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**Learning from Disasters:**  
**Japan, Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region in History**

On 1 September 1923, a massive earthquake followed by fires destroyed Japan's capital city, Tokyo. In addition to the heavy toll it took on people's lives and property, the disaster had a huge impact on schools and school children. In the short term, the first priority of Japanese educators was to resume schooling and within six weeks many school children had returned to the classroom. For the long term, however, the most important lesson government officials learnt from this unprecedented disaster was that a seismically active nation such as Japan needed to be prepared for future disasters. The key to achieving disaster preparation, they concluded, was through schools and education. Specifically educators employed two important strategies: first, to build schools able to withstand natural hazards in the future; and second, to increase the physical and psychological resilience of children by teaching them knowledge of disaster prevention and preparedness.

In this paper I argue that today, more than eight decades later, the global community can learn many lessons from the Great Kantō Earthquake and other such disasters in history about how to utilise educational institutions in order to raise awareness of disaster preparation.