

## History and Overview of Soka Education: Practical Implications

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Good morning to all of you. I am Hiroko Tomioka, from Faculty of Education, Soka University in Japan. Let me forthwith begin by expressing my profound gratitude to Philippine East University, that accepting us like this live-video conference style. I am very honored and appreciated to have the opportunity to present about Soka education and some of my research outcomes today.

In my lecture, I would like to talk about mainly three points. First one is about what the Soka education is. I will refer to Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the father of Soka education, and his thought in terms of purpose of education and the definition of happiness. The second point is about Soka education today. I will quote from some of Dr. Ikeda's lectures and words regarding education. We can see the essential elements of humanistic education and how Soka education was expanded in the world. The third point is about the practical dimensions of Soka education. After introducing Soka school system and school principles, I would like to discuss some findings of my research. I have been conducting qualitative research with Dr. Nantarat Charoenkul (Assistant professor in Chulalongkorn University in Thailand), which is about the conceptual framework of Soka education. We conducted the semi-structured interview with teachers and students in Tokyo Soka schools last year, and we attempted to explore unique and significant characteristics of Soka education. Today I will talk about some of what we found in our research.

### **What is Soka Education?**

Soka education was found by Japanese educator and philosopher Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944), who developed humanistic education based on "Value-creating" philosophy during 1930-1940s. Makiguchi was a reformist educator, geographer, and the 1st president of the Soka Gakkai. According to his theory, the purpose of education is to facilitate a lifetime of happiness and fulfillment for the learner. The ability to create value is synonymous with happiness.

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Makiguchi's work was nurtured and expanded by Josei Toda (1900-1958), and his successor Daisaku Ikeda (1928-). Makiguchi coined the term "SOKA" by abbreviating the Japanese phrase *kachi sozo*, meaning value creation. According to Makiguchi, value creation is the capacity to find meaning, to enhance one's own existence and contribute to the well-being of others under any circumstance. This capacity of value creation is what Ikeda and Makiguchi mean by "happiness." "Happiness" was, for Makiguchi, the very purpose of education, and the very purpose of life. All his ideas about education centered on this belief. Happiness comes from the ability to create value for the benefit of the self as well as the benefit of the others. For him, happiness is not a point or a destination, but it is the process, it is a journey, and the journey of creating value.

### Soka Education Today

Soka (value-creating) education takes the human being as most important elements, and it respects the life of dignity and fulfillment of humanity in each individual. Furthermore, Soka education aims raising self-reliant person who can create value and can contribute the society. According to Dr. Ikeda, education is not simply the transmission of knowledge. It is not simply the development of talent. Education is a great enterprise of steadily and surely passing on the fullness of humanity.... Education is a process of becoming fully human. He says that the human being is the point to which we must return and from which we must depart anew. In addition, Ikeda emphasizes the importance of trust between teacher and student, and he said that the teacher's depth of character is crucial in education. He emphasized interaction between teacher and student. In Dr. Ikeda's lecture titled "*Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship*" in Columbia University, Teachers College in 1996, he highlighted that the teacher is the most important element of the educational environment. This creed of Makiguchi is the unchanging spirit of Soka Education.

Makiguchi, Toda, and Ikeda have strong peace orientations. Dr. Ikeda emphasizes the importance of education in society, and he proposed the new paradigm of "Society for EDUCATION," not "Education for SOCIETY." It means that the world peace will be constructed by making the good society that enables to conduct good education. Because the education is the only way to become truly human, and the only way to change the society. Therefore, Dr. Ikeda therefore gave the highest possible priority to the work of education.

Dr. Ikeda fulfilled the vision of a network of Soka schools from kindergarten to university. Soka junior and high school was founded in 1968, as the first school in Soka school system. The core practices of Soka education can be currently found in the 18 schools of the Soka school system: six kindergartens in Brazil, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore; two

elementary schools in Japan and one in Brazil; two junior high schools and high schools in Japan and one in Brazil; Soka Junior Women's College in Tokyo; Soka University in Tokyo; and Soka University of America in the United States. Both Kansai and Tokyo Soka High Schools (2015 and 2016, respectively) have been selected by the Japanese Education Ministry as two of 56 schools in the "Super Global High Schools" project.

### **Practical Dimensions of Soka Education**

In Japan, Soka school system has one kindergarten (Hokkaido), two elementary schools (Tokyo and Osaka), two junior and senior high schools (Tokyo and Osaka), and one university in Tokyo, Hachioji. These Soka schools demonstrate the general orientation of such values:

- (1) Uphold the dignity of life
- (2) Respect individuality
- (3) Build bonds of lasting friendship
- (4) Oppose violence
- (5) Lead a life based on both knowledge and wisdom

In order to explore the characteristics of Soka Education at the elementary and secondary level, we have been conducting the qualitative research in Soka schools. The semi-structured interviews were administrated with totally 27 Tokyo Soka school principals, teachers and students in total. Research instruments included documentations of student performance reports, positive notes, school curriculum, and school handbook. Samples of interview questions to teachers are as follows:

- Curriculum, instructional activities, and assessment, as well as student affairs highlighting teacher-student relations, both in co-curricular and extracurricular activities.
- Teachers' roles in providing support for teachers and students in any collaborative teaching and learning activities and in implementing the core values or principles of value creating education in schools.
- Approaches of cultivating trust and confidence in relationship between teachers and students.
- How to impart some key global citizens' characteristics.

Samples of interview questions to students and alumni students are as follows:

- The most impressive experience on the value creating education.
- Their views on global citizenship and their inspiration to become global citizens.

The research findings turned out that the conceptual framework of Soka education comprised 5 key characteristics:

(1) respects human value of oneself and others to support harmonious coexistence, being aware of diversity and cross-cultural understanding as well as to build bonds of lasting friendship while developing a collaborative atmosphere and fostering trust to live happily with others;

(2) holds sufficiency, being moderate or being satisfied with what he/she could possess or what could be provided for him/her, being reasonable and responsible for his/her own actions, being self-reliant and maintaining the balance between the benefits of oneself, community and society with the non-giving up spirit, as well as sustainability, being concerned about saving the environment and the world;

(3) roots the service mind and supports the social justice-oriented interaction, opposing violence and being considerate of others and responsible for one's actions, as well as being endowed with a willing to progressively work for people and stand for equity or fairness in the society;

(4) proactively encourages value creating dialectic critical thinking, while enhancing creative thinking skills for attaining the desirable goals;

(5) leads a life based on both knowledge and wisdom, being equipped with the ability to differentiate right and wrong and to consider and consume any information wisely, as well as to carefully conduct life based on moral and ethical values for the common good.

From the results above, it is indicated that Soka education has commonality with Global Citizenship education, which focuses on harmonious coexistence and cross-cultural tolerance. The principals in collaboration with teachers in Soka schools applied the following concepts related to development of the value creating global citizens: 1. *Collaborative / Interactive learning*; 2. *Senior and peer support*; 3. *The schools' alignment of goals and objectives*, that is based on the same founder's principles and guidelines. Furthermore, as one of the unique characteristics of Soka education, the strong bond between the founder and students was pointed out. The school founder, Dr. Ikeda has shown his warm and consideration as well as interactions with students by sending things and souvenirs displayed in various forms, such as an encouraging verse containing moral values and social justice for each graduate at each level. This meaningfully affects the strong bonds and relationship between the founder and students, although they have never met.

Lastly, I would like to end with this quote from Dr. Ikeda, in his book titled “*The New Human Revolution*.”

The starting point and essence of Soka (value-creating) education is the spirit to treasure each student’s individuality so that they can become happy and enjoy a glorious future. Education does not exist for the sake of the nation, for business, or for religion. The aim of Soka education is the happiness of oneself and others, as well as society as a whole, and peace for all humanity (Ikeda, 2006, p.341).

Thank you very much for listening!

### References

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