

# Report on Ikeda Studies in Education

## Purpose

The Report on Ikeda Studies in Education is compiled and circulated by the Ikeda Research Institute for Soka Education ([IRISE](#)) of Soka University. The Report serves as an information-sharing tool for scholars and researchers of this field of study, with the aim of facilitating on a global basis, further advances in the research of and activities relevant to Ikeda studies in education.

## A Foreword to This Issue from IRISE Director Junichi Kanzaka

One year has passed since Daisaku Ikeda passed away. Although Ikeda was a Buddhist whose faith was based on the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Buddhism, his actions transcended religion, ideology and national borders. This is because he always engaged others in dialogue as an interpersonal effort and experience.

Fifty years ago in 1974, prior to his visit to the former Soviet Union, Ikeda was asked why he was going to a country disavowing religion, to which he responded, “I am going because there are people there.” This episode clearly reveals Ikeda’s enduring disposition toward his fellow human beings: to interact with and uphold people as equals and forge bonds of value with them.

Ikeda has had dialogues with leading figures throughout the world which resulted in over 80 collaborative books, and he has delivered 32 lectures at universities and academic institutions abroad, including Harvard University and Moscow State University. Above all, he has met with tens of thousands of ordinary people around the world and sent them words of encouragement and hope. We have thousands of texts that document Ikeda’s thoughts and actions as subject of research.

But it isn’t only the magnitude of Ikeda’s

accomplishments that leads to researchers thinking twice on accepting the challenge. Ikeda continued to question the nature of learning and researchers are expected to answer those questions.

At Soka University’s entrance ceremony in 1974, Ikeda said “the trouble with many contemporary intellectuals is that they habitually try to avoid difficulties of striving with ordinary people to realize peace and happiness for humankind.” He asserted, “To justify its existence today, a university must strive with ordinary people to overcome difficulties and realize the most sublime objectives of humankind. This always has been, and always will be, the mission of a university.”

Granted, each researcher should determine for themselves what stance they will take regarding the interrelationship between research and practice. I personally believe that research into the philosophy of Daisaku Ikeda and Soka education should not be relegated to a mere academic exercise. For this reason, Soka University’s IRISE aims to transcend religious and ideological boundaries and serve as a hub for a network of researchers who work together with ordinary citizens to meet the myriad challenges before humanity.

Ikeda would often call out: “For what purpose should one cultivate wisdom? May you always ask yourselves this question.”

## News Update

### **University of Alcalá in Spain opens master’s program on value-creating educational innovation**

The annual 2024 European Conference on The Faculty of Education of University of Alcalá in Madrid, Spain launched a master degree program entitled, “Educational Innovation for Value Creation,” on September 25. The program is taught by 20 members of the university faculty as well as researchers from other universities, with 26 students registering for the course. One required subject,

“Creation and Creative Innovation,” examines Daisaku Ikeda’s philosophy of human education and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s value creating pedagogy. At its opening lecture, Vice Director Ana Belén García Varela at the university’s Daisaku Ikeda Research Institute for Education and Development (IEDDAI) explained the goals and principles of the new program.

### **Soka University hosts Dewey Society of Japan annual meeting**

On September 28, the John Dewey Society of Japan convened its 67th annual meeting at Soka University, an event cosponsored by the university’s Center for Dewey Studies and Graduate School of Teacher Education, and supported by the Hachioji City Board of Education.

Waseda University Professor Chiharu Fujii, who serves as president of the John Dewey Society of Japan, gave the annual meeting’s opening remarks, followed by words of welcome from Soka University President Masashi Suzuki. The meeting’s theme was on Dewey and human dignity, with Soka University’s Center for Dewey Studies Director Takao Ito, who is also an Ikeda Research Institute for Soka Education (IRISE) researcher, presenting his research along with other presentations and lectures.

In addition, Two American scholars on the celebrated American philosopher of education sent video messages for the occasion: Dr. Larry Hickman, former president of the John Dewey Society in the US and Professor Emeritus at Southern Illinois University (SIU), and Dr. Jim Garrison, who also served as president of the Society and is currently Professor Emeritus at Virginia Tech University (VTU).

In his video message, Dr. Hickman cited Soka University and its founder, Daisaku Ikeda, for honoring “four keys to Dewey’s pedagogy”—“theme based learning, peer based learning, service learning and commitment to the role teacher as coach.”

Dr. Hickman noted that numerous Dewey research centers have been founded as cooperative ventures involving the Center for Dewey Studies at SIU, the John Dewey Foundation and various institutions throughout the world, from France, Poland and Argentina to Switzerland, Ireland and Japan. He added that these centers joined existing Dewey centers in Italy, China and Germany, and that the “global reach continues to expand.”

He mentioned that to explain Dewey’s belief “that among the keys to robust educational practice are three C’s: connection, cooperation and continuity. I therefore believe that more connection, cooperation and continuity among world Dewey Centers and Dewey Societies offers the promise of great educational rewards.”

He concluded with these words: There is, of course, much more room for globalizing Dewey’s educational practice. Your society continues to play an important role in this effort. You can be proud of its place in the project of globalizing Dewey’s influence. I therefore congratulate you on the rich history and the vibrant present of the Dewey Society of Japan. I am confident of your continuing success.

Dr. Garrison opened his message with a brief explanation of VTU’s Center for Dewey Studies that was founded in 2007. “It is part of an international family of Centers ... In 2008, the late Daisaku Ikeda, the founder of the Center at Soka University, received an honorary lifetime membership in the John Dewey Society, which I awarded as president of the Society.”

Next, he turned to Dewey’s rejection of “the Western notion that individuals are born with innate rationality and free will”: In his 1926 essay, “Individuality and Experience,” Dewey affirms, “Freedom or individuality, in short, is not an original possession or gift. It is something to be achieved, to be wrought out.” We only achieve freedom and individuality by participating in shared social practices involving communication. That is why creating learning communities inside and outside the school and collaborating with museums and other institutions is so significant. In *Experience and Nature*, Dewey says, “Of all affairs, communication is the most wonderful.” Dewey thought dialogue was an incredibly vital form of communication. He goes so far as to say: “Through speech a person dramatically identifies himself with potential acts and deeds; he plays many roles, not in successive stages of life but in a contemporaneously enacted drama. Thus mind emerges.” Human beings co-create each other and the meaning of the world through communication. Emphasizing dialogue and collaborative learning goes to the heart of Dewey’s philosophy of education. Because we are social beings, we usually learn best in social settings.

Dr. Garrison then concluded his message with this parting thought: “I was pleased to discover that the symposium on Dewey and human dignity

will be held in commemoration of Kant's 300th anniversary ... Engaging Kant is an especially beneficial way of perhaps reconstructing Dewey, the philosopher of reconstruction, for our times."

### **Postscript**

- We welcome comments regarding this Report as well as suggestions on specific material that it should feature in future issues. Contact: Ikeda Research Institute for Soka Education (IRISE) of Soka University ([IRISE-access@soka.ac.jp](mailto:IRISE-access@soka.ac.jp))
- This Report is issued on a bimonthly basis, with the next release tentatively scheduled for January 18, 2025.