). Kamikaze attacks were acts of aggression committed by the Japanese military against the United States. Nevertheless, how Kamikaze missions are remembered, with pilots perceived as symbols of peace, has become a dominant narrative in Japan. The association between this way of remembering and teachers' methods of teach about them should be examined.

Teachers' educational behavior, its subject, and its purpose must be considered to understand the methods of teaching about kamikaze missions in Kagoshima Prefecture. This study explored the conflict of teachers' teaching about kamikaze missions from the perspective of a sociocultural approach (Barton & Levstik, 2004). This qualitative study investigated how junior high school teachers in Kagoshima Prefecture teach about kamikaze and the conflicts they face in teaching this subject. We posed the following research questions:

- (1) Why do social studies teachers face difficulty in teaching about kamikaze in social studies but can address this topic in other activities, such as kamikaze plays?
- (2) What conflicts exist in the difficulty of teaching about kamikaze missions?

Methods

Research Context and Participants

Data were collected between March and April, 2023. In the preliminary study, we interviewed Mr. Yamamoto, a pioneering practitioner, to learn about the difficulties related to teaching about kamikaze and classroom practice in Kagoshima Prefecture. The preliminary research indicated the presence of conflict in teaching about kamikaze missions. Subsequently, we conducted interviews with eight teachers who were introduced to us by faculty members of X University in Kagoshima Prefecture. All participants provided written informed consent before participation. Participation was voluntary and participants did not receive any incentive. In addition, the names of participants were anonymized and descriptions that could identify their schools were avoided. Semi-structured interviews (Flick, 2002) were conducted either online or in person and lasted 49–79 minutes.

Six of the eight interviewees had more than 20 years of teaching experience, and two teachers were mid-career. Teachers with less teaching experience (1–5 years) were excluded from the study, as teachers with more teaching experience are more likely to have multiple opportunities to teach about kamikaze missions (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participants and teaching methods

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Years of teaching	Time / Method	Teaching method for kamikaze missions
Arita	Male	20–30	73 / Online	Teaching as part of the process to defeat
Bando	Male	20–30	49 / Face-to- face(with Komi)	Teaching as part of the process to defeat
Komi	Female	20–30	49 / Face-to- face(with Bando)	Teaching as part of the process to defeat
Deguchi	Male	6–10	76 / Online	Teaching as part of the process to defeat
Edo	Male	20–30	79 / Online	Asking, “Would you go on a Kamikaze mission?”
Fuji	Male	20–30	63 / Online	Teach about the war experiences of the local people who had a base for Kamikaze pilots.
Goto	Male	30–40	78 / Online	Teaching as part of the process to defeat
Haru	Male	6–10	73 / Online	Balancing various views regarding kamikaze based on research conducted by students.

Data Analysis

The recorded interview data were transcribed, and the participants were asked to review the transcripts. Subsequently, a qualitative analysis of the content related to the themes based on the research questions was conducted. The contents were coded, and concepts were generated by comparing codes (Sato, 2008). NVivo 14 was used in the process of coding and conceptualizing the textual data. The coding was conducted by the first author, and the results were checked by the second author to determine meaning. In addition, a hierarchy chart was distributed in the process of broadly sharing the analysis among the authors (Furukawa, 2019). In this way, we were able to understand the differences between the emotional conflicts of instructors teaching using

kamikaze plays in social studies classes and the diversity of difficulties in teaching about kamikaze in social studies. Subsequently, the results were presented to a research group of teachers and researchers in Japan to examine the validity of the interpretation of the key theme, “Teaching a Topic Without Presenting It In-Depth.” In addition, the results of the analysis were presented to the eight teachers who participated in the study to confirm the validity of the researchers’ interpretations and whether the teachers consented to the researchers’ use of their statements.

Results

Teaching about Kamikaze in Social Studies

Table 1 presents the participants’ characteristics and teaching methods. Eight teachers identified four patterns regarding teaching about kamikaze missions in social studies. The most common position was to teach it as part of the process leading up to the defeat of the war (five out of eight teachers). Teachers who took this position did not focus on kamikaze, as this topic is mentioned only once in history textbooks in Japan. They positioned kamikaze operation as a symbol of Japan’s war situation being pushed to the brink or presented it to help students understand the situation in Kagoshima prior to the defeat. These teachers attempted to teach the subject with as few values as possible and included critical nuances to ensure that the explanation would not praise the spirit of martyrdom. For instance, Komi stated that she would treat the subject matter in the classroom in a light-hearted manner and expressed concern about discussing the beauty of people who fought for their country. Arita said that the majority of people selected as kamikaze pilots were young. In class, Arita asked students imagine how pilots would have lived after the war if they had survived, and how those who ordered the kamikaze missions would have felt.

Some participants used kamikaze as a subject to convey the local war experience. Fuji wanted students to understand that the area in which they lived was at the front line of the war and deeply involved in kamikaze operations and encouraged students to consider that the war was close. Fuji toured war sites with his students and used classes to help them understand that the residents of the area opposed the construction of a new base after the war due to the tremendous damage to the area caused by kamikaze missions. Through this education, Fuji hoped to nurture future successors. Fuji’s classes were unique in that they did not deal directly with kamikaze operation or kamikaze pilots but rather focused on the realities of local wartime life and the damage caused.

Edo asked his students, “Would you go on a kamikaze mission?” In addition, Edo took students to the Chiran Peace Museum to help them understand the background and process of kamikaze missions, followed by discussing the thoughts of kamikaze pilots in his class. However, he reported that understanding the feelings of kamikaze pilots by putting the students in their shoes was difficult and that the students’ opinions were superficial. Furthermore, he stated that even if he had conducted a prior study at the museum, he would have spent time reflecting on the complex background and circumstances of kamikaze missions, as the museum has few descriptions of the historical background of the kamikaze missions.

Finally, some participants balanced various perspectives on kamikaze missions based on the students’ research. Haru conducted a lesson about people’s lives during the war and encouraged the students to consider each kamikaze pilot as one position. Haru indicated that he did not know everything about kamikaze missions but said that he attempted to ensure that diverse views were presented in the classroom, without extreme opinions

overwhelming the topic. Although Haru was the youngest teacher interviewed, he was the only one who did not find it difficult to teach about kamikaze missions. This was due to his openness to the various narratives of kamikaze missions and his feeling that it was not necessary for teachers to have a firm opinion on the topic.

There are at least two conflicting opinions about kamikaze missions. And this is Kagoshima Prefecture, where there are memorials for kamikaze pilots in Kanoya, Chiran, and Banzei. Even Kagoshima City was burned in an air raid, and you can learn about the history of air raids everywhere. We are open to the idea that we have to mention two ideas when we include all of these things. I have the feeling that even if we don't mention them, they will be mentioned somewhere. (...) I think that teachers are under no pressure to do so, and I don't think that there will be any negative or positive effects. I think it would be good if we could adjust our thinking so that it is not too much to one side and give them a direction to think about together. (Haru)

Haru recognized that he was "forced to deal with" the discourse about kamikaze pilots in the outside community. In this context, he defined the scope of his own responsibility as a teacher as "being a link to the real society" and "making adjustments so that students' opinions do not get swept away." This could be the reason he did not feel conflicted regarding teaching about kamikaze.

Thus, the eight teachers dealt with kamikaze missions in their social studies classes in several ways. The junior high school social studies textbook only mention the Imperial Japanese Army used Special Attack Units (kamikaze) in connection with the Battle of Okinawa. As the same page also describes other historical events, including the Great Tokyo Air Raid, atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Potsdam Declaration, teachers could choose to avoid dealing with kamikaze in class. However, all participants felt that they needed to address this issue. When asked why the participants wanted to teach this subject, they stated that they had "visited the Chiran Peace Museum since childhood, either with family or for school events" (Bando), that this topic "must not be forgotten" (Goto), that they "have a sense of responsibility" (Haru), and that they "feel that kamikaze should not be forgotten." As the participants taught about kamikaze missions in their classes, they saw value in teaching this subject.

Difficulties in Teaching about Kamikaze Missions in Social Studies

All participants except Haru felt that it was difficult to teach about kamikaze missions.

I think we can learn better if we dig deeper, but we haven't been able to do that. It's strange that we don't have to do it because it's compulsory education. I think we must make students learn, but we are not really doing it. (Arita)

I think that the more we try to go into it, the more difficult it will be to steer the course, and it is difficult to go into this topic in depth. The difficulty of teaching kamikaze missions can be expressed as, "We should teach this topic, but we can't explore it deeply." (Deguchi)

The participants mentioned three major reasons why they felt conflicted about not teaching about kamikaze, despite believing this topic should be taught. First, they reported two conflicting feelings: resisting the glorification of kamikaze and guilt about demeaning kamikaze pilots because criticizing kamikaze missions may lead to criticizing the pilots.

I don't think we can deny or affirm the young men who went on kamikaze missions. We can think of it as a beautiful way to die, or we can think of it as a job well done for Japan. However, if you look at it from a different perspective, other countries might call it terrorism or something like that, to put it badly.

But in those days, the pilots had no choice, and they were brainwashed in some way. They probably went on kamikaze missions because they wanted to do it for Japan... That's right. That's why I don't teach them about strategies and so on. (Fuji)

Several concerns can be identified in Fuji's statement. First, there is a logical but intuitively difficult distinction between holding or teaching about an opinion about the pros and cons of a kamikaze mission and evaluating kamikaze pilots. Second, teachers may be concerned that including these evaluations in the class may cause reactions in the outside world. In addition, Fuji became aware of these concerns after telling his own story.

Second, the participants were unsure of how to take a stance on the various positions and narratives regarding kamikaze missions. For instance, Deguchi was often concerned that his comments in class might be swayed by some position. As kamikaze missions reveal positionality, he was cautious about what he said. Furthermore, the fragmented nature of memories regarding kamikaze hinders teaching about them.

Edo was concerned that many of the letters and wills of kamikaze pilots were censored and could not be used as teaching materials to reveal the true feelings of kamikaze pilots, and that the fragmentary nature of the information provided by the few surviving kamikaze pilots would change the way children perceive the experience, depending on how they are shown. Moreover, Edo was concerned about complaints from parents and other concerned parties. Edo explained that teaching about kamikaze missions is like teaching the pros and cons of nuclear power in an area where there is a nuclear power plant.

Bando remarked, "I have a lot of information inside me, but I feel like I'm going to talk about it all the time." Some of the participants with mixed feelings about teaching kamikaze mission were concerned about providing excessive information and opinions. Other participants said that it was difficult to teach appropriately, as they had strong ideas about kamikaze missions.

With this variety of positions and ideas, teachers faced difficulty in reconstructing fragmented memories of kamikaze missions as lessons. In addition, teachers' thoughts and position on kamikaze missions were included in classes, and teachers found it difficult to adopt took neutral positions.

Third, various positions and narratives led some teachers to lack confidence in teaching because they did not fully grasp the concept of kamikaze missions. Some teachers also cited their own perception of kamikaze missions as an issue. Fuji stated, "I think there is a lack of study on my part." However, some teachers cited practical issues in their social studies classes, such as not being able to come up with questions to help students understand the reality of kamikaze pilots.

I can't think of that last question anyway. (...) I don't want to go on a kamikaze mission, but I have to. If I can find that question, I can make it into a lesson. For example, we can try to approach it in relation to the system of education. I think it can be said that the modern state has a high affinity with war. I would also like to make them think about the logic of those who give other orders. (...) But I just can't come up with a question to ask the students at the end.

Edo was a central player among social studies teachers in Kagoshima Prefecture and was familiar with previous practices on the theme of kamikaze missions, such as Yamamoto (2022) and Shinzawa (1998). After referring to such lessons, he was not satisfied with his previous lessons. However, he felt that sharing his issues with other teachers was difficult due to a lack of case studies on kamikaze missions.

The premise of these three factors related to the difficulty of teaching kamikaze missions in social studies seems to be the assumption that the teacher must have a firm perception of the subject and be objective

in asking students questions. However, capturing the full picture of kamikaze missions is difficult, as their evaluation is socially and ideologically divided. In addition, distinguishing between evaluating kamikaze missions and pilots is challenging, complicating teachers' perception of kamikaze missions. This contributes to the difficulty of generating essential questions for teaching about kamikaze missions.

Kamikaze Plays

In schools in Kagoshima Prefecture, kamikaze missions are presented outside social studies, such as in integrated studies. This often takes the form of plays. The interviews revealed six patterns of kamikaze plays:

(1) A play on the will of kamikaze pilots

Junior high school students playing kamikaze pilots give impassioned speeches about the wills of kamikaze pilots who flowed away from the base in Kanoya.

(2) A play set at Tomiya restaurant

The play depicts the relationship between Tome Torihama, the proprietress of Tomiya Restaurant, which was a place of relaxation for the personnel of the Chiran Air Base and kamikaze pilots, and their emotional conflicts.

(3) A play recreating kamikaze mission experienced by the local community.

The play is based on the testimonies of local residents who sent off kamikaze pilots, some of whom regretted not being able to go into battle or were victims of air raids. The play focuses on the relationship between the local community and kamikaze missions. Junior high school students interviewed by the testifying residents were given a message to live life to the fullest in the present.

(4) A play that sublimates into how we live our lives

Junior high school students living in the present go back in time to meet kamikaze pilots and, through their relationship with these pilots, think about how they should live in the present day.

(5) A play focusing on family members who supported kamikaze pilots

The focus is not on kamikaze pilots but on the relationships between their families and the people around them.

(6) Examining kamikaze missions from a military journalist's perspective

The main character, a military reporter, goes to kamikaze mission base in Chiran to cover various scenes of kamikaze missions.

Kamikaze plays are not performed in every school every year but are practiced and transmitted in a variety of ways. Kamikaze mission plays are relatively easy, as teachers' conflicts associated with trying to teach about kamikaze missions in social studies classes can be avoided.

First, Kagoshima Prefecture has a school culture that emphasizes peace education, and students tend to visit the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum on school trips. Holding peace plays, including kamikaze plays, as part of peace education is customary. Bando described kamikaze plays as "the Japanese language teacher writes the scenario, the science teacher writes the scenario, and so on. Teachers who like that kind of thing make it. Others make them because someone has to, so they make them to run for office" (Bando) They are created by people who want or have to make them. In addition, peace education occurs during the Period for Integrated Studies. One of the goals of the Period for Integrated Studies is to find questions from the real world and real life, set issues by oneself, gather information, organize and analyze information, and summarize and express information (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2019). Thus, peace education is

centered on student-centered activities. Students may visit the Chiran Peace Museum during their studies. Some students are impressed by kamikaze mission pilots during the storytellers' lectures. Thus, kamikaze mission plays are created. Some scenarios for the plays are created mainly by students, whereas others are created by teachers. However, among the participants, only Fuji and Haru have been directly involved in creating the plays. As Arita mentioned, the other teachers either did not get involved in the content of the play or followed up with students afterward, ensuring that the play not be too critical of the suicide mission or those involved in it. According to Arita, scenes of violence and expressions of death are removed from these plays to avoid a critical view of Kamikaze missions.

I don't really deal with the actual, historical interpretation of the damage. However, I am a social studies teacher, so they ask me. I wonder if this scene is correct for the time period. (...) But we still don't want to describe the military. The Imperial Japanese Army and Navy were all very strict and violent. I wondered if I could include such scenes. I talked to the other teachers, and we decided not to do that kind of scene. It was also a school scene. Other teachers were also concerned about it, and they said, "Let's refrain from using it." Even if it was a play, there was talk that it would be wrong to have such violent scenes between children. But we talked about cutting it out. (...) We kept the scenes in which the superior officers were strict with the enlisted men to a minimum. (Arita)

In school peace education, kamikaze plays are centered on a scenario in which the kamikaze pilots are viewed as sacrifices for the sake of peace in Japan. Therefore, describing the violence involved in the kamikaze mission and holding the play accountable for the mission are excluded as they are considered inappropriate. Arita used the term "neutrally" in a subdued tone to describe his own involvement in the creation of the series of plays shown above, but one could say that Arita's belief that his non-confrontational perspective is "neutral" is indicative of the typical attitude of Japanese social studies teachers who seek to avoid confrontation. The six teachers did not consider Kamikaze plays easy to teach; however, they did not face the same conflicts as in social studies because they were not in charge of creating the plays.

Fuji and Haru have created kamikaze plays in the past (Type 3 and 4, respectively). However, as this was during the Period for Integrated Studies, and due to the nature of the play, it focused on applying this knowledge to the students' future lives. Therefore, in creating the play, the school actively allowed a fictional aspect not seen in history studies by asking the students to compare their real lives with the lives of the kamikaze pilots and to think about their future way of life.

Haru: In the Period for Integrated Studies (...) how should I live my life? What should I do as a junior high school student in this era of peace? How should I live my high school life? How should I live my daily life now? I believe that the Period for Integrated Studies is the process of expressing feelings such as changing one's mind and becoming more positive. Through the play, students are encouraged to think about such things.

Interviewer: Do you remember what the students were thinking when you put on the play?

Haru: That's pretty common. It seems that the conflict of kamikaze pilots who can't do what they want to do has a considerable impact on them. They had to laugh even when they didn't want to. Or, even though they were crying, they had to leave a masterful poem of resignation in order to be honored. Such

oppression and the harsh environment peculiar to wartime seem to become more real and intense for children as they learn through research. I looked at myself and asked, “How am I now?” Some students think that they need to change the way they treat others, such as devoting themselves to the things they want to do, engaging in club activities, studying to get into the school of their choice, and so on. Or they need to take care of their classmates and parents. There is a pattern of doing one’s best for self-realization. I think there is often a pattern of taking good care of those around them.

Thus, kamikaze plays are a necessary part of peace education in schools, and teachers, whether actively or passively, must participate in the creation and facilitation of the plays. As child-centered activities are desired, teachers are rarely asked to be aware of history. The fictional nature of plays is permitted because they are part of the Period for Integrated Studies. Finally, students are allowed to sublimate the story in their own way of life. Therefore, the participants were less likely to have conflicts in organizing plays about kamikaze than teaching this subject in social studies.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results revealed that teaching about kamikaze missions in social studies was difficult for the participants, whereas presenting kamikaze mission plays was easier. The participants recognized that they must teach students about kamikaze missions but cannot explore this topic deeply. In addition, some teachers faced difficulties not only associated with controversial issues, such as outside interference in dealing with kamikaze missions in the classroom, but also emotional conflicts arising from their lack of firm recognition of kamikaze missions. Moreover, we found that conflicts can be avoided or resolved in peace studies by not intervening or sublimating kamikaze mission plays, thus increasing its practicability. According to Lewin (2017), teaching kamikaze missions in social studies classes can be said to lead to an “approach-avoidance” type of conflict, which combines the feeling of needing to seriously learn about the nation and its people (who allowed the recklessness of the kamikaze missions) with the fear of such education leading to criticism of the kamikaze pilots and the need to be sensitive to their diverse positions. Kamikaze plays, as an educational activity that involves fictionality and goals that differ from those of social studies, make it difficult to feel the conflicts that one would experience in a social studies class. In other words, the plays create new educational possibilities for teaching difficult historical topics, but they also lead to a distraction from the original education that must be addressed in the social studies class.

Inoue (2019) noted that teaching about kamikaze missions in school focuses on their recklessness and stupidity and criticizing the military, including describing the misery of war and vowing to avoid war. Teaching about kamikaze missions is conducted as part of peace education, which teaches students not to start a war again by rejecting kamikaze missions. Some teachers implicitly opposed kamikaze missions or taught about local history critical of kamikaze missions, or war in general, and opposed establishing bases. However, their teaching did not condemn all kamikaze missions. Furthermore, a sublimation to students’ lives occurred through kamikaze plays, which resemble the pattern of inheritance of wills (Inoue, 2015, 2021). The historical shift toward remembering kamikaze missions (decontextualization of historical awareness) was a result of simultaneous events in the context of peace and social studies education. However, teaching in this way can also be seen as causing a “collective occlusion” that leads various historical memories about kamikaze attacks in a certain

direction while making other memories less prominent (Wineburg, 2017).

In a broader context, this education represents a power balance of victimhood nationalism (Lim, 2022). Lim (2022, p. 62) described the relationship between kamikaze missions and victim-conscious nationalism as follows:

Perhaps the most dramatic example of war dead worship is the ritual for the victims of kamikaze suicide attacks. (...) Their pure deaths are easily sublimated into a national narrative whose mother tongue is “the connection between the dead and the souls of generations yet unborn. The anecdote about Tome Torihama, the proprietress of Tomiya, a restaurant near the Chiran Kamikaze missions base in Kagoshima Prefecture, and the young Kamikaze pilots, rooted the group psychology of war dead worship as a moving memory of victim-conscious nationalism.

Although teaching about kamikaze as a subject of national negligence, the history of colonial rule, and responsibility for the operation is possible, only one teacher in the surveyed area focused on local resistance. Research has shown that teachers cannot overcome victimhood nationalism, which has taken root in Japan.

Finally, we examined the possibility of covering kamikaze missions in the social studies classroom. Gluck (2019) stated that the purpose of learning about Japan’s decision to go to war is not for the sake of never repeating it again in the abstract but to consider future responsibilities. Learning in detail about the purpose, results, and process of kamikaze missions would lead to a critical analysis of the image of the martyrdom of kamikaze pilots, as well as the nation that ordered the mission and those who were complicit in it. The tendency of teachers to avoid such negative and controversial historical events has been noted by many researchers; however, in participatory and pluralistic democratic societies, the national narrative becoming singular and disagreements and oppression being forgotten is harmful (Barton & Levstik, 2004). If the content of the kamikaze mission is not explored in social studies classes while kamikaze plays are simultaneously accepted in school education, it is highly likely that a single narrative will be passed down, which is undesirable for historical education.

The participants felt that they had to teach about kamikaze as teachers in Kagoshima Prefecture. Some of the teachers were interested in reconsidering kamikaze missions in the context of the war in Ukraine; delving into specific facts rather than spiritualism, such as investigating the facts of kamikaze missions in familiar areas, and clarifying the social structure that supported kamikaze operations through daring to focus on individual kamikaze pilots; exploring the responsibility of kamikaze missions and group mentality, as structural similarities exist between kamikaze missions and social problems, such as nuclear power plants; and learning about the various positions of the students regarding kamikaze missions.

Inoue (2021) suggested the need to discover the intrinsic logic of kamikaze missions rather than condemning them based on an external criterion. The participants conceived the question of whether mobilization similar to a kamikaze mission is something that cannot happen in today’s society. In the interview, Edo said, “The difficulty is, after all, that there are so few cases that teachers have dealt with. One reason is that it is difficult to share the actual situation.” Teachers in Kagoshima Prefecture lack a shared understanding of how to teach about kamikaze missions. An environment where teachers can discuss the implications of teaching kamikaze missions and receive support from the educational admiration should be created to materialize their ideas for teaching controversial issues and difficult history (Kello, 2016; Pace, 2019). In this regard, Yamamoto’s recent publication of his own practice on teaching kamikaze missions led some of the interviewed teachers to

say that they had learned from him. Based on the results of historical research on kamikaze missions, which has been increasing in recent years, social studies researchers will be required to discuss possible practices with teachers and to encourage instructors who are conflicted about teaching difficult history to rise to the occasion.

Limitations

This study had some limitations. This study focused on junior high school social studies teachers. However, social studies teachers are not the only ones involved in teaching about kamikaze missions. Kamikaze plays are organized by teachers in charge of different subjects, from elementary to high school. If a decontextualization of historical perceptions (Inoue, 2019) regarding kamikaze missions is occurring, whether other teachers are conflicted regarding teaching about kamikaze missions should be considered.

Moreover, the interviews inquired about teachers' experiences with and difficulties in teaching about kamikaze. Teachers' involvement in and struggles with teaching about kamikaze in social studies and in integrated learning time differed. Therefore, we emphasized the differences in educational activities. In addition, as we anticipated difficulties in directly discussing this topic, we elicited narratives using analogies, such as "What topics are similar to the difficulties in dealing with kamikaze missions?" Therefore, the difficulty in teaching may have been overemphasized in our attempts to elicit relevant narratives. Furthermore, the participants' understanding of the purpose of the interview may have influenced the results.

Finally, the survey methodology was based on interviews, and we did not directly observe the content or creation process of the social studies lessons and plays. Future studies should include more participants to identify differences in perception by school type and clarify the educational potential of teaching about kamikaze missions by delving into the educational practices of specific teachers.

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