

Value-Creating Education, its Concept and Practice at Soka University

Ryohei Tanaka

Respected Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Jumba, Dean of School of Education, Professor Dr. Akala, Chair of Department of Letters, Dr. Odari, Dr. Indangasi, distinguished faculty, dear students, ladies and gentlemen!

At the very first, I'd like to express my heartfelt gratitude for your kind invitation. I am very much honored to be able to stand here as a Keynote speaker and to speak about the Value-Creating Education of Soka University.

The theme of this international conference is "Value-Creating Education for Sustainable Development". Knowing that one of the main concepts of our University, the Value-Creating Education is now receiving increasing attention here in Kenya in spite of the great distance from Japan, I am not only delighted and grateful, but I'm feeling a great responsibility as well.

The title of my address today is: "Value-Creating Education, its Concept and Practice at Soka University". After a short introduction, I'll first talk about the historical background of the concept of Value-Creating Education. How it was formed, inherited and actually implemented at schools and universities. Then I will demonstrate some examples of students on how Value-Creating Education gives positive effects on them and what kind of outcomes are brought. Finally I'd like to talk about the effectiveness of Value-Creating Education in the modern world as a global society, especially how it can contribute to foster capable persons who will take vigorous leadership roles both in Japanese and global societies.

1. History of Value-Creating Education

First of all, I would like to give you a brief introduction of Soka University. Soka University was opened in the city of Hachioji, Tokyo in 1971. Needless to say, the founder is Dr. Daisaku Ikeda. At the time the university opened, we had 3 faculties consisting of Economics, Law and Letters and today, as you can see, we have developed into a university with 10 departments in 8 faculties. About 8,000 students are studying at Soka University.

Ryohei Tanaka (Professor of Faculty of Letters)

The word “Soka” means “value creation.” That is also the goal of education at our university. In other words, you could say that Soka University is a place where Value-Creating Education is practiced.

Next, I would like to tell you how “Soka Education” was developed, and how it has been put into practice by the founder.

The original advocate of “Soka Education” was Mr. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. Mr. Makiguchi was an educator born in 1871. He taught at elementary schools and eventually became principal of elementary schools. Through his experiences as a teacher, Mr. Makiguchi contemplated what real education should be like. He avidly studied pedagogy, sociology and philosophy from all over the world. During the process, he developed the concept of “Soka Education.” He dreamed of setting up educational institutions where his “Value-Creating Pedagogy” would be applied. During the turbulence of the World War II, however, he continually advocated and was jailed as a result and died in prison. It was Mr. Josei Toda who took over the mission of Mr. Makiguchi. Like Mr. Makiguchi, Mr. Toda was also jailed, but was released when the war ended. Mr. Toda exerted every possible effort to make the dream come true that Mr. Makiguchi could not realize. However, Mr. Toda’s health had deteriorated in prison and this prevented the dream from becoming a reality. Mr. Toda entrusted his dream and that of Mr. Makiguchi to Dr. Daisaku Ikeda. Dr. Ikeda dedicatedly took over the task of implementing Soka Education and went on to embody the dreams and ideals of his two predecessors when Soka University opened in 1971.

Now then, what exactly is “Soka Education” in the first place? Let us listen to Mr. Makiguchi’s own words.

In the preface of *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei Kogai* (Summary of The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy), Mr. Makiguchi states as follows:

“What does this completely new term Soka Education mean? It is nothing other than teaching how to create a life that meets practical needs, or the creation of value.” (MAKIGUCHI, Tsunesaburo, *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei Kogai* [Summary of The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy], *Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Zenshu*, vol. 8, page 390)

He continues as follows:

“Then, how can the goals of education be clarified? I believe that we have no other choice but to first align the purpose of our education with that of our life.” (page 393)

“Let me come straight to the point. If the word ‘happiness’ is presented as the purpose for

education, who could deny it? That is the main idea of this essay.” (page 393-4)

“In short, the contents of the happiness that is the goal of education must not fall outside the acquisition of value creation.” (page 394)

In other words, the goal of “Soka Education” is that each and every one who receives this kind of education becomes happy through the creation of value. On the basis of this principle, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda founded Soka University.

When founding Soka University, Dr. Ikeda presented the following founding principles and ideals, that is:

Be the highest seat of learning for humanistic education

Be the cradle of a new culture

Be a fortress for the peace of humankind

These three are the founding principles. Specifically, on May 3, 1969, two years before the launch of the university, the founder announced the principles in his own voice.

He also explained in detail, one by one, why they are necessary for Soka University.

The first principle is “Be the highest seat of learning for humanistic education”. Dr. Ikeda explained this as follows:

“This means that, against the current trends of today’s educational circles that reduce individuals to mere components in the mechanism of society and ignore humanity, Soka University must consistently be an educational organization that produces fully balanced individuals, filled with wisdom and creativity, who drive and lead society.” (*Sōritsusha No Katarai* [Stories told by the Founder], 1985, page 37)

Next, about the principle of “Be the cradle of a new culture”, Dr. Ikeda states:

“This is, in a modern civilization riddled with problems for which we can find no solutions, to create and uphold a great, new culture that is based on the great Law of Buddhism and whose underlying tone is praise for the endless blossoming of life.” (*Sōritsusha No Katarai* [Stories told by the Founder], 1985, page 37)

And about the principle of “Be a fortress for the peace of humankind”, he states:

“The reason I uphold the peace of humankind here is that without peace we can never achieve any goals, may it be the building of a new civilization or exploration of a future society.”
(*Sōritsusha No Katarai* [Stories told by the Founder], 1985, page 37)

These principles also summarize the desirable students to be nurtured at Soka University as individuals who crave peace while upholding humanistic “education” and a new “culture.” Dr. Ikeda called persons with these qualifications “creative individuals.”

In the third year after the opening of the university, the founder urged new students of Soka University as follows. This was precisely the founder’s presentation of “what a university should be like” and “what a university should aim to be like.” It goes like this:

“The word ‘Soka’ of our Soka University means value creation. In other words, creating values required by society and providing or returning sound values to society is what Soka University must essentially pursue.” (*ibid*, page 65-6)

At the 4th entrance ceremony in the following year, he went on to further explain the important key word “creation.”

“What I feel in my bones for the word ‘creation’ never ceases to fill my heart and is nothing other than a victory song for an extension of the self and is the crystallization of my own sweat and tears when I am persistently tackling a job with no regrets, despite a long struggle, by devoting my whole being and life.” (*ibid*, page 144-5)

And he maintained that by continuing this act of “creation,” a person could learn to bring out his/her true potential.

“I believe a creative life is what a human being is meant for.”

“I dare call this ‘blossoming of a creative life’ a ‘human revolution.’ That is your challenge for today and for the rest of your lives.” (*ibid*, page 145-6)

The founder, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda himself set an example of the way of life that he taught us. Dr. Ikeda was the very person who embodied a life of “value creation” as a “creative individual.” With his own life as an example, he taught us what we should do.

Currently at Soka University, there are more than 500 international students gathered from all over the world. What we pursue here is nothing other than to become “creative individuals.”

The concept of Value-Creating Education is not only implemented at Soka University Japan. In 2001, Soka University of America was opened in California. It also embodies the plan that Dr. Ikeda had conceived in his heart at the opening of Soka University in 1971. Opening the university in the United States was driven by Dr. Ikeda's conviction that "Soka Education" is an ideal form of education that can be applied anywhere in the world, and his philosophy that all the people in the world should be happy.

Dr. Ikeda founded not only these two universities, but also an entire Soka school system. At the beginning, a junior and a senior high school opened in Tokyo in the year 1968, 3 years earlier than Soka University. These were only for boys. Soka high schools for girls started 5 years later. Now all these schools are both for boys and girls. Then Soka elementary schools opened in 1978 in Tokyo, 1982 in Osaka. Soka kindergarten started in 1976 in Sapporo. And just in the beginning of this month, a day-care nursery opened in our campus. As Soka University has a correspondence school without age limit since before, we could say this nursery is the final piece of the life-long Soka education.

2. How Value-Creating Education effects : Two examples

Now I'd like to show you two examples, among many students, who applied Value-Creating Education into their own life to create value for their own and for the society.

First I would like to talk about a female student whom some of you may know. (Soka University, "Career Center Navi" Vol. 6) She graduated from Soka University this spring and is now employed at Microsoft Japan. Her Home Town is *Ishinomaki* of *Miyagi* Prefecture. As you know, it lies middle in the area where a gigantic disaster through an earthquake and the Tsunami attacked 5 years ago. *Ishinomaki* was one of many towns that were almost fully destroyed. Back in the peaceful high school days, before the earthquake, one day she saw a TV documentary program about Africa and dreamed to visit there after entering a university. On the television, while she watched cheerful smiles of the people and the unique culture of Africa, it also showed its reality and difficulties. And she felt, "Africa is calling me".

But as she talked to a career counselor about her dream, after entering Soka University, this counselor said, "It will be much more helpful for people if you save the money of air ticket and donate it for Africa than you yourself go there." Through these words, she found out that only to dream is useless, if she really wants to help others. Since the day, she started to study diligently, even cutting down on her sleep. Because she wanted to do her best to acquire the knowledge and skills in order to be able to contribute to other people. Thank to the endeavor, she was selected as the exchange student for the University of Nairobi.

She spent her days in Nairobi as actively as possible, for study, for dormitory life, for internship

and volunteer work and so on. As a result, when she returned home after 10 months, her will to contribute to African people became stronger. In general, students in Japan find a job in their senior year in college. After returning to Japan, she started to think earnestly, which industry or which company to work is the best way to make her dream come true. Her answer was the IT industry. The reason of this decision was that the IT industry can change the life of people more speedily and more dramatically than the infra-structure or construction for instance.

Looking back her life until now, the most precious value which she wanted to pursue throughout her life was to contribute to better life of other people. But she became aware that it is not sufficient only to take action without thought in order to realize the value in the society. She found out, to create value, professional knowledge and skills through study was indispensable and tried her hardest. Combining the desire to work for happiness of others with qualified knowledge and skills that enable to find solution of problems, one can create value in the society. The Value-Creating Education aims to foster such individuals. This student can be counted as one of many creative individuals who embodied the virtue of the Value-Creating Education.

One more example, a male student this time. (Soka University, “*Soka University News*” Nr. 83) He studied also at the University of Nairobi from August 2013 to July 2014. He explains the reason of his decision to spend a year in Kenya as follows, “I wanted to put myself in a place which is at most distant from Japan, because I wanted to live in a totally different land and to have experiences that I couldn’t imagine.” This wish was fulfilled soon when he started his life in Nairobi. After about 4 months, however, he became dispirited by the difficulties of his surroundings, although he himself had wished for it.

Then something changed in his inside and it was a change toward the value creation. He thought, “I look for the excuse for difficulties simply in my surroundings. But have I taken action to change them?” From that day, he started challenging himself every day. He learned Swahili through self-study, tried to interact more with fellow students, actively asked more questions in class and discussed with his roommate to review the session of the day. In this way, his surroundings gradually started to change.

In addition to that, during the holiday he participated in a business project for an area with no electricity, hosted by a Japanese company. Making good use of these experiences in Kenya, after he returned to Japan, he took part as a leader of a student group in a contest of policy proposal and won the first prize. Currently he works at a global stock company in Singapore.

In his case, the transformation from dispiritedness into a creative individual began at the moment when he determined to change his surroundings with his own will and action.

In front of the entrance of the former main building of Soka University, a pair of statues stand. These were presented by the founder Dr. Ikeda in commemoration of the establishment. On each

pedestal, words for students by Dr. Ikeda are inscribed. One says, “For what purpose should one cultivate wisdom? May you always ask yourself this question!” The other is, “Only labour and devotion to one’s mission give life its worth.”

What is the purpose of study? Its answer differs obviously for each one of us. One may say fame, the other says fortune or the pursuit of truth. In any cases, the question “for what purpose” presupposes a certain kind of value for each student. The above mentioned female student found value in contribution to the development of Africa, while the other student found value in creating himself in the society through going over his limit and changing his surroundings. In both cases, they have a common purpose, that is, for the sake of others and society. To find value in contribution to happiness of others, to actually create value and to feel his or her own happiness through this process, this is nothing other than the significance of Value-Creating Education. This is the feature that found in the succession of Value-Creating Education from Mr. Makiguchi to Dr. Ikeda as well as in the entire Soka education system. The other words of Dr. Ikeda, “Only labour and devotion to one’s mission give life its worth.” also express this feature concisely.

Mr. Tashiro, chairman of board of trustees, was one of the first class students both at the Soka Highschool Tokyo and at Soka University. He worked as a secretary of Dr. Ikeda for years and experienced closely how the concept of Value-Creating Education practiced by Dr. Ikeda.

About the first inscription, Mr. Tashiro says in an interview, “It means that we should make it clear what is the purpose of our learning, and then we should make more efforts toward that purpose.” (Soka University, “*Soka University News*” Nr. 83) He cites Dr. Ikeda’s words, “Soka University should stand on the side of people, should be the fortress and castle to protect peace and happiness of people.” In the words “peace and happiness of the people”, the purpose of the Value-Creating Education is clearly defined.

Mr. Tashiro quotes Dr. Ikeda further, “Truly desired individuals are those who are persons of character with lofty ideas, those who are full of individuality as well as those who are innovative and creative and know well how to handle knowledge and skills.” Based on this, Mr. Tashiro says, “These are the fundamental spirits since the establishment of Soka University. This has been continuously addressed by Founder Ikeda and passed on to the students and faculty through generations”.

3. Value-Creating Education in the global society

In the modern age, especially since 1990’s, the globalization has been progressed everywhere, Japan is obviously no exception. In recent years in Japan, the advent of the knowledge-based society became topical. People say, the role of the higher education must change, and replace the traditional role as the place of mere accumulation and transmission of knowledge. Under the current situation where one can easily access the latest knowledge and information through internet, it is increasing

in importance as mission of universities to enhance skills and ability, such as to assemble and use the knowledge and information properly, to think based on them and to convey ideas to others effectively. Furthermore, it is also considered as a mission of the higher education to enhance attitude of cooperation which enables to make good use of knowledge and ideas, to solve the conflict between people with different interest or different cultural background and to find out the way of symbiosis.

Not only on the level of higher education, but also at the level of primary and secondary education, the importance of such competencies is acknowledged. For example, they are placed as the key competencies of DeSeCo of OECD, and 21st Century Skills, as well as national curriculums in various countries. Japanese Ministry of Education also aims to develop the competency consisting of these components as the goal of the entire school education.

This goal that includes the total development of individuals beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills is what Value-Creating Education has also aimed to accomplish since its establishment. As mentioned above, before the opening of Soka University, Dr. Ikeda stated as one of the three founding principles: “Be the highest seat of learning for humanistic education”. In 1973 and 1974, he defined this humanistic education as fostering individuals who create value for his own life and for the society. Therefore I’d like to say the Value-Creating Education as well as humanistic education shares main ideas with the current world-wide tendency of the competency enhancement.

However we have to pay attention on the fact that this idea of Dr. Ikeda was quite rare in the time of its statement, namely in late 1960s. At that time in Japan, profound problems were revealed as a result of rapid economic development such as pollution of environment, dead-end of education symbolized by raging students movement. At the same time, the competition principles as well as the elitism were dominant in Japanese society and the criterion for educational results was simply based on knowledge and skills. Taking this situation into account, we can see not only rarity, but foresight of Dr. Ikeda’s idea of humanistic education which must have sounded inefficient in the age of excessive competition.

Soka University is now proceeding with a number of attempts toward its 50th Anniversary in 2021. We now stand at a little after the half point of a grand design and many projects have been already successfully implemented. Besides this, our efforts of globalization since very beginning – please think of the third founding principle given by Dr. Ikeda – were recognized as exemplary by the Ministry of Education three years ago. Being selected as one of the top 37 Global Universities, we receive special grants-in-aid for ten years with a new goal to become an international center of humanistic education. For instance, almost all Japanese students should experience studying abroad at least once in order to develop their global awareness and cross-cultural competency. On the other hand, the number of international students should increase dramatically, so that they will

experience humanistic education. In addition, a new center for education and research in the field of peace, environment, development and human rights, called Global Core Center, has just started this May. The center is now preparing for a new graduate program to open in two years.

From now on, Soka University will continue to foster capable students who can create new value on the global stage of the 21st century.

Now I would like to conclude my speech by reviewing the principles of Soka Education, and the guidelines presented by the founder Dr. Ikeda.

They are summarized with the following points:

Be “creative individuals”!

Live every day of your life craving to be creative individuals!

Be value creators yourselves.

I would like that each and every one of us at the University of Nairobi and Soka University will share these same goals hand in hand with each other and pursue peace together.

I'd like to appreciate profoundly for this precious opportunity once again. Thank you very much for your kind attention.