Disclaimer
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The Soka Education Student Research Project is an autonomous organization at Soka University of America,

Aliso Viejo, California.
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Cover design: Alexander Banergee
The 12th Annual
Soka Education Conference
2016

Soka University of America
Aliso Viejo, California
February 13th - 14th, 2016
Pauling 216
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Introduction

Dear reader,

Thank you for participating in the 12th Annual Soka Education Conference. On February 13th and 14th, 2016 we begin our journey into a wholesome two days, filled with dynamic, thought-provoking dialogue on Soka Education. Within this volume, you will read eight papers pertaining to this year’s theme: “Soka and Peace: Thinking Through Education.” Amidst the wars, chaos, injustices and wide-ranging violence transpiring in this past year alone, we decided to emphasize the concept of peace and how Soka education may contribute to the realization of a more peaceful society.

Last year marks the seventieth anniversary of the end of WWII and the fifteenth anniversary of September 11. From suicide bombs in Lebanon to the slaughter of more than 100 college students in Kenya, to the relocation of wartorn refugees in the Middle East, to the lamentable offenses of US police revealing the deep, inherent racism and prejudice steeped in American culture and history, to countless terrorist attacks taken place across the globe, it becomes more obvious that we, humanity together, must respond. Therefore, SESRP was compelled us to open this year’s conference as a forum for peace and education, to bridge the two and consider education as the launching pad. We hope this collection of works will inspire each of you to consider the essence of Soka Education, to utilize it as the catalyst for transforming the turmoil and sufferings of society into one committed to value-creating activism for the sake of peace.

We are pleased to present this year’s keynote speaker Dr. Tony Jenkins, who currently serves as the Director of the Peace Education Initiative at the Judith Herb College of Education at the University of Toledo as well as the Managing Director of the International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE). His work contributes to the promotion and development of peace education, engaging peace educators to a diversity of educational approaches and transformative pedagogies of peace. Dr. Jenkins’ current work and research interests focus on examining the impacts and effectiveness of peace education methods and pedagogies in nurturing personal, social and political change and transformation. Complementing our keynote speaker, we will have a diverse selection of speakers, panel discussions, and workshops.

This booklet will serve as a document and reminder of our 2016 conference. We sincerely hope that this year’s conference offers the opportunity for all of you to be inspired and understand humanistic education that we feel is so desperately needed in today’s world.
We would like to acknowledge the invaluable support of Student Affairs staff, Dean of Students, Dr. Jay Heffron, and the tremendous assistance given by the Soka University of America IT staff. Finally, we express our appreciation to the founder of Soka Education, Mr. Tunesaburo Makiguchi and its successors Mr. Josei Toda and SUA Founder, Mr. Daisaku Ikeda for conceiving and keeping alive the spirit and ideas that constitute the foundations of this university; their life and work themselves are the most eloquent illustrations of applied Soka Education.

Please enjoy this booklet and all its contents. We hope to see you next year!

Warmly,
Soka Education Student Research Project
What is Soka Education?

The starting point and essence of Soka education is the spirit to treasure each student individually 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. - Daisaku Ikeda, Founder of Soka University of America

Soka Education was founded by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944), a Japanese educator in the early 21st century. Emerging out of 40 years of classroom experience, Soka Education is one of the first full-pledged educational theories ever put forward by a Japanese elementary school principal.

Soka (創価) is derived from the Japanese characters “sozo” (creation) and “kachi” (value), and literally means value creation. Soka education seeks to empower students to perceive value in every aspect of life. A key element of Soka Education is the quality of the relationship between teacher and student. Rather than exercise authority over the students, teachers are expected to engage in the learning process and grow together with the students. Thus, Soka education is not a mere injection of knowledge, but a humanistic process that nurtures wisdom and enables the individual's potential to bloom to the fullest. The teacher's genuine care and concern for the student, and their efforts to nurture the unique character and potential of each learner, make up the heart of Soka education.

Makiguchi established this pedagogy based on his firm belief that the happiness of children should be the purpose of education. This was a radical idea in Japanese society, oppressed under fascist militarism before and during the war. Individuals were forced to place precedence upon national prestige rather than their own happiness, and children were taught at school to serve that purpose. It was against this backdrop that Makiguchi advocated that the happiness of children be the utmost priority of education.

Today Soka education is being practiced globally: in Japan the Soka education system encompasses kindergarten through university; in the United States, Soka University of America was founded in California; and there are Soka Kindergartens in Brazil, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea, as well as other parts of the world.

The Soka Education Student Research Project (SESRP) is a student-initiated and student-run project at Soka University of America. Project members engage in the study, research, and exhibition of Soka Education as a
unique educational philosophy.

The **purpose** of SESRP is:
- To inspire individuals to embody and perpetuate the spirit of Soka Education
- To create a community united in protecting the values of Soka Education
- To encourage thorough and rigorous research into the meaning, possibilities, and development of Soka Education

The **objectives** of the SESRP are:
- To establish Soka Education as an acknowledged field of research
- To develop a centralized source and venue for information and discussion on Soka Education

*To build and maintain relationships with other institutions to promote Soka Education*
# 2016 Soka Education Conference Program

## Day 1: Saturday, February 13th, 2016

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Bookstore opening hours
Bistro closes at 12:30 | Bistro                                      |
<p>| 12:40 – 14:10| <strong>Panel Presentation</strong>- Four Scholar-Practitioner Engagements with Value-Creating Education: Application of Soka Ideals to Dialogic Transformation of Educators, Emancipatory Study Abroad of Low Income Black High School Students, Joyful Elementary Schools, and Happiness of Queer Black Boys | DePaul University |
|             | The Dialogic Becoming of Educators                                 | Melissa Bradford                            |
|             | A Duoethnography of Value Creation                                  |                                              |
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Keynote Speaker Biography — Dr. Tony Jenkins

Tony Jenkins, PhD, is Director of the Peace Education Initiative at the Judith Herb College of Education at The University of Toledo, OH. He also serves as Managing Director of the International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE) and Coordinator of the Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE). From 2010 to 2014, Tony served as the Vice President for Academic Affairs at the National Peace Academy and prior to that (2001-2010) the Co-Director of the Peace Education Center at Teachers College, Columbia University. In 2014-15, Tony served as a member of UNESCO’s Experts Advisory Group on Global Citizenship Education.

The GCPE is a global network of educators and policy makers that promotes peace education among schools, families and communities. As Global Coordinator of the GCPE since 2007, Tony maintains a knowledge and resource exchange in peace education with 4000+ subscribers/members. The IIPE, founded in 1982 by Dr. Reardon, is an annual, international, intensive learning experience, hosted, cooperatively planned and co-coordinated by a partner academic or non-governmental institution. The IIPE experience exposes participants to a diversity of educational approaches and transformative pedagogies of peace. Since 2002, Tony has directed IIPEs in the Philippines, South Korea, Turkey, Greece, Costa Rica, Israel, Hungary, Colombia, Japan, Puerto Rico and the USA. Through the IIPE, Tony has also worked with peace educators around the world to support the development of “learning communities” of formal and non-formal educators who learn with and from each other to address and transform local manifestations of violence through education and active citizen participation.
Tony’s current work and research interests focus on examining the impacts and effectiveness of peace education methods and pedagogies in nurturing personal, social and political change and transformation. He is also interested in formal and non-formal educational design and development with special interest in teacher training, alternative security systems, disarmament, and gender. Specialties: teacher training, transformative pedagogy, peace education theory, peacebuilding, education program development, disarmament education, global citizenship education, gender and peace education.

For more information:
www.utoledo.edu/education/peace
www.peace-ed-campaign.org
www.i-i-p-e.org
Jacqueline graduated from Soka University of America in 2008 and received her Masters of Public Policy from Duke University in 2010. While interning in India during her Masters program, she decided to also pursue a career in medicine. She finished her post-baccalaureate pre-medical certificate at Tufts University in 2013. She has a variety of professional and academic research experiences, covering topics such as gender mainstreaming in water resource management, social reintegration of obstetric fistula patients in Tanzania, international typhoid vaccine policy, and the tracking of daptomycin-resistant enterococcal infections. She is currently a second-year medical student at the Boston University School of Medicine and hopes to work in the intersection of international policy and clinical medicine in the future.

Victoria Chang Sandoval is an undergraduate student at Soka University of America (c/o 2016). Her research for this conference precedes a Capstone thesis of the same topic: Educating for Community- Towards a Sustainable Future. She became interested in EcoJustice Education after hearing last year’s keynote speaker Rebecca A. Martusewicz, and her hopeful, education-centered solution to global environmental and social problems. Through influential coursework at SUA—including Nature and Humanity, Sustainable Agriculture, and Cultures of Learning—as well as her experiences working at Hidden Villa Summer Camp, a farm and wilderness-based community promoting social and environmental justice education, Victoria has been inspired towards a mission of empowerment of self and others, engaging in empathetic dialogue, and active value-creation.

Victoria C. Sandoval
Melissa R. Bradford

Melissa Riley Bradford is a founder of Tallgrass Sudbury School in Riverside, IL and an adjunct science and math instructor at Joliet Junior College. Her research interests include soka (value-creating) pedagogy, Makiguchi and Ikeda Studies, and alternative education models. She is currently working on her doctoral dissertation on dialogue and inner transformation for value creating education at DePaul University.

Tameka Carter-Richardson

Mrs. Tameka Carter-Richardson is a high school Spanish teacher. Currently, she is working toward her Doctorate in Education at DePaul University. Much of her research includes intellectual emancipation and black student travel. She values accessible experiential learning and intellectual freedom in secondary education. She recently conducted a pilot study that narrated the experience of 12 student travelling abroad in order to encourage action research regarding experiential learning in secondary education.

Rhonda Stern

Rhonda Stern has been in the field of gifted and talented education since 2000. She is also a certified mediator and an attorney. Currently, Stern is a doctoral student in Curriculum Studies at DePaul University. Her research focus is on classroom conditions and dimensions that lead to joyful learning experiences in elementary school. She sits on the Social and Emotion Committee of the Illinois Association for Gifted Children and recently became a board member of the Chicago Gifted Community Center.
Agnes Conrad is currently a student of Tibetan Language at Qinghai Minority Nationalities University in Xining, China: a historical trade city on the northeastern corner of the Tibetan plateau with the end goal of one day engaging in either spoken or literary translation work. Since graduating from Soka University of America in 2012, she has spent the better part of the past three years living outside of the U.S. and studying Tibetan dialects, alternately studying in institutions or working in Tibetan speaking environments. She believes that serious language study is a practical way to live Soka Education and an indispensably valuable resource for learning respect, humility, and appreciation. She has made a conscious decision to change her context and devote her life to both living with less and living in a different language world so that she can truly learn to respect and accept people as people. As such, she hopes in her own way to help make the world a smaller, more understanding place by making an example of her own life—becoming the type of person she would like others to become. She is currently studying in attempt to pass the entrance exam for a Master’s Degree Program in Tibetan at her current university. Her research interests include linguistics, linguistic diversity, linguistic hierarchies, and Tibetan languages.
Garrett is a Co-Founder, an Instructor, and the Director of Operations at The Kiva Center in Boulder, CO. He is an experienced educator at Bixby School, a progressive and experiential learning institution in Boulder. Before starting his teaching career, Garrett traveled for seven months around the world; getting his first glimpse at the variety of cultural expressions humanity has to offer. Garrett then graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Humanities from Soka University of America in 2011. Since graduating, he has taught at Bixby, doing everything from Friday kindergarten assistant, to a daily aid in preschool, to summer program coordinator. Most recently he was teaching 1st, 4th, and 5th graders full-time. His time living in El Salvador for six months and completing a project to help a rural community write their first written history book inspired him to develop a deep interest in story-telling to help build community. He is currently pursuing his Permaculture Design Certificate.

Kasey is a Co-Founder, an Instructor, and the Program Director at The Kiva Center in Boulder, CO. She is a devoted educator with the gift of igniting the spark in the eyes of her students. Prior to founding The Kiva Center in 2014, she spent five years teaching English (ELL) and the Spanish language throughout the United States and Spain. She is a certified Permaculture Educator by the Learning Gardens Institute and strives to bring students back into their roots as integral elements of the Earth’s ecosystem. She has a BA in Spanish Language and Literature with a Minor in Business Administration from the University of Colorado, Boulder (2011). As a dancer and percussionist of Mokomba, a traditional West African Drum and Dance group, she is passionate about using rhythm, song, and dance as tools to strengthen community.
Jessica Bridges

Jessica Bridges is currently a candidate for a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Societal Change at Soka University of America. She holds an MA in Spanish Language, Literature and Culture from the University of Northern Iowa and a BA from Central College. Prior to coming to SUA, Jessica was a High School Spanish teacher at Columbine High School in Littleton, CO.

Vicki Gefen Mokuria has devoted her life to education, having worked for many years in a broad range of positions: teaching English as a Second Language to newly-arrived immigrants to the U.S.; as a high school teacher in a magnet program in Dallas, Texas—teaching students interested in pursuing careers as social service professionals, along with government and economics; as a program director at a community center, running an after-school and summer program for neighborhood youth; and as a parent educator, working primarily with undocumented immigrant families. Vicki is now “upgrading” her education as a student in Soka University of America’s Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Societal Change, and she plans to graduate in May 2016. Vicki is the proud mother of three daughters, Sara, Aileen, and Cristina, and she is the president of her grandson, Amari’s, fan club. Vicki plans to pursue a doctoral degree and devote the rest of her life to supporting education, with the goal of collaborating with other like-minded educators committed to imbuing public schools with humanistic principles.

Vicki G. Mokuria
Alankrita Chhikara

Alankrita Chhikara is an SUA graduate of 09 from India with a global spirit. She got her first Masters in India in English Literature and worked as a high school educator at a progressive experiential learning school for two years. Currently she is an M.A. candidate in Educational Leadership and Societal Change at Soka University of America and hopes to infuse Soka education to every aspect of Indian society.

Stephanie Samaniego

Stephanie Samaniego is of Ecuadorian heritage and is currently in Soka University of America's Master of Art's program in Educational Leadership and Societal Change. During the course of this program, she has been pursuing her academic interests in Ecuador's indigenous education. Having the opportunity to conduct her own field work, she has been able to visit several communities and schools in the country. It is those experiences that have fueled her passion and commitment to work for Ecuador after graduation. Stephanie is also a proud alumnus of Soka University of America's Liberal Arts program. Graduating in 2009 with her fellow classmate, Alankrita Chhikara, she sees the university as an integral part to her development and growth. Stephanie has also pursued studies in the environmental field, completing an M.A. in Global Leadership and Sustainable Development from Hawaii Pacific University.
Carolyn Millar received her B.A. in Psychology and Social Behavior from the University of California, Irvine, and M.A./Ph.D. in Mythological Studies with emphasis in Depth Psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute. Her interests in writing, interdisciplinary studies, and contemporary culture guided her to research graffiti from an archetypal perspective shifting literal thinking about wall writings as illegal and unwanted defacement to the mythical and metaphorical realm of creative discovery and imagination. She continues her mythic journey as facilitator of a Mythological RoundTable® group established internationally by the Joseph Campbell® Foundation, and in tandem, she writes and edits a blog: Mythic Unravellings (www.mythicunravellings.com) to share stories, art, and all things mythological.

Allana J. Bourne

Allana Joy Bourne, MA, is a writer, editor and teacher based in California. Her career path includes 20 years at The Seattle Times (where she initiated an writing program that won a Newspaper Association of America award), writer-in-residence at a private K-12 school, and adjunct professor at Seattle Central Community College and Seattle Pacific University. She currently works in the Writing Center at Soka University, where she conducts grant-writing and grammar workshops in addition to working one-on-one with students.

Elena Powell

Elena Powell’s ten years of work at Soka University include tutoring in the Writing Center, conducting grant writing and grammar workshops, and one semester of teaching Writing 101. Prior to SUA, she worked as an ESL instructor in Riverside Community College. She specialized in teaching writing, reading, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension skills at all levels. Elena obtained her master’s degree in teaching English and literature from Lviv National University in Ukraine.
Presenter Biographies

Padmini Hands

Padmini is a lover of world cultures and a musician trained in Western Classical, Indian Classical (Carnatic) and world music. She has been a professor in Computer Science and an Information Architect, but at Creative Learning A Global Village Academy she is interested in architecting educational methodologies and communities of creative students!

Rhythm Sethi

Rhythm Sethi, (SUA ’14) is Assistant Director at Creative Learning A Global Village Academy and is involved in administration, curriculum development and classroom interaction at the school. She is organizing the startup of the elementary school as well. Her areas of professional expertise include project management, marketing, and new media. In addition, Rhythm is an accomplished dancer and polished speaker.

Rebecca Engram

Rebecca Engram is passionate about early education and child development and has 17 years experience in this field. Rebecca sees each child individually and holistically and works tirelessly to bring out each child’s natural talent and potential. She has a Bachelor’s Degree in Child Development and a Master’s Degree in Human Development.
Session 1: Teaching Health and Medicine at Soka University of America
Ian Read, Zahra Afrasiabi, Lisa Crummett, Junyi Liu
Professors at Soka University of America

Summary
How is health and medicine best taught in a liberal arts college setting? What skill sets and knowledge base does a good liberal arts education offer that can complement a good premedical or health oriented education? Especially at a college where the founding principles are peace, human rights, and the sanctity of life? These are pressing questions considering SUA may open health and medicine as new fields of opportunity for its future graduates. This proposed workshop seeks to explore the challenges and benefits of teaching at a small university driven by a humanistic mission and pervaded by a unique emphasis on cosmopolitanism rooted in its history. SUA could present an ideal setting for expansion in health and medicine because its academics are organized less by discipline than concentrations that cross discipline. This is unlike large research universities that may be divided into “siloed” disciplinary departments spread over too many acres of campus to offer a sufficiently holistic introductory premedical education. Finally, SUA's humanistic mission is well-suited to the oaths doctors take when they accept the white coats of their professions. Similar to SUA's mission statement and principles, doctors follow in the footsteps of Hippocrates to swear to “remain a member of society, with special obligations to all my fellow human beings [regardless of nationality], those sound of mind and body as well as the infirm” and to “remember that there is art to medicine as well as science.” The participants of this workshop will take inspiration and direction from three texts: Daisaku Ikeda, René Simard, and Guy Bourgeault's On Being Human: Where Ethics, Medicine, and Spirituality Converge (2003); Thomas Cole, Nathan Carlin, and Ronald Carson's Medical Humanities: An Introduction (2015) and Michael S. Roth's Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters (2014). All books will be available on reserve at the Ikeda library before and after the workshop.
Facilitator Bios

Ian Read
Ian Read teaches in the International Studies Concentration. He has published several journal articles related to the history of disease and he is currently writing his second book on a series of unfamiliar and devastating epidemics that changed Brazil in the nineteenth and twentieth century. He has taught “Plagues and Peoples,” a global history of public health, to SUA undergraduates since 2010.

Zahra Afrasiabi
Zahra Afrasiabi teaches in the Math-Science Area. She has taught Chemistry courses at SUA and a learning cluster related to “Cancer Research.” Her research focuses on “application of nanoparticles for nanosensor design” and “anticancer drug design.” She has published several articles and served as the primary investigator on educational and research federal grants.

Lisa Crummett
Lisa Crummett teaches in the Math-Science Area. She has taught “Human Body in A Modern World”, “Genetics and Evolution” and a learning cluster entitled, "Alternative versus Traditional Medical Practices in the US". She has published several papers that fall under the topic of Evolutionary Biology and has most recently focused her research on the comparative genomics of marine viruses.

Junyi Liu
Junyi Liu teaches in the Social Behavioral and Sciences Concentration. He has two publications on the relationship between economic activities and public health in the US and part of his current research is on public health in P.R. China. His health research and possible future teaching on health-related course would be mostly economic policy oriented and rely heavily on quantitative methodologies.
Session 2: Taking Steps to Understand Privilege, Diversity, and Undocumented Students in the Context of Soka Education

Sung Eun Byun, Sofia Dugas, Eduardo Escobedo, Kayleigh Levitt, and Lindsey Shoenhard
Students at Soka University of America

Summary
The goal of this workshop is to promote a dialogue about privilege and diversity and the importance of understanding those two concepts in a truly humanistic education, and then relating that discussion to the prevention of undocumented student enrollment at SUA. In order to accomplish this goal, we are planning a reflective activity that will be followed by a discussion about diversity and privilege, and the place of these ideas in the context of a Soka Education.

The activity we would like to do is called a "privilege walk." A pre-selected and debriefed group of volunteers, and any volunteers from the audience, will participate in the privilege walk. A facilitator reads a statement, such as "If you have ever feared deportation, please take a step backwards," and each volunteer will simply follow the directions as their experience dictates. By the end of the activity, we will be left with a physical representation of relative privilege and relative deprivation—those in the back of the room have been granted the least privilege, while those at the front have been granted the most.

Following this activity, we will facilitate a discussion, focusing on the meaning of true diversity and its importance in a humanistic education like Soka’s, as well as the dangers of being unaware of our privileges. We believe this will lead nicely into a discussion of SUA’s current policy not to enroll undocumented students, regardless of whether or not they meet the academic standards of the university. We will provide information to the audience on why this is a policy, why it should change, what is being done to do so, and how they can help.
Facilitator Bios

Hello! My name is Sung Eun Byun and I am a second-year student here at Soka University of America studying Anthropology and Sociology in the Social Behavioral Science Department. I was born in Seoul, South Korea and moved to Seattle, Washington when I was roughly five years old. My interests include baking, making others smile, and sharing love with those around me by giving hugs and saying hello. I believe that my education here at SUA is one that will further my passion to love others and to have a global perspective in understanding where others stand, and use it to touch the lives of those who may be ignored on the streets to those who may be having a bad day. I hope to one day open my own bakery and be able to contribute to the community and bring joy to others through baking and decorating yummy goodies!

Sung Eun Byun

My name is Sofia Dugas and this is my first year here at Soka...so far, so good! I am the granddaughter of a Cuban political refugee and the daughter of parents who whole heartedly believe that being exposed to other ideas and cultures is the most powerful form of education. Since age 11, I have been actively involved in an international peace organization called CISV (Children's International Summer Village) which has inspired my passion for other cultures, social justice, and facilitation. In high school, I worked closely with the international students to ease them into the craziness of attending an "all-American" high school. We gathered each week to do activities/discussions, building powerful friendships and understandings. Soka is essentially that same safe haven where people from all different walks of life convene in one beautiful place, to meet, to share, and to love.

Sofia Dugas
Eduardo Escobedo

I’m Eduardo Escobedo, a second year student at SUA studying international studies. I am a queer immigrant from Mexico who came to the U.S. from a young age, and my mixed identity has made me interested in social justice, especially pertaining to immigration rights and queer issues. I am a passionate student who wants to use my education for the betterment of humanity. Philosophy, art, sociology, politics, and education are all dear to me, and I wish to use these subjects, which are often perceived as unrelated, to further my goals of becoming an immigration rights lawyer.

My name is Kayleigh Levitt and I’m a senior. I’m interested in the way privilege creates a false perception of the world. Learning has been a way to liberate myself from this false perception! My passion is environmental studies, and in that field we run into the way privilege deceives us all the time. I realized one day how blind my privilege made me in regards to the drought. If I had to walk to Northern California to get water, I would understand the drought completely differently because it would affect me. But if things that don’t affect me, I won’t understand them, unless I intentionally seek understanding. Education gives me the tools to see the world as it is rather than as I experience it, which I think is an even greater privilege than living with false perception. This is why I want to education to be accessible to as many people as possible!

Kayleigh Levitt

Hello! My name is Lindsey Shoenhard and I am a second year student at SUA, studying Anthropology in the Social and Behavioral Sciences Concentration. I have a particular interest in issues faced by undocumented persons living in the United States and I am striving to be a hardworking ally for undocumented immigrants in both the present and future. Outside of academics, my favorite things about SUA are running in the canyon and getting to learn about and interact with people who have different experiences from my own—which might be surprising because I can be pretty shy, but I’m working on it!

Lindsey Shoenhard
Session 3: SUA Founding Spirit: Revitalizing our Roots
Karina Kleiman, Shivangi Khattar, Stephanie Kimura, Kimberly Mullenix, Misaki Ono and Mitsuko Shimizu
Alumni and Students at Soka University of America

Summary

“It is my wish that you will cross over me to ascend the hope-filled peaks of the 21st century. It will be my pleasure to serve as a foundation and stepping stone for your efforts. I will pour my entire life into creating the kind of university experience that you can look back on and state without hesitation: ‘I am glad I chose to study at SUA!’ I look forward to the day when we can meet and share thoughts on this beautiful campus.”

- Daisaku Ikeda

Soka University of America has graduated eleven classes now, and is about to graduate its twelfth. As the times are changing, and the intellectual capacity as well as thinking is expanding, it has become increasingly important to revisit the roots of where the dream to pioneer SUA came from. In order to revisit the roots of Soka education and revitalize the founding spirit, we are presenting a workshop that will innovatively expand the knowledge that people have about the pedagogy of value-creating education, as well as utilize creative activities to ensure that the participants genuinely deepen their understanding of SUA's roots and inherit its founding spirit. Our hope is that this ignites the desire to research, and to expand on 21st century ideas of utilizing Soka education and the pedagogy originally founded and explained, as well as applied by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. Drawing from messages from the founder, Daisaku Ikeda, to SUA students and emphasizing the university's “student-centered culture”, we hope to revisit the founding spirit and leave participants with a passion to continue learning, and researching on the connection between Soka education and the contemporary times.
Kimberly Mullenix

Kimberly Mullenix is a fourth year at Soka University of America and concentrates in International Studies. During her first year at SUA, her growing love and appreciation for the university sparked her curiosity about the roots of Soka education, a pedagogy which she believes enables individuals to create and find value in life and learning. As a means to give back to the Soka community and firmly protect the values and mission of Soka, she joined SESRP as one of the coordinators for this year.

Misaki Ono

Misaki Ono is part of the Class of 2016 and concentrates in Social and Behavioral Sciences. She is also one of the SESRP coordinators this year. She joined SESRP in order to share her appreciation of Soka education with her peers and to deepen her understanding of why she and her classmates have chosen to study at SUA.

Mitsuko Shimizu

Mitsuko Shimizu is currently a fourth year at Soka University of America concentrating in International Studies. After experiencing her four years at Soka as well as her semester of study abroad in France, she strongly realized the importance of international education and cross-cultural exchanges. In the future she wishes to work for international students, promoting the importance of intercultural competency and immersing oneself in a different culture from his/her own. Her passion on education as well as her desire to inspire other people to learn more about the unique education students are receiving at SUA led her to join SESRP as one of the coordinators. She wishes to deepen her understanding of Soka education as well as the humanistic education that connects people beyond differences and unite the student body in a single purpose of living a contributive life. Along with her SESRP team, she is determined to protect the values and philosophy of Soka Education, and the vision of the founder to cultivate young global citizens.
Shivangi Khattar is a Masters candidate in the program of Clinical Psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University, and a recent graduate of Soka University of America, Class of 2015. She is the recipient of Soka University’s Founders Award. She has presented at the Soka Education Conference 2015, on her thesis relating therapeutic interventions for children with autism to Makiguchi’s value-creating pedagogy of education. Her current work focuses on global mental health as well as stigma research. She is a Student Ambassador for the Child/Family Concentration at Teachers College, Columbia University. She plans to pursue a PhD in Clinical Psychology and focus her thesis on researching novel interventions to assist countries like India in their mental healthcare for children with special needs.

Stephanie Kimura graduated from Soka University of America in 2008. Deeply inspired by the SUA Founder during her undergraduate years, she decided to pursue the field of education. In 2009, she received a Master’s in Education (Ed.M.) in International Education Policy at Harvard Graduate School of Education. She worked for two years at Education Development Center, conducting research in Early Childhood Education. She then received her Master’s in Science (M.Sc.) in Educational Research Methodology at the University of Oxford where she wrote her thesis on Global School Partnerships. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Education with a special focus on Global Citizenship Education at University College London (UCL) Institute of Education, while working as a Research Associate at the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research at Scripps College in Claremont, CA. She is also one of the current alumni advisors to the Soka Education Student Research Project (SESRP).

Karina Kleiman is currently a Ph.D. candidate and an Assistant Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She received her M. A. from the Philosophy and Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University. During her undergraduate years at Soka University of America, she was the first president and co-founder of SESRP, Soka Education Student Research Project, which aims to inspire individuals seeking humanistic education by sharing and expanding values of Soka Education. Her dissertation is in the history of educational philosophy, especially in the debates about education in the Socratic dialogues and its intersection with a dialogue between teacher and student in contemporary classroom. She is a former Education Fellow at Teachers College Graduate Student Initiative Press, and an Education Fellow at the H. S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace where she works to develop an all-inclusive education, based on a deep appreciation for student’s life, to achieve a genuine social change.
Soka Education and the Doctor-Patient Relationship: Engagement, Education, and Empowerment

Jacqueline M. Mills

Abstract
Patient education is an integral part of an individual’s health care management. Theories of educational philosophy can inform this dynamic of the physician as a teacher and the patient as a student. The purpose of Soka education resonates with the purpose of medicine and as such can serve as a model structure for the doctor-patient relationship. Soka Education provides a template of empowered engagement wherein both doctor and patient learn from one another and evolve together to accomplish goals. It mandates that the purpose of education must first be the happiness and wellbeing of the learner. Before considering specific techniques or materials to administer education, physicians should first set the intention to empower the patient. This relationship, embedded in mutual respect, has the power to affect change not just within that individual, but also address their social determinants of health.

Once physicians establish this intent to empower, they can take certain actions and implement techniques to optimize their interactions with patients. Individual patients and physicians should develop and assess goals together. Toward this objective, doctors should engage their patients in dialogue, listening and using appropriate methods of communication that foster genuine understanding. Patients also generally perceive a greater sense of empathy if providers make eye contact while listening and speaking. Providing appropriate and fundamentally empowering hope can also be a part of practicing Soka Education in the realm of medicine.

Introduction
Patient education is an integral part of a person’s health care management, whether this pertains to preventative health care, medication management, post-operative healing, or other related situations. Although physicians often act as educators, this dynamic of the physician as a teacher and the patient as a student is not routinely recognized. Consequently, doctors often become poor educators, which hampers their ability to affect a positive change in the health of their patients. Improved patient education correlates with gains in health outcomes, quality of life, and patient satisfaction. Given this connection between quality doctor-patient education and
improved health outcomes, physicians should also work to become skilled educators. What pedagogical approaches would be most efficacious and applicable to the clinical setting? The philosophical and practical applications of Soka Education could guide physicians in their efforts to engage, educate, and empower patients. The purpose of Soka education coincides with the purpose of medicine, i.e. the happiness and wellbeing of each individual. Makiguchi writes, "Health is the physiological foundation of happiness" (Makiguchi and Bethel). Soka Education employs a model of empowerment, encouraging students not just to be passive recipients of information, but rather to engage in subject matter actively with teachers. Similar methods of empowerment education applied in the medical setting have shown to have physiological and psychological benefits.

How practically would a Soka-based doctor-patient interaction play out? What guidelines could physicians practicing Soka abide by? How can the ideal patient educational experience manifest in reality with the practical pressures facing physicians? The purpose of this research is to examine the current state of doctor and patient educational interactions, investigate emerging progressive literature regarding empowerment education in the health care setting, and provide a preliminary outline on how Soka Education can inform and guide doctor-patient educational interactions.

Purpose for this inquiry

Physicians and medical trainees gain expertise in analyzing the patterns and minutiae of patient stories, their physical presentation and exam findings, and laboratory and imaging studies. Medical education and health care systems mandate the development of such qualities. For instance, the USMLE Step 1 exam, the foundational licensing exam for physicians usually taken during the second year of medical school, is a 7-hour multiple-choice test covering the foundations of every discipline in medicine. Rapidly assessing clinical vignettes is a skill all physicians must demonstrate as they move through their education. As such, physicians and medical students succeed by spending much of their training efficiently distilling the vital from the superfluous. They sift through what their patients are saying and how they appear to identify key symptoms and signs, develop an accurate diagnosis, and discern the most efficacious treatment for their patients’ ailments.

These skills are imperative to functioning as a physician. Nevertheless, such highly efficient processing has often resulted in rushed patient encounters, unrecognized key components of a patient’s story, conflict in the understanding of the patient’s condition and worries, and often a fundamental dissonance in goals of care between doctor and the patient. Bleakey writes:

[medical] students are said to lose their idealism because of increasing pressures to learn science and the fundamental dehumanizing that an intensive science education
may bring as this translates into focus on biomedical issues with patients, rather than addressing the patient holistically. However, science need not be dull or dehumanizing. Science teaching can both be grounded in patient examples to make it relevant, and the intrinsic artistry and creativity in science can be taught as standard [...] a knock-on effect of a science focus may be that while contact with patients is enjoyed in the early stages of a medical education simply for meeting a variety of interesting people, this may transform into reductive ‘hypothesis testing’ encounters. (60–61)

Physicians are fully capable of acquiring and cultivating skills to communicate in a way that is more effective, promoting patient health and satisfaction without sacrificing their skills in highly efficient information processing. Echoing Bleakey, medical training and medical encounters need not be dehumanizing.

For example when treatment includes necessary behavior change in the form of a new medication for a chronic condition, physicians explain the necessary change in a concise fashion - “I’m starting you on 20 mg of atorvastatin per day.” Often if the patient fails to follow the doctor’s orders, their physicians relegate them to status “non-compliant” or “health-illiterate” - a status that does nothing to improve the patient’s health. Patients, on the other hand, sometimes know fully what is meant by compliant, but find this behavior to be inconsequential and thus, meaningless to their lives (McMonnies). Acutely problematic failures in patient education have also arisen in cases of rapidly emergent conditions. Numerous studies have determined that many patients who have presented to the emergency department do not fully understand their condition, treatment or discharge instructions (Engel et al.; Jolly, Scott, and Sanford; Spandorfer et al.). However, attempts to improve methods of communication have shown that effective instruction can improve a person’s health outcomes and even levels of pain experience by patients (Egbert et al.). Many medical studies identify the shortcomings in patient education.

Over the past several decades, medical education has begun to emphasize the importance of developing a holistic understanding of a patient’s problems including not just their physiological concerns but socioeconomic and legal circumstances as well. Health care providers also increasingly recognize that patients are most in control of their health outcomes- individuals determine their own daily physical activity, what foods they eat, how much alcohol they drink, when and how they take their medications, when they choose to seek other medical attention.

Informing and empowering patients regarding health care decisions, and fully appreciating a patient’s right to exercise their autonomy has also led to improved health outcomes and satisfaction regarding medical interventions. Deadman et al. found that women with early stage breast cancer who were advised by physicians to have mastectomy reported greater mental distress
before and after surgery, compared to women who themselves made the decision. Furthermore, among women who were granted a choice and made that final, explicit decision themselves reported relatively better psychological outcomes than women assigned to the group where surgeons discussed alternatives but strongly recommended one decision (Deadman et al.). Informed patients can choose to use their health knowledge in a way that fits them. Doctors and other health care providers must approach patient education in a holistic manner, recognizing the complex interplay of factors involved in supporting empowerment, information provision, and behavior change for the improvement of their patients’ health.

While studies have repeatedly shown that good communication has positive health outcomes for patients, appropriate educational methods have yet to be clearly identified and outlined (Street et al.; Griffin et al.). Soka education could be an ideal model of education and engagement that physicians could employ. The founder of Soka Education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi writes, "We cannot afford the uncertainty of having teachers blindly acquiring skills over years of trial-and-error teaching anymore than we can afford to be treated by barefoot doctors who have learned - how much, we do not know- solely from experience in the bush" (Makiguchi and Bethel 108). Further emphasizing Makiguchi’s point, Daisaku Ikeda writes, "If a physician prescribes the wrong treatment, he can kill the patient. Mistaken education can be equally deadly" (“The Dawn of a Century of Humanistic Education”).

Physicians train rigorously in sciences because they must fulfill their role as a scientist. They should become great educators as well. These two roles as scientist and educator arguably are what enable a physician to be a skilled healer. Makiguchi writes that educators, and I would argue physicians as well, must "command two types of specialized knowledge: knowledge of all textual materials and subjects to be covered, and knowledge of methods and techniques by which to transmit, direct, and apply studies in the subject to be covered" (Makiguchi and Bethel). Physicians are fully capable of maintaining their efficient methods of analysis while also treating their patients with openness, respect, and humanism.

**Intention**

Soka Education focuses first on the intent of education rather than technique. Makiguchi writes, “Before we can consider educational methods, we must first establish the mental preparedness, or attitude, necessary for education” (Makiguchi 8). Goulah elucidates that according to Makiguchi, if the educator does not first establish an appropriate attitude toward the learning experience, the methods applied will be inconsequential (Goulah 257). He conveys the spirit of first establishing the correct attitude as an educator by discussing a portion of a haiku from the poet Yasa Bunson:
'You, chrysanthemum grower, are a servant of chrysanthemums!' This verse perfectly suggests the kind of mental preparedness that befits a teacher engaged in education. This is what we refer to as the attitude toward guiding learning; it indicates a kind of mental preparedness and thus, relative to the application of methods, it is a form of preparation. If teachers fully embodied the spirit of one who is a servant of chrysanthemums, determined to bring beautiful flowers to bloom, education would succeed without fail. (Makiguchi Vol 9, 8–9)

The appropriate intent that Makiguchi emphasizes is to focus on the cultivating the happiness and wellbeing of the learner. Educators must recognize the complexity of the learners and consider them in the holistic context in which they exist. Within the complexity of being human, Makiguchi emphasizes, is the inherent potential for growth and development.

This tenet of Soka Education resonates throughout current progressive literature regarding patient education. Many physicians highlight the need to first establish the purpose of communication and education as patient empowerment and that of fostering patient autonomy. As early as 1988, physicians have sought guidance from educational philosophers to understand the best education approaches they could apply with their patients and many physicians have drawn on Brazilian educator Paulo Friere’s empowerment education to guide their efforts. Friere explains how powerlessness occurs when a person is no longer the protagonist or subject of their experience, but rather simply an object being acted upon. In the case of patients, this could be understood as a patient being told to follow a doctor’s orders (Aujoulat, d’Hoore, and Deccache). At times, both doctor and patient unquestioningly accept a patient’s assumed helplessness toward a disease or condition and both resign to the assumption that only the physician possesses the power to provide resolution. Studies have shown that patients’ powerlessness over themselves and their environment as manifested in their health experiences correlates closely with lower quality of life and health outcomes (Wallerstein and Bernstein; Aujoulat, d’Hoore, and Deccache).

Anderson and Funnell emphasize that empowerment as the purpose of patient education must be the overall philosophy, the fundamental intent of education, rather than simply being a strategy. They explain that when physicians establish this as their educational philosophy, all of their interactions accord to the goal of service to the patient (Anderson and Funnell). Both the doctor and the patient recognize that the patient is most in control of their individual health care decisions. They add that that when empowerment becomes the foundation of the doctor-patient relationship, a transformation occurs wherein the doctor evolves from “feeling responsible for patients to feeling responsible to patients” (Anderson and Funnell). This sentiment is clearly echoed in Makiguchi’s writings, when he states, “a teacher comes to a humble appreciation of his/her true
position, which we can never forget is to be that of an aide, guide and midwife, empowering and assisting the activities of the learners themselves” (Makiguchi Vol 6, Page 54).

When a teacher cares for the development of student in such a way, they naturally come to share information, values, and authority within their relationship, both contributing to and transforming because of the process. Empowerment is thus something that is fostered together rather than something that the teacher bestows upon the student. This is true for the patient and doctor too. Aujoulat et al. further explain this concept as follows:

[Empowerment as an interactive process, suggests that power is “given” by someone to somebody [...] empowerment as a personal process, suggests that power is “created” within someone. Although the expected outcome is the same, i.e. to gain more power over one’s life, the nature of the two processes is very different [...] the emergence of “power” (or potential) is facilitated by a caring relationship, and not merely given by someone, nor created within someone. In other words, the emergence of a person’s potential as a result of an empowerment process, may be viewed as a co-creation, within a true partnership (Aujoulat, d’Hoore, and Deccache).

This perspective embraces that a physician, possessing greater technical knowledge, and a patient, with greater understanding of their own individual lives, can address complex concerns together. Some individuals may be engaged in every aspect of knowledge acquisition and decision-making, while other patients admittedly may choose to delegate the responsibility of decision-making entirely to the doctor and are uninterested in learning about their condition. But the choice to relinquish that responsibility is a choice made by the patient and can thus be an act of empowerment as well.

The potential of an empowering relationship can expand well beyond the two individuals involved. Daisaku Ikeda writes about this in his November 2014 Japan Times opinion-editorial. In it he states that learning in a system that fosters empowerment can lead to valuable “chain reactions of spontaneous and self-motivated action.” Successful empowerment leads to participants developing a sense of purpose in the tasks at hand and ultimately a collective sense of achievement (Ikeda, “A Chain Reaction of Empowerment”). Soka philosophy embraces moving away from simply transferring information from teacher to learner. Through the learning experience, the learner can become an even more skilled, autonomous learner, able to synthesize knowledge and apply it to their individual lives and potentially affecting positive change in their environment as well. Echoing Friere’s ideology, Gebert and Joffee explain that “Soka education emphasizes and nurtures the idea that students should live out their lives as the protagonists of both personal and societal transformation” (Gebert and Joffee).
When physicians encounter patient education as opportunities to empower, the physician and patient together address not just individual health issues, but they also confront the social determinants of health facing a person. Social determinants of health refers to conditions that contribute to the health and wellbeing of a person’s life including for instance the community in which they live, what food they can access and can eat, the level of violence they routinely experience, what social support they have, and what kind of work they do. When physician and patient engage each other in creating solutions to such problems, they can enact beneficial change within that patient’s family and community at large. In this regard, empowerment education is an act of social justice within the microcosm of an individual patient.

**Action**

With the intention of patient education firmly established, physicians can then begin to explore optimal techniques in engaging with patients. While some may insist that intent organically form into technique, physicians would nevertheless benefit from tangible guidance regarding techniques. The following are suggestion that can help facilitate practicing empowerment.

*Goals*

The intent to empower inherently involves dissolution of the preset goals and targets set for a patient’s behavior, particularly in the realm of long-term care. Physicians must “unlearn being in control” and must acknowledge that successful education requires cooperative engagement from both the doctor and patient (Aujoulat, d’ Hoore, and Deccache). They should gain a mutual understanding of the patient’s condition, including worries and concerns that the patient can share and disease and treatment information that the physician can share. No longer should doctors solely focus on persuading patients to abide by rigid health recommendations, which so often do not take into account patients competing interests and concerns or are incomprehensible to patients. Health recommendations must suit the patient’s needs and concerns.

Doctors do not know in advance what the outcome of empowerment education will be. They must engage patients in collective goal setting, balancing individual priorities, fears, realities, and values with science of the disease, the available and appropriate treatment and management. Regarding goal setting and communication in chronic care management, Clayman writes as follows:

There are many barriers to engaging patients in this manner. Finding or revising patient materials, changing one’s strategy for interacting with patients, and perhaps most importantly, treating patients as equals in this process are not easy tasks. Yet patients have a vested interest in keeping their disease under control, and measures that could empower them to do so have the potential for lasting impact. (Clayman)
When doctor and patient can engage in the shared responsibility of working toward the agreed upon goals of treatment, they increase the likelihood of enduring beneficial effects.

To assess their attitude regarding goal setting, physicians can ask themselves the following questions adapted from Anderson and Funnell’s approach to empowerment for chronic diabetes management:

1. Do I have the right to expect my patients to defer to my judgment about how they conduct their daily lives to manage their condition/disease?
2. Do I feel responsible for my patients’ health outcomes?
3. Do I find myself trying to persuade my patients to follow my advice?
4. Do I feel frustrated if my patients do not follow my recommendations?
5. Do I feel like my ‘noncompliant’ patients are undermining my effectiveness? (Anderson and Funnell)

The process of answering these questions and reflecting on one’s answers can help physicians be cognizant of their feelings regarding the practice of empowerment education. The skills and attitude of this approach takes profound self-awareness to develop. But physicians are capable of this and should be uphold this practice.

Dialogue

A common criticism of doctors is that they do not listen well to their patients. A 2015 New York Times article entitled Doctor, Shut-up and Listen explained that typically physicians allow patients to speak for about 18 seconds before interrupting (Joshi). Increasingly patients and doctors attribute this rushed conversation to advances in technology and the pressure of real time documentation in the examination rooms (Verghese). But even before such technology was in place, these criticism existed (Boyle). A physician instructed to listen more could do just that, but they may not necessarily be fully engaged in the meaning of the patient’s words. Thus rather than insist that doctors just listen, doctors should engage in dialogue with patients, something that inherently mandates good listening.

Daisaku Ikeda explains, “The key to dialogue is respect for the other person, a willingness to listen, and a readiness to learn from them.” He adds, “Dialogue starts by clearly recognizing the positions and interests of the parties involved and then carefully identifying the obstacles to progress, patiently working to remove and resolve each of them” (Ikeda, “Moving beyond the Use of Military Force”). This format of dialogue is precisely how an ideal doctor-patient relationship would proceed. Inherent within dialogue is mutual respect and thus dialogue, rather than just listening, resonates with the intent of empowerment.
**Eye Contact**

Physicians should make more eye contact with patients. Patients report significantly higher levels of satisfaction when physicians made eye contact with them when they were speaking (Gorawara-Bhat and Cook). Eye contact has strongly correlated with patients’ positive perceptions of clinician attributes, such as connectedness and liking. Patients also sensed greater empathy from their physicians when physicians made eye contact while speaking and listening to patients (Montague et al.). Doctors who spent longer times looking at a patient were also able to better identify if their patients were experiencing mental distress (Bensing, Kerssens, and Pasch). This understanding regarding eye contact may seem like common sense to most, but given the number of studies regarding deficient physicians’ eye contact, this research will not take this behavior for granted.

In his reflection on meeting Daisaku Ikeda, Larry Hickman director of the Center for Dewey Studies wrote as follows:

> When I shake his hand and we have eye contact, I see a person who is mindful and focused on our meeting at that moment in time. He is not thinking what he is going to have for dinner, or what problems he has to solve later in the day. He is present in the moment. Consequently, there is a connection that is almost electric. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we would all make an effort to achieve that level of mindfulness! (“Interview with Professor Larry A. Hickman July 12, 2010”)

Hickman's description clearly explains the potential power that eye contact can have. Indeed, physicians should strive to achieve this same level of impact with each person with whom they interact especially with patients to whom they are fully accountable.

**Empathy and Hope**

Physicians should be a source of hope to their patient. One study found that patients perceived hope not just in positive prognoses, but also in the reassurance that even if they do have a poor prognosis, doctors and their other health care providers would be with them through understanding their disease, managing any disability, and coping with the process of dying (Bensing, Rimondini, and Visser). This latter understanding of hope is that which, unlike the prognosis of a disease, is something that doctors can control and it is something that they can provide. Hope in this case does not, however does not mean cultivating unrealistic expectation for the patient. Ruddick clearly conveys a warning stating, “Convinced of hope’s therapeutic benefits, physicians routinely support patient’s false hopes, often with family collusion and vague, euphemistic diagnoses and prognoses [...] bioethicists charge them with paternalistic violations of patient autonomy”
(Ruddick). The provision of realistic hope as fitting to that doctor and patient, embedded in a relationship of mutual respect is the ideal.

**Communication**

Physicians should communicate with patients in a way that they will understand; if they fail to do this attempts at communication are meaningless. Tunesaburo Makiguchi outlines cardinal principles regarding the relationship of educators to the learning process, many of which can fluidly apply to the physician educator: Physicians should be "thinking experts who guide," who "take on a supporting role," "outgrow their own holier-than-thou self-importance," and "come down from their thrones and serve," (Makiguchi and Bethel). This advice from Makiguchi emphasizes that physicians must adapt to the needs of the patient rather than demanding that patients meet them at their level.

Physicians should be keenly aware of the language they are using, the volume of their voice, and the timing of their phrases. Doctors should speak not just for the sake of projecting information. Rather the way physicians communicate should facilitate understanding by the patient. Bleakley advises as follows:

Where doctors are able to make clinical judgments and to reason clinically, it is imperative that [...] they communicate the process of clinical reasoning and judgment itself in language that the patient can understand, to create dialogue. Indeed, if patients’ narratives and styles of communication offer a basis to, and for, diagnosis, doctors must reciprocate through democratizing their own more technical narrative styles. Importantly, content of a message is often secondary to delivery of that message. Patients should not be left confused about what is being conveyed to them because of poor communication. (Bleakley 62)

Not only will good communication foster rapport between patient and doctor but also greater clinical understanding.

**Practical Considerations**

This sort of approach to patient education does not apply well across all medical specialties. Many physicians work in fields such as family practice or in chronic care management, where in depth interactions with patients are paramount to the management of a patient's health. Conversely, others perhaps only have isolated, solely technical interactions with patients. For example, with emergency department physicians or trauma surgeons, they must move quickly from one patient to the next and extended conversations with patients may compromise the health of another patient in need of immediate treatment. In this case, physician and care teams should work together to
ensure that patients receive clear communication and understanding about their condition and treatment.

Another consideration is that patients, unlike students in most other educational settings, can be unconscious, have some other limitation in their mental functioning, or may be harming themselves or others. Patients may have no way of expressing their autonomy or physicians may be required to restrain or limit the patient. In these situations, physicians will require greater wisdom and creativity in expressing their fundamental intent to empower patients.

**Conclusion**

Soka Education provides an ideal foundation to patient education. It provides a template of empowered engagement wherein both doctor and patient learn from one another and evolve together to accomplish mutual goals. It mandates that the purpose of education must first be the happiness and wellbeing of the learner. Before considering specific techniques or materials to administer education, physicians should first set the intention to empower their patient, in a way most suited to that individual. This relationship, embedded in mutual respect, has the power affect change not just within the corpus of the individual, but within their environment, from their family to their community at large.

Once this intent to empower is set, certain actions and techniques can be implemented. Physicians should not interact with patients with the purpose of simply getting them to comply with preset goals. Patient and physician should develop and assess goals together. Toward this objective, dialogue and appropriate methods of communication are key. The former mandates engaged listening and the latter includes using language and speaking in a way patients will understand. Generally, patients will also perceive a greater sense of empathy from providers if they make eye contact while speaking. Providing appropriate and fundamentally empowering hope can also be a part of practicing Soka Education in the realm of medicine.

**References**


Educating for Community
Towards a Peaceful and Sustainable Future

Victoria Chang Sandoval

Abstract

Perceiving a peaceful and sustainable future requires reconsideration of our lifestyles, mindsets, and daily motivations. Learning sustainability encompasses fundamental understanding of: interconnectedness (all beings, all natural systems), cause and effect (history, legacy, future), natural limits (of ecosystems, individual rights), necessity of diversity (in organisms, ideas, knowledge bases), and most importantly, the importance of continuous critical examination and diverse ideology reflecting the complex goals of sustainability. Facilitating the necessary personal internalization of these frameworks develops from learning that is linked to daily life and personal realities, learning from the local community (including natural, trans-generational, and traditional avenues of knowledge), engaging in open-minded dialogue, active and creative learning (imaginative, hands-on, problem-solving, synonymously teaching and learning), democratic participation, and personal exploration of self in relation to society as well as self in the natural world. This paper considers communities as a vital center for learning, support, and taking action for change. Utilizing educational pedagogy of Freire, Dewey, Makiguchi and Ikeda, this paper emphasizes the ability of communities and individuals to create positive change. Through engaging life-long learners in critically and holistically examining their communities, relating together their daily experiences and personal realities, as well as the larger scope of interconnectedness, with ecosystems, global phenomenon, historical influences, and social structures—we can foster sustaining, empathetic atmospheres of open dialogue, embracing diverse realities, empowering individuals towards active leadership and collaborative value-creation, contributing to sustainable communities and a peaceful planet.

Introduction:

Establishing a Basic Framework for Learning Sustainability
“[T]he establishment of an educational framework promoting sustainability... would raise awareness among individuals and enable people to move from empowerment to leadership within their respective communities. It would encourage individuals to act as protagonists within their local community and to treasure the inalienable dignity of all people and the irreplaceable value of all that surrounds us” (Ikeda 2012; 9).

Daisaku Ikeda issued this powerful call to action in his 2012 Environmental Proposal, “For a Sustainable Global Society: Learning for Empowerment and Leadership,” advocating for the establishment of an educational framework promoting sustainability (9). This represents a unique challenge considering how the multitude of established educational frameworks and pedagogies, while philosophically profound and relevant, continue to fail during application and without reaching substantial goals. Considering education for sustainability with goals of challenging current realities—systemic social justice issues, increasing and irreversible environmental degradation, prevailing violent conflict, extreme poverty, food insecurity, as well as the projected exponential impact on our global Earth community—we cannot afford to fail.

Just as the issues we collectively face are all interconnected, so too must be our collaborative solutions. Learning sustainability involves the fundamental understanding of: innate interconnectedness (all beings, all natural systems), cause and effect (history, legacy, future), natural limits (of ecosystems, individual rights), necessity of diversity (in organisms, ideas, knowledge bases), and the importance of continuous critical examination and life-long learning as the needs for sustainability also continue to change. Facilitating the necessary personal internalization of these frameworks develops from learning linked to daily life and personal realities, learning from the local community (including natural, trans-generational, and traditional avenues of knowledge), engaging in open-minded dialogue, active and creative learning (imaginative, hands on, problem-solving, synonymously teaching and learning), democratic participation, and personal exploration of the self in relation to society and the natural world.

Communities of Soka Value-Creation

Individual learning and growth benefits from the collective nurturance in thriving communities—where the aforementioned values and learning processes can organically take place through the constant interaction and collaboration of people, environment, and shared space. Communities based on such internalization of interconnectedness build important bonds between people and place: bonds of respect, nurturance, empathy, and responsibility. Similarly, Soka value-creation pedagogy—empowering individuals to realize the innate, limitless potential of the self and all others—emphasizes similar bonds. Ikeda describes the mission of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who called for a fundamental lifestyle transformation:
“a consciously interactive, interdependent mode of existence, a life of committed contribution...based on an awareness of the interdependent nature of our lives—of the relationships that link us to others and our environment. It is a way of life in which we actively strive to realize happiness both for ourselves and for others” (2002: 7).

Soka pedagogy considers first and foremost the happiness of the individual, and through empowerment ‘brings forth the truly limitless potential we all possess’ (Ikeda 2002:1). This happiness derives from connection—a shared mission for the happiness of others. Individual empowerment inspires an active sense of leadership, ‘generating waves of transformation within our communities and societies” (Ikeda 2002:1).

Thriving, sustainable communities are built by happy individuals, connecting and working for the well-being of others, motivated by empathy, humanistic competition, personal internalization of responsibility and interconnectedness. Through engaging life-long learners in critically and holistically examining their communities, relating together their daily experiences and personal realities, as well as the larger scope of interconnectedness, with ecosystems, global phenomenon, historical influences, and social structures—we can foster sustaining, empathetic atmospheres of open dialogue, embracing diverse realities, empowering individuals towards active leadership and collaborative value-creation, contributing to sustainable communities and a peaceful planet.

Pedagogical Foundation

Connecting Educational Frameworks: John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Makiguchi

Achieving or even perceiving a peaceful and sustainable future will require a deeply impactful change in mindset. Learning is a powerful phenomenon; it can create powerful emotional responses. A change in understanding can allow you to perceive the world in a new way, then view yourself in this illumination and most significantly—to continue living with this complex understanding, internalized in your mentality. John Dewey, in Experience and Education, describes this phenomena as experiential learning: for better or worse, all experiences create reference frames for how all subsequent living will be experienced. He credits each experienced moment as having a lasting impact on an individual who then, both consciously and subconsciously, regards newly-occurring experiences through the lens of a growing collective of preceding experiential knowledge. In his views, the role of education and educator are to “arrange for the kind of experiences which, while they do not repel the student, but rather engage his activities are, nevertheless, more than immediately enjoyable since they promote having desirable future experiences” (27). Essentially, educating for the future lives of students. The dilemma then becomes deciding what ‘desirable future experiences’ should consist of and to what standards of desirability one chooses to aim.
Ikeda draws comparisons between Dewey’s ideas and Makiguchi’s work, written around the same time. Dewey linked school with everyday life, highlighting the importance of guiding children to improve social competence; he described schools as ‘genuine form of active community,’ ‘a miniature community, an embryonic society’ (Ikeda 2010: 18). Dewey’s ideas can be modernized to accommodate the needs of today’s communities—rather than aiming for social competence, one can create active communities fostering competence in sustainability.

In reaction to the hegemony of thought forcefully normalizing blind adherence to power structures, Paulo Freire’s work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, advocates for an eye-opening, critical conscientization of oneself, realizing the structures of social realities and one’s own previous oppression of both body and mind. Freire explains how liberating education reveals inherent connections between humankind, the world, and reality: “Authentic reflection considers ... people in their relations with the world... consciousness and world are simultaneous: consciousness neither precedes the world nor follows it” (81). This vital difference in perspective and perception allows for more holistic views of world problems, contrasting the dominant singular, normalized human narrative of individual and merit-based reward and consequence. This essential truth illuminating the interconnectedness between people, the world, and social relations identifies the complexities of reality as well as the critical, holistic perspective necessary to make such perceptions. Critical thinking therefore becomes an evident root to perceiving a sustainable reality.

Similar to Dewey, Freire roots his pedagogy in learning that shapes future experiences, with a specified focus on a future of liberated, critically-conscious individuals. The next step therefore concerns the application of such critical thinking—how to empower individuals into critical action.

Soka pedagogy affirms the innate, limitless potential within of all beings. Through education and learning, this potential can be actualized into value-creation and action for positive change (Ikeda 2010). This individual empowerment resonates directly with Freire’s conscientization through a broadening of individual perception of self and society, as well as with Dewey’s experiential education, as this understanding of self perpetuates and impacts future interactions with the world.

Makiguchi explains in *Education for Creative Living*, “[Education] is not the piecemeal merchandising of information; it is the provision of keys that will allow people to unlock the vault of knowledge on their own... it would rather place people on their own path of discovery and invention” (Ikeda, 2010). Dewey and Freire similarly advocate for the experiences and personal effort necessary to truly learn.

While education as a personal journey of discovery creates powerful, impactful, empowering change in learners, C. A. Bowers (considered one of the pioneering proponents of
EcoJustice thinking identifies how this constructivist education, where each new generation is challenged to critically unearth independent knowledge, can be problematic for sustainability. It continually ignores and discredits the environmental knowledge of more sustainable local, traditional cultures—“the most prominent of the mistakes made by John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and others in the constructivist tradition of educational reform was to assume that there is one-true approach to learning” (Bowers 2005).

Bowers makes an important point—learning occurs not only in a classroom, but in daily living, in communities, households, streets, etc. It would be too limiting to consider the complex issue of achieving sustainability through a singular pedagogical perspective. Through utilizing aspects of various educational frameworks, as well as specific considerations necessary for achieving sustainability including the diversity of thought and knowledge bases that Bowers describes, we can synthesize a roadmap for sustainable education.

Bowers asserts that eco-justice pedagogy: “must balance critical reflection with the renewal of community-centered traditions that represent an alternative to cultural trends that are now overshooting the long-term sustaining capacity of the environment” (2001: 183). The critical reflection and empowerment discussed by Freire, Dewey, and Makiguchi must therefore connect with other distinct aspects of community sustainability.

Connecting Soka Education and EcoJustice Education

“To be effective, education for sustainability must be rooted in a deep faith in humanity—the determination to awaken and empower human agency through the interlocking processes of learning, reflection, and empowerment” (Ikeda 2004: 3).

Rebecca Martusewicz, Jeff Edmundson, and John Lupinacci, in EcoJustice Education: Toward Diverse, Democratic, and Sustainable Communities, explain how fundamentally “teaching for EcoJustice is based on the recognition that ‘to be human is to live engaged in a vast and complex system of life, and human well being depends on learning how to protect it’” (9). This emphasis on humanity and the interconnectedness of life resonates perfectly with Ikeda’s proposed solutions for sustainable education. In addition, Martusewicz et. al. provide a synopsis of key points for educators to base their EcoJustice practices on: education for the commons (traditional, shared, non-monetized culture and places), critical thinking, cultural ecological analysis, culturally responsive teaching, Earth democracy, Ecocentrism, sustainable communities, and indigenous knowledge.

Rolf Jucker, in Our Common Illiteracy: Education as if the Earth and People Mattered, also conceives a framework of rules for sustainability, though his guidelines focus more on a sustainable reality achieved through concrete social regulation and rule creation—
acknowledgement of interdependence, social justice and ecological limits to freedoms, community control as liberation rather than restriction (based on open dialogue, transparent structures and rules, democratic practices allowing for change), and the powerful influence of exemplary behavior in a community as an encouraging catalyst for the sustainable change of others (268). These means for sustainability, while practical and seemingly effective, derive from an external societal change that community members choose to follow, rather than the critical, empathetic, and moralistic methods advocated by Martusewicz et. al. and Bowers. Jucker’s regulated social reality appears reactionary and a more extreme response to global problems; it lends more credit to the power of social structures than to the empowerment of individuals to create change.

Jucker however also identifies the necessity of holistic education: “We have to start thinking people- and earth-centered and relearning new-old values...reflect on the gap which has opened between real education for life—which includes accepting relevant elder knowledge and community based transgenerational communication—and institutionalized school education as we know it” (256). Similar to Bowers, Jucker draws a strong distinction between institutionalized education and life education. Makiguchi, as well as Dewey and Freire, also congruently admonishes institutionalized forms of education that are not based in life:

“Makiguchi worked to ensure that, at the actual site of education, abstract concepts and learning would be deeply and consciously linked to lived reality. Knowledge that is rooted in lived realities and illuminated by universal principles is inherently critical: its conformity to fact is subject to testing against immediate realities, its inner coherence to testing against the larger logic of principle” (Gebert 4).

Gebert’s analysis of Makiguchi’s community-focused education highlights the interdisciplinarity of community life, the importance of critical learning linked to the self, as well as an educational ideal simultaneously presenting universal principles, abstract concepts, and experiential critical learning. The engagement of diverse sources in learning fulfills the issues problematized by Bowers in regards to constructivist pedagogy.

In fact, Bowers’ ideas about ecojustice education parallel Makiguchi’s ideas, emphasizing learning that is “more global in terms of analysis and accountability, and more local in terms of educational strategies that reverse the process of deskilling that is part of the destruction of community systems of mutual support that began with the rise of the techno-scientific based industrial culture” (Bowers 2009). Bowers delineates a vital focus for educational strategies to recuperate community systems of mutual support that have been lost in industrial culture. Poetically, Ikeda also demonstrates the desperation and isolation permeating modern culture: “Immersed in material concerns, clamor and bustle, contemporary humanity has been cut off from the vastness of the universe from the eternal flow of time... Divorced from the cosmos, from
nature, from society and from each other, we have become fractured and fragmented” (Ikeda 2006 “Restoring...”:1).

Through community-based learning, we can rebuild the empathetic ties and social connections that give life meaning; we can find personal motivation and happiness in the active creation of value, striving for the happiness for others. Through such human revolution, we will find both the community support necessary to overcome the difficult symptoms of our hurting ecological and social systems, as well as spread waves of change addressing the root issues. Martusewicz et. al. emphasize how solving ecological and social problems rely on interpersonal relationships, happiness and friendship: “they are exactly what we see at the heart of strong, healthy communities. Happiness and friendship—and learning to care for others—grow out of relationships with others” (Martusewicz et. al. 281).

**Envisioning a Peaceful, Sustainable Future**

*Central Elements for Creating a Sustainable Community*

“It is education and learning that will turn the limitless possibilities possessed by all people...into a wellspring of energy for meeting the unprecedented challenge of building a sustainable global society. Learning can take place anywhere, wherever people come together; it is something in which we can all take part. And even when its results are not immediately apparent, it takes deep root within society and exerts an increasingly positive influence as it is passed from one generation to the next” (Ikeda 2012: 11).

The framework for a peaceful, sustainable, hopeful future necessitates three main factors—as explored by Ikeda, Makiguchi, and Toda under Soka Education pedagogy—individuals continuously learning and living with sustaining mindsets internalizing interconnectedness, finding individual empowerment and happiness in working for the happiness of others, and actively creating value through leadership and engaging with others. Internalizing interconnectedness embraces the vital importance of understanding the interconnected nature of all beings, systems, and realities. The next step involves the empowerment of individuals using this perspective of interconnectedness for action; through working to make changes that help others, individuals themselves will find happiness, purpose, and hope. Empowered individuals motivated to leadership can continue to inspire and empower others, working collaboratively to create powerful, positive changes. Makiguchi envisioned a world united and motivated by what he termed humanitarian competition where one protects, extends, and advances the lives of others while doing the same for oneself; one benefits and serves the interests of others while profiting oneself (in Ikeda 2012). Makiguchi involves the aspect of competition because he understood the natural competitive processes vital to healthy growth: “We find progress and development where
competition is strong and powerful; where it is hampered, either by natural or human factors, we find stagnation, immobility, and regression” (in Ikeda 2012: 2). Rather than the current capitalist, materialistic ideology motivating the world to unhealthy, egoistic, unsustainable pursuits, *humanitarian competition* would provide an atmosphere of working for others’ happiness, collaborating with others, for the collective goal of a peaceful, hopeful future:

This next section distinguishes how communities provide an essential basis for achieving sustainability. This sections extrapolates basic ideas which can be utilized by any individual, to consider as one lives and works amidst their own communities in any field or capacity. Through our daily lives and interactions amidst our own communities, we can create opportunities for dialogue, continued learning, collaborative action, making changes in our own lives and those around us.

I. **Community as Basis for Creating Positive Change**

Communities are central to sustainability for a multitude of reasons. Rather than focusing on education or structural change in schools or institutions, communities represent organic and accessible spaces of constant interaction and collaboration of people, environment, and cultures. Healthy communities provide invaluable support to individuals as well as opportunity for those living in these communities to create and perceive change in a familiar, attached environment of which they are uniquely knowledgeable. Thriving communities require the establishment of a safe space, which can then provide a vital sense of place and bonds of nurturance, encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own home bases. Creating change in local environments can provide important feedback and visible success as motivation for continued missions of value creation. In addition, local communities can be viewed as representative of the global community; as the popular refrain goes ‘think global, act local’.

a. **Establishment of Safe Space**

Paramount to the success of any community or environment is the establishment of safe space, where individuals feel free to communicate in open, honest dialogue, without the immobilizing fear or anxiety of being met with judgment, apathy, or being overpowered. This has been an important topic in the discussion of educators concerning educational environments where all voices are empowered—creating a diversity of thought and experience which prove fundamental for truly open dialogue and the synonymous learning and teaching amongst individuals. Through providing a platform for authentic individual voices, intentions, and background experiences to be shared in a safe space, communities can also foster an environment of care, empowerment, and consideration of others; this is hingent on open understanding and respect for the differing perspectives that comes from a real place of knowing ones’ neighbors, rather than oversimplifications and assumptions based on class and race.
McLaren describes the difficulties faced as an educator to create safe space, “since building reciprocal feelings of trust is paramount” yet how vital safe spaces are as “students are reluctant to stay in the classrooms where they feel they are going to be the objects of attack and derision” (97). “The goal, of course, is to challenge the experiences of students without taking away their voice. You don’t want to affirm a racist, sexist or homophobic voice, but how is such a challenge accomplished without removing the students voice entirely?” (McLaren 97). The dilemma McLaren describes is a critical one to consider. He considers the creation of safe space to be the role of an educator, in order to both protect and inform. Inherently though, safe spaces need to be the creation of all individuals involved, without any top-down hierarchy or air of intellectual superiority. Rather than policing voices which may communicate problematic ideas, truly open dialogue will allow for diverse voices to consider differing perspectives, helping all involved to naturally grow in their ideas and perceptions of reality. Policing and regulation only create atmospheres of fear, anxiety, uncertainty, and discomfort. Rather, establishing an openness and acceptance of all voices and perspectives, engaging in dialogue of relating personal realities and thoughts, can overcome such debilitating worries, instead encouraging all individuals to share, learn, teach, and grow together and from each others’ diverse, unique perspectives. Individuals will engage in critical learning as they experience and hear the narratives of other people whom they care about, trust, and empathetically relate to. bell hooks emphasizes the importance of an intimate connection and compassion towards students which facilitate an environment where the best learning is possible. hooks explains how education as a practice of freedom relies on transgressions and openness to seeing against and beyond boundaries: “To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin” (13).

b. Sense of Place

Inherent in living in a community are the valuable connections and roots which come from a sense of place. Through experiencing the unique local environment and cultures, sharing experiences with neighbors, establishing bonds of care and safe spaces, individuals gain an empowering sense of belonging, understanding, and interconnectedness with their immediate environments. Ikeda laments the decrease in such opportunities to connect to place and feel the security and engagement of having local safe space: “Urbanization and the collapse of the extended family have deprived children of the physical and social spaces where they are affectionately enfolded and can comfortably develop friendships” (“Bullying…” 2007:2). Ikeda holistically perceives the loss of roots and safe spaces as well as the detrimental, multiplying effects of such isolation: “Many children who become violent and carry a deep-rooted sense of being neglected and ignored” (2007:2). Just as the absence of connections to local place and people creates negative impacts on individuals, especially developing youth, the fostering of local
spaces of safety, where connections can be made to natural environment and neighbors, can also create positive, lasting impacts. Establishing connections to place encourages feelings of interconnectedness, support, mutual dependency, appreciation, respect, and responsibility towards one’s home community. Similarly, Makiguchi's work focused on using the local community as an experiential example for youth to feel and comprehend the workings of society, nature, and universal connection. He understood that through using the local community “as the place where the various principles by which society and the world operate come together in directly observable form” he could “instill in children the basic tenets of a contributive life—to work for the good of local and national society, and of humanity as a whole, based on a sense of mutual interdependence of all life developed through the child’s interactions with the local community” (Ikeda 2012: 10).

c. Bonds of Nurturance

Through such connection to place and the establishment of safe space, we see the formulation of essential bonds of nurturance. Especially vital is the nurturance of children by caring, empathetic community members. Ikeda connects how this symbiotic relationship of nurturing children in turn ignites the humanity in adults: “When children feel acceptance, they develop a natural awareness of their own unique and irreplaceable value. They come to treasure and care for themselves... this awakens feelings of trust and respect for others...Only by turning to directly engage with children, their feelings and their needs, will we redeem our own humanity” (“Bullying...” 2007: 2-3). This nurturance is vital to both the healthy future of the child as well as the community, which they in turn affect. Martinez and Cavitt, in their work with gang intervention, emphasize how education comes from the home and how it takes a village to raise a child; “Kids do for the most part, as we teach or allow. That makes us responsible as parent figures...I think a village ought to want to be involved in raising the kids. If, as a village, you raise the kids right, you raise your neighborhood right” (2007: 167). Grille also expresses how youth will become our future civilizations and this future therefore depends on how their socio-emotional needs are met. Referencing neuropsychology studies which prove how human brains experience chemical and synaptic changes through impact of human relationships, which “underpin the formation of individual personality and relating styles: the building blocks of any society,” Grille emphasizes that it is therefore up to us— “we can educate for the status quo, or we can educate for an evolution towards a more loving peaceful and sustainable society” (2011:174). Garabino et. al. also explain how as their intervention work steers away from focusing on singular negative issues in environments towards positive education of individuals, the utmost importance of “caring relationships with significant adults as the principle agent of change and source of support” (in Hutchison, 120-121). This relationship between youth and trusted adult becomes one
of mutual importance, as well as symbiotic impact. Rachel Carson expresses the important experiential learning that takes place as adult and child share together: “If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder...he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in” (in Hutchison, 110). Creating bonds of nurturance and learning together are valuable learning experiences for all involved, regardless of age, or other unnecessary classifications. Through diverse interactions and realities engaged together in sharing, we can understand, learn, and remember the expansive reality of the world.

d. Transformative Connections Inspire Responsibility and Empowerment

These caring connections to place and people can inspire individuals to feel empowered to take responsibility for their communities, engaging in action to further creating positive impact and value in the communities that they care about. Ikeda explains how this community-based empowerment of individuals, through encouraging courage and wisdom, also inspires a sense of individual vow or mission towards taking action, exercising leadership, collaborating in effort; in addition, “this process can serve as the basis for building an expanding grassroots movement in pursuit of sustainability on a global scale” (Ikeda 2012: 5). Ikeda also describes the impactful and transformative relationships with nature and mentors that he experienced with Josei Toda:

“He organized outdoor study sessions for young people in beautiful natural settings that helped us regain a sense of expansive vitality...We spoke with him late into the night about the things that concerned us: our relations with our parents, marriage, our lives and futures. He saw in them possibilities they themselves could not imagine. In turn they were transformed by the confidence, courage, and hope he instilled” (“Planting Seeds...” 2006: 2).

The kinds of human to human and human to nature connections fostered in communities that provide safe space, connection to place, and nurturing bonds empower individuals to realize their innate potentials; the feelings of appreciation, respect, and responsibility gained from such profound connections foster caring and impassioned individuals motivated for the happiness of others.

e. Perceiving the Community as a Microcosm of the Global

The community become a vital place to experience the reality of interconnectedness through the direct experiencing of connections to local environment and people. To really achieve sustainability, however, we must not neglect the global perspective. Makiguchi heavily emphasizes this connection, from seeing the local with a global perspective as well as understanding the global from a direct local experience: ‘To know that our life extends to the entire world. The world is our home, and all the nations within it are the field of our action.’ (in Ikeda 2012:10). Ikeda explains how rather than a narrow perspective of community, Makiguchi saw it as “the foundation for one’s
present life—the place where one walks and lives, where one sees and hears and is moved by various events. Makiguchi understood our sense of belonging and rootedness as members of a local community to be the foundation for a consciousness of global citizenship” (2012: 10). Ikeda describes this local to global, global to local understanding as a cyclical movement “viewing the world from the perspective of the local community, looking at the community through the lens of the world” that builds ethical understanding and appreciation for nature and humanity, as it is rooted in experienced daily life reality (2002: 5).

In the case of environmental and social issues, looking from the global perspective can seem overwhelming and insurmountable, making one feel powerless (Ikeda 2002). However, it can be more feasible to look at the elements of global problems which affect one’s local communities and find the start to creating change there. Still referencing the overall global interconnectedness, seeing the influence of one’s impact in changing local realities can provide motivation for individuals in the face of global dilemmas (Ikeda 2012).

“This is the significance of the local community: it is a place where people can recognize small changes as symptoms of larger issues and can, by framing this as a greater scheme of meaning, convert a sense of distress into determination and action. By protecting our respective communities and expanding solidarity among them, we can confront even the most pressing global threats. And we can engage in the kind of patient community building that will open up a broad path to the sustainable global society of the future” (Ikeda 2012: 11).

Bibliography


Japanese Buddhist philosopher, author and Soka school founder Daisaku Ikeda (b. 1928) proposes that inner transformation, or human revolution, to bring out each individual’s wisdom, courage and compassion is the basis for individual happiness, social improvement and world peace. This process of inner transformation enhances one’s ability to create value, defined by Japanese teacher, principal and educational theorist Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871 – 1844) as the ability to contribute positively to the world by maximizing beauty, personal gain, and social good. In this paper, Makiguchi’s system of value-creating pedagogy is considered alongside Ikeda’s philosophy of human education through a duoethnographic exploration of the phenomenon of inner transformation through and for dialogue toward value creation. The two interlocutors, one a founder of a democratically run nonpublic school, and the other a K-8 Japanese language teacher in a diverse urban public school district, both seek to apply value creation to their educational practice, and together they engage in ongoing dialogue to accomplish their own inner transformation as doctoral students in the field of Curriculum Studies. The study, containing excerpts of a dialogue they shared, finds evidence of dialogic education as growing together based on trust that facilitates shared value creation. The dialogue partners invite the reader to join them in the process of observing each other’s values in order to deepen our understanding of and operationalize inner transformation through dialogue.

Dialogue has the power to transform those who engage in it. Through dialogue, we “learn to know ourselves and others and thus learn the ways of being human” (Ikeda, 2010a). Dialogue is also the first step toward value creation (Ikeda, 2016), a volitional process of creating aesthetically, personally and socially beneficial contributions to life regardless of the situation at hand. Japanese Buddhist philosopher, author and Soka school founder Daisaku Ikeda (b. 1928) has
repeatedly advocated for dialogue as a path to inner transformation, value creation, and world peace, consistently articulated in his 150 volumes of complete works for over six decades.

Cooper, Chak, Cornish and Gillespie (2013) note the application of dialogue in four domains, centered on the work of particular theorists: Martin Buber and psychotherapy, Mikhail Bakhtin and education, Paulo Freire and community development, and Jurgen Habermas and social transformation. Because of its transformative power, dialogue has tremendous potential in education, both for teachers who seek their own inner transformation, and in application to the classroom practice of value creation. Dialogue as Ikeda conceptualizes it has yet to be explored in Anglophone scholarship as it applies to the practice of value creating education. This duoethnographic study explores the role of Ikedean dialogue in becoming fully human for two educators who seek to implement value creation in their classrooms through their own “courageous willingness to know and be known” (Ikeda, 2016) by the other.

**Human Revolution for Value Creation**

Ikeda proposes that inner transformation, or what he often calls “human revolution”, is a volitional effort to increase one’s wisdom, courage, and compassion through self-mastery in order to manifest one’s potential (Goulah, 2012a). This transformation is the basis for individual happiness, social improvement and world peace. Ikeda (2008) writes,

> I want you to be assured that the challenge to which we set ourselves day after day – that of our human revolution – is the royal road to bringing about a reformation in our families, local regions and societies. An inner revolution is the most fundamental and, at the same time, the ultimate revolution for engendering change in all things. (p. 253)

For Ikeda, human revolution can be considered from the perspective of Buddhist practice to elevate one’s state of life, but also more generally through education, spirituality, and dialogue with ourselves, with others, with nature, and with art (Ikeda, 2010b). This process of becoming what Ikeda (2010a) calls one’s greater self “only emerges fully through persistent dialogic interaction with the other” (Goulah, 2012a, p. 68).

Inner transformation, or human revolution, has tremendous significance for Ikeda because it is the path for individuals to become happy global citizens who contribute positively to their families, their communities, and the world. Ikeda has made human revolution a key principle in his 33 years of annual United Nations peace proposals, in his numerous dialogues with scholars and world leaders (78 of which have been published in book form), and in extensive writings consisting of books, essays, and speeches aimed primarily at Buddhist practitioners.

The process of inner transformation enhances one’s ability to create value (Jpn. soka), defined by Japanese teacher, principal and educational theorist Tunesaburo Makiguchi (1871 – 1844) as the ability to maximize one’s ability to create beauty, personal gain, and social good. The process of developing this capacity for value creation was used as a basis for an epistemology and
methodology by Makiguchi in Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei (Jpn.) or The System of Value Creating Pedagogy (cf. Bethel, 1989). Not all of Makiguchi’s pedagogical theory is available in English, but a selectively edited and liberally translated (Goulah & Gebert, 2009) version (Bethel, 1989) is available. (See Inukai, 2013 for a discussion of the limitations of this version.) For Makiguchi, like many philosophers, scholars, and leaders of today, education is instrumental for social transformation, but Makiguchi’s pedagogy is unique in the way he couples the happiness of the individual with the development of a harmonious society through value creation, thus not denying the importance of individual happiness, but at the same time not embracing an isolating individualism that ignores the needs of others (Ikeda, 2010a).

In this paper, Makiguchi’s system of value-creating pedagogy is considered alongside Ikeda’s philosophy of human revolution toward value creation through a type of dialogic exploration known as duoethnography. The two interlocutors, one (the author) a founder of a small, democratically run nonpublic school, and the other a K-8 Japanese language teacher in a diverse urban public school district, both seek to apply value creation to their educational practice. Together they engage in ongoing dialogue to accomplish their own human revolution as doctoral students in the field of Curriculum Studies. The study, containing curated excerpts of one dialogue they shared, finds evidence of dialogic education as growing together based on trust that facilitates shared value creation. The dialogue partners invite the reader to join them in the process of observing each other’s values in order to deepen our understanding of and operationalize human revolution through dialogue.

A Duoethnographic Study of Human Revolution through Dialogue

My own desire to create value as I began my teaching career led me to execute creative and successful classroom projects during the seven years I taught eighth grade science in a suburban public school district, but I found that the constraints placed on both teachers and students in the conventional system made it difficult to give creativity full rein and to fully manifest a humanistic student-teacher relationship. The hierarchical, competitive and standardized model of education, with its separation of students by grade, rigid structure of 40 minute daily classes and textbook-driven curriculum, increasing pressure to score well on tests, and lack of student voice in the rules and curriculum imposed limitations I thought might be able to be overcome with a different educational approach. Thus, in accord with Ikeda’s call for “experimentation” in education through “the creative energy of educators” (Ikeda, 2010b, pp. 96-97) I founded a school based on a school model that for me embodied an education that treats students with “unconditional trust and warm respect, instead of giving them instruction from on high” (Ikeda, 2010b, p. xi).

My interest in the process of dialogic becoming, or human revolution through dialogue, was sparked by the transformative experience I underwent as I struggled to create value in the challenging undertaking of opening an unconventional school. Later, it became a scholarly pursuit
as I began focusing on Daisaku Ikeda Studies in my doctoral program in Curriculum Studies. In my first class, I met Michio Okamura, a fellow graduate student and teacher with whom I began meeting for dialogue on a regular basis. Our conversations focused on what we had learned during our very different journeys in education as well as our engagement with the thinkers we were learning about in our coursework, especially Makiguchi and Ikeda. Four years later, the dialogue is still going strong.

Michio and I have expanded the arena of our dialogic exploration by discussing theory to practice application inspired by my time spent volunteering in Michio’s classroom. These experiences serve as the inspiration for this duoethnographic study of two teachers’ inner transformation toward value creation through dialogic inquiry. In this paper, I share excerpts from one conversation that took place at Michio’s school as we discuss the relationship between inner transformation, dialogue, and value creating pedagogy. This study functions as a pilot study for a larger research project that will explore our dialogic becoming as teachers as we seek to implement value creation in our educational praxis.

**Problem Statement**

Daisaku Ikeda, noting John Dewey’s passionate commitment to courageous, forthright dialogue, finds within such communication “the lifeblood of democracy, the power to propel humanistic education” (Ikeda, 2007, p. 4). At a time when differences threaten to deepen the social, political, racial, and economic divides, dialogue has the potential to transform opposing views, “changing them from wedges that drive people apart into bridges that link them together” (Ikeda, 2001, p. 8). Unfortunately, as is easily seen from the rhetoric of the current election cycle to the hierarchical, standardized, competitive approach to education in most US classrooms, the type of dialogic communication envisioned by Dewey and Ikeda is rarely seen either in schools or the larger community. Thus, an exploration of the role of dialogic educational practices in fostering an inner transformation, or human revolution, in enhancing one’s capacity for value creation, and in developing global citizens, has the potential to move education in a more humanistic and democratic direction.

How does one accomplish a human revolution to become a better value creator? How might one utilize dialogue to transform within, and inversely, how does human revolution help one become better at dialogue? More broadly, do dialogue, human revolution, and value creation contribute to humanistic education for democracy and if so, how? These problems are the starting point for my research. In this paper, I focus on the interactions between human revolution, dialogue, and value creation that emerge through a duoethnographically curated conversation about Daisaku Ikeda’s concept of human education and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s knowledge cultivation theory.
Statement of Purpose

This study is a multi-layered duoethnographic investigation of dialogue, human revolution, and value creation by two teachers who seek to employ value creation in their educational praxis. First, this study dialogically enquires into the relationship between dialogue and inner transformation as informed by Daisaku Ikeda’s philosophy of human education within the greater purpose of becoming value-creating educators. Second, this study explores how our praxis as teachers is informed by the application of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s system of value creating pedagogy and operationalized through our dialogues.

Research Questions

1. How does Ikedean dialogue foster human revolution toward value creation for two teachers who seek to operationalize it?
2. How does the interplay between the theory and practice of Makiguchi’s value creating pedagogy in combination with the practice of Ikedean dialogic inquiry for inner transformation manifest, evolve and inform classroom application?

Theoretical Framework

Ikeda’s concept of human revolution is rooted in Nichiren Buddhist philosophy as is practiced by the Soka Gakkai International, the Buddhist lay organization which Ikeda leads as president. Themes of mutual respect and equality, autonomy, creative coexistence, dependent origination, and inner transformation, derived from Buddhist thought, are central to Ikeda’s dialogic practice and educational philosophy of value creation. I adopt a lens of dialogic becoming as articulated by Ikeda in his many published works to both employ and examine the role of dialogue in human revolution for value creation. According to Ikeda, through dialogic exploration of differences, value can be created and new discoveries made, enabling us to break through the shell of our lesser self and clearly “see others as well as ourselves” (Ikeda, 2003, p. 2), thereby contributing to true mutual understanding and increased ability for value creation. My framework examines the relation between the characteristics of human revolution, dialogue, and value creation relate in Ikeda’s thinking, and relates it to Makiguchi’s theory of value creation and knowledge cultivation. First I will briefly consider what Ikeda and Makiguchi mean by these terms before incorporating them into my framework.

Buddhist Human Revolution

Ikeda emphasizes inner transformation because Nichiren Buddhism teaches that in order to transform our local environment of hardship or suffering, we must accomplish a human revolution, a term employed by Ikeda’s mentor Josei Toda to indicate an inner transformation through Buddhist practice. From a Buddhist perspective, our environment is fully connected to our inner selves so once we change by elevating our life condition, our environment must change in response. Once we transform our own sufferings into joy, wisdom, and compassion (transform
poison into medicine), those changes cultivate the qualities of global citizenship and have a ripple effect toward world peace. Ikeda talks about this inner transformation being accomplished through dialogue (with ourselves, with others, with books, with art, with the universe), through religion/spirituality, and through the teacher-student or mentor-disciple relationship (Ikeda, 2010b). In an educational context and more broadly, this transformation or human revolution is sometimes translated as becoming fully human or human education (Goulah & Ito, 2012).

Urbain (2010) writes that inner transformation is an idea common to many religious traditions, but that SGI Buddhists call it human revolution. Although it can be considered a Buddhist term, Urbain (2010) notes that for Ikeda the boundary between the religious and the secular is porous. This is not so much a view only held by Urbain, but is more broadly indicative of the contrast between many non-Western views and the Western, modern treatment of religion and education as separate (Merriam, 2007; Goulah, 2016, personal communication). Likewise, Makiguchi’s system of value creating pedagogy is not Buddhist education, but Makiguchi saw the Nichiren Buddhist perspective on the unlimited potential of each individual to resonate with his own views (Goulah, 2015).

Human is an ongoing process toward continuous personal growth and character development and transformation from a self-centered life to one dedicated to the happiness of others (Ikeda, 2016). Urbain (2010) further characterizes Ikeda’s concept of human revolution as “an effort to increase one’s own courage, wisdom and compassion, and all the other virtues associated with them, in order to deal with the circumstances at hand in the best way possible” (p. 94). In this process, one must challenge within the need to dominate others, point within as the locus of change, see the capacity for evil within and develop self-mastery. Dialogue also has a key role to play in human revolution, because of the way the dialogic process allows “two human spirits [to] engage with and elevate each other to a higher realm” (Ikeda, 2016).

Dialogue

Goulah (2012b) locates Ikeda’s ethos of dialogue in the Buddhist Lotus Sutra as dialogue in, as and for Buddhism. Goulah (2013) considers Ikeda’s philosophy of dialogue and education through a Bakhtinian lens, pointing out their shared view that of the interdependence of human beings and all phenomena. He argues that Bakhtinian dialogic becoming through interaction with the other, in Ikeda’s terms, allows individuals to realize their greater selves within the social world, and that Ikeda concretizes Bakhtin’s theory through his own use of dialogue on, in, and as education.

Ikeda considers dialogue to be bidirectional, a means of bringing about our own inner transformation as well as a means of engaging others toward global citizenship. From the
ontological perspective that we are social beings who are fundamentally interconnected, although we might not be aware or are open to the fact that we exist dialogically, we do in fact live that way, and any interaction with an Other has the potential to change us within as well as the Other, regardless of how open and aware or closed and unaware we may be. Ikeda (2010b) writes, “Through dialogue and engagement, we draw forth and inspire in ourselves and in the lives of others a profound sense of purpose and joy. We begin a process of fundamental change that awakens a vastly expanded sense of identity...” (p. 45-6). Furthermore, this change leads to “…a contributive way of life...through the kind of dialogue that unleashes our vast inner potential, inspiring people to work together for the peace and happiness of the entire global community” (p. 46).

Value Creation

Makiguchi derived his theory of value creation from the neo-Kantian categories of beauty, truth and good. Makiguchi argued that while beauty, truth and good may exist as facts, the cognition of beauty, truth, and good is meaningless without evaluation. Because truth is not a positive value in and of itself, in creating categories of value, he replaced truth with personal gain to come up with three values of beauty, personal gain, and social good. It is important to distinguish between values—moral principles or ethical standards—and value—something held as important or useful to oneself or others. Value creating education is not to be understood as the transfer of moral values from teacher to student, but rather as the process of the student learning and applying cause and effect to create something of value, a process that can be facilitated, but not coerced, by the teacher’s efforts.

In his value-creating pedagogy, Makiguchi differentiated between cognition and evaluation as ways of dealing with the external world that are in continual interplay (Bethel, 1989). Cognition, or knowledge, comes from experience with the world. Evaluation is found through interacting with the world and placing a value upon the things that are known. Both are important to development, but must be balanced. Thus for Makiguchi, to learn something means not only to acquire factual knowledge through cognition, but to also form an evaluation based on emotion. The separation of rational understanding of facts and the emotional evaluation of their usefulness was a grave epistemological mistake in educational methodology for Makiguchi.

Makiguchi’s value creation is seen by Hatano (2009) as an inherently dialogic process because the value of something changes according to the person, time and place. It is the relation of self to the environment that determines the value created. This dialogic engagement allows children to transform their individualistic sense of self into a social self-consciousness. Makiguchi stressed the importance of children developing through participation in harmonious community life for this transformation to be fostered, considering education as a “society in miniature” (Makiguchi, [1897] 2010, p. 51).
From this epistemological theory, Makiguchi developed a methodology that outlined the role of the teacher as one of assisting students in learning how to create relations of value through the cognitive understanding of their surroundings (Geber & Joffee, 2007). Goulah & Ito (2012) explain that Makiguchi believed a happy life results from education that cultivates accurate cognition of reality through direct observation, understanding and evaluation, and creation of value. In an unpublished paper, my dialogue partner (Okamura, 2015) elaborates on this aspect of Makiguchi’s system of value creating pedagogy, known as the knowledge cultivation model, which has not yet officially translated into English. I draw on his work next.

**Knowledge Cultivation Model**

Okamura (2015) explains that Makiguchi not only laid out an epistemological theory of learning that incorporated both the cognition and evaluation, but he also devised a methodology for educators to cultivate knowledge and value creation ability in their students. He organized this method into three stages (living, learning, and living) and also a corresponding five stages (evaluation, direct observation, apperception, evaluation, and application), as can be seen in Table 1. The only difference between the three stage model and the five stage model is that in the five stage model, learning is broken down further into direct observation, thinking or apperception, and evaluation.

**Table 1 Makiguchi’s Knowledge Cultivation Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>Stage 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Direct Observation</td>
<td>Thinking [Apperception]</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Application [Value-Creation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stage 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stage 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stage 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stage 5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This knowledge cultivation model can be placed in relation to Ikeda’s dialogue and value creation in order to consider how value creating pedagogy and human revolution relate to and inform each other. In order to examine this relationship, next I consider a related framework of Ikeda’s thought developed in the context of his philosophy of peace.

**Urbain’s Framework of Ikeda’s Transformation toward Global Citizenship**

Olivier Urbain, director of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, has published an in-depth study of Daisaku Ikeda’s philosophy of peace, systematizing his
contribution to peacebuilding and showing how Ikeda has modernized Buddhist values to empower individuals to make pragmatic steps toward peace. Summarizing Ikeda’s philosophy of peace, Urbain (2010, p. 6) proposes the following framework (see Table 1) of transformation toward dialogue that develops one’s capacity as a global citizen for world peace. Urbain considers this contribution to peace theory by Ikeda to be unique because it is the only one to combine all three of these factors.

**Table 2 Urbain’s Framework of Ikeda’s Transformation toward Global Citizenship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Peace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inner Transformation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development along the lines of Humanistic Psychology, especially developing Courage, Wisdom and Compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogue</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The main goal is to bring out the best in oneself and others, along the lines of Communicative Rationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global Citizenship</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of one’s own identity as a Global Citizen. As more people develop this type of identity, elements of a Global Civilization start appearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>World Peace</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Urbain, 2010, p. 6)

Urbain’s (2010) framework implies directionality because he postulates Ikeda’s philosophy of peace as “a concrete approach that starts with one individual asking the question, ‘What can I do for peace?’” (p. 5). Thus he argues that the first step is inner transformation, which increases the individual’s positive personal qualities, followed by dialogue to discuss important issues, share insights, and bring out the best in each other, thereby nurturing the formation of a global citizen. Urbain does, however, acknowledge that these concepts are interdependent and describes three other ways to imagine the links between these three concepts, which I have illustrated in Image 1 below.

While Urbain argues that “dialogue at its most meaningful is not possible between to people who have not sufficiently elevated their consciousness through self-mastery and inner transformation,” and “[i]nner transformation must precede dialogue,” he concedes that, “[a]t the same time, it is often through dialogue that we are inspired to start a process of inner
transformation” (p. 141). He again suggests that several models showing the interdependence of dialogue, inner transformation and global citizenship “might be useful” (p. 141).

Image 1
Alternate Conceptualizations of Ikeda’s Transformation toward Global Citizenship

For my inquiry, I am interested in both inner transformation through dialogue, and dialogue for inner transformation, within the context of an overall educative purpose of value creation. Therefore, in my framework of Ikeda’s human revolution, because my focus is education rather than peace studies, I replace global citizenship with value creation. In addition, I do not place inner transformation before dialogue; rather, I have conceptualized it along the lines of what Urbain (2010) called a continuous loop. (See Image 2.)
Global citizenship is not eliminated from the model, but is considered as a continually manifested outcome of this process.

**Toward an Interconnected Framework of Human Revolution, Dialogue, and Value Creation**

Because my study investigates value creation both in terms of teacher dialogic becoming and in application to our teaching praxis, I consider the confluences between Ikeda’s human revolution or dialogic becoming and Makiguchi’s system of value creating pedagogy by placing Makiguchi’s knowledge cultivation model together with Ikedean dialogic becoming together in Table 3. In this framework, I place dialogue, along with religion or spirituality and the mentor-disciple relationship, under the category of relational human education, as starting points that help birth inner transformation (top row, Table 3). Becoming more skilled at this mutually reinforcing cycle means becoming a better value creator. Goulah & Ito (2012) suggest Ikeda’s application of value creating pedagogy to education is a “spirit of educating, an ethos rather than defined methodology” (p. 60), as Ikeda says that he is not an educator, and leaves particular pedagogical methodologies up to teachers (Ikeda, 2010b).
### Table 3

#### Combining Makiguchi’s Knowledge Cultivation Model with Ikeda’s Model of Human Revolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ikeda’s Human Revolution or Dialogic Becoming</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogic Learning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Purposive Inner Transformation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mentor-disciple</td>
<td>Through self-mastery, develop: wisdom, courage, compassion, respect for each person, belief in others’ infinite potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dialogue with self, others, books, nature, the universe</td>
<td>- Dialogue with self, others, books, nature, the universe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Religion/spirituality</td>
<td>- Dialogue with self, others, books, nature, the universe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Makiguchi’s Knowledge Cultivation Model</strong></th>
<th><strong>Outcome</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation and Direct Observation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Apperception and Evaluation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- evaluation of student’s already constructed but disordered conceptual world</td>
<td>- understand normative principles of cause and effect to create value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- direct experience of relation between knowledge and value</td>
<td>- editing and integrating experiences to see how they fit together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to reflect confluences in Ikeda’s human revolution and Makiguchi’s pedagogy, in the lower section of Table 3, I incorporate Makiguchi’s theory of knowledge cultivation. Through the various aspects of human revolution, one can directly observe the value of others. In
particular, through dialogue, one observes not simply cultural values, but an individual’s values. One can see the values in someone else’s mind, and the other can see one’s values. Through this exchange, one can apperceive and transform within to bring out wisdom, courage, and compassion, thus dialogically becoming someone who can create value with others. The column on the far right indicates the outcomes Makiguchi and Ikeda intend through their models of value creation.

Finally, in Image 3, I represent this framework as a continuous loop to consider the mutually reinforcing interactions between the three aspects of dialogic learning, inner transformation, and value creation. This framework is informed by the dialogic encounter documented in the findings section of this paper.

Image 3
Ikedean Human Revolution and Makiguchi’s Knowledge Cultivation

Mode of Inquiry
I seek to operationalize Daisaku Ikeda’s dialogic approach as both method and practice, which has led me to a research design rooted in, and informed by a relatively new research genre known as duoethnography (Norris, 2008). In duoethnography, two or more researchers work together dialogically to explore the process through which they make meaning of a phenomenon as they have experienced in their lives. It is a methodology that “mixes societal questions with individual frameworks, theory with praxis, and curriculum – that of self and school – with justice” (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, p. 2). Through conversation, researchers question their epistemological
constructs and the meanings they assign social issues, thereby generating new insights and perspectives. Like autoethnography, the researchers “are the site of their own inquiry, interpretations and representations” (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, p. 10) with the intent to expose and transform their understandings, knowing that conclusions will be tentative and always unfinished.

Rather than outlining methodological steps, duoethnography offers central tenets as working principles. The overlapping themes of the tenets fall into six basic categories: “a) communal and dialogic conversations, b) the transformation of meaning, c) a focus on the phenomenon or construct, not the person, d) the importance of difference, e) the need to recognize power differentials and f) noting the placed-situatedness of meaning” (Norton & Sawyer, 2009, p. 131). In a duoethnography, the voice of each researcher is written explicitly, and readers are invited into the dialogic conversation, but editing and resequencing is employed to create a flowing linear narrative incorporates the literature review, as well as personal conversations and other artifacts. More data emerge through the writing process, and the degree of tandem writing or conversation varies depending on the researchers’ aims. The phenomenon explored in this duoethnographic study is the inner transformation of the interlocutors through and for dialogue toward value creation.

Participants

As both a practicing Buddhist and a teacher who has studied Ikeda’s translated works for almost thirty years, I have striven to apply the ideas of value creation and human revolution to my teaching practice. Moving from a student-centered middle school to a democratically-run, mixed-age, freedom-based (Sudbury) school, I have actively sought to embody dialogic relationships of respect, equality, and autonomy with my students. My dialogue partner in this study (Michio Okamura) is a K-8 language instruction teacher in a Midwestern urban public school and has a strong focus on theory-to-practice implementation. Additionally, he has read all ten volumes of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s work in the original Japanese, unavailable in English. Through dialogue across difference, we explore our individual and interconnected transformations toward value creation.

Procedure, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

In duoethnography, a written dialogue is produced, and the writing process is “simultaneously a form of data generation, data interpretation, and data dissemination” (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, p. 76). Theory is blended into conversation and thick description of the phenomenon being explored – in this case, the human revolution of the interlocutors through dialogue, and the application of Makiguchi’s value-creating pedagogy to our classroom practice. Headings are used to delineate the themes that emerge. The literature acts as a third discussant as is determined by the interlocutors, thereby embedding the literature and methodology within the dialogue. Editing
and reordering has taken place during the editing process to make the document flow naturally to the reader.

In this study, I recorded a dialogue that took place between Michio and me after having spent the day in his classroom, where I volunteer on a weekly basis. I had questions regarding the literature review I was working on for my dissertation, and wanted his input on the way I was organizing the themes. In particular, I wanted to get a better understanding of how Michio saw the intersection between Ikeda’s philosophy of inner transformation through and for dialogue and Makiguchi’s knowledge cultivation model as it applies to value creating pedagogy. In addition to the recording, I also took photos of diagrams he wrote on the board during our dialogue. I transcribed the dialogue, edited it for clarity and length, incorporated the photos, organized excerpts by theme, sent my draft to Michio, and had a follow up conversation with Michio to discuss my findings. I have also added references to literature where appropriate, in keeping with the duoethnographic methodology.

Findings

Dialogic education is growing together

Ikeda (Garrison, Hickman, & Ikeda, 2014), characterizes the relationship between teacher and student as one of shared inquiry, where teacher and student learn and create value together. In this portion of the dialogue, we discuss Ikeda’s view that education is mutual growth between student and teacher, and consider how dialogue allows us to transform together. In addition, at a meta level, we, as teachers, show how we grow together through this dialogue.

Excerpt 1

Bradford: Is education the same as dialogue?

Okamura: Dialogue is really the key to growing together. Goulah (2015, personal communication; class lectures 2013) explains how Ikeda writes about this. [Goes to white board and picks up marker.] Here’s kyoiku. This is translated as education. [Pointing to two Japanese characters he’s written on the board.] (See Image 4.) Kyo means to teach. Iku means to grow. So together it’s education. Do you remember this?
Bradford: Yes, I remember discussing that in class.

Okamura: So the two characters of kyoiku, together as a whole, make education. To teach, and to grow. However, the characters Ikeda uses are these. [Draws two more characters on the board below the first two.] This is same pronunciation- kyo, Same character - iku. [Points to character for iku.] So, same character, same meaning....

Bradford: To grow.

Okamura: Yes, to grow. Now [points to Ikeda’s character for kyo] this is the same pronunciation, but the meaning is different. This character means together. So when Ikeda is saying kyoiku [points to second set of characters] he means we grow together. This is not the word you find in the dictionary for education. (See Image 5.)

Bradford: And this [pointing to the first set of characters] is not growing together? It means one teaches, and the other one grows, not both?

Okamura: Yes. Ikeda is playing with the words to say kyoiku should be, education should be teacher and student growing together. A person doesn’t just grow by himself or herself. It’s about both.

Bradford: Where does dialogue fit in?

Okamura: Through dialogue, we transform together. We grow together as human beings to become more holistic people. Because I see how you see it, and you see how I see it, and we sometimes struggle together, right? I think dialogue is the only way that we can come to see each other’s value system and explain why we value something in a certain way.
Bradford: This reminds me of Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of surplus of seeing, which we studied in Dr. Goulah’s class. Only I can see what is behind you, and only you see what is behind me, but through dialogue, together we can construct a view of the entire room.

As can be seen in this excerpt, through open-ended dialogue we naturally connect thinkers we have studied, such as Ikeda and Bakhtin, to class discussion and ideas we have learned from our professor, which helps us think through our own ideas about dialogue and education. I am able to understand how Ikeda populates a term, kyoiku, with his own intention (Bakhtin, 1981) thanks to Michio’s knowledge of Japanese, showing how through dialogue, we can see more than each of us alone. We demonstrate our own journey as teachers going from direct observation and evaluation to apperception and evaluation of our own practice through our engagement.

**Dialogue based on trust and genuine relationship facilitates shared value creation**

In this next excerpt, I ask Michio to elaborate on the way he is connecting dialogue to the ability to perceive another’s values. I was intrigued by this connection, because as I had been working on my literature review, I had been struggling with articulating how Makiguchi’s theory of value creation connected to Ikedean dialogue and inner transformation. This prompts him to reflect on an incident that took place with a student (R.) during and after class while I was present. In this instance, Michio had prepared a cooking activity using Makiguchi’s theory of knowledge cultivation to provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge of Japanese language and pursue outcomes they valued. As Michio prepared the class to begin the activity, he asked a student to step out of the classroom after the student refused to accept the answer Michio had given to a question. Michio later asked the student to stay after class to discuss what had happened. Because I was also in the room, I listened to their conversation for a few minutes, and noticed that they were not fully understanding each other’s position in the discussion. I then decided to join in the conversation with the intention of helping them understand each other better.

In this incidence, I was able to draw on my own experience as a teacher in a democratically run school to demonstrate how to create value through dialogue with a student in a conflictual situation. During the exchange below, Michio recalls the incident as an example of the power of dialogue to aid in our inner transformation as teachers. We both mention the importance of trust; his trust of me when I decided to jump in on the conversation he was having with the student, and my awareness that I had to proceed with caution in order not to jeopardize the establishment and maintenance of trust between the three of us.

*Excerpt 2*
Okamura: Dialogue is critical for a transformation – for becoming a value creator - because together we become better. If I don't know what you value, and if you don't know what I value, we cannot cooperatively, collaboratively create value together. It's not like I just transform myself. It's not like you're doing it alone.

Bradford: I like how you are connecting dialogue to the ability to perceive others' values. Do you have an example?

Okamura: Once I was talking with a student, R., after class about an incident that had happened in class that day. You were in class as a volunteer and had observed what happened and how we were having a difficult time seeing eye to eye about the situation. You listened to the conversation, but then you jumped in, and we worked it out together.

Bradford: Yes. I was a little nervous about jumping in, because I don’t know R. as well as you do, and I haven’t had as much chance to build up trust with him as you have. I didn’t want him to feel like I was on your side, and I was just taking the teacher’s side, because I imagine that he might already get that a lot from adults. But at the same time, I wanted him to be able to look at things from a larger perspective and also to testify that the situation had, in fact, occurred the way you had characterized it, which he was trying to deny. I wanted to help him consider how difficult the situation was for you as a teacher, as well as how his interruption impacted the other students in the class.

Okamura: He was fine. You wanted to help, and you jumped in, and we worked it out together. R. was very receptive to you. He just accepted you as an interlocutor.

Bradford: Also, I didn’t want to step on your toes by inserting myself if it was not wanted.

Okamura: But you were able to do it because we’ve been talking about it. You know what I value, how I operate, what I think. And we also have a good relationship, so I trust you. My feeling was, “You’re fine. Just go ahead and do it.” But without previous dialogue, it’s very hard to work together.

Bradford: Because I know what you value, and you know what I value, we have shared aims to help R. be a better value creator. So I was able to ask R. questions, get at the heart of his objections, and elicit from him a solution that everyone could agree to.

Okamura: Exactly. We had a mindset that we are going to solve this together. Through dialogue, the three of us...I think we each grew together as people that day a little bit.
Bradford: Because we all understood, hopefully, each other’s values. I don’t know if R. did, but I feel like I learned.

Okamura: I feel like I learned some more about R. as well. And I did not know that you could just jump in and make things positive but it was great. It was open-ended. So, I think we all grew a little bit together through dialogue.

This excerpt demonstrates the importance of respect and trust in dialogic engagement, as well as efforts to flatten hierarchies when it comes to adult-child interactions. Ikeda (2010b) quotes Martin Buber when he explains how dialogue is a high risk encounter, and this excerpt underscores that notion. I articulate my awareness that my intervention in the conversation between Michio and R. was a risk, because my interjecting in the conversation could jeopardize the relationships that have been built between R. and Michio, between Michio and me, and between R. and me. My decision to interject myself into this sensitive conversation could have resulted in disaster, but instead, it resulted in each participant gaining a better understanding of the others’ views of what had happened. As a result, Michio and R. reached an agreement regarding what to do next time a similar incident arose, and each of us transformed within and created value from a potentially negative situation.

This example illustrates the power of dialogue to facilitate inner transformation that directly impacts classroom practice in a value creative way. Most teachers practice their craft in isolation; few get the opportunity to work together with other teachers to be able to see aspects of a classroom situation that they might not see on their own. Through our practice of Ikedean dialogue, in combination with Michio’s efforts to apply Makiguchi’s system of value creating pedagogy to his curriculum, the three of us were able to grow together in our creation of a solution to the conflict.

Through dialogue we observe the other’s values

In this excerpt, I ask Michio to make more explicit his view of the relationship between dialogue and value creation and value-creating pedagogy. This exchange proved helpful to me in my own research, because the connection in Michio’s mind between Ikedean dialogue the stage of direct observation in Makiguchi’s knowledge cultivation model helped me in my own theorizing. As a result, I revised my thinking and include the knowledge cultivation model as part of my own framework. This excerpt provides evidence that dialogue does, indeed, help us observe the other’s value system and transform our own value system based on learning that takes place through apperception and evaluation.

Excerpt 3
Bradford: What is the connection between dialogue and Makiguchi’s theory of value creation? We have discussed that in order to create value, you have to understand each other’s values, and then when you do, you grow together. How does dialogue fit in?

Okamura: [Picks up marker.] Everybody has their own value system or point of view. [Draws stick figures on board.] (See Image 6.) But when we talk to each other, through dialogue, the value systems in our heads can be shared as we go back and forth.

Bradford: Can be shared, and can develop.

Okamura: ...Altered, edited, developed. So, after the conversation, my value system is, it’s a little bit of, ah...you know what? I will do a shape. This is square. This is triangle. So mine is like a square, triangle-shaped...it’s a combo of value system. But how do we get things get more combined, get edited, or get better at it? Only through dialogue. Because people are not telepathic. I can’t read your thought. Only through genuine dialogue. So that’s why the relationship is crucial. Because if we don’t have genuine relationship here [points to stick figures] we’re not going to believe each other.

Bradford: What is the role of value creating pedagogy in relation to dialogue?

Okamura: This is my understanding. Ikeda’s value creation is more dialogue based. Makiguchi’s is very pedagogical. Right? His ideas are for application in the classroom, which I find helpful, because I get how to apply the ideas in my teaching. [Redraws stick figures on board.] (See Image 7.)

Bradford: You can make a trapezoid. [Refers to second set of stick figures.] There! They both are changed.

Okamura: And this one is an upside down trapezoid. There.
Bradford: There you go.

Okamura: But then, this is direct observation. You have to directly observe, experience the value. Someone’s value system, the way they
think about beliefs, is only experienced through dialogue, and shared time together. Like we read in Dewey’s (1934) A Common Faith – shared experience. They start imagining together. They share how they believe. So these will become apperceived value systems. [Labels picture.] Direct observation is dialogue.

In this conversation, Michio, who has intently studied Makiguchi’s writings, including the parts of his value creating pedagogy not available in English, helps me apply Makiguchi’s knowledge cultivation model to Ikeda’s theory of dialogue in a way that I had not discovered on my own. Even though I had worked with Michio on multiple drafts of the paper he wrote on knowledge cultivation, and we had discussed many times the way he applied the knowledge cultivation model to his curriculum, I had not apperceived this particular application until he pointed it out to me. In addition, this is not something Michio had specifically articulated before I asked the question.

Together, we discovered and articulated a connection heretofore undeveloped, a clear example of the way value, something new that is pleasing, and potentially beneficial to ourselves, our students, and others in the field of education, can be created through dialogue. After this conversation, I reread the paper Michio had written on knowledge cultivation and incorporated it into the theoretical framework contained in this paper, a further demonstration of the value we are able to create through our dialogic becoming.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, I have employed a duoethnographic methodology with my dialogue partner in order to explore the interplay between dialogue, inner transformation, and value creation in Daisaku Ikeda’s human revolution. Additionally, I have explored the relationship between Daisaku Ikeda’s human revolution and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s system of value creating pedagogy through the examination of a conversation with my interlocutor. I found evidence of dialogic education as growing together, based on trust that facilitates shared value creation. As dialogue partners, Michio and I were able to observe each other’s values in order to deepen our understanding of inner transformation through dialogue. Finally, the capacity for dialogue I demonstrate in the excerpts can be seen as the result of the human revolution and dialogic becoming, which I experienced as a teacher and school founder. While this is only a pilot study, I believe it will serve as a helpful base for further investigation into the phenomenon of inner transformation through dialogue for value creation.
References


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Bordering Emancipation and Value Creation: Democratic Emancipatory Study Abroad Opportunities for Black High School Students

Tameka Carter-Richardson

Abstract

While current trends in education are focused on meeting learning standards and accountability, too many students in American high schools will never have the opportunity to learn outside of their own community. As part of my doctoral coursework, in 2014, I completed a pilot study with 12 Black American high school students as we planned for and traveled on a study abroad trip to Spain. Traveling and learning with 12 of my students was unlike anything I have experienced in my teaching career. The students and I were transformed together as we became more confident in what we know. In this paper, I will discuss study abroad as an intellectually freeing and transformative pedagogical approach for black high school students in secondary education. My aim is to do dissertation research on the next study abroad trip I take students on, which is in March 2016, to Cuba.

Purpose

Studying abroad is a form of experiential learning (Roberts, 2012; Goulah, 2010) and is the means through which I discuss the theory of intellectual emancipation as a transformative move towards creating/recreating spaces for educational equity and equality in American high schools. Examining experiential learning as a field of study is not the primary purpose of my study, but I feel it is important to discuss its potential in theory in order to further develop and encourage curricular projects that can free both the teacher and student from unjust constructions of race, space, and culture in education. Experiential learning is not an archetype of hegemony or supremacy. The power of experience liberates both the teacher and the student from restrictive norms of schooling (Itin, 1999; Garrison et al., 2014; Roberts, 2012).

Epistemological examinations of experiential learning were led by progressive thinkers such as John Dewey. His works, *Experience and Education* (1938) and *Experience and Nature* (1958), for example, legitimate experience as “the ultimate teacher” (Roberts, 2012, p. 50). Dewey
does not discuss the construction of intellectual inferiorities and injustices prevalent in the field of experiential education or in American education as a whole. More recently, study abroad, as a form of experiential learning, is frequently discussed as a pathway to educative liberation and social justice (Goulah 2010; Ikeda 2006; Roberts, 2012).

**Mode of Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry is the best methodological choice for this research because it allows me to analyze experience as data. Defined, narrative inquiry is to understand how people structure the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives (Schram, 2006, p.104). While my role as a researcher was to observe, record and analyze the participant experiences, I was also a participating chaperone. Being a participant enhanced my research with reflective and transformative data. Students were more willing to share their thoughts about the trip because I was part of the experience. The limitation to being both a researcher and participant is that you have to distinguish the two roles in order to carefully analyze your data. Formal observations were the hardest to complete because the students knew me and never really allowed me to just observe. During formal observations, students would often ask me to join a conversation or would ask if I could complete an activity with them. While defining the roles between chaperoning and researching was challenging, my findings would have been incomplete if I would have participated as only a researcher and observer. As you read the findings and data analysis, narratives support the theory of encouraging experiential learning as a means to emancipate the intelligences of low income black children.

Themes of my data analyses include reflective experiences regarding personal, social, and academic reactions to learning outside of one’s own spatial and cultural surroundings. I was the facilitator of the experiential learning, which allowed me to accept my student’s invitations into their personal, social, and academic reactions. I found that students were more open to talk to me when I was leading a daily activity than when I co-led an activity. I often had to stop scheduled observations because students insisted on my participation in an activity or students would often distract me with discussion about the activity. Identity, experiences of emotions, and group cohesion are the reoccurring themes from the research.

This Research was conducted in a large public high school district. The school has a population of 98% black students with 100% of all students receiving a free lunch. The high school's academic curriculum requires 4 years of “core content” coursework in math, science, social science, and English. Similarly students were required to complete at least 2 year’s World Language. Research participants were selected from the group of students enrolled in Spanish I or Spanish II classes. Students enrolled were typically in their Junior or Senior year of high school.
The Spanish department at the high school invited all students to study abroad in Spain as it was in conjunction to the school's world language curriculum. Students interested in applying for study abroad had to submit a letter answering the question, “Why would you like to travel to Spain?” The letters were to be submitted to a Spanish teacher for review and selected students were required to attend Spanish Club meetings for travel preparations.

Administration and staff agreed that the school often experiences a low percentage of students participating in after-school activities. Therefore, a large number of students are selected to meet the minimum number of travel participants. 52 out of 267 applicants were selected to attend the trip.

The educational travel experience to Castilla y Leon, Spain included 12 students, of which 7 were male students between the ages of 15-20 years and 5 were female students between the ages of 16-17 years. There were three chaperones. 1 Female Administrator, 1 Male Dean of Discipline, and 1 Female Spanish teacher (myself). 11 of the 12 students identified themselves as Black and 1 male student identified himself as Dominican.

Students used their journals, pictures, and interpersonal conversations to exhibit their emotions before, during, and after the trip. I collected the data artifacts in conjunction with my own journaling in order to organize the themes which produce intellectual emancipation. Experiences of emotions were one the first themes recognized during data analysis. For example, travelling on airplane with 12 students who had never experienced flying was full of qualitative data for which I recorded in my journal. I observed one student announce his seat number while another student make a video of herself board the plane with her cell phone. During my observation of the students on the plane, I was only distracted once by a student who seemed to be nervous. I believe he was nervous because he did not stop asking me questions until he fell asleep on the plane.

My reflections and analysis conclude that students experience a wide range of emotions when taken out of their learning environment. The following observation excerpt reflects the anxiety as an emotional experience:

Ricky asks me, “What type of emergency can happen.” I say “a storm or engine problems.” He says, “oh” The woman next to me ask if I would like to sit by my other student that is across the aisle. I say sure. Student Jonnie, then taps my arm. He asks “that doesn’t happen a lot Ms carter?” I say “what?” he says the storm. I say not too often.

The observation of student emotional experiences showed me how important I am as the facilitator of an experiential learning opportunity. Students needed to trust me in order to share their thoughts, feelings or emotions about learning in a different cultural and spatial environment. Many times, I served as a connection to their own learning environment. Leading
to the exploration of self-identity as another theme produced by experiential learning, students would give me details about their emotions and looked for approval. I mean to say that students often did not trust their own emotions and needed a guide (facilitator) to validate their questions and conclusions about their own identity. The following excerpt from my observation journal exhibits my role which allows students to talk about how they see themselves in the world:

After the plane took off, one of my students asked to sit beside me and we talked for about an hour until he fell asleep. This student is 17 years old and did not know his real name until he applied for his passport. His Grandmother hilariously described how she adopted him a few months before the trip. She said to me last week, “He doesn’t know how blessed he is.” She told me that his mother actually left him on her doorstep when he was a baby and she gave him his name. She never showed him his birth certificate because she did not want people calling him the name given to him by his mother. She told me, “I raised him so I get to call him whatever I want.” As I talked to this student on the plane, he asked me if he should tell people to call him by his real name. Why did he ask me that? I mean, I don’t know. I told him that I didn’t know the answer to that question. Immediately after telling him that “I didn’t know,” I felt the need to explain myself. He then told me that he felt “goofy” telling all of his friends to call him something different. I told him that he could tell people to call him anything he wanted. After I said that, he said “ok, yeah”. I don’t know if I answered his question, but I love the fact that he is thinking about his own identity.

(3.15.14)

Student’s sense of self is an important finding during the process of intellectual emancipation because it encourages self-confidence regarding what a student knows about the world around them. As stated in the literature review, emancipation is to recognize the intelligences of individuals equally valuable or invaluable to other individual’s intelligences. Emotions and identity is connected to one’s own intelligence in that it validates what student learns from their experience. A student’s understanding about the world around them is created by their experiences and therefore valuable when emancipating intelligences.

I also observed that students appreciated group cohesion when planning the trip and during the trip. During group interviews, student were sharing food, using each other’s cell phones, and asked me to wait to start the interview in order to allow all students to arrive and eat food. Related to the group cohesion, Ryan states his appreciation of the group:

Ryan: We should try going on a trip every other year or something at least with the same group.
Ms. Carter: That would be nice.
Ryan: ...with the same group.
Observations also showed that the students demanded unity and cohesively made decisions. One student wrote in her journal:

All of the students had an understanding with each other. We agreed to be respectful of each other’s ideas and comments and know that our voices count.

Also, I found that students captured their own emancipation through their discovery of self and group cohesion. One student noted in their journal:

I like the feeling of being foreign. Lol. Its fun to see how ppl feel when I look at them. I makes me want to walk a little taller (raised my confidence). The air seems fresher than Chicago. Probably because they walk a lot.

Similar to the student’s statement above, I found that a majority of the students described their experience as “freeing”, which is the goal of intellectual emancipation. A 12-grade male wrote:

I feel happier here. I don’t want to sound goofy but this place is really cool. I have to go to Paris. Right now anything seems better than Chicago. My teacher said that I looked really happy. I am happy. Its like I am not lacking here. I feel real free. I can’t wait to do this again.

**Theoretical Framework**

Experiential learning is inspired by philosophy. Jay Roberts attests experiential learning projects, such as study abroad programs, come from a “variety of other philosophies and, as such, ought to be seen as derivative of them and not a philosophy in and of itself” (p.6). A range of philosophies draw on the field of experiential learning and the power of experience. Critically examining the philosophies in the field of experiential learning exposes study abroad as a pathway to educative liberation. Jacques Rancière’s (1991) theory of intellectual emancipation is considered to be a method and a philosophy. It exposes the potential of a person’s human mind to acquire knowledge without the assistance of a teacher or instructor. If only teachers decide what’s worth knowing and how to teach knowledge, then the values and beliefs of students are not considered during instruction. Curriculum and instruction are not created or implemented for the sake of the teacher or instructor. Educators who do not consider their students’ values and beliefs are undermine their student’s intelligences.
As I become aware of my own authority and privilege as an educator, I take a critical look into how the theory of intellectual emancipation informs pedagogy. My hope is to facilitate a classroom culture where students can acquire a liberating, just, intercultural, and hopeful learning experience. Intellectual emancipation occurs when teachers relinquish their authority and student learning is no longer determined by the master instructor, but is structured by interlocutory relations between the student and the teacher (Goulah, 2012b; Ikeda, 2010; Rancière, 1999). The locus of instruction, what is worth knowing and how to teach knowledge, is something that should be determined by both the student and the teacher. Knowledge should not be transferred from the teacher to the student, but should be transformative for both the student and teacher (Kazepides, 2012; Kvernbekk, 2012). Ikeda (2010) writes that through teacher-student partnership in discovery, “the desire to learn will naturally be ignited in their student’s hearts. And once children feel that their teachers are genuinely concerned for their individual welfare, they will begin to trust them and open up to them” (p.151).

In the book, The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five lessons in Intellectual emancipation, Rancière (1991) tells the story of Joseph Jacotot, a French Professor living in Brussels circa 1880. He calls Jacotot an intellectual adventurer and uses his narrative as research to model intellectual emancipation. As a professor of French literature at the University of Louvain in Belgium, Jacotot was highly regarded by students who did not speak French. Nevertheless, Jacotot decided to teach a translated French novel, Télémaque, to a group of students who spoke Flemish and did not speak the French language. He did not know how to speak Flemish and thus by traditional teaching standards could not teach them anything because he did not know their language.

Since the students asked him to teach the course, Jacotot exercised his student’s will to learn and researched how the students would respond to teaching themselves. He used a bilingual edition of the book, Télémaque, as an instructional tool. Without knowing the outcome, he created a project where the students learned French by reading the dual translated book and then the students had to demonstrate their understanding of the book by summarizing it in French. Jacotot did not offer any assistance and was surprised to find out that students successfully completed the task. Rancière (1991) says that Jacotot transformed into a conscientious professor:

Such was the revolution that this chance experiment unleashed in his mind. Until then, he had believed what all conscientious believe: that the import business of the master is to transmit knowledge to his students so as to bring them, by degrees, to his own level of expertise. Like all conscientious professors, he knew that teaching was not in the slightest about cramming students with knowledge and having them repeat it like parrots (p. 2).
Intellectual emancipation transforms both the teacher and the student into a conscientious being. Being conscious of self addresses how one sees himself through the lens of the other. Consciousness represents the individual human experience in relation to other (Shor & Freire, 1987).

Teachers must emancipate themselves before they can recognize opportunities of emancipation for their students (Rancière, 1991). Teachers who are not emancipated distribute traditional scholastic knowledge which means student learning is limited. In the classroom of the explicator, a student does not have access to knowledge beyond the knowledge of the teacher.

Now let’s apply this method of emancipation to classroom environments where a student and the teacher come from different cultures. How will that affect student learning? Explicators ignore intelligences that are alternative or considered to be unorthodox. The teacher guides students to the regurgitation of knowledge only taught by the teacher. The teacher’s knowledge is a reflection of the cultural values and norms produced from their own personal educational experiences. If the teacher transmits knowledge influenced by their own experience, student learning is then limited to the cultural norms constructed by the experiences of the teacher. Education becomes a construction of the dominant norms held by the teacher. Michael Apple (2004) conveys describes this construction as academic boundaries:

Academic boundaries are themselves culturally produced and are often the result of complex “policing” actions on the part of those who have the power to enforce them. This “policing” action involves the power to declare what is or is not the subject of “legitimate” inquiry or what is or is not a “legitimate” approach to understanding (p. vii).

When boundaries are placed on student learning, norms are reproduced as knowledge. Cultural ways of being dictate what knowledge is worth knowing and knowledge becomes normalized. Students are expected to reproduce a common knowledge in the forms of standardized test results and social behavior. This reproduction is facilitated by schooling (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Students who do not acquire traditional scholastic knowledge or believe in the norms from the dominant discourse, experience life in a way that this normalized knowledge is relevant to them are marginalized. Unfortunately, high school curricula tend to reproduce normative ideologies that police student learning to emulate a standardized form and content of learning. For instance, youth from non-dominant cultures, races, genders and identities are often marginalized by the explication of standards based-testing and reproduction of educational segregation. Intellectual emancipation is a reflective method that allows learners to individually examine self in relation to the other and also disempowers normative ideologies in education and challenges patriarchal norms with liberating perspectives (Shor & Freire, 1987; Rancière, 2007; Ikeda, 2006).
The emancipated or liberated teacher undergoes a process of transformation where he or she becomes conscientious of dominant norms and rejects these norms as part of their instruction. The emancipated teacher does not dominate the discourse with the transmission of their own knowledge. A conscientious teacher understands that if knowledge is transmitted from teacher to students then the teacher has done a grave injustice to the students. The responsibility of the teacher is not to reproduce knowledge. Educators who deliver knowledge, according to Rancière (1991):

\begin{quote}

disengage the simple elements of learning, and to reconcile their simplicity in principle with the factual simplicity that characterizes young and ignorant minds. To teach was to transmit learning and form minds simultaneously (p. 39).
\end{quote}

I encourage teachers to be conscientious of the unjust authorities that construct knowledge. An educator should be naturally progressive when it comes to conscientiousness and emancipation when appropriating knowledge. Conscientization, as conceived by Paulo Freire (1987), requires educators to be revolutionary leaders who, practice cooperative education. The teacher and the student are cooperative learners through common reflection and action; they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators (p. 69).

**Scholarly Significance**


The prejudice which I have experienced on all and every occasion in the United States, and to some extent on board the Canada[boat called], vanished as soon as I set foot on the soil of Britain. In America, I had been bought and sold as a slave in the Southern States. In the so-called Free States, I had been treated as one born to occupy an inferior system ... But no sooner was I on British soil, than I was recognized as a man, and an equal (Brown, 1855, p. 40).

In 2002, authors Christian Anderson and Monique Y. Wells added to Brown's experience in a well-organized account of the Black experience abroad. In the book *Paris Reflections: Walks through African-American Paris*, the authors discussed the social, political, and cultural experiences of famous Black Americans in a city that welcomed blacks without bias. Paris museums, libraries, schools, and restaurants are home to the first of many Black American works of literature, art, social reforms and entertainment. Anderson and Wells (2002) recognize the
welcoming black diaspora in Paris which welcomed the free travel of Blacks abroad since the time of slavery.

Similarly, Margari Aziza Hill (2008) writes about the other Black authors who have traveled before her and the richness of the Black female experience abroad:

Maya Angelou tells the story of arriving in Africa a stranger but leaving claimed as a member of the Bambara tribe. Evelyn C. White writes about finding new pride in being black after visiting Egypt. Opal Palmer Adisa evokes the sights, sound, and aromas of urban Ghana where she traveled to meet her lifelong pen pal. Lucinda Roy brings alive the year she spent teaching girls in Sierra Leone and talks how the villagers’ friendship overcame her loneliness for home.

...Audre Lorde captures her experience of being refused entry to the British Virgin Islands because of her dreadlocks. Gwendolyn Brooks recounts the camaraderie and tensions of a trip to Russia with a group of American writers. Gloria Wade-Gayles explores the complexities of being both an American and a woman of color as a paying guest in a Mexican home.

Literary accounts of Blacks travelling abroad are important to my research as there is a limited amount of research on the motivations of Black participation in study abroad programs. Fortunately, with joint efforts of various university faculties, the Council on International Educational Exchange (1991) began the discussion about diversity in abroad programs with the edited publication, *Black Students and Overseas Programs: Broadening the base of participation*. In Holly Carter’s address to the conference she refers to the eleven barriers that prevent students of color from participating in study abroad programs:

1. program structure
2. language requirements
3. length of study
4. finance/cost of program
5. rigid on-campus requirements
6. marketing (printed materials promotional campaigns)
7. admissions requirements
8. lack of support of faculty/department
9. campus culture
10. state legislature-mandated requirements
11. difficulty in transfer of credits.

(Carter, 1991)
Carter (as cited in CIE, 1991) notes that these barriers exist for all students but mainly affects Black students differently in that study abroad programs are often biased when recruiting students of color. Study abroad programs are known to fail at making program information sessions accessible to Black students presumably based on the assumptions that Black students are uninterested and lack the ability to be successful in study abroad programs. She states, 

Often, African American students remain ill informed of any international education opportunities on their campuses because of a presumed lack of interest or qualifications. Many minority students may not even be aware of the existence of an international office on their campus. They are a constituency that has not been actively recruited for international education programs or courses. (Carter, 1991 p. 9)

In the same manner, Carter reveals that the “presumed lack of interest or qualifications” may have racist foundations if program directors rest in the belief that Black students do not have similar academic skills and interest as white students that traditionally participate. Carter is reminded “of a young African American Radcliffe junior who tearfully related a meeting in which she had been advised by her white faculty adviser to change her East Asian studies major because she would not be able to fulfill the language requirements because —her big lips might prevent her mastery of an Asian language” (Carter, 1991, p. 9).

Johnetta B. Cole (as cited in CIE, 1991) reorganizes the CIE’s list of barriers specifically for Black students as the “four F’s” (p. 12):

1. Faculty and Staff
2. Finances
3. Family and Community
4. Fears

(CIE, 1991)

Jinous Karasvi adds other case studies to the body of research that discuss black student participation in study aboard programs. His research explores the theory of reasoned action—where personal, social, and institutional relationships impact Black student participation in study abroad programs. A limitation to Karasvi’s (2009) data is that it discusses students of color who are underrepresented in the percentage of college students studying abroad participants.

The research studied two groups focusing on studying aboard: a group of undergraduate students of color accepted to a 2008 study abroad program at the University of California and a group of sophomores from multiple races that did not apply to a study abroad program. Karasvi’s findings included family, values, cultural resistance, financial responsibilities, and personal factors as barriers to the decision to traveling abroad.
Karasvi’s data from the IIE, shown in Table 1.1, make it clear that study abroad participants increased from 76,302 to 241,791 from 1993 to 2007. Of that increase, African Americans only represent 1% of the increased number of participants.

### Table 1.1: Profile of U.S. study abroad students by percent and total number from 1994-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>83.8%</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic American</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number</strong></td>
<td><strong>76,302</strong></td>
<td><strong>241,791</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Karasvi, 2009, [IEE,2008], p. 3.

With only 18.1% of students of color traveling abroad in 2007 (the sum of the five groups in Table 1.1 without the Caucasian students), Karasvi states students of color are at a disadvantage in being able to compete and advance (2009, p. 4).

Karasvi (2009) and Carter (1999) discuss the barriers that may prevent black students from studying abroad in college, while Carlton McLellan (2011), on the other hand, discusses study abroad in high school as preparation for college. As American public schools focuses on national standards and core content-relevant instruction, a large majority of Black students arrive to college no prior knowledge of travelling abroad. Early preparation can increase the number of knowledgeable stakeholders in global economies, expand and improve world languages, and revolutionize the communication of scientific study (McLellan, 2011). Mary Gage (2001) states that it is “now more important than ever to produce future leaders who understand the intricacies of other cultures and other languages” (p.43).

**Substantiated Conclusions**

Experiential learning discusses ways in which humans learn from a variety of lived experiences. I approach experiential education from the perspective of a language learner and teacher. My experience with learning a language different from my own has informed the ways of which I currently teach my students in Spanish class.

My first experience in a Spanish class was in high school during my freshman year. Similar to subsequent Spanish classes in high school, I learned through rote memorization of vocabulary and the regurgitation of verb conjugations. Looking back at those experiences, I am hesitant to say
that I learned the Spanish language in high school. It wasn’t until college that I learned language not only as memorized vocabulary and grammar structures, but also to communicate meaningfully with others; this opened up opportunities to develop inter and intra personal relationships with people from different cultures. And, through that experience, particularly in study abroad experiences, I was exposed to other ways of living and learning that impacted how I became socially and politically aware of connections between my culture and other cultures.

For me, this exposure was realized in the form of study abroad programs offered at my university. Living in another country and studying at a non-American school transformed my learning experience into a freeing adventure where I began to make connections between my culture and other cultures. This enables me to see myself in a broader context, in a wider world.

As a teacher, I look for similar opportunities to expose my high school students to experiential adventures that promote the exploration of intercultural relationships. The experiential dimension of study abroad is a curricular project that globally personifies multiple subject contents in secondary education. Implementing travel as a curricular component in a high school language class was what I did in the pilot study in 2015, and what I aim to do in 2016 for the dissertation research; this is not an easy feat, however.

The pilot study was an inquiry into the participation of Black high school students in study abroad programs. Initially, my inquiry was guided by research that suggests Black students lack access to study abroad programs (add citations here that say that). Policy makers are releasing data supporting the instruction of global competencies in our nation’s schools in order to sustain socio-political and economic well-being of our youth in the United States and abroad (Lincoln Commission, 2005), but Americanized standards-based curricula does not accommodate study abroad programs in secondary education (McLellan, 2011). In high schools, 

standardization and accountability measures—affords students no direct opportunities to regularly interact with peers around the world in the context of learning and development, and therefore fosters no international, intercultural or interlingual experiences that engender, at the most formative ages, empathy, sympathy and awareness of destructive aspects played out in communities in other parts of the world (Goulah, 2010, p. 336).

I thoughtfully implemented study abroad in a high school curriculum to counter some of the barriers impeding Black students from participating in study abroad programs. Challenges such as financial limitations and cultural fear of the unknown are just a couple of examples that may sway participation in studying abroad for Black students. Students who chose to participate in the study abroad program were removed from spaces of discrimination and isolation. I was fortunate enough to observe my students’ transformation toward conscientiousness. They became aware of their ability to learn without the direct instruction from a teacher and made
inquiring beyond the prescribed curriculum. During a group interview, one student attested to the absence of direct instruction:

"It was nice of the teachers to trust us as much as they did. I mean all of us are like friends now. Girls and boys are just hanging out, eating going, shopping, watching movies. I did not think that they would trust us so much. I didn't even trust us like that, but we are really having fun!! I feel like this is how college is going to be. I can't wait for college!!"

Participating in the study abroad program allowed my students to confront the culture of domination in education. “We begin a process of fundamental change that awakens a vastly expanded sense of identity – our ‘‘greater self’…a contributive way of life is centered on what we now call empowerment, in particular through the kind of dialogue that unleashes our vast inner potential, inspiring people to work together for the peace and happiness of the entire global community” (Ikeda, 2010, p.45).

References


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    *Education and Urban Society, 43*(2), 244-265.
Rediscovering Joy in the Curriculum through Engaging with other Thinkers

Rhonda L. Stern

Abstract

High stakes testing and the standards movement have burdened both student and teacher by narrowing the curriculum and subjecting both to hours of preparation for largely meaningless exams. Consequently, opportunities to explore, play, experiment and participate in joyful learning experiences have been minimized as students are faced with grinding teacher-centered instruction. To rediscover joy in the classroom, educators are urged to turn to alternative pedagogies that value student voice, interests, problem solving abilities, and participation. In the United States, feminist liberatory educators have redesigned the curriculum to take into account students’ perspectives through positionality. A small number of educators have advanced varied methods of democratic instruction, ranging from problem posing to the discussion of controversial issues. As Stanford scholar Nel Noddings observed, “children (and adults) learn best when they are happy” (2). Though Noddings neglected to see the true value in Soka education and its convergence with pedagogies in the United States, eminent scholars John Dewey and Francis Parker did. They valued Makiguchi’s desire to engage students through observation, focus on student interests, and discussion. Rejecting rote memorization in the classroom Dewey, Parker, Makiguchi and later theorist Daisaku Ikeda believed that the classroom should be modeled after the family home, putting a premium on the child’s happiness. Scholars have seen convergence between Makiguchi’s thinking and that of linguist Mikhail Bakhtin. Both believe in facilitating student growth or “becoming” through dialogue, with some arguing that Bakhtin’s irreverent and playful strategies will be tools to bring joy back to the classroom.

Introduction

You see lately, I’ve come to understand that although we all begin school as strangers, some children never learn to feel at home, to feel they really belong. They are not made welcome enough (Paley 103)
Paley raised the specter of difference and hierarchy in a simple example from one of her kindergarten classes. Why are some excluded, viewed as strangers, while others are welcomed with privileged treatment? In our country, we have historically struggled with the notions of equality and freedom at a deep cost to happiness and social engagement. In contrast, Soka pedagogy cultivates the relationship between teacher and student, referring to it as the mentor-disciple relationship and urging democratic, humanistic, and respectful practices. Teachers are urged to cultivate the students’ growth, interests, and human spirit. While Soka educators and institutions are establishing a growing presence in the United States, it is unclear how aware classroom teachers are of this pedagogy. In a startling move, Nell Noddings, a math teacher and an eminent scholar on happiness, treated the founder of Soka pedagogy, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, as a stranger. While she acknowledged that Makiguchi “also makes happiness a primary aim of education,” she described his thinking as a bit odd to “Western readers” (Noddings 3). Like some of Paley’s kindergarten students, she chose to “other” him. I strongly disagree with her assessment. Had she encouraged dialogue, she might have recognized the convergences in thought between American scholars, John Dewey and Francis Parker and Soka educators Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Daisaku Ikeda. That Noddings, a woman in the highest reaches of academia dismissed Soka education because a thinker was “odd” and his theories are complex is disconcerting. In our American culture that renders happiness in the classroom virtually irrelevant, we have much to lose if we fail to engage with “strangers.: That’s just like saying we won't play. Our democratic values demand much more.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the ways in which educators encourage growth through participatory and joyful learning experiences in the classroom. At present, there is a dearth of research on this topic in the context of traditional elementary education. In the United States, high stakes testing and the standards movement have shifted educators’ academic lens away from the uniqueness of each student. Except for some of the most able learners, a one size fits all curriculum, not designed to encourage individual growth and spark student interest, has been imposed (Apple, 62). To tap into student potential, teachers must strive to create a caring and respectful learning environment and cultivate student interest. Soka educators, as will be described more fully below, can be stewards in helping U.S. teachers bring joy back to the classroom. As Noddings rightly noted, “children and adults learn best when they are happy” (2). Conklin and Csikszentmihalyi have found evidence of some joyful learning experiences in middle school. But that is not enough to make meaningful change. My goal is to capture student interest and enthusiasm as soon as students enter elementary school, while their curiosity, playful attitudes, and motivation to learn is still ebullient. Towards that end, I aim to explore the nature of classroom experiences in the K-5 context.
Definitions:

Democracy

Many attempts have been made to define democracy in the context of education. For purposes of this paper, I view democracy in its most idealized form. Garrison, Hickman and Ikeda described it as “an organic, living, evolving thing that encourages dialogue, participation, interaction, and respect of all peoples’” (209). Goodlad emphasized that a “democracy can only survive by participation of its members” (4-5).

Democratic instruction furthers the goals of a democratic society and teaches students how to participate in the school and society, affording opportunities for critical and creative thinking for all students. According to Dewey, “[a] society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is...democratic” (106-107).

Feminist liberatory educators, adherents of third wave feminism (intersectionality of gender, race, and class), maintain that academic disciplines must be taught in such a way that they are inclusive for all (Barton). These educators strive to give every student a voice in her learning by decentering dominant ideologies and dominant constructions of knowledge so that students can reconstruct and reposition their learning through their own lived experiences and observations (Barton). Barton described how she and her students co-constructed a chemistry curriculum at a local community college by focusing on the lived experiences of her students and the questions they raised.

Heteroglossia is linguist Mikhail Bakhtin’s terminology for a polyphony of voices within the same language. The concept is similar to the notion of plurality and consistent with Dewey’s metaphor for understanding democratic inclusivity. Rejecting the notion of a “melting pot,” Dewey likened democracy to an orchestral symphony (Garrison, Hickman, and Ikeda 208).

Happiness, joyful or optimal experiences, flow, or pleasure from learning

Different theorists have used the above terms or related terms interchangeably to describe the self-actualization and pride a student experiences after participating in a relevant, meaningful, and agentic learning experience. Goulah outlined Makiguchi’s theory of happiness that is distinctly different than pure pleasure:

“Happiness here is not superficial hedonism found in absolute individualism but a fundamental happiness born only through self-actualization in a ‘harmonious social life’... Makiguchi believed such happiness occurs when individuals, as members of society, become human beings who contribute to the development of society by participating with people in the joys and sorrows of daily life” (65).
To clarify that achieving good for society is the dominant objective, Hatano described Makiguchi’s symbol for value creation: a triangle of beauty, gain, and good, with the greater good grounding, or serving as the base, for all actions (70). Makiguchi’s philosophy of value creation has significant overlap with Dewey’s theory of democratic education.

Flow is a theory developed by psychologist and educator Mikhail Csikszentmihalyi. Csikszentmihalyi argued that when skills and a challenge are balanced and sufficient feedback is given, a student becomes so engaged in the task that his concentration is heightened and he loses sense of everything else, except achieving his objective. The ability to achieve the desired objective produces deep internal satisfaction within the individual, with participants seeking to do the task over and over again, in order to achieve internal satisfaction and joy in completing the goal. Goals are modified after the student masters the task.

There may be times when I interchangeably use the terms happiness and joyful experiences.

Strategies to locate literature on the topic
I have used traditional research strategies to locate articles in journals. I have also turned to alternative theories on flow and play. Researching what makes students unhappy, such as suppression of voice, coercive practices in the classroom, and authoritarian instruction, has been instructive in terms of what not to do when seeking to engage students. As noted in the introduction, a significant portion of this paper covers research on Soka philosophies on happiness, cultivation of student interests and growth, and working for the common good. I have also sought to stimulate discussion on whether the new federal statute that replaced No Child Left Behind, Every Student Succeeds Act: A Progress Report on Elementary and Secondary Education (“ESSA”), will provide a foundation for more joyful, and student directed learning experiences.

Objectives and Organization of the review
This paper provides a review of the literature on student engagement in traditional schools, with the focus on joyful learning experiences in the classroom. The specific goal was to describe the conditions leading to joyful learning experiences in the classroom and the dimensions of instruction so that teachers can see how to teach relevant and rigorous content without sacrificing opportunities to advance joyful learning. The second objective relates to methodology. To date, the literature indicates that many students are unhappy at traditional schools. While few educators would admit that they and their students are miserable, the ethnographic and phenomenological examples identified below in this paper provide some insight into the unhappy conditions in today’s classrooms. I have adopted a model-of-wisdom approach (similar to writing about best practices) to highlight methods, like Soka education and democratic instruction, which not only foster joyful experiences, but also are considered dialogic, respectful,
and inclusive. It is my hope that these methods will be used to inform Western educational practices and drive joyful learning experiences. In keeping with Hess’ philosophy, I believe that “good cases’ [ought] to be studied because they allow us to learn from the possible, not only the probable” (15).

**Theoretical considerations**

“It is impossible for a teacher to know...”what you need to know” without knowing the students and learning about their lived experiences” (Barton, 122)

I situate my thinking in feminist praxis (also referred to as feminist liberatory theory) that also takes into account the positionality of the student, the teacher, and then, the class as a whole. Feminist praxis aims to connect the student’s voice and lived experience with pedagogy, teaching students to resist dominant thinking and critically deconstruct power and privilege. “The ideals of education for freedom” and liberation are central to this theoretical framework (Barton 123). By valuing the personal, feminine praxis liberates the potential of the student and decenters institutional power. This process is reflexive, context dependent, and agentic, with students and teachers co-constructing knowledge through dialogic experiences that can lead to joyful classroom experiences (Barton).

The second theoretical lens on which I rely is democratic instruction, as articulated by Dewey and interpreted by Apple, Beane, Hess and Paley. Emphasizing the importance of teaching students to become dialogic and participatory citizens, Hess argued that students have to have a stake in community problems and issues. Through discussion, they develop a strong commitment to relevant problems and issues in their local communities. (Hess 12). Apple and Beane have reported that student excitement and passion are important outcomes of democratic instruction (3). While Dewey believed that school was the place where students should explore a variety of interests, he also opined that trusting relationship between student and teacher led to creating a context for joyful experiences in the classroom. By getting to know the student through discussion and other methods, the teacher could act as a facilitator through “enlisting the person's own participating disposition in getting the result desired, and thereby of developing within him an intrinsic and persisting direction for the right way” (Dewey 32).

**Schooling and happiness in the United States**

*Elementary level*

Though there is sparse research on joyful student experiences in American classrooms, Paley did observe student engagement in a kindergarten class. Ironically, it occurred in response to a rule that she asked her five year old students to follow, telling them you can’t exclude others during play. The exact wording was “you can’t say you can’t play” (Paley 3). Over the course of
the kindergarten day, whether as part of discussion of a story Paley had written that related to the rule or during class activities, students were interested in raising questions about the rule and expressing their opinions. Paley observed that “[t]he children enjoy listening to any analysis of the new rule,” whether from the perspective of teacher or student, including upper elementary students, some of whom were surprised that Paley’s rule was working with five year olds (115).

Democratic instruction leads to joyful classroom experiences in fifth grade

Apple and Beane and Hess have written about a small minority (very different than traditional educators) of teachers who run their classrooms pursuant to democratic principles and have succeeded in joyfully engaging students. Schultz described the attitudes of fifth grade students who participated in a Project Citizen program through which they requested that their dilapidated urban school be rebuilt. Although they weren’t able to achieve that goal, participating in Project Citizen and having a voice in relevant, local issues empowered them and made school more meaningful to them. Students who previously disliked school were transformed by the process and committed to learning more. As one student wrote in his journal, “I did not think that school was the place for me. I didn’t think it would help me in my life, but this project made me like coming to school. It did not feel like the boring school I was used to” (Schultz 80). After this project was completed, this student continued to attend school regularly and became engaged in schoolwork. Apple and Beane viewed the students’ experiences as transformative. They had made education worthy again and there work on Project Citizen could serve as a model for teachers who wanted to teach the curriculum through a democratic, social justice oriented lens. Apple and Beane emphasized that these positive student experiences “speak to the growing dissatisfaction on the part of educators in so many places with curricula that has little relationship with the cultures and lives of the students in our schools [and] to an abiding belief that schools...must reflect what is best in all of us” (vii). These educators firmly believe that participatory experiences like these will bring optimism back to the classroom. As Dewey predicted generations ago, these students succeeded in building bridges with the community.

Apple argued that hegemonic ideologies and practices, driving assimilation and conformity, and discourses of failure and deviance contributed to an absence of joy in the classroom. Noddings credited part of the problem to puritanical ideology in the United States. Scholarly researchers have presumed that there is space for joy in elementary classrooms, but without gathering data, we really don’t know whether conditions exist for joyful learning experiences (Barton; Apple and Beane). Consequently, I believe my research is timely, and hopefully, will add to the existing literature.

Indeed, scholars have maintained that the child (and his happiness) has been a missing factor in curriculum development. Noddings expressed deep concern that educators do not place a premium on happiness in the present, i.e. the quality of the student’s experience in the short
term. Noddings emphasized that the student experience has been marginalized, largely as a result of standardization, and high stakes testing. Though never mentioning happiness outright, Goodlad believed that democracy, ethics, self-realization, creativity, and appreciation of aesthetics are key components of the curriculum and lamented that they were often not taught. Chastising those who write federal and state legislation for not focusing on students, Goodlad noted that a fundamental problem with legislation is that “state and local directives are written with adults, not children and youths in mind” (37). Noddings and Goodlad have called for a broadening of the curriculum and “deepening of the subject matter” giving teachers the discretion “to make wise judgments on what is really worthwhile,” guided by student input on depth and learning extensions (Noddings 247). Dewey believed that children ought to be given time to pursue their interests and experiment as part of the learning process. Now that No Child Left Behind is no longer federal law, perhaps teachers will relax about meeting testing deadlines and permit student exploration and choice.

Evidence of joyful experiences in middle school

Conklin provided evidence of middle school students engaged in curriculum that involved fun, humor, play, imagination, creativity, and joyful experiences. Students studying American history enjoyed participating in reenactments of battles, during which they used wadded paper balls as ammunition. Another teacher allowed students flexibility and choice when it came to assessing their study of the Middle East. For a final product, one student created a magazine entitled the “Mummy Monthly.” Although he seriously responded to his teacher’s questions on Egyptian burial practices, he was imaginative and invoked humor, drawing pictures on “how to mummify a chicken,” creating “Random Hieroglyphics, and posing a quiz on “Is your mommy a mummy?...Is she over 200 years old? Is she wrapped in gauze” (1242). Conklin emphasized that these joyful experiences, highly valuable in motivating students, are not typical, noting that “[d]espite the evidence of the potentially powerful and important outcomes of play, there is widespread agreement that play and joy have been eroded in young people’s lives today, with devastating effects,” most notably boredom, stress and anxiety (1235).

Democratic instruction has also been invaluable at the high school level. Hess found that “discussion improves critical thinking, democratic participation—understanding of what that means, more analysis and better interpersonal skills...and it is the valued currency of [democratic] public life” (12). The high school students that Hess studied “used evidence from their readings and personal experience to support and challenge one another’s views” (25). Others played the roles of participants at a Town Meeting. Unlike Soka education, authentic democratic debate has not been typically part of the curriculum in the United States.
Authoritarian practices minimize opportunities for “joyful experiences”

There is extensive evidence in the literature that teacher centered instruction dominates traditional schooling. In contrast to Paley, Apple wrote about a kindergarten classroom that was considered a “model” kindergarten, though the teacher began to regulate her five year old students’ behavior and thinking as soon as they walked through the classroom door (50). According to Apple, “the four most important skills that the teacher expected children to learn were to share, to listen, to put things away, and to follow the classroom routine” (50). Students were punished when they moved to play with something and it was not play time. In contrast, those who refrained were praised for their “obedience” (51). The students developed a complete understanding of what items were used for “work” and for “play” (51). When working on art projects, the teacher demonstrated the type of work she expected. All of the projects that imitated the teachers’ work were emulated. Original products were not valued. The tone of kindergarten had changed. Apple found that “all the children talked less about playing in October than in September and much more about working as the school year progressed” (53).

Scarred after being marginalized by classroom teachers as a child, Kirk, now a principal, wrote about the oppressive nature of his elementary schooling. He was retained a couple of times in the primary grades because he could not read, and the grade retentions caused him to experience deep shame. His teacher failed to take into account how poverty had impacted his ability to learn. Nor did she make connections between what he enjoyed doing and finding contextual texts. Instead, he was given a basal reader that made no sense to him. It was not until he entered fourth grade and a teacher gave him a math manipulative that he discovered his thinking skills. He learned to count and then to read. For him, context would have made all the difference. Had he been shown books on Appalachia, he might have read much earlier. In his position as a principal, he has recognized the importance of motivating students through relevant and contextual materials, and the need to build bridges with families. Happiness, individuality, creativity, appeared to be missing from the ecological conditions of Kirk’s reading teacher’s classroom. Rather than facilitate learning, some of these teachers pushed for growth with external prods.

Dewey described the toll that external aims take on both teacher and student as “mechanical” and “slavish” (117, 119). In terms of teens, the toll is enormous; they resent being controlled at school. Lesko urged educators to see through the dominant constructions of adolescence and end covert and overt regulation and control over students.

I believe that a view of teenagers as essentially out of control due to hormonal storms, plays an important part on maintaining control of youths as the highest value in secondary schools (Lesko 157)
The question becomes why are we focusing on controlling the student over taking steps to understand him and collaborate with him. Gray provided evidence of research on flow that demonstrated students’ overall unhappiness in middle school and high school. According to Gray, Csikszentmihalyi and Hunter found that students were happiest when they were with their peers, and most unhappy when “at school” (Gray 19). Educators need to heed these findings. Parents and students need to push for change through dialogue with the school.

This type of hegemonic thinking in traditional schools--that “work” builds character or that students who question or protest are discipline problems--kills morale at school, destroys self worth and interferes with trusting relationships within and outside of school. Noddings cautioned against the use of coercive practices in the classroom, urging educators to let students play a role in making learning choices and to structure the environment so that they can have fun while doing it (247). Otherwise, the students’ lots may be similar to that of a California high school student who conceded ‘this place [school] hurts my spirit” (Darling-Hammond 63). Coercion takes its toll.

Bakhtin, Dewey, Barton, and others maintained that to optimize learning, teachers must respect student difference and voice. When crafters of the curriculum do not take all students and their needs and interests into account, certain groups of students, most notably bilingual and minority, will struggle. Fine described how minority high school students were unable to embrace an anglocentric curriculum. When faced with the prospect of retention, some dropped out of school. According to Fine, the system failed them, as teachers focused on deficits and deviance, not learning strengths. Fine charged that these discourses and related teacher mindsets are hardly democratic and rarely concerned with individual potential. Indeed, they wither “away from any image of collective engagement, inquiry, passion, or critical excitement in the minds of secondary students” (77-78).

Overall, the literature indicates that little has changed since the Sputnik era, a time that was to drive expansive learning changes, including an emphasis in science. Noddings lamented,

School is still boring, and in some ways worse today...the effects of standardized testing have aggravated an already dull way of life. Both students and teachers are caught in a deadly serious campaign to amass facts that can easily be tested’ (244-5).

Goodlad claimed that even textbook publishers are feeling the heat of a narrowed curriculum: “[w]hen textbook publishers tell me how difficult it is to get adoption of books and materials,” I worry about what students are doing in the schools” (p. 58). While Obama has claimed that he wants to reduce testing pressures, the newly adopted ESSA contemplates annual student assessments
beginning in elementary school. Though less, that still poses a substantial burden on students when there are other ways of gaining assessment information. When we engage with feminist praxis and Soka philosophies, it is apparent that the ecological conditions and instructive nature of U.S. classrooms could be improved without much cost, but with heaping doses of rigor, respect, compassion, and flexibility.

**Theories and practices which align with Soka pedagogy and values**

“When our conception of language is one that is fixed, neutral, and isolated—something to be preserved rather than animated—then the literacy classrooms we create become museums to the past rather than playgrounds, workplaces, and intellectual spaces of the future” (Fecho and Botzakis 556)

As mentioned earlier, a models-of-wisdom method of inquiry is designed to champion best practices. Soka pedagogy is respected worldwide for the strong bonds in the mentor-disciple relationship as well as the deep cultivation of learning. This part of the paper will be presented thematically, as the reader will notice that there is a strong convergence among Soka philosophers, Dewey, adherents to democratic instruction, and feminist praxis.

**Modeling the classroom after conditions in the home**

In contrast to the prevailing situation in traditional U.S. classrooms where knowledge is typically fixed, Soka educators have set up conditions to enhance learning possibilities. Ikeda drew from the philosophy of Johann Pestalozzi. Pestalozzi believed that schooling must model itself after the warmth of the family home, a point with which Dewey concurred. Goulah and Ito highlighted the loving and humanitarian aspects of the relationship between the teacher and the student (mentor-disciple) as “education that happens under a mother’s gaze, where the means to a child’s academic and moral cultivation happen through direct observation of the close at hand and through experiences in nature” (51). Under such education, Pestalozzi had argued, the child’s happiness is the teacher’s happiness and the child’s joy is the teacher’s joy” (62). Feminist praxis also values the positionality of the student (Barton): My intention as a feminist teacher working for liberatory science education is to value students, to value their age, gender, social class, race...and to create spaces where their lived experiences, their hopes, their dreams and fantasies, are part of their exploration of the world” (129). In terms of democratic values, there is significant overlap in thinking between Makiguchi and Dewey. Both believed that the school was a miniature society and happiness was gained by contributing value to society.

Ikeda described Makiguchi’s enduring support for his students (Goulah). His devotion included feeding the hungry without revealing their impoverished status, buying school supplies for disadvantaged students, and maintaining warm relationships with parents, often through home visits. He also refused to participate in favoritism towards elite students in
society. Makiguchi made school inclusive for all (Barton). Yet, many of the issues he dealt with during a most repressive, militaristic regime still pose problems today. So many children come hungry to school and they are embarrassed when they are associated with free lunch programs. Fine, Willis, and Deschene, Cuban, and Tyack have written extensively about the shabby treatment of parents by teachers and principals and the parents’ correspondingly lack of involvement in their children’s academic careers.

Because of Soka pedagogy’s emphasis on a caring, nurturing, close, and respectful relationship between educators and students, we can learn more about how to maximize academic instruction to create engagement and joy in traditional classrooms. This may mean rethinking the structure of schooling. Makiguchi believed in a cross grade approach. He thought that it reduced unhealthy competition and gave students an opportunity to interact with peers of all ages. This provided a better sense of community life and great opportunities for learning. To Makiguchi, the cross grade nature of the playground made it one of the most dynamic spaces for learning and socialization in the school.

Students at traditional schools have seen a decline in play (Gray). This is unfortunate as play provides freedom, plus an opportunity for children to learn, imagine, explore, and exert some control over their environment. Vygotsky believed that play opened up social sites for learning and language development (Gray). Novelty adds a sense of joy and excitement to both play and learning (Gray). Highlighting the importance of play, Gray argued that it gave children freedom, confidence and the ability to “take ownership of their lives” (Gray 221). He added “our happiest moments are usually those that are fully our own, the result of our own doing, not something presented to us by powerful others” (Gray 220).

Noddings emphasized the power of play in the learning process. To Noddings, in addition to providing social fun, board games built literacy and fostered mathematical connections. Csikszentmihalyi’s early research was grounded in play. Csikszentmihalyi lauded parents who are direct, give feedback, and allow their offspring to develop a sense of control. He opined that those children will be “free to develop interests and activities that will expand their selves” (89).

*Dimensions of learning*

Teachers have the power to take control of the curriculum and their classrooms so that students can engage in optimal learning experiences. Though he lived during a repressive regime, Makiguchi rejected pressure to teach geography as the state required (as a means of loyalty to the Emperor). Instead, he taught his students how to think and observe, not conform. He valued the sense of belonging and understanding they derived from interactions in the local community (‘Kyodo”). Describing his value creative approach, Takeuchi concluded, “Makiguchi emphasized the significance and meaning that human beings discover in and confer on nature, which varies
from place to place and era to era” (121). Takeuchi added, Makiguchi was generations ahead of himself as a scholar of social, political, and cultural geography, finding meaning in place, location, identity, and human interaction with the environment. Thoroughly aware of his students’ needs and interests, Makiguchi rejected environments where learning was based on “rote” memorization or forced choices. Rather, he sought to spark student interest in learning, “helping them to develop enthusiasm” (67, fn. 3). We have seen how students in democratic classrooms (Schultz; Hess) latched on to relevant problems they decided to tackle. In a similar fashion, Barton grounded her chemistry class in the students’ experiences: “Because the students experiences occurred within and were reconstructed through social frameworks, their experience shaped the science class from questions about access to science to proper methods of childbirth” (Barton 130). Thus, focusing on students’ positionality and interests is a critical condition towards building joyful experiences in the classroom.

**Dialogue and Difference**

Makiguchi believed that discussion of shared geographies could be a basis for dialogue on minimizing difference. Ikeda fulfills the spirit of Makiguchi’s goal. Not only does he recognize the social nature of dialogue, Ikeda sees the connections between nature and man, and wants to use Makiguchi’s theories on geography to advance them. Ikeda believed “if [Makiguchi’s writings on geography] can act as a source of energy to awaken the citizens of the world to the ways in which they as individuals are related to the life force, and thus usher in a century dedicated to the life, I will be most gratified” (Goulah 268). Ikeda has tried to support humanity by advocating for sustainable measures as part of UN proposals and also seeking for disarmament. A founder of many Soka schools worldwide, he told his peers that “everything begins with person-to-person dialogue” (Garrison, Hickman, and Ikeda 172). Translating this into an educational context, Ikeda urged teachers to promote small group dialogues because they will foster deeper communication and learning. As Hess indicated, dialogue drives democratic instruction. Through dialogue, students can embrace happiness and become intrinsically motivated to learn.

Ikeda was also convinced that dialogue was a way of overcoming difference and transformation, which he called human revolution. He wrote, “without the warmth of the human heart, the world is a savage place. To build the foundations for a harmonious society—a democratic society in which humans respect one another equally and live up to the best of their potential—we need creative dialogue that brings people together in spirit and promotes their elevation and growth (Garrison, Hickman, and Ikeda, 176). To Ikeda, it was critical to listen to the inner voices of others, including opposition leaders, to fully grasp their message and work to bring about global change.
Soka philosophy has been likened to Bakhtinian discourse, largely through the notion of “becoming” or as growth contributes to self actualization, a construct that Makiguchi and Bakhtin supported. Both Soka scholars and Bakhtin believed that language lives within social discourse, and a deep understanding of language’s passage through time is central not only to furthering understanding through communication, but creating respect for the other (Fecho and Botzakis). Formulating the term heteroglossia, Bakhtin argued that a simple utterance is never one's own, but imprinted with meaning from senders and receptors. Fecho and Botzakis added “educators need to see the empowering aspects of helping students to move from seeing language as belonging to nobody and then belonging to others before they can ultimately claim it as ‘my word” (Fecho and Botzakis 552). This means that educators must probe meaning, through penetrating analysis and dialogue. Fecho and Botzakis believe that deeper understandings and creative responses will occur through a strategy which Bakhtin called carnival. Carnival involves the sanctioned flattening of hierarchies between teacher and student. Once student and teacher are on an equal footing, their exchanges become free, often humorous, penetrating, and always unfettered. Perhaps experiences like carnival will make it easier for teachers who have been entrenched in rigid activities to listen to students and understand their perspectives and their histories. Carnival also has the potential to make it easier for teacher to embrace their students’ positionality, co-construct meanings as part of dialogic instruction, and make adjustments to classroom learning experiences, perhaps in a relaxed and joyous state. At the community college level, Barton found joy in making those adjustments, creating meaning for students who had previously found themselves stuck in a rigid chemistry curriculum.

**Scholarly significance**

When I submitted this proposal, I focused solely on the student’s perspective, not thinking of the pain endured by educators trapped in a tight system or parents dealing with student negativity towards schooling. Reflecting on schooling around the time of the Industrial Revolution, I was reminded of students who opted to work rather than go to school because school was so awful and their parents permitted this (Deschennes, Cuban, and Tyack). Not much has changed for all involved and perhaps the deepest sadness is that researchers don’t seem to focus on the perspective of elementary learners. These students come to school with open minds, ready to engage. Unless we become open to differing perspectives on education, we may all contribute to rising levels of anxiety and frustration among students. As I read the report on ESSA, I noticed references to creativity, critical thinking, tailored assessments, collaborative efforts and problem solving. However, nothing is written from the student’s perspective. The prescribed annual assessments collect measurements, but ignore student, teacher, and family voices.
Conclusion

Perhaps ESSA is an opening of the door to change in school policy, but so many more adjustments need to be made, both from the bottom up as the literature suggests, and from the top down. I wondered if ESSA drafters studied student growth under democratic instruction or feminist liberatory education. I wondered if philosophies on happiness and education were considered. On a theoretical level, I hope that Noddings would have a change of heart and engage with thinkers on Soka pedagogy, a philosophy that was wholly respected by some of America’s most eminent scholars (Dewey and Parker).

Paley’s democratic kindergarten can be viewed as a metaphor on life. If we are to truly value our students and members of our community, we can’t exclude them from any part of our lives. We must practice good citizenship. Ikeda argued that the Bodhisattva, a woman of valor in the Buddhist religion, is a “modern exemplar of the global citizen,” as she works for the happiness of others and models the qualities of wisdom, courage, and compassion” (Goulah and Ito 67). From wisdom, she can see interconnectedness. From courage, she can respect the other. From compassion, she gains empathy. My aim is to encourage others to reflect upon the message of the Bodhisattva. This will enable school staff and parents to make adjustments to the classroom that will optimize learning.

As the foregoing indicates, we have some models of wisdom that support a democratic, inclusive, and value creating curriculum. Fecho and Botzakis realized the possibilities of embodying these qualities through the study of great literature. In their article, they dealt with questions about race arising from a hypothetical study of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. They urged the teacher in the hypothetical to take the time to respond to her student who had raised a race related question. Hess asked her students to dialogically engage with controversial public issues, and they did. Schultz’s students dealt with the dire conditions of schooling in Chicago’s Cabrini Green, one of the most impoverished areas of the city. Barton’s students raised questions of privilege and class in the context of the medical care for an elderly, Hispanic mother of one of the students. Conklin and Paley described students happily learning while at play, even wordplay, the kind of enjoyment of language that Bakhtin envisioned. As Fecho and Botzakis observed, “Bakhtin brings to classrooms what we feel has been too absent: joy” (557). Dewey, Makiguchi, Bakhtin and others have laid the path for us; we must follow it as friends and colleagues in a learning community, never as strangers.
Works Cited


Beyond Victimization towards the Pursuit of Happiness: A
Phenomenological Study of the Role of Happiness in the
Schooling Experience of Queer Black Boys

Kendrick Johnson

Abstract
Research on the schooling experiences of queer youth often paints a myopic image of how they cope with bullying, victimization, and homophobia. Furthermore, the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality further complicates the experiences of students whose identities overlap in multiple marginalized categories. Thus, this study investigates how queer Black boys in single-gender, racially-homogenous high schools experience happiness. Using Makiguchi’s framework for value creation and Ikeda’s principle of human revolution, the researcher 1) explores potential correlations between happiness and resilience and 2) addresses implication for educators in understanding the dynamic schooling experiences of queer Black boys in all-male high schools. This study employs dialogical phenomenology as the methodological approach for gathering and analyzing data. Interviews and participant observation are the primary modes of collecting data.

Keywords: intersectionality, value creation, harmonious coexistence, happiness, queer Black boys, resilience

Hegemonic systems such as heterosexism, heteronormativity, homophobia, and genderism are entrenched power constructs that impact society and profoundly shape the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and intersex (LGBTQQI) youth (Wernick, Kulick, & Inglehart, 2013). This diverse and complex group of individuals makes up a growing category of sexual minorities in society; thus, for the purposes of this study, the term *queer* will be used to represent the collective group of non-gender and non-sexuality conforming individuals. Schools—as social institutions—have historically played an integral role...
in both perpetuating these oppressive constructs, as well as creating platforms for resistance, liberation, and happiness.

High schools, in particular, are still hostile environments where queer students experience a relatively high degree of marginalization due to violence, bullying, and harassment (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014). This form of social stigmatization produces short-term and long-term damage to students’ psychological, emotional, academic, and social well-being (Olson, Kann, Vivola-Kantor, Kinchen, & McManus, 2014). In fact, multiple studies have found that students who experience homophobic victimization are more likely to drop out of school (Hickman, Bartholomew, Mathwig, & Heinrich, 2008), demonstrate poor academic performance (O’Shaughnessey, Russell, Heck, Calhoun, & Laub, 2004), feel disconnected from the overall culture of the school (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010), and suffer from negative mental and psychological health, resulting in high incidences of suicide, promiscuity, and substance abuse (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009). Considering these adverse factors, there is a sense of urgency on the part of educators, researchers, and practitioners to examine students respond to these oppressive circumstances, while also negotiating spaces where students and queer youth advocates can speak back, create value, and produce counter-narratives.

**Problem Statement**

While the corpus of scholarship surrounding queer students in schools is plentiful, the literature specifically around queer Black boys and their schooling experiences is still emerging. Moreover, there is a need for phenomenology to investigate human happiness, not as a narcissistic pursuit, but as a genuine philosophical endeavor towards a determination of the highest human good (Heffernan, 2014). The intersections of race, gender, and sexuality “trouble” basic social science concepts and necessitate a more integrative approach to understanding the experiences of those whose identities overlap within multiple categories of difference. Because there is not simply one way to be “queer,” to be “male,” and to be “of color,” there is not just one way to understand the perceived realities associated with these identities. The research problem can therefore be contextualized through three lenses: the need to 1) expand research designs and methodologies to investigate queer experiences, specifically those of Black boys; 2) expand intersectionality inquiry specifically related to race, gender, and sexuality; and 3) create multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary frameworks for understanding queer Black males and their schooling experiences.
First, and most notably, previous educational research on queer Black studies has included only small sample sizes (Friedman, Koeske, & Silvestre, 2006), lacked inclusivity of racial and ethnic minority students (Meiners & Quinn, 2010), and failed to shed light on how whiteness, privilege, and racial segregation further complicate the plight of queer students of color (Berland, Corliss, Field, Goodman & Austin, 2010). While the existing literature surrounding the experiences of queer Black boys in schools provides rich context on how harassment, bullying, and victimization that they endure impact their schooling experience, these narratives fail to paint a comprehensive picture of queer Black boys in educational settings.

Scholars interested in queer of color studies and intersectionality inquiry are making valiant efforts to expand the scope of multicultural education, urban education, and queer studies to include a more in-depth inquiry into how intersectionalities complicate the schooling experience for students whose identities intersect in several marginalized categories. This critical theoretical lens, adapted from Black feminism, seeks to disrupt the heteronormative power constructs that perpetuate homophobic ideologies within educational settings, invariably impacting queer of color youth. Recent queer of color literature suggests an interest in queer Black boys and their schooling experiences in urban high schools. These studies focus primarily on how queer Black boys negotiate masculinity, prioritize Blackness, downplay queerness, and foster agency in order to navigate the homophobic terrain of comprehensive, urban high schools (Goode-Cross & Good, 2009; Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011; McCready, 2010; Misa, 2001; Brockenbrough & Boatwright, 2013; Patton & Simmons, 2008; Quinn, 2007). Nonetheless, since queer of color critique is still emerging, there are gaps in the literature.

Lastly, there is a need for comprehensive, multi-dimensional frameworks for pursuing queer of color inquiry. In Brockenbrough’s (2015) most recent article, he explores queer of color critique as an analytic framework to unpack queer agency in educational institutions. At the end of his article, he invites other scholars to continue critical dialogue around these lines of inquiry. Specifically, he poses one of the following questions: “How do the cultural and institutional politics of difference act upon the multiple and intersecting identities of queer students of color, and how can these students agentively negotiate these politics and their own identities as they strategically navigate educational spaces?” (p. 39).

My line of inquiry seeks to challenge the existing literature that limits the experiences of queer Black boys to bullying, violence, and victimization. I seek to unpack how they experience happiness and resilience in the contexts of heteronormativity, heterosexism, and genderism.
Literature around happiness in western contexts is limited in its scope and lacks a connection to a more humanistic purpose—harmonious coexistence and moral good. The rugged individualistic nature of western ideology limits the potential for happiness and value creation that contribute to the greater good of society.

In light of these studies, a new, more robust, narrative is warranted for my study of happiness in resilient populations. For Makiguchi a “value-creating life is socially integrated, contributive and, thereby, fundamentally happy” (Goulah, 2012, p. 1000). In the following section, I advocate for broadening the scope of Black queer and queer of color discourse to include posthumanistic frameworks for understanding the schooling experiences of queer Black boys. In order to do so, I draw upon and expand the philosophical lenses Makiguchi’s value-creation pedagogy and Ikeda’s notions of human revolution and creative co-existence in order to examine prospects and possibilities for queer happiness. This nuanced theoretical lens, termed critical queer posthumanism, seeks to create an internally persuasive voice that reconciles the critical nature of postmodern theory with posthumanism philosophy and thought. Critical queer posthumanism will inform how I explore the phenomenon of happiness as experienced by queer Black boys in a single-gender, racially homogenous high school.

**Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of my study is to build upon queer scholarship, intersectionality research, and phenomenological studies by unpacking the schooling experiences of queer Black boys. More specifically, I seek to unpack the phenomenon of happiness as experienced by queer Black boys in a single-gender, urban high school. In order to approach this study, the following research question will be addressed:

1. **How do queer Black boys in a single-gender, urban high schools experience happiness?**

2. **What role does queer liberation play in contributing to a happy life?**

**Rationale**

Queer of color youth in this country are faced with a unique dilemma due the multiple intersections of marginalization that they endure. This study contributes to the discourse on queer Black studies in several ways. First, it offers a new direction of queer discourses in educational studies—that of single-gender high schools. This perspective is an important
extension to previous studies which were conducted on queer Black boys in comprehensive urban high schools. Little research has been conducted on single-gender, urban high schools. Moreover, Black queer theory investigates structural, cultural, and social formations of genderism, racism, and heteropatriarchy, what it fails to unearth is if/how queer Black boys experience happiness as a result of said agency.

In essence, my research expands queer discourse and urban educational studies through its quest to understanding how resilient populations experience happiness and lead value-creative lives, despite the victimization, bullying, and violence they face. Moreover, my research seeks to provide a platform and means by which queer Black youth speak back, rather than succumbing to value prescription and value consumption set forth by dominant, heteronormative narratives. It is through this study that we begin to understand how to best address the unique needs of queer Black boys in single-gender schools, and potentially beyond.

The complexity and heterogeneity of this study demands a nuanced discourse that speaks to and contextualizes both the critical (cultural, structural, systemic, racial) aspects of queer Black boys’ existences in schools, as well as the post-humanistic growth that leads to a better understanding of their potentiality, dignity, and human value. Makiguchi philosophy of happiness and Ikeda’s human revolution are brought into dialogue as an instrument for disrupting the heteropatriarchal norms in schooling institutions that pathologize identities posing a threat to said ideologies.

**Methodological Framework**

Phenomenology seeks to make lived experiences—as perceived through human consciousness—the object of inquiry (Husserl, 1970). Husserl (1913/1952) states that bodies are “something touching which is touched,” meaning that bodies and objects, insofar as they can be sensed and touched, impress upon this world while simultaneously being impressed upon by other forces already existing in space and time. Since no objects exist independent of themselves (they have already been impressed upon and “colored” by the voices of others), our orientation toward objects is met by a two-way approach between the bodies that move around objects, and objects around which bodies move; in other words, in the process of approaching (or co-inhabiting the space of) a body (or bodies), we are also approached by the body. Hence, bodies are shaped by contact with objects (constructs, system, institutions, policies, ideologies, discourses) and others (family and community members, teachers, religious leaders, politicians, etc.). Phenomenology helps us explore how bodies are shaped by histories, making them performative in nature, posture, and gestures—what Husserl and Merleau-Ponty describe as
“sedimented histories” and what Bourdieu describes as habitus, or “systems of durable, transposable, dispositions” that impact our perceptions, appreciations, and actions” (referenced in Ahmed, 2006, pp. 552-553).

Heidegger, a student of Husserl, approached phenomenology from a hermeneutic epistemological lens—one that upholds an interpretive process for not just understanding and disclosing cultural experiences and their meanings through language, rather than the merely descriptive categories of the “real” as proposed by Husserl. Hermeneutic phenomenologists (Solomon, 1987; Gadamer, 1976; Heidegger, 1962) also make the following assumptions:

- Pre-understanding or worldview is a structure for being in the world, and every human being possesses it—it’s inescapable.
- Humans are embedded in the world to such an extent that subjective experiences are inextricably linked to social, cultural, and political contexts.
- Human cultural activities are seen as “texts” towards interpretation of intended or expressed meaning.

Thus, phenomenologist believe that this approach is not just a way of conducting research, but also a way of being in one’s lifeworld.

This process, thus, allows participants, as cultural actors, to manifest what is normally hidden in human experiences and human relations (Spielgelberg, 1976). Thus, phenomenologist believe that this approach is not just a way of conducting research, but also a way of being in one’s lifeworld. Since my study explores the phenomenon of queer happiness as experienced by male students in single-gender high schools, I decided to approach this line of inquiry by “queering” phenomenology.

**Description of Site and Sample**

Wesley Prep High School is a predominantly African American high school in a large, metropolitan city in the Midwest. The school has a rich history as one of the first schools for African Americans who migrated north during the Great Migration, and has graduated some prominent figures in the African American community, ranging from musicians, actors, doctors, and lawyers. The community in which Wesley is located has a history of poverty, but is currently being gentrified. In 2010, the school went through a turnaround process due to low academic achievement, where all staff was replaced and students remained. Two years ago, the school was reconstituted yet again--this time, it transitioned from a comprehensive school to
single-gender academies. The Young Men’s Academy was the site of my research inquiry, as I sought to unpack the experiences of queer Black boys in all-male environments. I chose to focus my study on two boys in particular. They were chosen based on a few criteria; first, I wanted to choose students who were open about their sexuality and sexual orientation, so that they would be more comfortable discussing their schooling experiences without fear of being outed. Moreover, since I did not have personal relationships with queer students, I wanted to choose students who had strong relationships with the gatekeeper and teachers at the research site.

In an effort to yield the most representative data, these individuals helped to identify students who would provide candid insight into my line of inquiry. Moreover, the gatekeepers helped to mediate the experience, so that the students felt safe and secure. If things became uncomfortable for either of the participants, they would help alleviate any confusion or discomfort. This was paramount in me to establish credibility and rapport with the participants, even before meeting them. In addition, I was eager to choose upper-classmen for a couple reasons. First, I wanted students who were more mature and had spent more time at the Wesley. I thought it would even be interesting to choose students who could speak to queer experiences both as a student in a coed environment and in a single-gender environment. As such, they could more poignantly address the essence of their experiences during our interview dialogues. Secondly, I wanted to interview and observe students who were open about their sexuality and identified as a member of the LGBTQIA community.

My sample size, though small (two participants), yielded thorough and robust data that helped to construct mini narratives about the experiences specific to the participants in their respective environments. The lifeworld of the participants, whose intersecting identities overlap in multiple categories of oppression--being Black, queer, and poor--actually contributes to their resilience, empowerment, and resolve despite the adversity that they face. In fact, Elliot and Melvin refused to be defined by their circumstances. Though unique in their own right, both young men shed light on the interesting experience of queer Black boys in all male high schools.

Between the two young men, Elliot stood out most. His fire-red colored mohawk seemed to signify his personality: bold, bright, and spicy. I first met him in anticipation of an observation in Ms. Martin’s English classes. As I stood near Ms. Martin’s doorway and watched her greet students, I could see Elliot and Melvin in the distance engaging in what appeared to be a heated discussion about something near their lockers. Elliot was vigorously flailing his arms, rolling his neck in a figure eight, and contorting his face to signify that he was disgusted about something (or someone). Melvin stood in front of him, hanging on to his every word, and
occasionally jumping in and emulating the same level of disgust for the situation that Elliot expressed. If I had not know that they were friends, I would think that they were about to attack each other.

Both Elliot and Melvin were neatly dressed, and despite the fact they they had to wear uniform—which consisted of navy colored slacks and a light blue polo—it was clear that both of them went through great measure to set themselves aside by adding some flare to their ensemble. Elliot was rather short, standing at about 5’5”. His slacks were so tight that they looked as though they were painted on. Elliot’s facial features were accentuated in several ways: his caramel brown skin tone was enhanced by the women’s foundation that he was wearing; the mascara that adorned his eyelashes created a bold, smoky look; and the precision of his arched eyebrows made them seem as though they were airbrushed on. Elliot seemed proud of his work, and wanted everyone to know it. He would occasionally bat his eyes and purse his lips as he wrapped up his conversation with Melvin before the warning bell rang, scanning students as they walked past him. His aura suggested both confidence and tension, as though he dared any student to have a negative reaction to his bold look. Most boys who walked past seemed to ignore both of them.

Melvin’s look was not as dramatic as Elliot’s. He was average height for a teenager, standing about 5’9”. He wore a tight red and white striped cardigan over his uniform polo, and his slacks, though fitted, were not as tight as Elliot’s. His hair hung down in thin shoulder-length braids, and a red head band covered the front edges of his hair, coordinating perfectly with the red in his cardigan. And, while he didn’t appear to have on any make-up, it was clear that Melvin also cared about his appearance very much.

Methods of Data Collection

This study employed several modes of data collection: phenomenological interviewing, observations, a group interview, and document analyses. Since participant interviewing is the primary mode of phenomenological research, I relied heavily on thick description from the participants to capture the essence of the phenomenon happiness over the course of six weeks at Wesley Prep High School. Each interview lasted at least 45 minutes each.

Using Seidman’s (2013) model for phenomenological interviewing, my interviews took place in three distinct phases: the first focusing on life history, the second on details of the phenomenological experience, and the final phase reflecting on the meaning and interpretation. In the first interview, I sought to understand (generally) the participants’ experiences with being queer Black males in their communities and households. I felt that before jumping into their experiences as students, I had to first understand the stories of their
life outside of the school setting so that I could gain a comprehensive picture of their identities. School, as a microcosm of society and thus a microcosm of the participants’ consciousness, could only be understood in relation to the larger social and cultural context and milieu. The second interview focused on the participants’ experiences with being a student in an all-male high school setting, in hopes that in this conversation, they surface topics around their queer identity, gender expression, homophobia, heteronormativity, invisibility, in/exclusion, resilience, and other themes that connect to existing extant literature regarding the experience of queer Black boys. It is throughout these broad themes and lenses that that I sought to elicit if and how they navigate the terrain of all-male schooling and still maintain their sense of self worth, dignity, and freedom, while simultaneously creating value within their journey towards becoming “happily queer” (Ahmed, 2010). The final interview took the form of a focus group, where I engaged both participants in a dialogue around happiness. In preparation for this focus group, I asked each participant to bring an artifact that represented their understanding and experience of happiness as a queer Black boy. The focus group ultimately served as an opportunity to engage in critical reflection and co-construction of meaning based on the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants’ schooling experiences and their lives.

**Methods of Data Analysis**

Once interviews were completed and transcribed, I began the open coding process using the line-by-line method--at the phrase, sentence, and passage level-- in order to elicit a variety of concepts and categorical trends pertaining to participant responses. When coding the data, I utilized bracketing, or epoche, which allowed me to elucidate the phenomenon in terms of its own intrinsic meaning, rather than one imposed by myself or the existing literature. This process allowed me to continually reduce the descriptors down to their most fundamental essences versus what is already known about the phenomenon. By employing this practice of phenomenological reduction, I was able to achieve horizontalization at the initial data analysis stage, whereby I laid out all data and treated it as though all aspects had equal weight and value (Merriam, 2002). This allowed me to then categorize initial codes into parent codes. I continued to reduce these categories by synthesizing redundant statements into broader themes and removing non-repetitive categories in order to unlock the “true” nature of the phenomenon. This cycle of data re-examination was integral to ensuring reliability, and was rigorously employed in order to address inconsistencies as well as reach consensus. Lastly, I applied imaginative variation to the data analysis process in order to examine the emerging themes from divergent perspectives and lenses so that the tentative interpretation of data was examined through multiple vantage points (Moustakas, 1994). By consistently asking myself, "If
theme ‘X’ was eliminated from the list, would that drastically change the way the phenomenon is understood or interpreted?” This allowed me, as a researcher, to derive structural themes.

To further ensure accuracy and validity, data sources were triangulated; coded data from field notes, memos, and interviews were juxtaposed in order to ensure reliability of thematic connections across all data sets. The trustworthiness of the data was assessed based on the frequency with which aggregated codes appear. This process was repeated until the data become saturated and full consensus around thematic trends was attained.

Findings and Discussion

There are of course good reasons for telling stories about queer happiness, in response to and as a response to the very presumption that a queer life is necessarily and inevitably an unhappy life (Ahmed, 2010, “Just Happiness”).

Thus far in my journey of unpacking the experience of happiness in queer Black boys, I touched on various points related to correlations, possibilities, and associations for this phenomenon. As the aforementioned quote describes, mini narratives play a key role in pushing back against the meta-normative assumptions around possibilities for queer happiness. As a researcher, my focus was on capturing, as accurately as possible, the voices of participants in order to tell their stories as they relate to happiness. This was no easy feat as I found myself having to “queer” my own interpretive lens by suspending my natural attitude toward all presumed understandings of the social and historical world as it related to happiness. As I sat at my Husserlian “writing table,” my orientation constantly shifted and wandered in an effort to co-perceive the “reality” of my participants. This “twofold directedness” (Husserl, 1969, p. 122) first directed/oriented me towards certain objects in order to understand their properties, which then caused me to take a direction towards them (place values on them).

If phenomenology orients the researcher towards certain objects, things, and perceptions in the foreground, then queer phenomenology disorients him, causing the researcher to intentionally direct his attention towards things that are, instead, in the background, both spatially and temporally. My interpretation of the data takes on this stance. I attempt, as much as possible, to make the everyday queer experiences of my participants--their words, behavior, action, and perspectives--“normal” without necessarily “normalizing” them. As such, several themes emerged, which I contextualize below.
Power was a major theme throughout the interview, observations, and group interview. It was interesting to see how various facets of power unfolded in discussions about the participants’ experiences as a queer Black boy, both inside of school and within their families and communities:

**Coercive (Em)Power(ment):**

The theme of power emerged in several ways throughout the interview. Coercive power, or ‘power over,’ was evident in the way in which participants described instances where they had to exert authority, both physically and verbally with other boys (within or outside of school) in order to protect themselves. Melvin states,

*And when you gay in Chicago, you have to be strong and dominant. You got to be confident...and have a lot of weapons...Well, when I’m with my bitches, we run shit. We come though the scene and we dominate. And we wish somebody would pull it. We don’t mind jumping on anybody *(laughs)*. I never been provoked to where I had to brutally attack somebody because we carry tasers, knives, and mase. And if somebody ever pulled it, we would just pull out our weapons and they would leave us alone.*

Melvin felt that he had to exhibit anger and hostility toward boys initially in order to gain respect. Undergirding this decision is the assumption that all straight boys will automatically be homophobic, and that the only way to protect himself, and let them know that he is “here to stay and ain’t nothing you can do about it,” was by being dominant. This sense of power also serves as a means of empowerment, and gives the participants the courage needed to face adversity in spite of their sexuality. Elliot reiterates this sentiment:

*I never tried to be friends with these boys at Wesley. Boys like bitches so I be a bitch to them *(laughs)*. Like, one time this boy tried to turn up *(disrespect)* on me. When all of his friends was around, he tried to call me fags and shit, so I had to turn my savage up and let him know that I wasn’t gonna take his shit. I was yelling and screaming because I’m just tired of trade *(masculine guy)* thinking they can punk me. And the teacher comes over and tells me to ‘let go of the rage, Elliot.’ Everybody telling me to calm down like I did something to him. I was minding my fucking business.*

To some readers, this data may seem disturbing and may paint the two participants out to be angry and aggressive. Indeed, within feminism the image of the feminist killjoy, the angry Black woman, or the aggressive, unhappy queer tells an interesting story. To speak out in anger or frustration as a queer, is to add to the tension, to exacerbate the problem (Ahmed, 2010). In this
case, the image of the happy, blissful queer is flipped on its head in this situation, thus making Melvin and Elliot’s exhibitions of power seem problematic. In being heard and perceived as angry, Elliot and Melvin’s words and actions are automatically understood as being motivated by anger, rather than being understood as a defense mechanism against injustices committed against him.

**Gender/Sexual (Em)Power(ment):**

The participants also used their bodies as a means of em/power(ment) and control as well. Interestingly, they seemed to take pride in their ability to seduce “straight” men (“turn them out”), and receiving financial compensation for it. Melvin, in particular, always seemed in control whenever he flaunted his sexuality. He also seemed to get pleasure out of knowing that he had the power to “out” straight boys in the school, and the power to get closeted men (many whom were doctors, lawyers, and husbands) to pay him substantial amounts of money for sexual pleasures, often without even involving intercourse. Though many may view this as a form of prostitution, participants seemed to have another purpose in mind: freedom to explore the possibilities and complexities of gender expression without the fear of social recourse:

_We go on strolls down Halsted...the stroll is when you get your money. You pop your dates (laughs). I’ve had lawyers, sugar daddies, husbands, baby daddies. When you walking up and down the street, if a man picks you up, they ask you ‘what do you want?’ or ‘what are you looking for tonight?’ and stuff like that. I’m totally and in control and respected. Then they ask, ‘how much you charging?’, like ‘what you wanna do?’. On the stroll you can be whatever you want to be and people don’t fuck with you because you choose to dress like a girl. One day I can be butch, the next day a fem queen, or a woman. Anything goes. For me it’s not even about the sex or anything cause most of the time that doesn’t even happen. It’s really about the fact that I can be myself and try out whatever personality I want without being disrespected for it, you know? It’s fun, and I learn a lot about myself in the process._

Going on a “stroll” was not necessarily a sexual obsession or an act of promiscuity for them; instead, it was a means of validating their gender expression and sexual freedom. Both participants expressed how they “take their [female] ‘realness’ very serious,” and enjoyed the fact that they were respected and treated as women when they presented themselves as such on the stroll. This validation and affirmation gave the participants a sense of self that was beyond the myopic definitions that society prescribes them. Their self-affirmation made the gay scene a new world for them--a place where they can embrace a wide range of personalities, identities, and personas.
Other overarching themes that resonated throughout the interviews were self-transformation and self-recovery, as both participants told stories of dark days when they were insecure, confused, and self-loathsome, but managed to emerge anew. The participants seemed to be comfortable with their queerness, and through self-recovery and reconciliation, learned to love this aspect of themselves. Melvin spoke candidly about how he had to recover from self-hate and grow into his own skin:

I never told anyone what school I came from because I wanted to leave that in my past. Like, ok, so my freshman year I was ugly as hell. I looked like a naked mole rat. I don't know, like I think I came a long way. I was short and had low self-esteem. Plus I was gay on top of that, and I was scared to be myself. It was hard for me to come out, so I used Facebook to come out, and I was catfishing a lot of boys by pretending to be the girl who I felt I was inside. I got a lot of dick pictures that way (laughs). This girl I used to hang out with snitched on me. I should have beat that bitch down. She told a boy who she called her brother, and he started telling everybody. It got across the fuckin school in less than a week. Even the teachers and staff was talking about me. I was so embarrassed--I stopped coming to school, which is why I have to repeat freshman English as a senior.

Melvin’s insecurity and overall fear of homophobia led him to use deceptive measures, via social media, to transform into the persona that he felt had been repressed on the inside. This is not uncommon, especially among the Black community. Deception, including the down-low (DL) phenomenon (men who secretly sleep with other men, while maintaining an, otherwise, heterosexual life), has plagued the Black community for decades. Although this practice has been a topic of taboo in the Black community, it was J.L. King--with his New York Bestseller On the Down Low and appearance on Oprah--who sounded the clarion call on the ravaging impact that DL men have on the Black family and the Black community. The fear of being ostracized, discriminated against, and potentially hurt leads many young Black males to perpetuate a life of deception just to be accepted, wanted, and valued. Melvin’s testimony reaffirms this disparaging reality. His courage to realize the impact that his dishonesty had on his school community and himself caused him to embark on a journey of self-discovery and reformation:

I couldn’t stay at that school. I was in a dark place. I knew that before I could get out of the slump I was in, I had to work on myself and build back up my self confidence. I also realized how bad I impacted the school and I didn’t want to ever put people through that again. I prefer to be a positive contribution to my school. But I definitely learned a lot about myself, and
I'm a much better and stronger person because of it. When I came to Wesley, I decided to just be me and not worry about what people thought. I am here to stay, so they were just gonna have to figure it out.

Ikeda's human revolution is the lifeblood of humanity and a prerequisite for harmonious coexistence. Invoking the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, Ikeda (2000) declares, “that the inner determination of one individual can transform everything; it gives ultimate expression to the infinite potential and dignity inherent in each life” (p. 7). Thus, the sense of powerlessness that Melvin felt as a result of the unfortunate situation is also the impetus that propelled him to make a concerted effort at recovering psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Elliot's realization for self-transformation took on a slightly different approach—though just as powerful—as he endeavored to find his authentic self:

_I aint even gonna lie. I had to stop coming outside with my best friend as Elliot because I felt like Elliot was getting so mistreated by trade (men who are “straight” acting and “straight” appearing). They would not accept him for him. They would always ask my friend, ‘why you got this fag around you all the time?’ And he (speaks of himself in third person) just felt like he just wanted to be Tiana (female persona). So now, every time I go out with my best friend, I'm Tiana. They respect me more when I'm Tiana and I think I look great. I take my ‘realness’ very serious, and I finally feel like I'm me...One day I wore my hot pink Hunter boots to school, and the librarian called me into her office to tell me that she and other teacher were worried about me getting jumped because I was wearing pink boots. But I just didn't care. Besides, they needed to understand that those hot pink books belonged to Tiana, not me (laughs)._

This inner queer transformation that Elliot undergoes is not only a testament to his struggle with identity, but also a testament of his courage, resilience, and tenacity in the face of adversity. His uses of the third person to refer to his gender-bending persona bespeaks his initial lack of confidence with juggling who he authentically was versus what society wanted to him to be. Reconciling these identities is a process that ultimately made him value and appreciate his beauty and worth without pigeonholing himself into a life of heteronormative conformity. Elliot's self-actualization manifests in his ability to create value, which is crucial to his journey towards human revolution. Ikeda proclaims, “Human revolution is not something extraordinary or divorced from our daily lives. It begins with an individual identifying and challenging those things which inhibit the full expression of his or her positive potential and humanity” (Ikeda, 2010, p. 247).
Additionally, Elliot’s newfound happiness and confidence has led him to make attempts at affecting change in his school community, specifically around the issue of bullying:

*I know what it’s like to get bullied, so we gotta stick up for each other. When I saw this gay boy who was new to the school getting bullied, I had to step in and help him. He tried to befriend straight boys, but they just took advantage of him. He started buying them chips and shit. I had to intervene and tell him that he was being used, and that if he needed a friend or someone to hang out with outside of school, just call me. I also had to let the straight boys know that what they were doing was plain wrong.*

*I would’ve never been able to give anybody that kind of support if I had not healed from my own self doubt and learned to love myself regardless.*

Similar to Elliot, Ikeda (2012) takes a moral, ethical, and personal stand against bullying, calling it an “absolute evil” (p. 64). Cooperation from home, school, and society is necessary for the sake of children’s happiness, so as not to compromise the development of their virtue and character. This becomes a dialogic process where all invested in the child’s life contribute to his/her moral development. Children who exhibit bullying behavior, according to Vincent Harding—a confidant and advisor to Martin Luther King Jr.—are products of the pathologies and ethical failures of contemporary society, and believe that they are important to no one (Harding & Ikeda, 2013). According to Ikeda (2012), we must create a society where each child recognizes his or her self-worth; a recognition of one’s own dignity and value, as fundamental principles, allow individuals to also acknowledge that other lives are equally as precious. This is vital to instilling a value system where we actively refrain from harming others to mask our own insecurities and self-loathing. As a victim of bullying himself, Elliot had to undergo self-reformation before he could recognize his full humanity, which gave him the courage and compassion to advocate on behalf of others.

Similar to the metaphor of the lotus flower, Elliot recognized his own human potential, despite the trials and tribulations that life threw his way. Ikeda notes how it is the mud and dirt of the lotus pond that represents our problem-filled world; nevertheless, no matter how murky and grimy the pond gets, the lotus flower—representing each individual life—still blossoms beautifully (Weiming & Ikeda, 2011). This is the ethos behind human revolution—our human dignity and growth is measured by our courage to overcome the difficulties that life throws our way. In essence, struggle is a necessary part of establishing an unshakable self amidst the afflictions of the world. Makiguchi affirms, “Thus, genuine happiness requires sharing the sufferings and joys of the larger public as a member of society; and it can easily be understood that full and harmonious life within society is an indispensable element for any concept of authentic happiness” (referenced in Goulah & Gebert, 2009, p. 124).
The blossoming that my participants experienced speaks not only to their tenacity, but also to their human dignity and yearning to coexist peacefully and harmoniously. Melvin and Elliot’s sense of self-efficacy is mitigated with humility along with empathy, compassion, and a deep sense of interconnectedness of human beings. Melvin declares, “So for instance, if somebody sees a gay person at school, they see nothing but the fact that you like boys. It’s nothing like you got a life, and feelings, and experiences just like everybody else. I’m human too, just like you, and there is no reason why we shouldn’t be able to get along” Interestingly, despite that participants seemed cognizant of their status as “other,” and despite the differences with how they expressed themselves, they ultimately felt connected--on a humanistic level--to others who may not share their same lifestyle or sexual orientation. Elliot echoes Melvin’s perspective towards harmonious coexistence:

*My ultimate wish is to have the same level of respect as everybody else, and being able to be yourself in front of everybody. Being able to walk into a room full of boys without them saying, ‘Ooo, look at that faggot. He gay as hell. Damn, he touched you--now you gay too.’ I just wanna be me. And even if you don’t like it, the least you can do is give me simple human respect.*

**Disorientation:**

Understanding a queer life from the perspective of queer phenomenology is a commitment to inhabiting the world through a lens of deviation, whereby one does not completely disregard the familiar, but instead works to make the familiar strange by implementing a queer hermeneutic that re-interprets taken-for-granted understandings of life experiences (Ahmed, 2006). Ahmed provides the example of how some individuals describe queer gatherings as family gatherings as a means of experiencing happiness and joy in the unusual effect of deviating from a “familiar” context to a form of queer kinship.

Despite the fact that the participants realized that they were outliers in heteronormative spaces, they still managed to navigate them and eventually find a place/community that was both accepting and supportive of their lifestyles and identities. This was accomplished through their abilities to “disorient” their traditional notions of the family unit, and instead, re-orient themselves in a “queer” manner. Both participants addressed the fact that their biological families were in denial and refused to accept their lifestyle choices, even when it seemed self-evident. Melvin describes,
Well I tried to come out in 7th grade, but I guess my family didn’t believe me. Although, like, when I was growing up, I was always doing feminine stuff, and I would always get in trouble for it. I would play with dolls, jump role, skirts, wigs, heels. I would always get in trouble for it. I literally got whoopings for that. I really didn’t understand why I felt that way or why I was getting in trouble for it. But I always felt like that. Everybody thought it was just a phase. They would say, ‘oh no, it’s just a phase. You think you like boys, but that’s now right for you. How are you gonna have kids if you like boys?’ And I was like, ‘maybe I don’t wanna have kids.’ Like maybe, I just wanna date. But I was always low-key.

Elliot adds,

My mama always knew I was gay. But you know how moms be--they don’t want to have that feeling in their heart. But when I finally told her, she went through it. Like, we had very tough times. My mama used to really whoop me for a lot of stuff and tell me that being gay was a sin and that God was not pleased. I used to glue tracks (weave) to my hair and just play in it and flat iron it over and over again. I was obsessed. I played in heels, too. That’s all I really wanna say about that.

Undoubtedly the church plays a crucial factor in the perpetuation of homophobia because the Bible still remains a powerful instrument in the world. This institution essentially attempts to categorize all blacks men into one homogenous group, and stems from the very worst aspect of White supremacy, which asserts that all blacks are interchangeable and substitutable. Ultimately, this facet of sex culture denies Black diversity, Black multiplicity, Black humanity and Black heterogeneity. West (1993) sees this action as unfavorably imposing certain control and regulation over women, gays, and lesbians and policing those regulations, which contributes to the cyclical and reverberating role that nihilism has played in Black life.

While familial rejection can be devastating for adolescents seeking validation and acceptance for their sexual orientation, Melvin and Elliot found solace in individuals who served as surrogate families in times when they needed support and nurturing. The act of “queering” the family unit became their mode of survival in navigating the often enigmatic terrain of queer identity formation. Outside of school, it was clear that Melvin sought refuge in the “gay scene” of Chicago: “I’ve been in two families already (gay families)...the Romans and the Cores. They took care of me and looked out for me when I need to get away. My gay mother taught me how to survive as a gay man in Chicago.” At school he found support systems in adults as well as other students who seemed to understand who he was at the core:
When I’m going through stuff and need somebody to talk to, she (the librarian) is always there, like a gay mother. She understands the LGBTQ community...I think Mr. Patterson, our dean, is really supportive. He is so cool. Ever since I’ve been going here, he’s been looking out for me. I feel like he respects me. Like the other day, I came into his office with some cookies and he asked me for some. Whenever I come into his office, he never gets me in trouble. He let me chill and relax—he don’t say too much to me like he does to the other boys.

Elliot also described the familial ties that he has developed with teachers at Wesley:

Mr. Reynolds has had a big impact on me. I’m never gonna forget him. Like, in the classroom one day—I was high—he said ‘Gentlemen, let me have your attention,’ and I was like ‘Oh no, I’m a real lady.’ Normally men would have a negative reaction to that, but Mr. Reynolds was just like, ‘Ok, then that’s what I’ll address you as.’ He has even seen me vogue and all that. He hasn’t said much about it, and will protect me if another student tries me. He always say that I act like Wendy Williams (laughs). I guess they are all like an extended family to me in some crazy way (laughs).

The level of empathy from staff member, especially Black male teachers, was heartwarming and quite shocking, considering how the Black community is saturated with homophobic discourse and ideology that continues to shape the meaning of what it means to be a Black man in this country. Similar to Ikeda’s human revolution, West (1993) provides an ethics of hope and self-recovery that seek to counteract the ravaging effects of nihilism—a necessary condition for the establishment of solidarity within the Black community and peaceful coexistence beyond: “Nihilism is not overcome by argument or analyses; it is tamed by love and care. Any disease of the soul must be conquered by a turning of one’s soul. This turning is done by one’s own affirmation of one’s worth—affirmation fueled by the concern for others” (p. 43).

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Abstract

Once while watching a war documentary on TV, an acquaintance imparted to me the story of tigers. Every tiger born is born as if it were the first tiger ever born. Tigers are unable to access their cultural knowledge, their family histories, or discuss theories on their origins. Tigers will fight each other to the death. Humans choose to behave like tigers, but we have the option not to. We have language. Over the course of history, language has been used to prevent wars, create communities, and fuel the imagination. Though language has also been used to justify nationalism, ethnocentrism, and war, an appropriate framing of language as a shared human resource and connective tool for peace can provide a theoretical base for learners to engage in value-creative learning and contributive living. This paper discusses the ideas shared in Makiguchi’s *Education for Creative Living* alongside the author’s personal research and observations on Tibetan pedagogy. The goal is to present a paradigm that can help contextualize language learning as a way to connect to history, peers, and the globe. These ideas are applied in both the context of foreign language learning and first language learning. Finally, this paper addresses the need for a basic introductory study of the genesis and development of language in school curricula, namely that of Soka Education. Included is a proposed syllabus with readings, discussion topics, and additional materials and gives suggestions for how this 'Historical Introduction to Language' component can be integrated into university curricula.

Earlier this month, the American Dialect Society (ADS) announced its 2015 Word of the Year. Beating out hugely popular sayings such as ‘on fleek’ (used as a descriptor for anything from eyebrows to floral displays to describe them as perfect, spot on, of the highest possible caliber, etc.) and new compounds like ‘microaggression’, was the unassuming and seemingly bland English pronoun ‘they’. The ADS made their decision based on the now widespread use of ‘they’ as a single person, gender neutral pronoun. The American English speaking community lacks such a pronoun, using instead, the combined ‘he or she’. Rather than seeing single person ‘they’ as a representation of improper grammar or laziness, the ADS recognizes the rise of this new ‘they’ as a reflection of changing social realities; a necessary adaptation in light of prominent topics like gender fluidity (American Dialect Society).
‘They’s’ reassignment seems not only inevitable, but of absolute necessity when we consider that new identities demand new language for self-expression and new socially sensitive ways to refer to said expressions. A macrocosm of the commons, language is humanity’s one true shared invention—one that we not only share, but build, update, and edit together. Replacing ‘he or she’ with ‘they’ is one step society is taking towards a more inclusive, respectful common language. This example demonstrates the co-creative, interdependence of society and language. In this instance language is simultaneously society’s mirror and an element for promoting normative changes.

Language is the medium through which the majority of humanity’s basic interactions occur. And yet, a basic introductory study of the genesis and development of language is, shockingly, absent in much of the world’s school curricula. This paper seeks to address the general curricular need for a historical introduction to, and modern contextualization of ‘language’ as a subject in of itself. Implied within this suggestion is the need to provide a framework for observing and analyzing the ways language is edited, used, and understood by its users—all of us. The definition of language employed here applies not only to second language acquisition or grammar, but to every area of learning which involves the transfer of knowledge through the medium of learners’ native languages (a process which will hereon be referred to as first language learning).

Using my personal research on Tibetan pedagogy and my experiences as a learner in a university system that employs Tibetan pedagogy, I will explore the ways ‘language’ as our primary learning medium is conceptualized, contextualized, and presented to students in the Tibetan medium. Synthesizing elements of Tibetan pedagogy with the definitions of Soka Education outlined in Makiguchi’s *Education for Creative Living* will help to demonstrate how framing language as a tool for actualizing peace, can produce a solid theoretical base for critical, creative learning in any language.

**Language: The Global Commons**

What exactly *is* language and why does it matter? We use language so often and have used it for so long that many of us hardly give pause to consciously think about the role language plays in the development of human society. Over thousands of years we have produced countless poems, songs, treatises, and deep lexicons to describe both our internal and external environments, record our history, share ideas, form relationships, and understand the world. It was an extension of language, the written word, that first helped us to collapse communication gaps in space and time, facilitating the rise and fall of history’s most well remembered empires, simultaneously fueling wars and acting as an instrument of peace. At our best, we use language to spread or store ideas, to mediate conflict and express care for each other; using it to share history and discoveries that can better our lives. At our worst, we use language as a weapon of hierarchy.
We create in-groups and out-groups, conflate them with illusory social inventions like race, and use these misinterpretations to justify wars and discrimination.

A comprehensive run-down of the history of language and its present day social functions would require delving into linguistics, sociolinguistics, archaeology, philology, and a plethora of other fields. Needless to say, such a history constitutes a wholly separate, much longer paper. As this paper focuses on the need and method for embarking on such studies, it will present only a brief introduction in hopes of demonstrating relevance the relevance of language study to the goals of Soka Education.

Linguist Noam Chomsky popularized the theory of a natural human hardwiring towards language acquisition (Pinker 8). The process of language acquisition and creation—rather than one of amending or messing up elegant systems of cultural creativity passed down from our ancestors—seems to be an innate shared ability of humans across the world. In The Language Instinct: How the Mind creates Language, Steven Pinker states that “the universality of complex language is a discovery that fills linguists with awe, and is the first reason to suspect that language is not just any cultural invention but the product of a special human instinct” (14). There is not a culture on earth or in history (save maybe that of our pre-speaking pre-human forbearers) that has not developed a complex language replete with different aspects of grammar, tense, or spatial relations.1

This viewpoint can fundamentally alter the way we see our fellow beings. If language is really a product of our natural human capacity to structure and create, and not the special creation of highly developed, intellectual individuals, then it is fundamentally wrong to discriminate on the basis of linguistic differences. Language has no inherent hierarchy other than that with which it is societally ascribed. For example, age old structural inequalities and social discrimination dating from the United States’ history of slavery relegate Black English Vernacular (BEV) to the realm of “improper English” and prevent new grammar structures (abiding by their own logical rules within BEV) from being understood for what they are: ordered systems of communication which have no bearing on one’s mental capacities (Pinker 18).

Similarly, though creole languages are frequently seen as bastardizations of an imaginary concept of pure language, it is likely that most of the languages spoken today started out as creoles emerging from the collision of peoples and cultures (Pinker 21)2. Through natural linguistic processes of what Deutscher calls erosion, and the subsequent restructuring that occurs, no matter what language we speak, we are always speaking through the corpses of past words,

1 Pinker goes un to suggest that writing, more so than speaking, can be considered a learned skill.
2 Pinker discusses the formation of creoles with reference to the work of linguist Derek Bickerton in Hawaii at the end of the 19th century. The U.S. only recognized Hawaiian English as an official English Dialect in 2015.
cultural meanings, and languages (Deutscher 2162). All of our speech is heavy with a shared human history, and when we begin to talk about language in this context, it becomes a tool for recognizing our common humanity. A tool for actualizing peace.

As we follow our words into the past we find common ground between Hindi and English, Bulgarian and Syrian; debunking in the process, the idea of primordial languages linked to primordial ancestral homelands and identities—ideas which have been front and center in many catastrophic nationalist projects. Take for example, the idea of an Aryan race; a concept emerging from a word that somehow skipped out of Sanskrit and into a political agenda.

“The problem of Indo-European origins was politicized almost from the beginning. It became enmeshed in nationalist and chauvinist causes, nurtured the murderous fantasy of Aryan racial superiority, and was actually pursued in archaeological excavations funded by the Nazi SS...The mistakes that led an obscure linguistic mystery to erupt into racial genocide were distressingly simple and therefore can be avoided by anyone who cares to avoid them. They were the equation of race with language, and the assignment of superiority to some language-and-race groups” (Anthony 295-297).

Likewise, an experience formative to Makiguchi’s educational philosophy was his experience teaching writing literacy at a time when the discourse surrounding Japanese language education was part of a “[state] project, central to fascism, of using the affective attachments of first language and native place to forge unmediated identity between the individual and the state” (Gebert 20). Language can easily become a tool of nationalism, but a deeper understanding of its complex developmental history allows us to reframe language as a global commons from which we all stand to benefit.

**Soka Education and Language**

There is often much ado involving the production of a compact, presentable definition of Soka Education. Yet, as the founder of Soka Education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi himself was painfully aware, his writings can hardly be seen as a concrete how-to guide for creating an international school system. Barred from participation in Japan’s formal education system and later imprisoned, Makiguchi died in prison never having completed additional volumes of *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei* (*The Theory of Value-Creating Pedagogy*) and only having published *Education for Creative Living* as a self expressed jumble of notes (Makiguchi x). In lieu of the unfinished nature of his works, it was all Makiguchi could do to entrust that future generations and interested educators would continue developing his educational theories. Though much work remains
available only to Japanese speakers, and translation is problematic\(^3\), further elaborations on the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of Soka Education proliferate in the writings of Makiguchi’s successor, Daisaku Ikeda, and also in the writings of Soka School graduates, a few of which will be mentioned in the course of this paper.

Unarguably, there is much work to be done in terms of research, expansion, and applied practice of teaching methodologies. Luckily though, the bounds and directives of Soka Education are self-revealing when we remember to continuously ask the one question for which we have been left with a concrete answer. The most fundamental, pressing, and important question of all: why do we teach how and what we are teaching?

Obvious answers, such as providing an alternative to military, state centered education, or working to educate a new generation of youth that will never consider using the atomic bomb, can be found by examining the life works of Makeguchi and Dr. Ikeda. Many of us ostensibly share these dreams, though not all of us intend to make them our life’s work. The deeper ‘why’, which I believe is what attracts so many people to Soka Education, is the fact that most of the world’s problems can be attributed to a fundamental lack of mutual respect and dialogue between ordinary people. Simply put, we need Soka Education because we, as a global community, need an educational pedagogy that teaches people the social responsibility we all have to try to understand and respect each other.

This theme of respect is central to the student-centered learning approach put forward by Makiguchi, and essential to the dialogue-based approach to problem solving that Dr. Ikeda champions. If we are to take respect as the foundation for the deep cultural and societal change that educational reform seeks, then the most obvious place to begin teaching respect is through a careful consideration of the way we communicate with those around us. Such considerations can involve nonverbal communication, music, and art, but inevitably, at their very base, must involve a reexamination of the way we understand, use, and relate to our most primary communication tool: our words.

\textit{Makiguchi on Language}

The founder of Soka Education, Makiguchi Tsumesaburo (1871-1944) was a proponent of reforming education to support the development of creative individuals acutely aware of and devoted to the needs of society. Speaking from direct experience in his years of teaching, Makiguchi advocated for experience-grounded education relevant to students’ daily lives and a systematic move away from “force-feed” education styles that sacrificed the learner’s happiness

for the goals of the state. Less mainstream, but no less poignant, are the methods he developed in response to his experience teaching writing literacy to elementary students in the 1890s. Makiguchi wrote about and taught composition in Japan at a time when writing literacy was a topic precariously balanced between debates on nationalism, history, and the new world order emerging at the close of the Second World War (Gebert; Goulah). Makiguchi addressed issues such as writing the self, sought to strike a balance between new and traditional attitudes towards composition, and taught writing literacy from the ground up rather than the top down by helping learners “develop a conscious awareness of the social structures of knowledge and of the different modes of expression appropriate to different social settings” (Gebert 16).

Though this area of his work has not lead us to memorialize Makiguchi as a language educator per se, by way of his struggles teaching writing literacy, it is clear that the importance of language education was a topic he considered relevant to educational reform. Realizing that first language education could easily become a tool of the state, and an expression of education for society rather than society for education, Makiguchi provided critical alternatives that, as Gebert so powerfully states, demonstrate Makiguchi’s view of language education. “[Makiguchi] considered language (like all knowledge) to be the product and means of social interaction; thus for him, teaching the structures of language was inseparable from teaching the structures of society” (20). Makiguchi realized that language could become a negative component of education and that we must consciously work to keep language from becoming the purvue of nationalist policies.

**Second Language Learning**

Because many of us speak like we breathe, the process of foreign language acquisition is a good port of departure to begin removing language from the domain of subconscious actions. When we learn a foreign language we come face to face with unfamiliar value systems, structures, and world views, forcing us to renegotiate passive acquisition.

One reason Soka Education is relevant and absolutely necessary today is that it seeks to redefine second language learning in this very way. Soka Education seeks to produce global citizens who will be able to understand multiple cultural contexts. The achievement of this goal requires not only the production of multilingual students, but the production of multilingual students who understand exactly why it is important to be multilingual in the world today.

Scholarship already exists within the field of Soka Education around the need to provide adequate context for second language learning. On the state of English learning in Japan, Hatano states that “especially in this era of globalization the primary goal and purpose of English education [in Japan] must be to help students cultivate wisdom, develop their personality, and achieve happiness” (“Daisaku Ikeda’s Educational Philosophy” 128). Goulah discusses barriers to
second language learning in the United States in similar terms, noting that second language learning is stunted by “a politicized imagining of America” (22) that rests, in part, on negative portrayals of immigrant communities.

It is clear that for language to become an instrument for actualizing peace, it must be understood and contextualized as such. Soka University of America’s curriculum addresses these issues with the inclusion of a mandatory, minimum four semesters of preparatory language study and one semester abroad. By framing second language learning as an integral process necessary for creating a global community, Soka Education imbues second language learning with a profound task: creating a more well-connected, aware, and understanding world. 4

Extending the idea of conscious language use from the realm of second language learning, I posit that an introductory contextualization of language can help learners critically assess their own cultural linguistic blind-spots; a reflective task essential to actualizing the goals of Soka Education. Every bit of information students acquire during a school day, whether it be science, geography, or a guitar chord, is transmitted and/or synthesized into one’s own personal knowledge base through the medium of language. In effect, all learning is language learning and demands to be examined as such. By further extension, all teaching involves language teaching, and as evidenced by ‘he or she’ vs. ‘they’, the implications for word choice can be far-reaching. First language learning, then, must be framed in a similar format to second language learning—giving thought as to why learning about one’s own language holds value. Here Hatano’s comment on English learning in Japan can be extended to give context to English language learning for native speakers:

“...as members of society we have the responsibility to ensure sound education that fosters wisdom and allows students to engage English in a way by which their learning empowers them to reinforce bonds between people...when such bonds expand to different cultures and nations, globalization will surely be seen as a truly valuable process. Arguably, this is the very aspect of globalization that benefits people. In this sense, English may then be recognized as something that connects the world and English education may become a genuinely valuable practice” (“Daisaku Ikeda’s Educational Philosophy” 126).

An excellent example of a system where such context is given for native language is Tibetan educational pedagogy.

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4 Though not included in this paper, Jason Goulah writes on this topic in an essay titled "Realizing Daisaku Ikeda's Educational Philosophy Through Language Learning and Study Abroad: A Critical Instrumental Case Study."

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Tibetan System

Assuming that the majority of readers have no previous exposure to Tibetan language, it is necessary to demystify what and where Tibetan language is. Tibetan refers to a language belonging to the Tibeto-Burmese language family which stretches across the Himalayan mountain range and Tibetan plateau, down into Burma. The usage of Tibetan corresponds, to some extent, with the holdings of the former Tibetan Empire (early 7th to mid-9th c. A.D.) which stretched from Pakistan in the West beyond the Silk Road in the Northeast, all the way down to present-day Nepal and India in the South. In terms of non-native, linguist scholarship (i.e. conforming to largely European conventions of scholarship) “Tibetan” is a deplorably understudied language. To begin, the term Tibetan itself is problematic. Used as a blanket name for all of the Tibeto-Burmese languages spoken in Tibetan areas of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) it presents a misleadingly simple, single classification for what are really more than 18 different languages (Roche 25).

Some consensus exists in both native and foreign academic communities—as well as in quotidian speech—that the language can be divided into three main dialects: མཁམས་སྐད། གོང་མདོ་སྐད། བུ་སྐད། Kham-ked, Am-ked, and U-ked, respectively5. These classifications derive from their generally accepted corresponding geographic, cultural spheres: མཁམས། གོང་མདོ། བུ། Kham, Amdo, and U-Tsang, respectively. Historically speaking, however, these categories have not been stagnant. U and Tsang were once separate administrative units with their own smaller units (reflected today in part by prefecture and county distinctions in the PRC). Amdo is still frequently referred to in terms of another border arrangement called Do-med (མདོ་སྨད།) and Kham contains large swaths of long-ago conquered peoples of Gyalrong (རྒྱལ་རོང་). Each of these newly mentioned classifications, of course, comes with its own host of what are misnamed ‘dialects’ by foreign Tibet Studies scholars and referred to as kha-ked (ཁ་སྐད།), literally “mouth language”, i.e. colloquial speech, by native speakers and many native scholars. In reality, a good number of these so called dialects are mutually unintelligible and by any objective standard can be considered wholly separate languages6.

Explaining away this unharmonious cacophony is the widely acknowledged conception of Tibetan as a diglossia. A diglossia occurs when, “'low' vernacular dialects are superposed by the ‘high’ literary language. Diglossias typically occur in situations where: a) there is a large body of culturally defining literature (in this case, the Tibetan Buddhist canon); b) there are low literacy rates (which has been the case in Tibet even to this day); and c) the literature has been around for

5 The transliteration of Tibetan words used in this paper does not strictly conform to any established system. Instead I have opted for readability and proximity to actual pronunciations.

6 There is not space in this paper to discuss in full the internal problems surrounding Tibet’s minority languages. Gerald Roche has written on this topic extensively.
centuries (also the case here). In other words, vernacular literature is nearly non-existent in the Tibetan language” (Schmidt). Arabic is another example of a diglossic language. In both of these cases, a variety of divergent dialects or languages are united through the use of a classical language used in literary study (in these two cases, specifically religious study).

Grammar: A Sacred Framework

The two fundamental grammar treatises which every good student of Tibetan language will devote hours to memorizing and analyzing, from primary school right up through university date back to the creation of the Tibetan alphabet in the seventh century are the Sumcupa (སུམ་ཅུ་པ།) and the Takjukpa (རྟགས་འཇུག་པ།). Though these texts probably reach us today, not in their original form, but in a 12th century variant, they are credited to scribe Thonmi Sambhota, the creator of the Tibetan alphabet and one of Tibetan history’s most famous figures (Tournadre 89). One may question Sambhota’s role as architect of these treatises, and though the two oldest available treatises are not commentaries on the Sumcupa, these treatises have taken center stage in Tibetan pedagogy (Tournadre 89). Prolific linguist, Nicholas Tournadre, describes these texts as a rare example of an ancient grammar that is still in daily use. One reason for the persisting relevance of these two texts—on which almost all later grammar commentaries are based—is that the texts are “written in verses and are conceived as a ‘sacred grammar’ meant to facilitate the access to sutras and tantras” (88). The early association of writing and religion (as most text was religious text) has imbued writing with a sacred quality readily observed in social conventions that prohibit stepping over or on any piece of Tibetan writing or placing books on the floor.7 Though originally these actions would have been based in reverence for religious texts, they have been extended to more generally apply to content written in Tibetan.

From its inception, grammar has been conceived of as a fundamental building block for accessing subsequent, higher, sacred knowledge. When the five great sciences and the five minor sciences—the subjects used as the basis of traditional Tibetan educational pedagogy—were transmitted from India to Tibet, grammar was understood to be the first subject necessary to access them. Without knowledge of grammar, one would be unable to read poetry, study medicine, or practice astrology.8 Grammar as a subject in Tibetan pedagogy tends to encompass an

7 When a book is accidentally dropped or falls on the ground, it is common convention to pick the book up immediately and touch it to one’s forehead.

8 དུང་དཀར་ཚིག་མཛོད་ཆེན་མོ་ལས། རིག་གནས་ཆེ་བ་ལྔ་དང་ཆུང་བ་ལྔ་སེ་བཅུ། རིག་གནས་ཆེ་བ་ལྔ་ནི། བཟོ་རིག་པ་དང་། གསོ་བརོ་རིག་པ་དང་། སྒྲ་རིག་པ་དང་། གཏན་ཚིགས་རིག་པ་དང་། ཉང་དོན་རིག་པའོ། ཆུང་བ་ལྔ་ནི། སྙན་ངག་དང་། མངོན་བརོད། བཟོ་སོར། རོས་གར། སྐར་རིས་སོ། The Dungkar Dictionary, lists the five major sciences as mechanical arts, medicine, grammar/linguistics, logic, inner science/doctrinal studies, and the five minor sciences as poetry, etymology, composition, drama, and astrology.
introduction to the history of the creation of the Tibetan script and its Sanskrit origins, research on pre-Tibetan scripts, the major official language reforms that have occurred, the lineages of relevant grammatical scholars, a detailed description of the part of the mouth in which each word is formed, and study of a dictionary text called Dagyig (དག་ཡིག). Courses in Dagyig are required in many Tibetan medium high schools and for the completion of some Bachelor’s Degree programs as well.

Introductions to language are also found in History of Literature, Poetry, and History courses (required for most B.A. in Tibetan Literature and History programs in the PRC). Tibetan literature and poetry studies include introductions to loan words and transliterations. Studies of literature (and history) include substantial analysis of oral history. The history of literature takes song to be the first form of composition from which all other forms have developed, examining pre-Buddhist creation stories as Tibetan language’s earliest literature (Choepel 11). Because Tibetan writing conventions have changed little since the last language reform in the 12th century, educated Tibetan readers can access (with far less application than it would take an English reader to read in Latin) many of the first recorded written texts (Schmidt).

In addition to the written word, the Tibetan speaking world also holds great respect for the spoken word. There exists a long history of and high respect for those skilled in debate (originating in the monasteries) and mediation. A good example of the importance of the spoken word is the commonly expressed view that for the Chinese, the written word holds supreme, but for the Tibetans oral agreements are the highest form of accord.

Language, spoken and written, is so important to the study of almost every subject, that the history of language itself is an integral, indispensable component of Tibetan medium curricula and also a widespread piece of general knowledge. It becomes literally impossible to learn without learning about language. The result of this reverence for language is that language, writing, and human communication, is endowed with immeasurable value. Language is presented as a tool that will garner respect and success in everything from art to employment. One would be hard pressed to find a Tibetan speaker (not barring those who have never attended a day of school) who could not rattle off at least a few facts about the genesis of Tibetan and the state and extent of existing “dialects” or a Tibetan speaker who would refute the statement that learning language is the same as learning.

From personal experience learning in two separate Tibetan colleges as well as from private tutors from various regions over the course of three years, my main conclusions on the affect of this language reverence can be expressed in two points. Firstly, there is a noticeably high value ascribed to nonmaterial cultural wealth such as poetry. The study of what would be considered

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9 This text is a Tibetan text with no English translation. I have entered the citation as a self-translated English version.
‘humanities’ subjects is thus highly respected in society and seen as study that will contribute to the cultural enrichment of society as a whole even though it carries less guarantee of material wealth. This is an excellent example that works counter to the pervasive idea that people will always act in the selfish interest of economic gain at the expense of society. Many educated individuals emerging from this system are genuinely concerned with enriching culture and see public cultural or social work as more important than works undertaken for private gain; the very mindset that Soka Education seeks to imbue in its learners.

Secondly, an understanding of the history of language is a useful cross disciplinary tool that can help create critical learners who are aware of bias and connection in language. For example, Tibetan students across disciplines are taught to track spelling changes to date documents and to use language in determining the origins of thoughts and ideas. Every book begins with something that can roughly be called an introductory praise. This short section thanks the translator, the writer, the culture, Gods, and other relevant aspects that have made the text available. In berating these dedications I once heard a university professor exclaim that if everyone insists on attributing everything to India, Zhangzhung, or Afghanistan, then “Tibetan” knowledge is non-existent. Looking at this topic from another point of view, tracing sources and translations, saves Tibetan language learners from the pitfalls of negatively framed ethnocentrism. Indeed if all languages were viewed as nothing more than a great accomplishment in translation and importation, perhaps the world would be a little less rife with ideological battles.

**Synthesizing Makiguchi and Tibetan Pedagogy**

In terms of language learning, Makiguchi’s interrelated ideas of value creation and contributive existence provide an excellent framework for reworking how we relate to language. These ideas can also be applied to describe previously discussed elements of Tibetan pedagogy and support the thesis of this paper: that language can and must be framed as a tool for actualizing peace.

*Value Creation*

Makiguchi defines value as “an expression of the relation between self and object... an emotional bond bringing the object into human life” (55). Furthermore, value is assigned on the

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10 I do not imply here that the Tibetan education system is wholly free of negative ethnocentrism, as it certainly is not. Depending on how this approach is framed (and I have seen it framed so in many Tibetan classrooms) it can prevent negative ethnocentrism.

11 Recognized for their role in bringing new knowledge to the plateau empire, translators are some of the most revered people in Tibetan history.
basis of what Bethel translates as a hierarchical systemization of value consisting of beauty, benefit, and good.

“1. Good – social value bearing on collective group existence
2. Benefit – personal values bearing on self-oriented individual existence
3. Beauty – sensory values bearing on isolated parts of individual existence” (75).

A curricular component that will include a historical contextualization of language creates value by demonstrating how understanding our relation to language can: 1. Encourage an aesthetic appreciation for language (beauty). 2. Teach the importance of language as a tool for negotiating personal interactions (benefit). And, 3. Demonstrate how language can be used as an instrument of peace (good).

Tibetan language learning, for example, is frequently contextualized and presented as enacting all three aspects of Makiguchi’s hierarchical systemization of value. Speaking Tibetan is presented to students in a manner that combines all three of these values as interrelated components of one whole. Speaking Tibetan is presented as not only beautiful, but beneficial for understanding one’s own history and culture, and by extension good for the whole of society. Moving in the reverse, because speaking Tibetan is recognized by most of society as an act of good pertaining to a continued, collective group existence, it is also understood to contain inherent personal benefits and aesthetic beauty.

As touched upon earlier, a rhetoric of value creating second language learning in terms of the greater good has already been put into action by Dr. Ikeda and curricular elements of Soka University of America. This same value connection is an element active in the way Tibetan pedagogy frames language. In his discussion of moral cosmopolitan education, Obelliero also discusses the framing of language and the need to contextualize language learning for students so that they can begin to see themselves as “creators of culture”. He states:

“In language learning normative orientations towards other cultures and people from distant places, as well as towards oneself and one’s culture emerge. This is partly influenced by the materials and curriculum. However, Ikeda would argue it is mainly the moral character of the teacher that shapes it. Language education in general, and the language teacher in particular, play a central role in a moral cosmopolitan education. For a moral cosmopolitan perspective on language education, what counts is that teachers and students strive to embody the virtues of the global citizen and, in striving, inspire one another to take responsibility for the world” (56).

Benefit and beauty can be actualized in this same manner, not only for second language learning, but for first language learning as well. Interactive exercises in free-verse poetry, spoken
word, discussions on the origins of words and the connections between them, or on the job markets available for those proficient in editing, writing, or foreign languages, are just a few examples that can help students find beauty, benefit, or both in language. By demonstrating how language relates to all three aspects of value creation, every learner can be given an opportunity to determine and create value in language themselves.\textsuperscript{12} The Tibetan education system achieves this goal by presenting language as the fundamental building block for every subsequent form of knowledge learned through the medium of speech. As part of a traditional progression of study subjects, students must take poetry classes, partly because these classes expose them to different forms and ways to use language; exposure that is necessary to understand deeper concepts of philosophy and religion.

\textit{Contributive Living}

Creating value in language is essential to achieving the higher task of contributive living. Contributive living derives from Makiguchi’s idea that education must be based in realizing the happiness of the individual. “True happiness,” Bethel translates “is not to be had completely on one’s own terms...True happiness comes only through sharing in the trials and successes of other persons in our community. Hence it is essential that any true conception of happiness contain the promise of full commitment to the life of the society” (25). Successful education will, by focusing on the happiness of the learner, be able to awaken them to the fact that their happiness is inextricably linked with the greater good of their society. Individuals living contributive lives will not only create value, but will apply their value creating towards the needs of society.

In the Tibetan context, the very act of doing a degree in Tibetan is highly regarded as an act of contributive living. Many students intentionally forsake the economic opportunities they might be afforded by applying themselves to the study of Putonghua (Standard Mandarin Chinese based on the Beijing dialect; the national language of the People’s Republic of China) to engage in Tibetan language study because Tibetan society considers this process to be culturally enriching. Though

\textsuperscript{12} Hatano also uses Makiguchi’s paradigm in assessing language planning policy in an article titled “Makiguchian Perspectives on Language Policy and Planning”. Drawing similar conclusions Hatano states that “it is important to include lessons that allow immigrant students to learn the social functions and usage of their home languages and the dominant language and to evaluate the importance of these languages for their personal lives with respect to gain, good, and beauty. It is also important to implement such lessons for all other students of the dominant group so that they can understand the positions of minority languages and the lives of the immigrant students in the society. Such education will foster a sense of respect toward those who have different backgrounds, which will in turn foster students’ willingness to give priority to public good in their value creation” (58).
this movement does have much to do with ideas of linguist-ethnic identity similar to those presented earlier in this paper, in this context, language is most often presented as a tool for maintaining connection to the history and traditions of a religion (Tibetan Buddhism) which claims to seek the betterment of human life. In this case, because Tibetan language is intimately linked with Tibetan Buddhism, a contributive living ideal is already implied. Parallel to the Tibetan system, it would possible to present English, for example, as an inclusive language. Owing to its large number of translated works, extent, and rate of rapid change, English could be presented as a global information library for the benefit of mankind.

Language is a comprehensible, close to home, non-abstract field in which Soka Education can be applied towards contributive living. Acting with the understanding that language is a shared human ability, a shared human resource, and a potential tool for peace, students can find concrete ways to engage in contributive living when they are taught to live as responsible, conscious speakers and language creators. This idea does not require a U.N. position or international funding to enact, it is a practice in conscientious, contributive living, applicable in each and every one of our immediate environments.

Proposal

The following proposal comprises of a core suggested syllabus and how it could be integrated into one of three different curricular components existing at almost any university (as a plenary lecture, a guest lecture series, or a core curriculum component). Different arrangements or focuses can be selected from multiple suggestions for teaching points, reading sources, additional teaching materials, and discussion questions are presented for three different main topics.

The following syllabus requests of the teacher, a commitment to the presentation of language as a shared human resource and potential tool for peace. This view (aiming to actualize Soka Education’s peace ideal by applying Makiguchi’s ideas of contributive living and value creation) should be taken as the guiding theoretical framework behind the content.

**Language: History, Context, Value, and Uses**

**Suggested Syllabus**

**Topic 1: History of Language**

We live in a staggeringly diverse world but the one thing we all share is a unique human capacity to communicate through speech. This unit will introduce students to the languages of the world; their physical boundaries and affects on global culture. Multidisciplinary uses for the history of
language will be revealed as well as the ways language has shaped the rise and fall of empires and nations.

**Teaching Objective:** To inspire in students an interest in history and communication as well as an awareness of language as a unique tool that can be used to either hide information or share it; create wars or eliminate the existence of physical violence.

**List of Possible Reading Sources:**
- *The Power of Babel: A Natural History of Language* by John McWhorter
- *The Unfolding of Language: An Evolutionary Tour of Mankind’s Greatest Invention* by Guy Deutscher
- *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language* by Steven Pinker
- *On Language* by Noam Chomsky

**Lecture Topic: Introductory History of Language**
- Overview of world’s language families with times and dates
- Overview of most influential dead languages (i.e. Latin, Sanskrit)
- Overview of interesting theories pertaining to language (can be modified for a focus on linguistics, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, linguistic archaeology, language acquisition, etc.)
- Introduction to the development of pidgins and creoles

**Discussion Questions:**
- Do you think linguistic study is valuable? Why or why not?
- Have students share and then discuss similarities, differences, and cultural contexts for simple words like “yes and no” in their respective dialects or languages
- Conduct the same exercise but replace “yes and no” with the concepts of past, present, and future. How are these terms perceived and related to in language in your own cultural context?

**Additional Materials:**
- Folklore explaining the origins of language: i.e. divine gift for Sanskrit, or the story of the Tower of Babel
- RFA short, The Secret Powers of Time [https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=A3oliH7BLmg](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=A3oliH7BLmg)

**Topic 2: The English Language**

That Soka University of America is itself an English translation of a Japanese educational pedagogy demands an analysis of the peculiar role of the English language today as a conduit for globalizing,
among other things, ideals and value systems. This unit provides students with an introduction to the history of the English language: its origins, rate of change, and present-day extent. English has been demonstrated to have a surprisingly rapid rate of core vocabulary change and as it becomes more and more widespread, the whole world will be responsible for shaping its fate. Will it become a global lingua franca confined to economics or one used to create platforms for social good?

**Teaching Objective:** Whether they be native or non-native speakers, English medium or English subject learners, the primary objective is to encourage students to begin understanding the ways English can be used not as a tool for material economic advancement, but for the advancement of global peace and culture.

**List of Possible Reading Sources:**
- *The Story of English* by Robert McCrum
- *The Oxford History of English* by Lynda Mugglestone
- *Our Magnificent Bastard Tongue: The Untold History of English* by John McWhorter

**Lecture Topic:** *The Changing Nature of English*
- Overview of the historical development of English
- Comparison of Early, Middle, and Late Englishes
- Overview of places where English is spoken today
- Overview of English language dialects and their development (i.e. Black English Vernacular, Hawaiian English, Indian English, etc.)

**Discussion Question/Exercises:**
- What does it mean to be an English speaker in the world today?
- What are some structural biases you have noticed in the English language?
- What are the descriptive limitations of the English language?
- What are the descriptive strengths of the English language?
- For non-native speakers: what do you find difficult about English?
- For native speakers: what do you find difficult about English?

**Additional Materials:**

**Topic 3: Multilingualism**

Human communication has always, in some form or another, required the existence of multilingual individuals adept not only in the usage and contextual implications of their own languages, but in finding ways to communicate between contexts. True multilingualism calls for deep cultural understanding. In this unit students will learn about the cultural, societal benefits of multilingualism and discuss how multilingual societies can be administered and educated in a harmonious manner.

**Teaching Objective:** To contextualize the purpose of Study Abroad programs and the importance of second language learning as a tool for creating a more interconnected, just society. To encourage students to become sensitive to culturally different understandings of the world around them.

**List of Possible Reading Sources:**
- *Tongue-Tied: The Lives of Multilingual Children in Public Education* by Otto Santa Ana
- *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective* by Ofelia García

**Lecture Topic: The Need for a Multilingual Society**

- Second language learning
- Introduction to translation
- Introduction to cultural context
- Introduction to primary grammar structures (subject-object-verb vs. subject-verb-object)
- Introduction to ideas of time and place that different languages convey
- Introduction to the state of bilingual and second language learning programs in the US

**Discussion Questions/Exercises:**

- How many languages are spoken in the room?
- What are the benefits of multilingualism?
- Have each student share a region-specific term (for English place specific slang) and its meaning.
- Present students with a concept and ask each student to define it as an exercise to demonstrate the layers of comprehension that can occur even within one language.
Additional Materials:

- PBS Series: Precious Children
  http://www.pbs.org/kcts/preciouschildren/diversity/read_linguistic.html
- National Association for Bilingual Education: http://www.nabe.org/bilingualeducation

Plenary Lecture

In the form of a plenary lecture, the suggested syllabus could be compacted into a single lecture that would require only the additional materials component from the first topic and one reading from each of the second topics. One or two discussion topics could be selected at the lecturer's discretion.

Guest Lecture Series

As a guest lecture series, the three topics of this syllabus could constitute three separate lectures or expanded into more lectures with a suggested focus on English Dialects and Time-Space Expressions in language as further main topics. Discussion questions can be selected or expanded at the lecturer’s discretion.

Component of Core Curriculum

As a segment that can be added into a core curriculum, the syllabus would not constitute an entire class, but instead be incorporated into Modes of Inquiry or Core classes. The proposed syllabus could be taught in its full three topics over three separate classes or the first and second topics combined to comprise one class with the third topic constituting a second class. The teacher could structure the classes in a lecture format followed by student discussion, or structure the classes as discussions on previously assigned readings or additional materials.

Conclusion

To educate conscious speakers aware of the roots, origins, and present-day implications of their speech is to create a new, more sensitive, aware, and connected world. The absolute need to achieve this goal becomes apparent when we open our eyes to even a few of the perpetual inequalities that, at their base, stem from a lack of human-to-human respect. To name a few: racially motivated violence in the United States and insidious structural sexism the world over. These problems are not outside of us, however. We promote them unconsciously when we say things like ‘man up’ or when we make public mockeries of ebonics. Indeed for even the most enlightened individuals, discrimination of difference is deeply embedded in our psyches and
societies, and played out in countless, seemingly innocuous ways when we speak. These patterns can only be broken through active and intentional self-reflection; a task that each individual is capable of committing to, and one that is perhaps more societally pertinent in the long-run than a job at the United Nations or a globally recognized NGO.

Becoming a conscious speaker is a necessary, lifelong endeavor for those of us interested in conscientiously working to alleviate suffering in the world. If we truly want to see our fellow human beings as equals, extend our empathetic capacities, and expand our self awareness, there is no better way to begin than by examining the environments which shape our thinking, and no better place to start than with a critical look at language.

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Exploring the Edges of Edge-Ucation:

An ecological perspective of Value in Soka Education

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Abstract

Soka Education contains philosophy, theory, and concepts that give this world a hope for creating value in our everyday lives. Permaculture Education is rooted in the goal of developing skills and experiences that help people find new ways of harmonizing their lived environments with their natural environments in a way that supports all life on the planet. A discussion between the two educational models leads us to see how we can integrate the harmonious living skills, deep nature connection, and focus on community in Permaculture Education into the value-creative model of Soka Education. By illuminating the crossover between the two educational models, we determine Soka Education can benefit from expanding value creation beyond the beauty, benefit, and good for humanity to include a fourth evaluation method based on ecology. This paper demonstrates how this fourth value creative evaluation can lead to all the goals of Soka Education and help Permaculture Education root itself in the fundamentals of value creation. We finish the paper by sharing some of The Kiva Center pedagogy and how we achieve the crossover between value creation and ecological mindfulness.

“In my village, if you went to the medicine man with a sick child, you would never say, ‘I am healthy, but my child is sick.’ You would say, ‘My family is sick.’ Or if it were a neighbor, you might say, ‘My village is sick.’” No doubt, in such a society, it would be equally inconceivable to say, “I am healthy, but the forest is sick.” To think anyone could be healthy when her family, her village, or indeed the land, the water, or the planet were not, would be as absurd as saying, “I’ve got a fatal liver disease, but that’s just my liver—I am healthy!”

-Martin Prechtel, as quoted from Sacred Economics

Where are we now?

We cannot run from this truth. As the above quote proposes, if ecosystems are sick, the people are also sick, and vice-versa. As people are showing more and more signs of sickness, we know the ecosystem we rely on is sick too. We are ready to be healed and to do the healing. We
can no longer continue to put bandages over gaping wounds and severed limbs. It is time to humbly confront the state of the planet and let her guide us toward responsible action.

The healing necessary today extends far beyond stopping the increase of global temperatures further beyond preindustrial levels. Sadly, climate change is but one symptom of a larger issue in the way humans relate to the natural environment. Furthermore, the drive of human consumption is not showing signs of slowing in the foreseeable future. A moment in front of the television and you can see Western consumptive patterns showing up even in current “health food movements” that package, seal, and ship foods across the country to arrive at your local grocery store. As humans, we must confront our manner of living and make drastic changes in the way human life conceptualizes and engages with the natural environment. Many immediate lifestyle changes are necessary to heal our species and protect the earth. To keep the movement for a healthier planet sustainable, the Boulder, CO-based Permaculture Education community, The Kiva Center, focuses on the leaders of the future to maintain the lifestyle changes that are necessary to make today.

As two of the three co-founders of The Kiva Center, this paper explores the ways the edges of Soka Education and Permaculture Education mingle. In a time when restoring the health of this planet is of highest priority, Permaculture Education offers a rich perspective on implementing the many ideals of Soka Education with a focus on raising generations of ecologically-minded value creators. The paper begins by outlining the value system of Soka Education and why adding a fourth ecological value to Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s Soka model will help Soka Education more directly address the challenges humans face today. The second half of the paper shares the successful mentoring strategies The Kiva Center uses to build an ecologically-minded learning community that fosters the individual passions of the children towards community action.

In this discussion, we aim to explore the edges of our experiences and the ways we relate to them. The edges exist in the places where we see drastic contrast. When we explore the edges of our existence, we obtain a richness of perspective that cannot be found anywhere else. This phenomenon can be witnessed throughout our ecosystems as well; for when we take a close look along the edge of a river and the woods, or the mountains and the plains, we find immense biodiversity. As multiple species merge with varying elements, a plethora of vital information is exchanged among them. The more that we humans step outside of our comfortable patterns and slither through the margins, the more capacity we have to receive this information.

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1 For the purpose of this paper, “natural environment” will refer to the places with little human contact and interaction; the places that sustain life on their own without human engagement. Think of the 5 biomes: Aquatic, Desert, Forest, Grasslands, and Tundra. The natural environment differs from the lived environment, which is the man-made living environment we design and construct to serve specific purposes for human life.
Purpose of Soka Education

On the first page of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s seminal work on Soka Education, he states that the purpose of education, “must take into account the entire scope of human life.” As we explore this idea more thoroughly, we know at the most basic level humans must survive. What skills are necessary to ensure safety, food, water, and shelter? How are we raising our children to satisfy the needs of human life? Are we teaching them to do so harmoniously with the rest of life on earth? Or are we growing up learning to engage in behaviors that offer us temporary comfort, yet leave us to suffer in the long-term, only taking, and not replenishing, the resources of this planet. Makiguchi continues, “at the same time [the purpose of education] must consider the specific needs of family, society, and nation” (Education for Creative Living, 17). How do humans determine the needs of family, society, and nation while considering their relationship with the environment within which all those bodies exist?

As we move past meeting the survival needs of life, new considerations can arise around the purpose of education. Makiguchi clarifies, “Helping us learn to live as creators of value is the purpose of education” (Education for Creative Living, 54). He further explains,

Life is a pursuit of value, and the ideal state of life that has attained and manifested value is called happiness. Therefore, the aim of education that guides people to a happy life is to foster people who are capable of creating value, or so-called valuable character (Inukai, 45).

In order to further illuminate value creation, Makiguchi deeply examines the elements and qualities of value. He starts by clarifying the distinct characteristics of truth and value. He ultimately explains truth to be immutable and separate from the human relationship with it. In discovering truth, we identify unique characteristics and properties of something in comparison to the myriad of objects in the universe. Value, on the other hand, arises out of the emotional relationships humans form with something in terms of how it affects their lived experience. Makiguchi describes three types of value: beauty, benefit, and good. For example, something can be on a spectrum of beautiful or ugly, beneficial or detrimental, good or bad. The distinction between types of value is not inherent within the object or subject of evaluation, but is based on how deeply the object of evaluation reaches into the life of the subject.

Beauty is an aesthetic evaluation that arouses the five sense and can bring emotional pleasure or displeasure, but not within the context of one’s whole life. Benefit differs in that it touches the whole life of the individual and their ability to survive and ultimately thrive. Finally, a society or group evaluates good and bad in regards to how a member or belief/concept aids or hinders the interests of the group. Thus the distinction of how valuable something is comes from how deeply an object touches the life of the evaluator and whom is evaluating.
Evaluation and Creation of Value

How do things come to touch our lives? Makiguchi explains, “When our attitude toward these things is merely one of intellectual cognition, without engaging an emotional response, we do not perceive that they have any significant degree of influence on our being, and thus we perceive no particular value in them” (Education for Creative Living, 73). Our emotional responses come from our sight readings of the world, and these sight readings, Makiguchi says, are “colored by such factors as our level of knowledge or our personal character, individual differences that focus our judgments on certain criteria over others” (Education for Creative Living, 73). Therefore, education that seeks to help people assess and create value must focus on creating emotional relationships with the elements of life around us.

How, then, do we create value? We have to know what kind of value we want to create and how to work with the elements and matter all around us. Makiguchi gives a succinct definition of creation,

“When we speak of creation, we refer to the process of bringing to light whatever has bearing on human life among elements already existing in nature, evaluating these discoveries, and through the addition of human effort further enhancing that relevancy. In other words, creation reworks the “found order” of nature into an order with special benefits for humanity” (Education for Creative Living, 56).

Many children in the world today are growing up with fewer opportunities to create an emotional relationship with the “found order” of the natural environments. This lack of emotional connection leads to humanity’s practices of creating value at the expense of the found order, or at least not taking into consideration the found order’s value for other living beings.

In addition, children know little about where their favorite objects of value come from and what is required to create them. To demonstrate this concern, we see more and more children growing up without any connection to where their food comes from. Watch Jamie Oliver’s Food Revolution and you may be appalled that most children in the town he filmed had no ability to identify a tomato or potato. They were unable to identify the simple ingredients of their favorite side dish of french fries and ketchup. Makiguchi calls on experience as the bedrock of learning.

“Getting a child to listen,” Makiguchi says, “will not lead to their understanding unless they have experiences to call upon to relate to the new information” (Education for Creative Living, 40). Our children of this country are deprived of the experiences necessary to understand the value the natural environment has in their lives. At the foundation of The Kiva Center pedagogy is the belief that experience in nature is the only thing that helps children understand the interconnectedness of all life on the planet.
The Found Order of Nature Today

Makiguchi wrote these ideas in early 20th Century Imperial Japan. He indicates that he closely relates with the natural and lived environments: growing food, collecting lumber for fire, and reacting to the change of seasons. One can easily see, throughout his work, that Makiguchi highly revered the natural world. For example, he states his ideal attitude towards nature,

Our attitude toward nature must first be one of recognizing that we are creatures of nature and subject to its physical laws. But do we seek to simply follow the ‘natural course’ of things? Or do we seek to triumph over nature? A third possibility chooses the path of moderation, both harmonizing with nature and also utilizing it directly or indirectly for our benefit. *We may even to a degree domesticate nature to our ends, gaining all of the advantages with none of the dangers of its conquest. The key here is seeking a relationship of calm intellectual interplay between us and the environment* (Education for Creative Living, 47).

Many people are no longer aware of their emotional and physical connection with the health and well being of the natural environment surrounding them. Thus we must make it a focus of education to emphasize this awareness by making it an explicit type of value in our assessment of our value creation.

When considering human needs (disregarding the needs of the rest of life on the planet), humans have “reordered their found environment” and created perceived beauty, benefit, and good for *humanity*. For example, we learned to burn coal and harness electricity. The ability to direct and store electricity has brought immeasurable value to all of *humanity* that has it. Think of hospitals serving patients at night, warm homes to protect us from the elements, and cities bustling in the night. Nevertheless, our increased desire for electricity led to new practices that needed to access the deeper and more hidden stores of coal. Humans began to remove mountaintops altogether. This stark change has immense effects on countless ecosystems and destroys innumerable critter homes. This practice shows just how shortsighted the human relationship with the natural environment is today. The issue here is that humans perceive to be creating value for the species, but it comes at the expense of the health of the entire planet. We show little ability to understand the impact of our actions. Nevertheless, we carry on, perceiving that humans are somehow more important than any other species.

So how can we continue to create value without harming this planet? We need a means of assessing our value creation on a broader scale. We have to expand value creation from creating things that have special benefits for *humanity* to include creating value for all life, not viewing humanity as separate from the rest of life. As we develop new technologies and create value in new areas, there has to be a firm recognition that assessing value from an ecological perspective is necessary for human survival. The act of creating ecological value, in turn, simultaneously creates
beauty, benefit, and good. For example, when someone plants a tree, they create an ecological form of value. Bugs that we rely on for pollination of fruits and vegetables have a new home, birds come to share in the yield of fruit and drop their nutrient-rich droppings on the soil, the roots make the soil more stable and erode less. In addition to the ecological value created by planting a tree, a person can relate to this ecological value by seeing it as beautiful. They receive beneficial bacteria from the dirt that relieves stress and anxiety², bringing benefit to their being (needless to say they benefit from the fruits of the tree). Furthermore, planting more trees cleans the air and creates good for all humanity. Our education today has to focus on sharing human knowledge about ecosystems and help children establish emotional relationships with the natural world around them. We propose that adding an ecological value to Makiguchi’s science of evaluation for value creation gives humanity the perspective to meet the challenges we face today.

**Ecological Value**

Recall that Makiguchi’s three types of value differ in how the object of evaluation affects the life of the evaluator, and who or what is doing the evaluation. Individuals, in regards to how something touches their life, evaluate Beauty and Benefit. Society, or a group, assesses Good in regards to how an individual or belief serves the group. Ecological value, then, is assessed from the perspective of life on this planet, beyond human life alone, in regards to supporting or opposing life. For example, imagine you are noticing weeds growing in your yard. Many believe this to be ugly and detrimental to their enjoyment of the space. The commercials tell you to grab some herbicide to kill weeds without harming the grass. You purchase a spray, killing countless microorganisms that support the health of your neighborhood and put your friends and family in danger of poisoning.

We have failed when evaluating the above example from the perspective of ecological value. How would ecological value help us redo this scenario? Although at first glance, human perspective, killing the weeds should produce beauty and benefit for our lawns. However, from the perspective of all living things around us, spraying any poison to take care of a perceived intruder is harmful. Ecological thinking, as seen in Permaculture, reframes the concept of an invasive weed and sees it as an indicator of a damaged ecosystem. Plants that many consider weeds are actually opportunists that only spring up in the right conditions. As Hemenway explains, “in nearly every case, these [invasive species] are invading disturbed land and disrupted ecosystems, fragmented and degraded by grazing, logging, dams, road building, pollution, and other human activity” (13). Using ecological value to assess what to do, we research more into how the “weeds” we are finding in our ecosystem might be cluing us into the disruption happening in our own lived environment. We begin to see the “weeds” as helpers that are trying to bring our

² A quick search on Google with “soil bacteria and happiness” reveals the plethora of research on this topic.
lived environment back into balance. Exploring ecology in educational settings transitions our thinking into the broader web of life on the planet. As we reorient our relationship with the “found order,” we come to find many things that once brought disgust, are actually processes happening that support a healthy environment.

Unlike many calls for change that want to swing the pendulum to the other side, we are calling for a shift to the middle way, just like Makiguchi. We need a process for seeing the larger picture of our actions. We have to shift our edge back towards the patterns and processes happening in the natural environment all around us while also satisfying our need for energy in our homes, clean water, clean air, and abundant food sources. We must take an ecological approach when assessing the value of our creations. To stay relevant for solving current challenges, Soka Education has to include the concept of the human-generated ecological value as a fourth method of assessing value. It is a mandatory assessment of whether or not something we create has total value; for beauty, benefit, or good.

To clarify, Makiguchi makes clear his stance on the need for humans to harmonize human life processes with the life existing in the natural environment. Our goal is to help solidify his beliefs about the human relationship with nature within his important methodological process of evaluating value creation. Permaculture Education gives insight into how to identify ecological value creation. Its ethics and principles allow us to see how the health of our ecosystem is fundamental to our individual and collective health.

**Permaculture Design Ethics**

Starting with overall big-picture educational design concepts, and then eventually scaling down to details, we can slowly work our way towards an embodied ecological awareness of self within a larger community. The Kiva Center uses Permaculture ethics and principles to design an educational experience for children and their families that sparks a new perspectives on the relationship between humans and their natural environment.

The Permaculture design approach identifies and mimics the processes of natural environments to create human systems that harmoniously integrate human needs with those of the surrounding ecosystems. Due to its simplicity and scalability to a variety of contexts, it grounds people in a collective global understanding of how we can proactively respond to the current challenges that we face on our planet. By providing a modern framework that is easily understood to the Western mind, permaculture practices supports humans to embody a more holistic, ecologically-centered lifestyle.

The three ethics of permaculture are Care for the Earth, Care for all People, and Share Resources Fairly. By designing our homes, schools, and communities with ethics as a foundation, we create a shared vision for how to relate with Nature. We model these ethics in our...
relationships to change the cultural paradigm of how we interact with life. The following list shows questions we can address when we design our communities:

**Care for the Earth**
- What does it mean to Care for the Earth?
- What types of daily practices do we engage in that model this concept?
- Are there certain practices that we engage in that do not seem to be in integrity with this ethic? How could we improve this/what new rituals could we practice together?
- Does our school culture model this concept for children?

**Care for all People**
- What does it mean to Care for all People?
- What types of daily practices do we engage in that model this concept?
- Are there certain practices that we engage in that do not seem to be in integrity with this ethic? How could we improve this/what new rituals could we practice together?
- Does our culture model this concept for children?
- Are children’s ideas being valued throughout the creation of their educational design? Do children have the space to follow their own intrinsic motivation throughout the day?

**Fair Share of Resources**
- What are some resources that exist in our community that help us to learn, grow and survive?
- What does it mean to Share Resources Fairly? With whom and/or what do we share these resources?
- What types of daily practices do we engage in that model this concept?
- Are there certain practices that we engage in that do not seem to be in integrity with this ethic? How could we improve this/what new rituals could we practice together?
- Does our culture model this concept for children?

**Permaculture Design Thinking Tools**

Beyond the ethics, permaculture design further extends its practices to encompass “Principles”, also known as “Thinking Tools.” For the purposes of education, the term “Thinking Tools” is a helpful way to understand them. Here is a list of David Holmgren’s Permaculture Thinking Tools with a corresponding proverb and short explanation:

1. **Observe and Interact:** “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”

   To observe and interact is to exist in the state of raw, objective observation, without placing immediate definition, judgments, or constraints upon what we observe. It implores us to release the tendency to project our own ideas and values onto our observations, but rather see them as they are, in their raw state. Spend time in nature just for the sake of being there.
2. **Catch and Store Energy**: “*Make hay while the sun shines*”
This thinking tool teaches us to collect resources in times when they are abundant, so that we can save them for times when they are not so abundant.

3. **Obtain a Yield**: “*You can’t work on an empty stomach*”
We must make sure that we are being nourished by the work we do.

4. **Apply Self-Regulation and Accept Feedback**: “*The sins of the fathers are visited unto the children of the seventh generation*”
This thinking tool reminds us that we must head to the negative feedback responses that we receive to appropriately assess and adjust our behavior to bring the most value.

5. **Use and Value Renewable Resources and Services**: “*Let nature take its course*”
There are abundant renewable resources that we can benefit from to care for humans and the planet. We shall relinquish the tendencies toward mass consumption and dependence on nonrenewable resources.

6. **Produce no Waste**: “*A stitch in time saves nine*”
When we value and make the best use of the resources that are available to us, waste is a non-existent concept. Through mindful and timely maintenance, we convert perceived waste into a useful resource.

7. **Design from Patterns to Details**: “*Can’t see the forest for the trees*”
Patterns drive Nature. When we step back to notice these patterns, they give us a larger understanding of how Nature operates. In designing our communities, it is crucial to start with the big picture to create a solid foundation, and slowly fill in the details.

8. **Integrate Rather than Segregate**: “*Many hands make light work*”
When each element of a system exists in its fullest potential, it creates ease and efficiency. In that place, healthy symbiotic relationships are formed to create balance. When we work together, our individual roles become less demanding.

9. **Use Small and Slow Solutions**: “*Slow and Steady Wins the Race*”
Small and slow systems are easier to maintain than big ones, tend to be more sustainable long-term, and make better use of local resources. This Thinking Tool encourages patience, similar to what is needed to plant a seed, tend to it and watch it grow.

10. **Use and Value Diversity**: “*Don’t put all your eggs in one basket*”
Diversity provides strength and resilience within our ecosystems. The many elements within our vast network of species have unique functions, and through a series of interconnected relationships, they work together in a system of checks and balances. This reduces vulnerability to the ongoing threats that are ever-present within our world.

11. **Use Edges and Value the Marginal**: “*Don’t think you’re on the right track just because it’s the well beaten path*”
We arrive to The Edges, which have been the main inspiration for this research. The edges that exist everywhere within our world are the most productive and diverse places within our ecosystems.

12. **Creatively Use and Respond to Change:** “Vision is not seeing things as they are but as they will be”

Change is always happening, and by maintaining a flexible attitude, we can interact with it in a creative way to leverage health, happiness, and wholeness (“Permaculture Principles”).

The Kiva Center uses these ethics and thinking tools as a fundamental scaffolding to form shared values and beliefs within the community. We share with you now some of the practical tools we use to achieve what Makiguchi hopes for when he says, “the key here is seeking a relationship of calm intellectual interplay between us and the environment” (Education for Creative Living, 48). These practical tools fall under three main “edges” that we explore on our learning journey. The edges are the places where we can challenge ourselves to boldly move beyond our current habits to embody a holistic lifestyle. These edges include: The Edge of the City and the Forest, The Edge of Hierarchy and Collaboration, and The Edge of Theory and Action.

**The Edge of the City and the Forest: Deep Nature Connection through Immersion**

“Education, if it means anything, should not take people away from the land, but instill in them even more respect for it, because educated people are in a position to understand what is being lost. The future of the planet concerns all of us, and all of us should do what we can to protect it. As I told the foresters, and the women, you don’t need a diploma to plant a tree.”

-Wangari Maathai

It is very difficult for us to understand the complex web of life we are apart of if we continue to spend entire days corralled into classrooms with other humans. Makiguchi states it clearly, “The adult may well get the child to listen, but listening does not lead to understanding unless the child has the experience to appreciate what is being said” (Education for Creative Living, 40). In order to develop the slightest understanding of our environment, it must become a ritual for humans to Observe and Interact with our ecosystems.

Spending time in nature develops a sense of compassion and reverence for the land. Time in nature helps each person develop the type of sympathetic interaction with our environment that Makiguchi recommends,

We should regard people, animals, trees, rivers, rocks or stones in the same light as ourselves and realize that we have much in common with them all... Sympathetic interaction occurs, therefore, when you encounter that person or object at a deep emotional level and are able to place yourself in the position of that person or
There are many creative ways that we can get children outside and moving around, while still allowing mentors to set the stage for deep learning.

The Kiva Center uses activities from Jon Young’s approach to Deep Nature Connection. These practices, embodying Small and Slow Solutions, help students deeply connect to nature. The three main goals that Jon Young has identified to achieve this are Awakening Sensory Awareness, Cultivating Knowledge of Place, and Restoring the Bond Between People and Nature. These goals allow for certain skills to emerge in humans that are often overlooked in a conventional educational setting. He calls these skills Indicators of Awareness, and they include the following: Quiet Mind, Common Sense, Aliveness and Agility, Inquisitive Focus, Caring and Tending, Service to the Community, Awe and Reverence, and Self-Sufficiency (Young, Hass, and McGown, 258-279). The Kiva Center practices the Core Routines of Sit Spot, Storytelling, and Survival Living, to achieve Jon Young’s goals and skills mentioned above.

**Sit Spot**

The Sit Spot routine is exactly as it sounds. It is a special spot where one goes to be alone, to sit still and simply observe his or her surroundings. It is a place where we go to experience silence and quiet the mind. Ideally, each person should have a unique spot that they go to each day throughout a long period of time, watching the change of the seasons, witnessing the bugs as they scurry on the ground, and studying the sounds of the life that are bustling all around. This routine evolves over time and is something they become accustomed to little by little. Through games, children can ease their way into adopting this routine. Here is an example of a favorite game The Kiva Center uses to help children build comfort in stillness, develop increased sensory awareness, and prepares them for longer sit spot times:

**Game:** Eagle Eye

**Description:** This game is a form of hide-and-seek in which the “Eagle” uses its strong vision to hunt for its prey as it sits still in its nest. The Eagle cannot move from her small nest, however she can pivot 360. The players, or prey, hide within an established boundary where they can see the Eagle with at least one eye. The Eagle searches for prey and describes the player’s clothing to call them to the nest. The goal of the game is to get as close as possible to the Eagle’s nest without being seen.

**Storytelling**

Storytelling is a practice that humans have engaged in for as long as we have had language. As Jon Young, Hass, and McGown share, it “knit[s] the society together” (41). Before humans had symbols to represent spoken language, we relied on each other, through sharing our experiences firsthand.
As mentors, we often have the goal to sharing a new concept with children; possibly one they have never been exposed to before. Or perhaps, we want to raise a question within them, one that compels them to expand past their comfortable learning edges into the unknown, developing new curiosities. Storytelling is a powerful way to pursue this, and conveniently it can be done in any environment, under a tree, around a fire, or anywhere our creativity takes us. It is also an extremely effective way to engage childhood passions and captivate the attention of the learners. Who doesn’t love a good story?

The Kiva Center uses storytelling in two ways. The first is to share a new concept with students in a playful way, allowing for children of all ages to thoroughly understand and engage in the topics presented. Seemingly complicated ideas become very approachable when the students themselves become the characters and get to act them out. Many stories are also accompanied with songs that leave a memorable impression within their experience. Please see the appendix to read the story of “The Great Dirt Famine” that was developed for an introductory elementary school lesson to explore the effects that industrial farming techniques have on our soil health.

The second way we engage in storytelling is through a Story of the Day. All learners come together and share a story they have regarding their experience from the day. Perhaps, in their sit spots somebody discovered a new type of insect they had never seen before. Or maybe someone heard the sounds of birds giving off an alarm call. Whatever the case, this is a powerful way to open up the learning journey and give the learners time to share their own discoveries, taking responsibility for reporting their learning.

Survival Living

What would we do if we could no longer go to the local stores down the street to buy the resources that we need to survive? What if our homes were destroyed by a natural disaster? How would we eat? How would we keep ourselves warm at night? What resources do we have right in our backyards and how could we make the best use of them? These are important questions to ask in order to develop resilience within our communities. Regardless of whether or not we ever find ourselves in a life or death situation, the practice of survival skills strengthens our ability to Creatively Use and Respond to Change. Our modern culture is heavily dependent on consumption that cripples our ability to make use of the abundance that surrounds us within the natural environment. When we learn how to use these resources effectively, we develop a deeper understanding of our world, allowing for us to flexibly adapt to change. As Jon Young says, “Nothing gives us more meaningful relationships with nature than really putting ourselves out into the elements and living off the land. It creates the ultimate need to learn.”

When we practice survival living, our pace slows down ten-fold. If you have ever tried to start a friction fire or make a burn bowl, then you know exactly what we are referring to. The focus and patience that is developed through these practices is priceless, and miraculously...
children seem to drop right into the process. Some survival skills that we learn together are foraging for edible and medicinal plants, shelter-building, tool-making, water filtration and friction-fire, to name a few.

Last summer during a Kiva Center Day Camp, the children demonstrated a phenomenal ability to tap into their instinctive propensity towards wilderness survival. The group (6-9 years old) went for a hike into the mountains, taking a break to eat lunch. At first, they were ready to turn around and go back home as soon as they finished eating. As the clouds turned grey overhead, one girl said, “It’s going rain, let’s go home now.”

But a few minutes later, she had a new idea, “The rain is coming! We could build a shelter!” Instantly, the entire group mobilized. They found the perfect tree to build a lean-to. Some children stayed there to begin the assembly while others went out to gather more sticks and pine branches. As the shelter took form, some kids began to delegate themselves toward new tasks to support the “village.” Earlier in the week, we had learned a few survival skills that they decided to put into practice. Some of them decided to be the cooks, so they went out and gathered an abundance of wild onions, lettuces, and berries for the group. Others took on the role of nurses, saving up a store of medicinal plants to keep handy in case of an emergency. Another group spent the day making tools. The entire experience was unplanned and emerged gracefully once the mentors let go of the agenda and allowed for it to unfold. By the end of the day, it took a lot of urging to get the kids back for pick-up. Upon their request, we ended up spending the rest of the week going back to our “village.”

This story shows how powerful our creative potential can be when we are left to our own devices in the middle of the woods. As we launched out of our comfort zone from the urban edge into the forest, new challenges were met to gracefully strengthen the bond of the community. Now, you may ask yourself, what if I am land-locked in the middle of an urban metropolis? How could I possibly explore this edge when I am deep in the middle of one extreme? With that, we say that no challenge is ever too great, and where there is an urban center, there is an edge somewhere nearby. Start by directing attention to the weeds creeping up through the cracks in the sidewalks; or perhaps to the pigeons who have managed to survive off the crumbs on the ground, or the cats that have made a cozy home in the dumpsters. These places could actually be some of the sharpest edges that we see on our learning journey, providing for optimal learning opportunities.

**The Edge of Hierarchy and Collaboration: Self-Directed Learning within Community**

“Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury, it’s a necessity.”

*Kay Redfield Jamison*
If there is one major distinction that we tend to perceive between adults and children, it is that at some point, when we “grow up” and transition from childhood to adulthood, we become responsible, hard-working members of society who no longer engage in the wanderings of play that were so natural as children. In the most conventional educational scenarios, students, from the time they are five (or even younger), are involuntarily placed within a track that trains them skills that will supposedly be useful to them in their careers in about fifteen to twenty years. We perceive there is an inherent lack of trust in children to follow their innate desire to learn without an adult telling them what to do and when to do it.

Jiddu Krishnamurti elaborates on this concept in his book titled, *Education and the Significance of Life*. He says,

> Education is not merely a matter of training the mind. Training makes for efficiency, but it does not bring about completeness. A mind that has merely been trained is the continuation of the past, and such a mind can never discover the new. That is why, to find out what is right education, we will have to inquire into the whole significance of living (13).

If we continue in a pattern with adults assuming absolute authority and wisdom over children, and continue functioning within the roles of those who “know it all” and “have it all figured out,” we deny the opportunity for human evolution to take its course. As we often forget, and as Makiguchi agrees, humans ourselves are nature, it is not something outside of us. It is not something that we need to go and look for, read about in books or learn from an adult. We can only truly begin to understand it through the process of understanding ourselves. And how do we even begin to do such a thing?

Well, WE PLAY.

Learning is happening in every moment of life, regardless of whether or not we manipulate it. While playing, questions emerge, observations are made, and ideas are explored. We discover our surroundings, we feel the emotions that arise within us when interacting with peers, we learn about how to move in our own bodies and we interact with our environment. In learning through play, we **Catch and Store Energy** that is alive and abundant within us, and give permission to follow our natural curiosities without interruption.

Valerie Strauss, mother and educational columnist for The Washington Post shares her perspective about play. A once avid advocate for the early implementation of structured academic learning for her children, she discovered the importance of play by observing its effects on her own family. She writes:

> If children were given ample opportunities to play outdoors every day with peers, there would be no need for specialized exercises or meditation techniques for the
youngest of our society. They would simply develop these skills through play...

Children just need the time, the space, and the permission to be kids (Strauss).

Luckily, the techniques and skill-sets necessary for an educator to allow for children to play are quite minimal. There is no need for extensive lesson planning, differentiating for a variety of learning styles or accommodating for special needs. Play only needs unstructured time within our “busy schedule” to flourish. This, in many modern education scenarios, could be the most difficult thing of all. With all of the demands imposed upon teachers and students to keep up with imposed educational learning standards and demonstrate the results through standardized performance criteria, there is hardly time left in the day to eat lunch.

However, when we believe in something whole-heartedly, we know that there is always a way to put it into practice. Even beyond our intuitive understanding of the importance of play, research studies reveal the positive effects that unstructured time has on our learning. In a recent psychology study done at the University of Colorado, Boulder, psychologists investigated the self-directed executive brain functioning between children who had more structured time embedded throughout their day, compared with those with less. According to the article, strong self-directed executive functioning is what we use to organize to meet our goals. The results demonstrated that, “the more time children spent in less structured activities, the better their self-directed executive function. Conversely, the more time children spent in more structured activities the poorer their self-directed executive function” (Barker, Munakata, and Snider). When we consider the needs of our planet, it becomes crucial that humans are able to creatively respond to a rapidly changing environment. Strong self-directed executive functioning is necessary for to flexibly respond to the changing needs of our world.

The Kiva Center advocates for ample embedded free-play time throughout the day, as well as the application of Jon Young's 50-50 Principle. The 50/50 Principle is a concept that Jon Young shares in Coyote’s Guide to Connecting with Nature. The idea of this principle is to plan for the allotted time of the day expecting that half is structured time, while the other half is unstructured. This could mean that a mentor plans 50% of the day, or that a mentor plans an entire day of activities expecting that “only about 50% of what you plan will actually happen” (Young, Hass, McGown, 234). The 50/50 Principle encourages balance between giving and receiving, leading and following, listening and being heard. It gives mentors the opportunity to set the stage for the learning community, passing on their wisdom and experiences to youth. It also helps us Creatively Use and Respond to Change, allowing for in-the-moment learning experiences to authentically emerge as spontaneous questions get explored. Improvisation is the key here, and as Jon Young elaborates, “is quintessential to edge-walking” (237). Improvisation may not be considered the “safe route” when it comes to knowing what to expect in our learning experiences, but it provides for a deeper, more authentic experience in our relationships.
Makiguchi advocates a slightly different half-day schooling system in his book Education for Creative Living. Both concepts, Makiguchi’s and Young’s, aim at the same sort of experience, but in different contexts. Makiguchi calls for half the day in the classroom and the other half participating in some vocational/professional task or endeavor. This helps students step into their social living and learn through the process of working with others in an applicable way (154-160). Young’s concept could be conceived in the classroom or out, possibly stepping out of the classroom more as the students mature. Ultimately, Young encourages giving the student time for self-directed action when they reach inward to pursue interests while the mentor takes a facilitating position instead of a leading role. Combining the concepts, we come up with a broader picture of how half structured time and half unstructured time can help students develop autonomy in their pursuit of spontaneous, personal, and communal interests.

**Learning Landscapes: Exploring Trust**

“Cooperative living can develop only as individual persons become able to see their own weaknesses and strengths as well as the weaknesses and strengths of other. Out of this mutual understanding of each other’s strengths and weaknesses there can emerge a genuine pooling of efforts that works to the advantage of all concerned... If education is to transform those who see life as a struggle to get ahead of others into persons who appreciate and value the rewards of cooperative living, it must raise social consciousness by helping students to know themselves through comparison with others”

(Education for Creative Living, 43).

Here, we explain a practical method The Kiva Center uses to help students explore this deep personal understanding of the self in comparison with others. When we trust one another to explore our self-guided motivations, our relationships shift from power dynamics and control to supportive guidance. Jen Mendez, author of PermieKids, shares insight and tools that invite mentors to co-design a “Learning Landscape” with children. The Learning Landscape is explored through a process that helps learners to identify their passions, talents and challenges, which they illustrate and connect on a Personalized Learning Map. The learner organizes the Learning Map in a pattern that reflects the manner that she tends to learn or move through life.

By **Designing from Patterns to Details**, the Personalized Learning Map creates a bird’s-eye view the learners use to deepen their understanding of the most authentic expression of self. Through self-reflection, they examine the patterns they see inherent in their process of learning. For example, a person who tends to learn through wandering or exploring their environment may use a meandering pattern to represent the route they follow to navigate their learning landscapes. By placing passions, talents, and interests on the map as key points of exploration, learners see how their passions and learning processes fit together.
Also known as “Me-Mapping,” creating a Personalized Learning Map is a process-oriented approach towards education. There is really no end product or final destination, although there may be landmarks along the way that indicate where learners may choose to orient themselves. When exploring the relationship with self, individuals use the learning map to ask questions like, “Who am I? and, What are my inherent gifts, passions and curiosities?” This is a never-ending question that continues to evolve as the learner moves through time. And for that very reason, learning remains a lifelong process.

**Education is at the Center of Our Communities: Providing Support**

The relationships that naturally succeed our relationship with self are those with our community members (including families, mentors, peers, etc.) and other non-human elements of our ecosystem, planet, and universe. When we **Integrate Rather than Segregate**, the role that community members play within the learning landscape becomes one of collaboration and support. The Personalized Learning Maps are created not only for individual benefit, but to be shared with community members. We share our Me-Maps to express ourselves and receive guidance from people with other perspectives. Throughout this process, we learn how personal inward motivations interact with others’ to provide symbiotic learning opportunities within the community. Opportunities to collaborate are endless and emerge from the exploration of our most authentic desires. As we pool our efforts, we then discover how our collective gifts and inspirations may come together to serve our communities.

Sienna Wildfield created a helpful tool to support education through community engagement. She calls this the Community Engagement Logic Tool, which helps “community members make connections between interests, opportunities, and resources (or lack of) found within their region” (Community Engagement Logic Map, 2). This is an extremely valuable tool that allows students to see how their unique interests can fit into their larger community, helping them find ways to seek out resources that support their learning. This tool becomes very useful when pursuing Makiguchi’s concept of a half-day school. According to Sienna, “Feeling connected to where you live is a vital ingredient to the recipe in creating sustainable and resilient communities” (Supporting Education Through Community Engagement).

The Community Engagement Logic Tool helps learners begin to make connections between subjects, which at first glance seem unrelated. The graphic below displays the categories that are used to explore these connections:
Community Engagement Logic Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interests</th>
<th>Catalysts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write down an initial interest here and some related topics. As you</td>
<td>What could catalyze some initial engagement with the larger community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continue to use this map, more unexpected interests emerge.</td>
<td>List them here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources and Opportunities</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Self-Initiated Activities</th>
<th>Method of Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List related resources and</td>
<td>List events that you find within the community that relate to the interests.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunities that are found</td>
<td></td>
<td>What types of self-initiated activities have emerged throughout the exploration of community resources and events?</td>
<td>How do we use our learning to engage with the larger community? This can include Skill-Sharing and Community Service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within the larger community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In her TEDEx Talk, Supporting Education Through Community Engagement, Sienna Wildfield gives an example of how she uses this tool to engage her daughter’s interest in insects with the larger community. Starting with the topic of Interests, she inserts “insects” into the category, and then began to think about some other topics that are related to insects. Some ideas that emerged were pollinators, pests, and farms. She then made her way to Resources and Opportunities, where she thought about what obvious resources were available within the community to learn about insects. They found there a Butterfly Conservatory, Native Species Parks, and Trails. From there, she made her way to the topic of Events, where she discovered there was a local Honey Festival within her community. This later led to a connection that was made between a local organization that teaches cooking food with honey. Although she did not initially make the connection between culinary skills and insects, The Community Engagement Logic Tool allowed for a new interest to emerge. This series of connections guided her and her daughter on a learning journey that blossomed into a series of self-initiated activities and community service projects within her community. See the table below for how Sienna used the Logic Map to uncover the many resources within her community to support the initial interest in insects (Supporting Education Through Community Engagement).
Through this example, we can see how we start from within by focusing on our inherent interests to leverage community engagement. This is a powerful approach that places childhood learning at the center of our communities. This now leads us to explore our final edge where we apply what we have learned to empowered community action.

**The Edge of Theory and Action: Skills that Serve**

"Active Hope is not wishful thinking. Active Hope is not waiting to be rescued... by some savior. Active Hope is waking up to the beauty of life on whose behalf we can act. We belong to this world. The web of life is calling us forth at this time. We've come a long way and are here to play our part”.

- Joanna Macey and Chris Johnstone

ActiveHope.info

We have now made our way to the final edge that we explore in this paper, The Edge of Theory and Action. This edge is perhaps the most difficult, for it requires that we make some big lifestyle shifts, including the un-doing of habits that formed throughout countless generations. This also implies a grand shift in perspective around education, from one that obsessively orients around mastery and intellectual achievement to one of ACTION. We empower children by teaching them skills that build community resilience. Beyond deepening our connection to the natural environment, we strive to **Obtain a Yield** through developing skills in community farming, sustainable resource management, and social entrepreneurship.

The Kiva Center practices essential skills that give people the tools to become stewards of empowered and resilient communities. These skills follow a natural cycle of the seasons and the four elements corresponding to each season. Through the exploration of timeless cultural patterns, we found a consistency in the way we cycle through the seasons. We display this through
a graphic that follows a pattern very similar to the Medicine Wheel, which has been used in several different Native American Tribes for health and healing.

As we explore this edge more closely, we merge indigenous skills and practices with modern skills and practices that are most relevant to our modern society. As these edges playfully intermingle, deepening our use of indigenous wisdom can allow for us to Integrate rather than Segregate. The seasons and corresponding elements may differ from those that you have seen on traditional medicine wheels. The elements that we choose to focus on in each season create a balancing effect. For example, in the winter, the fire element is the anchor of our learning because it produces heat and light in a time of cold and darkness.

This graphic details a broad conceptualization that is adaptable to any natural or living environments. It does not by any means cover the entire scope of necessary skills, but rather puts us into the mindset of where we can orient our focus. Some skills may be practiced during different times of the year, or throughout multiple seasons based on the culture and landscape of the learning community. The big idea is that we orient our focus around natural cycles to Catch and Store Energy, creating resilience and self-sufficiency in our communities. Rather than a linear approach to education, we take a cyclical approach. Therefore, as we cycle through each year, we
embody a deeper understanding of our human interactions with the ecosystem throughout the change of the seasons. As we repeatedly practice certain skills, we naturally improve, allowing for us to refine our skills and raise new questions each year. By the time students graduate high school, they are already master gardeners, well-practiced community organizers, zero-waste engineers, and social entrepreneurs. This model unifies the vision for the school community, providing many opportunities for intergenerational learning and mentorship.

At the core of the Edge between Theory and Action is a reversal in the order of how we conventionally approach education. Rather than starting with the academic subjects (reading, writing, math, science, history, etc.), we start with hands-on, embodied learning, grounding in our global community needs first. Then the academic subjects fit into these goals.

Take this time to reflect upon your learning community. How are learners of all ages working together towards a common vision with individual goals? What skills are you currently practicing to ensure resilience in your school community? How can these be improved upon, or what additional skills may be necessary? Who/what resources can you consult in your larger community to strengthen the vision? How can you use the Permaculture Ethics and Thinking Tools to assess ecological value in your work with education?

**Call to ACTION**

It has been a pleasure to share the successful practices of The Kiva Center. We help children recognize their unique passions and talents while connecting them with the broader community of their natural and lived environments. Feel the inspiration to explore your own learning landscape and that of your closest community members. As we learn more about the intricate workings of life on this planet, grounding our learning and value creation within the context of ecological health and wellbeing for all is the only course of action. We encourage and request you to explore the edges of your education and help the youth of this world learn confidence in meeting their edges. For more information or to follow up with The Kiva Center, please visit our website, [www.thekivacenter.com](http://www.thekivacenter.com)

**Appendix**

**The Great Dirt Famine**

Once upon a time, on this very land that you lie your body upon, there was a thriving kingdom. In this Kingdom resided billions of joyful creatures who REALLY knew how to live the good life. They danced together merrily all throughout their days; explored every corner of their beloved kingdom; and most importantly, their FAVORITE thing that they did together was EAT! They ate luscious feasts all day, every day, day in day out, and deep into the night.
Life was good…

If you listen closely, VERY closely, you may hear echoes of the creatures of this kingdom. Softly place an ear on the ground and see if you just might be able to hear these remnant echoes of the past. Listen... ever so quietly.

Then try to use your body to feel the vibrations of the bustling movements that they once made on this very land. Feel, ever so gently.

See if you can then smell all the activity of the lively kingdom that once thrived right here. Do you smell the delicious meals that they shared together? Breathe in through your nose, ever so deeply.

If you dare, you may try to taste the leftovers of those lovely meals that they once ate right beneath you. It may be a taste that you are not used to, so taste, ever so cautiously.

Now today, on your journey, you may get the privilege to actually meet some of the remaining members of the Kingdom! Even though the kingdom is no longer thriving in the way that it once was, there still remain some loyal civilians who work diligently to restore the land.

And perhaps you have met them before. The leaders of this kingdom are very kind souls. Humbly, they use their magic to turn the most horrendous waste into glorious food for all the creatures of the land. They are tremendously flexible, never seem to get in the way, and EVEN live inside of the very food that they eat. And the most INCREDIBLE part of it all is that they do all of this without any limbs! Do you know which creatures they may be? [Answer: worms]

Yes! Our glorious friends, the WORMS. Eaters of compost and lovers almost anything wet, moldy, stinky and brown. They once lived here in paradise, chomping away at all the dead leaves and scraps that they found, until one day....

Boom! Vrrooooommmmmmmmmmm........ Crash!

It was a day like no other. As the farmer shamelessly plowed his way through the Kingdom, he was completely oblivious to the shrieks and shrills that emerged from the creatures below. Many of the worms had never experienced such terror, such quick, drastic change. Yet the farmer, on the other hand was thrilled to begin planting. On his new homestead, he would soon plant 100s of rows of vegetables to share with his family and neighbors. But first, he had to tear through all of those darn “weeds” that cluttered his farmland.

And meanwhile.....

“AHHHH!!! Somebody help us!!”

The worms were in a panic. As the tractor charged through the topsoil it sunk its vicious teeth into the Earth and turned it upside down. What a fright! Yet the elder of the kingdom assured them
Braun and Schelling

that there was no need to feel alarmed. He had experienced times just like this one several times throughout his life. For he was a traveller and knew that this was happening in many of the worm kingdoms all across the Earth.

In light of the chaos, he calmly and firmly shouted his orders, “Deeper, deeper! Dig deeper!” So down they went, as deep as they could. In this deep part of the Earth, they had to lay low. They could not dance around and feast the way that they normally did near the surface. They had to be very still to conserve energy.

They grew very tired in that deep place. So they rested. They rested oh so peacefully until they were ready to make their way back up to the top to see what was going on. So they stretched their slimy worm bodies and slowly wiggled their way up to the surface to investigate.

They were happy to see that there no longer were any machines tearing through their homes. Yet they did notice something quite different….

Cough, Cough! My oh my, was it dry up there! Their glorious home that was once sprinkled with dead leaves, animal droppings, dead sticks and plants was now just a huge clump of dirt baking in the hot sun. It was unbearable!

Yet this dryness did not last long, because all of a sudden……

*SPLASH*!!! The sprinklers were turned on!

So the worms took huge, glorious gulps of the great abundance of water. They swam laps, they played Marco Polo. What a joy!

Yet the very next day, they awoke to dryness, yet AGAIN!

“What on Earth is going on here?” many cried out. The elder seemed to know something, so nearly the entire Kingdom of worms squirmed their way to his side, to find out what he knew.

“We have entered into a time of drastic change,” he said. “It is quite possible that this Kingdom will never be the same, now that the plow spirit is roaming the land.” He told the other worms all about what they could expect to experience in days, months and years to come.

He shared with them the stories of the plows. They learned that each spring season, just as the dirt would begin to stabilize, collect new leaves and sticks and grow strong roots to hold it all together, the plows would come through to turn it upside down once again. The waters would then wash away billions of pounds of dirt from the top layers of the Kingdom, where it would then flow away to join the fish in the rivers and lakes. And when the waters dried up, the soil would once again turn as dry as sun-baked animal bones until it rained again.

The elder assured them that everything was going to be okay, but they would need to adjust their lifestyles. Some would have to choose to stay deep beneath the soil, where they would live a simple, lazy lifestyle. Some would move far, far away in a horizontal fashion to make their way to the pockets of Earth that the Plow Spirit had not found. And others would perhaps decide to remain tough and survive through all the tough changes. They would risk drying out and
potentially starving from the lack of organic matter and the washing away of topsoil. Many would not survive.....

The worms were devastated. They cried together and shared their last songs and dances together before they all went their separate ways. The Kingdom would never be restored to the way it was again. No longer would all of these worms dance and happily feast upon the luscious dirt ...

REWIND! Wait a just second here... Did we just read the word never?? Is this true? Didn’t anyone teach this author to never say never?

Let’s back it up a bit... Because we are all powerful, creative beings, we are going to see what we can do to change this story. Whaddaya say? Does anyone want to see what they can do to revive the Kingdom?

Alright! Let’s do it then. However, there is little that we know about how we can help the Worm Kingdom. We must investigate to discover what they need. Read your first clue to guide you along in this journey.....

Bibliography


Castro and Makiguchi: Education for a New Citizen

Jessica Bridges

Abstract

This paper addresses education as a means of reproducing social values. It uses two case studies for analysis: The Cuban education system after the triumph of the revolution and Soka (value-creation) education. In addition to the school systems, the lives of the founders of each system is briefly explored as a means of understanding the purpose for the social values to be reproduced. The frameworks used for understanding social reproduction are Marxism and Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. This paper will look at how, through Marx and Bourdieu, schools can be understood as instruments of social reproduction.

What could Fidel Castro, a Cuban revolutionary leader and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, a Japanese educator and martyr possibly have in common? Although they were only briefly contemporaries, both men sought to transform their respective education systems in order to create a new citizen. In the case of Castro, education was a vehicle to create a citizen imbued with revolutionary values, committed to communism and socialist ideals (Blum). For Makiguchi, education existed to raise young people to be critical thinkers and to be able to contribute in a constructive way to societal issues (Ikeda). In both cases education was to serve as an institution to reproduce certain values in order to cultivate a new generation of youth that could help transform society from what it was to what it could be. This paper will examine how education functions as an institution of social reproduction, inculcating certain social values in order maintain or promote certain societal morals and what those values are.

In order to understand how education functions as a means of social reproduction, two examples will be shared: that of the Cuban education system and the example of Soka education. In conducting the research regarding schools as institutions of social reproduction and in order to find out what specific values are being reproduced, I spent three weeks at the Center for the Studies of José Martí in Havana, Cuba. During my stay in Havana, I conducted formal interviews with current and former professors on teacher education as well as informal interviews with various Cuban citizens. For the research regarding the values of Soka education, I traveled to Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia visiting Tokyo Soka High School, Soka University and the Soka Kindergarten in Singapore and in Malaysia. In conducting research for the Soka schools, I
interviewed various administrators, teachers and parents as well as engaged in participant observation at Tadika Seri Soka, the Soka kindergarten in Malaysia. Although distinct in purpose and history, Cuba and Soka serve as examples of how schools explicitly work to imbue certain values in students so that these values can mirrored in society.

Cuba is a prime example of a country that is well known for its high literacy rate which, according to the Central Intelligence Agency website, stands at 99.8%. According to one parent at the Soka kindergarten in Malaysia, the school functioned to create a child with a good character proving that schools do not merely function to teach learners to read or write. Schools also teach students how to function in society. This paper will examine how education functions as an institution of social reproduction, inculcating certain social values in order maintain or promote certain societal morals and what those values are. The theories of Karl Marx and Pierre Bourdieu will be examined as frameworks for how values are reproduced in society.

Schools have a myriad of meanings for societies. Schooling is said to provide a way for the populace to acquire knowledge and skills that will help them to get ahead in society, a place where young people experience diversity and equity and where equal opportunities can be provided for all. However, when Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis published *Schooling in Capitalist America* in 1976, the dialogue about schooling and education in the United States was, to a great extent, turned upside-down. By applying a neo-Marxist lens to education in the United States, Bowles and Gintis transformed the conversation from education as the great opportunity for advancement to education as a sorter; putting in place those deserving and undeserving. Jean Anyon echoes this sentiment stating that schools tend to “reproduce the unequal labor positions that the economic system had created” (20). The theory of Marxism as a foundation and neo-Marxism as it applies in non-socialist countries is important in understanding how schooling functions to reproduce certain values. Schools have preserved and helped reproduce the current capitalist social order of the United States (Bowles and Gintis; Anderson; Anyon). This notion that schools are institutions that reproduce a desired social order is not unique to the United States, rather it can be seen more overtly in socialist countries such as Cuba. In the case of Soka, the name meaning “value-creation,” where the idea of values lies explicitly in the name can also be seen as an example of a system of education that seeks to reproduce certain values in society (Ikeda).

Neo-Marxism is one key to understanding how social reproduction works. Fidel Castro identified himself as a Marxist-Leninist after the triumph of the revolution in 1959 and Marxism was used as theory on which the creation of the revolutionary society was based (Blum). Therefore, examining Marxism through the lens of Bowles and Gintis can help to understand how the theory applies to education. As economists, Bowles and Gintis used a macro-level scope to apply a neo-Marxist lens to education (Anderson). In order to better understand the neo-Marxist
lens it is important to grasp Marxism in general terms, including how Marx himself described his theory. Marx, essentially divided the social order into two classes: the proletariat – laborers and the bourgeoisie who owned the factories and employed the proletariat. Dividing the social order in such a way helped describe the power struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. This relationship is described by Anyon as “unequal and contradictory” (11). The worker and his labor is exploited in order to gain profit for the boss. The interests of the bourgeoisie are prioritized while the proletariat work to fulfill these needs. To Marx, the struggle in this relationship between the worker and the boss can also be described as a struggle between labor and capital. According to Marx, “Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already…” (as cited in Anyon 10). These circumstances are the ones divided by social class – or a person’s relation to the means of production – whether they are proletariat or bourgeois.

Marx further divides the society into two categories: the superstructure and the base. The superstructure represents all of society – its ideology, culture, social values, and social institutions such as churches, and schools. The base represents the people’s relations to production. Marx argues that the class that has the superstructure, or means of production at its disposal also controls the mental production i.e. the schools (Marx and Engels). The base supports the superstructure, and reflects the interests of the ruling class that controls the base. Because the working class supports the bourgeois in the superstructure they are the true revolutionary class (Marx and Engels). In Marx’s theory, when the proletariat triumph in the revolution, socialism can take the place of capitalism and all citizens labor according to ability and are given what they need by the government (Anyon) – as is the case in Cuba.

Because of his adherence to Marxist ideals, Castro rejected capitalism as the basis of production relations in the economy and therefore Cuba’s relationship to the US—the US being the embodiment of capitalism. In response to the capitalist economy and dictator put in place by the United States, Fidel Castro mounted a rebellion. Together with other farmers and working class people, they overthrew the Batista regime and announced the triumph of the Cuban Revolution on January 1, 1959.

The Cuban revolution, among other things, led to a new educational system started by its leader – Fidel Castro. Castro intended to sever ties with the United States which had been like an economic hand to Cuba (Britton). His first order of business after successfully overthrowing the previous government was to lead a cultural revolution whose first order of business was literacy for all on the premise of socialism. Samoff describes the view from the socialist’s perspective in this way, “Socialists have regarded education—both the learning generated by participation in struggle and the more organized instructional efforts inside and outside schools—as a critical, and
perhaps the principal, dynamic in reconstructing society” (2). In order to reconstruct society, Castro intended to educate citizens to adhere to and honor revolutionary values. According Blum as well as interviews with professors of education in Havana these values include honesty, solidarity, and patriotism.

Immediately following the revolution Castro began his educational reform movement. His first step was to close down all the schools and start a literacy campaign for every citizen. In a speech to teachers on, Castro gives a call to arms in his speech on October 11, 1960 to First National Congress of Municipal Education Councils:

[We] are defending... the humble peasant, the little child who does not have a school to go to, the worker, the person who has been discriminated against, the poor... the exploited and sorely-tried portion of Cuban society; these are the interests which will be defended by revolutionary government that is fully aware of its duty to defend the interests of the humble people of the fatherland against... foreign exploiters... I only want to know whether you think that we can win the great battle of culture in 1961... [for] you [the teachers] are the great army of education in our country (paragraph 50).

In this speech, Castro denotes the importance of the ideology that should be taken toward education and the revolution. His words illustrate his adherence to Marxism in order to create a socialist society. He defends the poor and the peasants – the proletariat. Emphasizing that Cuba will defend those workers through education explains the morality behind the need for Castro to start a cultural revolution—in order to educate the poor as a defense against imperialist and exploitative Yankees. There is an undertone that relies on education as an important savior for the future of Cuba.

In 1961 Castro called upon the Federation of Cuban Women to help in a nation-wide literacy campaign where the rhetoric of this campaign was that literacy was as important to the revolutions as the insurrection the preceded it (Herman; Blum). In a speech on April 9, 1961, titled, “Education and Revolution,” Castro further paints a picture of the importance of education to the revolution, “There can be no revolution without education because a revolution means profound changes in the life of a country” (paragraph 1). The way Castro spoke about education, put it as the highest priority of the revolution and in order to do so he gathered volunteer teachers, voluntary teachers, and youth brigades. In his “Literacy Campaign” speech on August 17, 1961 in Havana, Castro talked about how many people in the country were still illiterate and outlined his plan to educate the entire population through university level. Literacy was tantamount to accomplishing the production necessary to provide for the people and sustain production for future generations.
In order for Castro to give life to a new citizenry, the populace had to be educated in such a way as to support the proposed new way of life, creating a society that embraced socialism. Carnoy and Samoff describe the socialist mindset toward education as follows, “The most important reason is that the leaders of these states themselves attribute great importance to education as part of the means of achieving social transformation” (7). In socialist societies education is the primary vehicle for ensuring that future generations are trained and developed for the specific tasks society expects of it (Carnoy and Samoff). In order for Cuba to imbue in the youth the revolutionary values of honesty, solidarity and patriotism certain programs within the educational system were put into place.

Bowles and Ginitis describe the developing of social consciousness as one that is “further facilitated by a series of institutions, including the family and the educational system, that are more immediately related to the formation of personality and consciousness” (125). Keeping in mind that Cuba only has one educational system – the government schools, the process of unilaterally implementing curricula is easily accomplished. With a central government publishing textbooks based on the required curriculum, Cuban schools are all teaching the same socialist concepts at the same level for all students and teachers in Cuba are closely monitored in their classrooms and the focus is on instruction (Carnoy, Gove, and Marshall).

One significant distinction of the Cuban educational system is their focus on a collective consciousness rather than individuality. This ideal is expressed in work done outside the classroom in the work activities of the students while they are in school (Carnoy, Gove, and Marshall). Two professors of education mentioned one way that students learn revolutionary values is through the “Pioneer Explorers” whose motto is, “Pioneers for communism, we will be like Ché.” These groups exist in varying forms from kindergarten through university. Blum likens these groups to the “Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America” stating that another purpose for these groups is to separate the young people from their parents so they can spend more time with “revolutionary-primed teachers” (37). The purpose ultimately being so that the government has more control over the values the students are learning. The Cuban government would prefer that students retain the values of the revolution in order to continue with socialism. In other words, schools function to train young minds to adapt to the current economic needs. Years after leaving school young people in their late twenties and early thirties could still recite the mottoes of these groups. One professor explained proudly that she had always been voted leader of the groups throughout her time in school. Although an example of one method of how Cuban education functions to reproduce social values, the fact that this organization remains strong in the schools today and that leadership within is highly regarded at the university level illustrates how deeply
embedded revolutionary values are in society and how effectively schools have inculcated these values in the youth.

Cuba is an example of how a nation can purposefully embed certain values within the schooling experience and why doing so helps reproduce young people more likely to agree with the direction of the government. If, after the triumph of the revolution, Cuban youth had attended educational institutions that were teaching curricula with different values as one professor explained, they might not have stood in Revolution Square after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and together with Castro chosen to persevere with socialism knowing they were about to pass the most difficult time in their country’s history. In fact, Cuba has faced one of the most devastating trade embargos in modern history. One professor felt the embargo, known in Cuba as “the blockade,” was responsible for their mother’s death and yet the blockade also served to strengthen the national identity. Cuban revolutionary values are central not only to the political theory, but also, to the national identity and schools are primarily responsible for forming these values and maintaining this identity (Blum). What happens though, when an education system is conceived not to maintain the same values year after year, but rather, change the current direction of a country? This is the purpose of Soka education conceived by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi in 1930s Japan. Instead of leading a revolution, creating a new political economy, and changing education, Makiguchi sought to first transform education.

Like Castro, Makiguchi was looking to create a new citizen with new values and instead of overthrowing a government he sought to instill new values in students through the current education system. Unlike Castro, Makiguchi was not a revolutionary leader, rather, he was a teacher and elementary school principal during pre-World War II Japan until he was jailed for his resistance to the Thought Police and subsequently died in prison on November 18, 1944.

Japan in the late 19th and early 20th century was pervaded by nationalism, imperialism, and militarism. In the 1880s Japan took to the task of nation building more than ever before as a means to squash the enthusiasm for westernization. Education was the means by which Japan hoped to meet these social and political needs via the ordinances of 1886. These ordinances gave the government considerable control of the form and content of education (Sharma “Value Creators”). Until the end of World War II, Japan’s elites had created an educational system that could raise a “knowledgeable citizenry without unleashing the kind of critical energies that would generate social upheaval” (Goulah and Gebert 121). In order to manage any inclination of social upheaval, Japanese government established the Peace Preservation Law of 1925. This law was meant to manage the content of knowledge in the public sphere by means of censorship. Within the Ministry of Education other efforts were being made to control early education where Japanese children were “fed a steady diet of loyalty, obedience and emperor-centered patriotism”
It is important to understand the role education was playing at this time, especially elementary education where the emperor served as the gatekeeper of knowledge without critical thinking. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi stood in stark contrast to schooling reproducing these ideals of standardization.

In this case, a framework for understanding how the Japanese government was able to control its citizens is Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “Habitus.” Habitus is Bourdieu’s explanation for how society functions without apparent interruption. Habitus is a structure. It is not random, but has patterns that have been ingrained in people. Habitus could also be considered socialized tendencies or norms. These are dispositions that are lasting attitudes and actions that are “inscribed in our bodies, in things, in situations, in our everyday lives” (Bourdieu 51). In a sense the militarist Japanese government was using education and schooling to inculcate the values of loyalty and obedience in students as a way of norming their behavior in support of the war and the nation. Makiguchi, however, was known as a teacher and principal who, “invariably caused trouble in one way or another wherever assigned” (Bethel 10). As the government began to implement nationalistic state centered educational reforms that asked for education to inculcate young children into a nation-centric way of thinking, Makiguchi began to write his own more humanistic pedagogy with the philosophy that education exists for the happiness of the learner (Ikeda; Goulah and Gebert). His intention was to transform the social values being taught in the curricula from obedience and loyalty to critical thinking and value creating.

Bourdieu describes in his work how education functions through its curriculum, explicit or implicit to determine a student’s educational success, qualifications, and ultimately, their life chances (English and Bolton). English and Bolton describe how curriculum can be a battleground for knowledge:

Schools are battlegrounds where social classes will be able to impose their view of the world and their groups place in it, because schools legitimize that view as they inculcate students with the approved and sanctified knowledge of the world, So the question isn’t, “Will history be taught?” but, rather, “Whose history will be taught?” (12)

Michael Apple also addresses the issue of “whose” history, when he argues that education is “never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge” (222). The question of whose history is what is taught through curriculum and then becomes official knowledge. During Makiguchi’s time, the Japanese government was drawing up a more nationalistic curriculum, using rote memorization as the foundation for pedagogy. The focus for the government was, “submission to authority” and education became more militarized and highly regimented (Ito 137). Standing up to the government Makiguchi rebelled against authority by writing his own pedagogy, System of Value-
Creating Pedagogy, a twelve volume work aimed at empowering teachers (Goulah and Gebert 123).

Makiguchi sought to reform education while working within the system. Makiguchi dedicated his life to developing an educational pedagogy that would change the habitus of his students, create value for, and lead to the happiness of all learners. His world view could be discerned in his lessons for students starting at the grassroots level, discovering their local community and expanding globally discovering the interconnectedness of all things. He was radical for the time because Makiguchi, holding tightly to his ideals that people should learn to think for themselves, adapted his style of writing to pass through the censor, and published four volumes of “Value Creating Pedagogy” where he called the emperor a common man, citing that the emperor had attended a state school and renouncing the ideas of an autocratic government (Ito 139).

Makiguchi’s ideals of “respect for and faith in children’s agency in the creation of value” can be found in the missions and visions of Soka Schools throughout the world (Goulah and Gebert 127). Although he died in prison for his religious beliefs and for refusing to “support the Japanese war machine,” his work was able to live on, being implemented in many schools world-wide thanks to his disciple Josei Toda and to Toda’s disciple Daisaku Ikeda (Strand 4). Makiguchi’s character was engraved in how he lived his daily life. He never wavered in his belief that, “education is living and living is education” (Gebert 163).

Understanding Makiguchi’s character is to understand Soka Education in a modern context. Soka schools did not exist during Makiguchi’s lifetime. It wasn’t until Daisaku Ikeda founded the first Soka School in 1968, in Tokyo that Makiguchi’s ideas about education were able to take fruition. Makiguchi’s Value-Creating Pedagogy” was developed from thirty years of classroom teaching (Sharma “Value Creators”). In the Soka schools there is a mixture of aims and goals from the national guidelines as well as Makiguchi’s “Value-Creating Pedagogy” (Sharma “Makiguchi and Gandhi”). Another aspect of Makiguchi found in the schools is “the normative aspect established by his death as a ‘martyr’ who died for peace,” as well as the emphasis on students to contribute to world peace (Sharma “Makiguchi and Gandhi” 115). These attributes of Makiguchi give students a sense of mission for peace and one of the outcomes from this sense of mission is the lack of bullying found in Soka Schools and the imparted trust between teachers and students (Sharma “Makiguchi and Gandhi”). It is through Makiguchi’s example as relentless advocate for peace during the Japanese War that student draw from as an example of value-creation by which Makiguchi defined peace and happiness (Sharma “Revisiting”). Although Soka Schools adhere to the national curriculum in Japan they are able to stay true to the beliefs and ideals of their founders—Makiguchi, Toda, and Ikeda.
Other evidence of the habitus created in Soka schools is illustrated through parent testimonials. Parents shared that when telling their friends about the Soka kindergarten in Malaysia, the emphasized that the school is about character formation and that they felt their children were becoming better people by attending. This being said in contrast to the rote memorization and corporal punishment that students are subject to, even at that young age, in government schools. The humanism in Soka education stands in stark contrast to current methods and pedagogical practices. Soka has become a way of permeating society with values that counter the habitus inculcated in other schools and by maintaining its mission to raise global citizens.

Whether it be to create values that sustain or run counter to the common sense of a society, education functions to reproduce social values. As two examples, Cuban education and Soka education represent two different ends of the spectrum of social values yet both use education and schools to influence the direction of society. The question that should be posed about education is what values are being reproduced and what is the purpose of said values?

Works Cited


Humanistic Education in Brazil: Exploring Soka Education & Freirian Popular Education

Vicki G. Mokuria

Abstract

During the twentieth century, the philosophical foundations of contemporary humanistic education were developed as the world was in the midst of economic and political turmoil. Through committed efforts of current educators committed to humanistic education, two revolutionary educational programs are now thriving in Brazil. One is based on the humanistic educational philosophies of Japanese educators, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Daisaku Ikeda, and their ideas have been put into practice at the Soka School of Brazil, which currently serves students from PreK to 8th grade. The other is an adult literacy program called MOVA, which is based on Paulo Freire’s popular education ideas. Research conducted during the summer of 2015 on these very different educational programs, which both share a commitment to work with students and their families to bring out their greatest potential, shed light on great possibilities for a promising alternative form of humanistic student-centered education for learners of all ages.

The role of education in any society is inextricably linked to the power structures that are in place in the country and the world at any given point in time. Education either supports the prevailing structures or challenges them. This paper examines historical and sociological forces that have created the current hegemonic educational system in Brazil and focuses on two educational programs, one based on Soka educational philosophy at The Soka School of Brazil (ESB- Escola Soka do Brasil), and the other based on Freirian popular education philosophy as implemented through adult literacy programs, called MOVA (Movimento de Alfabetização de Jovens e Adultos). These two programs, studied in the summer of 2015, serve as contemporary counter-hegemonic alternatives to Brazil’s current two-tiered educational system which provides very different educational opportunities that privileges the economic "haves" over the "have-nots."
What purpose does education function in a society? Can education be the internal source from which counter-hegemonic ideas emerge in a society, or does education reproduce the power structures in society? This dynamic process is complex and layered, and multiple ways exist to view and analyze a country and its educational system. Whose interests are served and protected? Whose interests are ignored and marginalized? How do citizens negotiate their children's or their own education in such a web, when education is intricately connected to a country's historic, social, religious, political, and economic life? How can alternative schools, such as ESB and MOVA, emerge in the midst of a vast and diverse country, such as Brazil—that is simultaneously culturally diverse and rigidly demanding of conformity to societal norms?

During times of great transitions and turmoil in the world, intellectuals, educators, religious leaders, and artists tend to become contemplative and turn inward as they grapple with confusing political and economic landscapes. At such chaotic and confusing times, new ideas often emerge or re-emerge that focus on the very meaning of life and the role of humanity to usher in an era of hope. The foundations of two contemporary humanistic educational philosophies, the popular education ideas of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and the Soka educational philosophy of Japanese educator Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, were established when their native countries of Brazil and Japan were undergoing huge transformations in the midst great turmoil and mostly uncontested societal militarization during much of the 20th century. While the roots of Soka education lie in Japan, this paper will examine how a humanistic school based on Soka education principles has emerged and is thriving in Brazil. Both educational philosophies emerged because of the courageous efforts of persons who stood alone and then collaborated with very small groups of individuals committed to a more equitable and just society, resulting in progressive and humanistic ideas now taking root in the hearts and minds of citizens from a wide range of backgrounds in Brazil.

The Brazilian educational programs researched for this paper—Paulo Freire Institute’s MOVA adult literacy programs in Bahia and the Soka School of Brazil in Sao Paulo—both have humanistic missions. These schools, though unrelated, seek to foster students to become citizens committed to social justice, while functioning within Brazil’s neoliberal economic and political system. Further, this paper considers how individual and collective agency can disrupt larger hegemonic processes, in order to accomplish their missions of larger societal transformations. Hegemony refers to the unquestioned prevailing ideas in a society that create institutions and structures to serve the interests of the dominant class in power, and any efforts to challenge those norms would be considered “counter-hegemonic.” Neoliberalism, as used in this paper, refers to efforts to privatize public services, such as education, such that private profits can be made in areas of a society that historically were served by government services for the collective good.
Formal education in Brazil began with the arrival in Porto Seguro in 1500 of the first Portuguese colonists. It is commonly believed that Brazil’s indigenous population was pre-literate, and while there are no records of their formal educational practices, the ability to teach their young about their cultural norms, values, and ways of life suggest a thorough experiential informal education occurred for thousands of years. Beyond teaching the young its cultural values and ways of survival, we may never know for what purpose the indigenous Brazilian Amerindians informally educated their young. The Portuguese, however, were very clear about the ultimate goals of their education, and that was for the purpose of “mass conversion to Christianity” (Langfur 1). This was made clear since there were “more than a dozen priests and Franciscan friars [who] accompanied the expedition of at least 1200 men in thirteen ships” (1) who first arrived in Brazil. What, then, is the foundation of formal education in Brazil? Put simply, the formal Brazilian educational foundation rests on the colonization of Brazilian souls—through a Christian education.

During the centuries in which enslaved Africans worked on large, privately-owned farms, education served the needs of the colonial elite. For Brazilians, however, modernization grew in importance, as indicated by the two words on its flag: “order” and “progress,” since the country’s leadership wanted Brazil to be transformed into a modern nation. Education during the era of the late 1800s and early 1900s served to reproduce the status quo of a strongly stratified society, which provided limited opportunities for advancement, except for the elites. When Brazil started to become an industrialized nation in the 1920s, much of the population left rural areas and flocked to the cities, seeking work. Between the 1920s and 1960s, “the growth of industry also contributed to a massive increase in the urban electorate and to a sharp rise of the political influence of both employers and workers in the industrial centers” (Poppino 239). As slave labor had been replaced with wage labor, the industrial class rose, and workers began to organize. The economic system that emerged was based on “the doctrines of Manchester Liberalism—i.e., a belief in free market economics with minimal government intervention and a reliance on free trade” (Skidmore 88). However, the result was a widening gap between the rich and the poor, with social unrest growing, and after the revolution of 1930, many industries were later nationalized.

Impacted by the worldwide economic depression of 1929, an internal revolutionary struggle within Brazil was taking shape, which brought together members of the military, technocrats, and young politicians, and “the victors of 1930 were a heterogeneous lot, both socially and politically” (Fausto 196). Backed by the military, Getúlio Vargas seized power during the revolution of 1930; he dissolved Congress and ruled by decree (Skidmore 110). Under Vargas’ dictatorship, Brazil became more nationalistic, and Vargas promoted popular culture--
uniting Brazilians around soccer and Carnival (119). Vargas ruled over Brazil on and off for over eighteen years—as both a dictator and democratically-elected President (Fausto 198). Many progressive education reforms occurred during his time in power and before his passing, the then-President, Getulio Vargas proclaimed: “‘The school is the means of our salvation,’ and he directed that this very inscription be prominently carved into stone at the entry of [the newly built Palace of Culture] building—”, which would house the new Ministry of Education (Plank 1). This, then, is the proclaimed sentiment at the core of the Brazilian education system. The question is: has education fulfilled that promise for all Brazilian people, or is it just rhetoric?

The years in Brazil between 1945 and 1964 were a time for democratic experimentation. Rural workers began to organize, and “peasant leagues had begun to appear around the end of 1955” (Fausto 265). With Vargas as an elected president, rather than as a dictator, he tried to raise the minimum wage by 100%, in order to provide some relief for the lowest paid workers in a society that saw a very uneven and inequitable tremendous rate of growth since modernization. Simultaneously, Vargas tried to maintain power by establishing close ties with military leaders, who ultimately turned on him and forced him to resign. Instead, Vargas committed suicide in 1954, and the nation was in turmoil for several years afterwards.

After Vargas’s suicide, Brazil continued flirting with democracy—until 1964, when the military staged a coup to accomplish three goals: “maintaining social order, respect for hierarchy, and controlling Communism” (Fausto 278). The military sought to use force to reinstate democracy, but in order to accomplish that, widespread repressive tactics were used—especially on labor unions and anyone who appeared to have connections with communist groups. Many human rights groups charge that torture and repression was used. During that era, Paulo Freire had developed and implemented a literacy campaign that provided a pathway for thousands of formerly illiterate Brazilians to vote, which was a huge threat to the military. In 1964—the same year the military gained power in Brazil—Freire left Brazil and lived in exile until democracy returned in the 1980s.

It must be asked what impact a long history of oppression has on eroding the will and potential resistance of citizens to such repressive governance. Based on this research, the histories of both Japan and Brazil center on a complex dance of societies that have gone through waves of domination and assimilation. How and why do citizens living under oppressive regimes, such as those that occurred in Japan and Brazil, resist political and military domination? What role does education play in a society—to either support a military or repressive regime, or to counter it?
The road that was paved historically in order for the military to gain control in both Brazil and Japan took years to develop, and it does not seem that there was a strategic plan in either case. In both cases, the growth of the military served as a pathway for social mobility for a large group of men, who lacked familial ties and the appropriate education to help them gain entree into a higher class. Education, then, was not a means for them to find a place in their societies. In both countries, militarism grew alongside strong nationalistic feelings. Since Japan had emerged from 250 years of isolation, the opportunities for Japanese people to interact with others from different cultures and to learn about new ideas was dramatically different from the Brazilian experience. Japan’s isolation, size, location, and Shintoist beliefs also contributed to its developing very inward-looking ideas, based on their own version of truth and reality. Brazil, on the other hand, developed a lighter and more colorful version of cultural national pride based on soccer, music, dance, and Carnival.

It is interesting to note that in Brazil and Japan, both countries have been heralded as “economic miracles,” and in both cases, economic growth and development preceded their shift to militaristic regimes. Quite possibly, the military believed they had a role in protecting and maintaining economic growth for their people, and they did not trust the path elected officials were taking. Both educational systems that were in place that lead to the militarization of their governments had strong ties to the country’s predominant religions. In the case of Japan, students were taught about the divinity of the emperor and Shintoism, as well as the importance of loyalty to the emperor. This component of their education might explain how and why there was such little resistance in Japan, which lead to devastating results in World War II.

The two educators, Makiguchi and Freire, however, did find ways to resist their governments. In Japan, Tsuneaburo Makiguchi had “sought to humanize the educational system and increase its effectiveness [and] had been thwarted at every turn by both the rigidity of the culture and the increasing dominance of the military in national life” (Bethel 94). After Makiguchi’s conversion to Buddhism, he developed the courage to stand up to the military government, by refusing to display a Shinto talisman. He was imprisoned as a “thought-criminal,” and he died in jail. After Makiguchi’s death, a fellow educator, Josei Toda (1900-1958), kept Makiguchi’s spirit and passion for education alive, followed by Daisaku Ikeda, who also sought to link education to the humanistic ideas of Buddhist philosophy. Many of the principles of current Soka educational philosophy are based on the ideas of Daisaku Ikeda.

Similarly in Brazil, for Freire “education is not neutral; it can be used to reinforce structures of domination, but it can also be used to promote social transformation” (Schugurensky 4). This quote sums up the power of education to influence students to engage in transforming
the seemingly immutable power structures in a society. What is required? Educator-activists cannot be neutral; they must harness the transformative power of education to initiate change. What are some of the ways that Soka education and MOVA are distinctive from more traditional educational practices, and how do they maintain the intent and spirit of the founders, Freire, Makiguchi, and Ikeda? What are the links to societal change?

In a country such as Brazil, education further serves an important political and economic function. In order for a democracy to exist, citizens must be able to think for themselves and participate in the society's political and economic structures. Schools must prepare youth for their economic roles in society, which David Labaree refers to as the social efficiency approach. Education, then, provides a public service, resulting in a society functioning efficiently, by preparing young people for their places as economic contributors. As a father of a student who was interviewed at the Soka School of Brazil shared, “As a society, we are forgetting to help children develop their humanity and only focus on them getting good jobs.” The single-minded focus on individual economic aggrandizement above all else has superseded the needs of educating citizens to work together in a democratic society.

If a society, such as Brazil, minimally provides financial resources to support public education as a vehicle for developing a democracy, what happens when such a society does not have a place for all the youth who have left the educational system (successfully or otherwise) and who want to be part of the economic system that has no place for them? How does that affect the educational system? Labaree explains that the role of education, reflected in the social mobility approach, will function to give some students a “competitive advantage in the struggle for desirable social positions” (42). The education system functions to allow some students to succeed, while ensuring that others don’t, perfectly suited for a labor market that is highly competitive to favor the privileged few who have that competitive edge. This perspective focuses on the ability of individuals to get ahead, regardless of consequences for the good of all. Education then becomes a valued commodity, and it is the commodification of the education system that brings us to our current critical historical and economic juncture grounded in neoliberal economic policies. Labaree further states that “the increasing hegemony of the mobility goal and its narrow consumer-based approach to education have led to the reconceptualization of education as a purely private good” (73). The commodification process holds the interests of each individual above all else, pitting students against each other.

This sociological-historical background frames Brazil as a society impacted by its colonial roots, which continues to shape the educational system today. The two examples presented in this research—Freire’s MOVA literacy program and the Soka School of Brazil—are contemporary
efforts by educators that are in opposition to the prevailing hegemonic system that focuses on giving some students educational and economic advantages, while ignoring the needs of the majority of the youth to grow and develop in order to cultivate their own humanity.

This research examines two very different counter-hegemonic educational systems in Brazil. What these schools have in common are their unique and distinctive philosophies and approaches towards education that focus on the importance of respecting students and seeking to engage with students in meaningful ways so that they can reach their highest potential. In what ways are these very different philosophies and approaches similar, and in what ways do they differ, in terms of addressing the goals and needs of learners in school settings that are both embedded within Brazilian culture and society?

The Soka educational philosophy is grounded in the idea that education should place the “lifelong happiness of the child” as its central goal. Daisaku Ikeda, the founder of contemporary Soka schools, bases much of his writings about education on the aforementioned Japanese educator who focused on a humanistic philosophy and pedagogy of education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944). Ikeda writes, “Makiguchi likewise strove to make what we would now term ‘the best interests of the child’ central to the theory and practice of education. He denounced the force-feeding of knowledge far-removed from the realities of the child’s everyday living. In its place, he called for education to have the happiness of children as its fundamental purpose” (9). This child-centered focus on education has been proposed in other periods of history by other educators. What makes Soka education unique is its unapologetic emphasis on the happiness of each child and the importance of creatively finding ways for each student to develop his/her greatest potential, with the ultimate aim of creating a more peaceful world. The father of a student who attended The Soka School of Brazil shared his perspective in this way:

As a society, we are forgetting to help children develop their humanity and only focus on them getting good jobs. Here [Soka School of Brazil] was different and I saw that the focus was on helping him develop himself as a human being. Because we shared this common belief of the importance of developing his character, I was certain that this school was the right place for my son to be. The most important thing for me was for him to develop himself as a human being.

Clearly, the Soka School of Brazil provides an alternative approach to education that creatively provides the basics of what could be considered traditional education, while also fostering qualities in children that help them expand their humanity.

The second case in this research explores an adult educational Freirian-inspired program, MOVA, which uses humanistic principles as a means of making societal changes. While MOVA programs exist throughout Brazil, this case examines two sites in Bahia. The aim of the Freirian-
based MOVA programs in Brazil is to work with illiterate and/or functionally illiterate adults in order to teach them to read and write, while raising their levels of consciousness about their political and social realities. The goal is for the teachers to collaborate with the adult learners on ways to take collective action in order to make personal and societal changes.

The primary focus of the research conducted in Brazil was to uncover the processes that these humanistic schools use to interrupt the process of social reproduction and to examine the challenges and barriers they face in the unique cultural context of Brazil. The idea of social reproduction is based on the theory that schools reproduce the unequal class and racial societal structures through the educational process, and humanistic education attempts to find a way so that education is not part of that process of either maintaining or reproducing unjust social structures. How do those connected to these humanistic schools live up to and maintain the founding philosophy and mission of these schools? In what ways are these schools different from public schools, and how do they negotiate teaching a nationally-mandated curriculum while holding onto humanistic values? How do the educators, administrators, and parents gauge the school’s success at fulfilling their goals of providing a humanistic education committed to social change? What is the nature of the relationships that seek to maintain a focus on the humanistic principles? The task is huge, and the urgency of the need to further an understanding of this process, even bigger. The choice is clear: either accept the status-quo or find ways to challenge and change it.

A big challenge for this research is that it is difficult to define and explain how an educator is able to know the extent to which they have been successful at fostering students committed to social change. Do the educators see themselves as “interrupters” in the process of social reproduction of inequalities or injustices in their societies? Will my research be able to uncover the answers I’m seeking?

Beyond the theoretical ideas of Soka education and Freirian popular education, how are these educational philosophies put into practice? In both cases, the importance of developing a culture of care, in terms of relationships was emphasized. In a discussion with learners/students at MOVA in Bahia, a retired gentleman who only attended school for two years as a child shared his thoughts about his facilitator/teacher in this way: “I feel very good with her, as if she were part of my family. She’s a very dedicated person, always asking how we are doing. She worries about us a lot. And she teaches us a lot, more than what is sufficient. Sometimes she would pay something for us. She would use her own money to do that. Sometimes even our own family doesn’t do that.” This kind of genuine concern based on deep bonds between teachers and
students were evident in both MOVA and the Soka School of Brazil, pointing to the significance of an educational environment grounded in care.

At the Soka School of Brazil, the school's schedule was developed to provide students of all ages to have time to interact and play freely with each other, which also allowed for flexibility for school-wide functions. Developing close bonds—between teachers, students, and parents were demonstrated in specific and concrete ways. Each classroom at the Soka School had a wall with envelopes attached, with each child’s name on an envelope. On a regular basis, time was spent for students to write letters to each other, their teachers, and other school staff, showing appreciation and acknowledgement of each other. Intentionality with regards to creating a caring culture at both schools was evident.

In what ways do teachers/facilitators teach in “non-traditional” ways at the Soka School of Brazil and MOVA, and what is the content of the curriculum that makes these contemporary humanistic schools unique? The pedagogy of MOVA is based on Paulo Freire’s dialogic pedagogy of “problem-posing education,” which he describes in this way:

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who is turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which they all grow. (Freire 80)

The dialogic pedagogy of Freirian’s popular education practiced at MOVA collapses traditional power dynamics in which teachers are experts with knowledge that they bestow on students. Rather, students and teachers learn together, and the foundational curriculum centers on the lived experiences of students. Every teacher interviewed shared the same practice, which involves discussions with students/learners, centering on how they “read their world,” including walking in their own communities, discussing with family members and neighbors, and as a class, generating a theme, or topic, that functions as the curricular base. As one educator shared, “They come up with a general theme together and focus on that for 9 months and all the lessons will connect to the general theme. It’s based on what they want to learn about. The teacher doesn’t decide; the students do.” This technique would mean that the education would be completely relevant to students’/learners’ lives.

The challenge of curriculum at The Soka School of Brazil is that all Brazilian schools—public and private—are bound by law to teach a government-mandated national curriculum. What schools do have control over is HOW the national curriculum is taught. The
Soka School of Brazil has developed innovative ways to teach the curriculum and to create a schedule to provide enrichment curricular classes, such as music and art. Additionally, school-wide activities are planned throughout the year, which provide opportunities for students to learn about pillars of Soka education, such as human rights education and peace education. Also, a school-wide garden gives all students the chance to grow vegetables and expand their understanding of environmental education, yet another pillar of Soka education. As a pedagogy coordinator shared, “But the main thing is we work with teachers to teach by seeking out the value within the material, and the teachers must have the creativity to find that. If we don’t give teachers time to be creative, how can we expect the students to be creative?” This point is critical, since a key component of Soka education is for students and teachers together to “create value” through the educational process, rather than focusing primarily on facts and rote learning.

What is the current relationship between religion and education in Brazil? Historically in Brazil, education came through religion as a vehicle for societal change. The link between religion and education continues, though there are important permutations in that relationship. Contemporary Brazilian society in general has clearly shifted away from the overt religious conversion through education that occurred during colonial times. This same trend of taking a more nuanced approach to social change through religious conversion also applies to the educational philosophy and practices in the Soka and MOVA educational systems studied in the summer of 2015. The religious and spiritual beliefs served more as spiritual foundations for the educators themselves.

While “Freire’s views were informed by the Roman Catholic liberation theology of mid twentieth-century Latin America (Boyd 771),” his ultimate aim was not for the mass conversion of Brazilians, but rather to use his unique pedagogy as a vehicle for citizens to raise their political consciousness and fight for social changes in their own communities. At the MOVA teacher training, the morning session began with everyone joining hands and bowing their heads in prayer. However, the education itself did not function as a means of conversion. At the Soka School of Brazil, the philosophical foundation is Buddhist humanism, but as one administrator from the Soka School of Brazil pointed out, “the Founder, Daisaku Ikeda, thinks about education as a way to bring peace to humanity—without religion. Without religion. He thinks: how can I do this? Through the way of education. The more people who have contact with Soka education, the more peace will be in the world.” This point is critical because in the cases of both Freirian popular education and Soka education, a humanistic religious perspective is the source of the philosophies. However, this could be the first time in history when conscious efforts are made NOT to convert people, but rather, to provide an educational pathway for students/learners to develop their own unique humanity, regardless of their religious beliefs. It is important to note
that in both educational settings, teachers and administrators spend many hours of professional development time focused on the original teachings of the philosophic writings of Makiguchi, Ikeda, or Freire, in order to maintain fidelity to the original spirit of their teachings.

Brazil, then, is a country that holds great hope as a model for other countries on how to embrace humanistic education—at every stage of a person’s life. The Soka School of Brazil has been able to demonstrate how to create a caring educational environment where elementary and junior high school students are able to cultivate compassion through caring relationships, along with developing critical thinking skills by having an enriched curriculum—while simultaneously adhering to a nationally-mandated curriculum. MOVA, based on Freire’s popular education model, works with adult learners—who for various reasons were not able to develop literacy skills in their youth—to learn how to read and write, while also developing a political consciousness in order to make changes within their lives, as well as in their own communities. Both contemporary educational programs are based on humanistic philosophies centering on the power of humans to fully develop their greatest potentialities. Of greater significance, however, is that courageous educators have collaborated to put these theories into action, in order to transform lives, the educational process, and ultimately—the world where we live.
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Creating a Culture of Care in Teacher Education: Brazil’s Makiguchi Project in Action

Alankrita Chhikara

Abstract

Creating a Culture of Care in Teacher Education: The Makiguchi Project in Action (Chhikara)

Fostering and nurturing teachers is the bedrock of the education profession as teachers have a direct impact on the lives of students. Teacher education itself, to remain effective, must respond to the historical, political and economic forces that continue to shape it, calling loudly for “high quality” and “effective” teachers. This paper introduces the framework of a “culture of care” conceptualized as the amalgamation of three bodies of literature: 1) Soka education - which focuses on trust, mission and dialogue (Sharma, 2015); 2) Human rights education - particularly honing in on the aspect of education with human rights (Bajaj, 2011); and 3) Social Justice education, which provides intentionality in the process of disrupting discriminating and oppressive structures (Freire, 2000). This paper will demonstrate how one organization in Brazil, the Makiguchi Project in Action, is aiming to foster teachers who are committed to seeing Makiguchi’s educational ideals realized in the classroom.

Teachers are at the heart of the educational process. The greater the importance attached to education as a whole whether for cultural transmission, for social cohesion and justice, or for human resource development so critical in modern, technology-based economies the higher is the priority that must be accorded to the teachers responsible for that education. (OECD, 1989)

Fostering and nurturing teachers is the bedrock of the education profession as teachers have a direct impact on the lives of students. Regardless of which side one takes in the nature versus nurture debate, a tired debate to be sure, there is undeniable evidence that one's environment, especially as an impressionable child, plays a determinative role in shaping one's beliefs about intelligence, motivation, self-efficacy and competency (Dweck, 2006). Teachers are a major presence in the lives of children and shoulder the overwhelming responsibility of educating them. To remain effective, teacher education, must respond to and if need be disrupt the prevalent
historical, political and economic discourse calling for "high quality" and "effective" teachers based on a narrow technical agenda. It is important to clarify that education is seen as integral to the social and moral fabric of a society and therefore warrants continuous examination. David E. Purpel (1989) eloquently articulates this sentiment, which reflects the purpose of reevaluating the purpose and focus of teacher education, as follows:

Educational goals are to be seen not as finite problems that have a definite solution, similar to an engineer's responsibility to figure out a way to build a bridge given a particular terrain, climate, budget, etc., but as inherently elusive since they should represent what we believe to be the essences of the true, the good, and the beautiful. Hence, the perplexities of discussing educational goals are parallel to the perplexities of discussing the meaning of life, and thus must be done in a context of awe, mystery, and humility. (Pg 124)

There is growing research to show that, "The system of schooling and teacher education prevalent in developing countries is often designed for industrialized nations" (Rajput and Walia, 2002, pg 53). As a result, the focus of teacher education imitates the factory model and deprofessionalizes the role of teachers, separating execution from conception. This is one repercussion of the centralized and economically driven neo-liberal policies that define high quality teaching, competence and effectiveness based on an accountability approach (Bower, J and Thomas, P. L, 2013). In such a climate, teachers are easily stressed and burn out. While there are scholars and practitioners advocating for the need for caring teachers to create safe classrooms for students of diverse communities and backgrounds, policies do not reflect their concerns (Noddings, 2003).

In an effort to combat this trend, my research examined teacher education programs based on the framework of a "culture of care" conceptualized as the amalgamation of three bodies of literature: 1) Soka education - which focuses on trust, mission and dialogue (Sharma, 2013); 2) Human rights education - particularly honing in on the aspect of education with human rights (Bajaj, 2012); and 3) Social Justice education, which provides intentionality in the process of disrupting discriminating and oppressive structures (Freire, 1970). Drawing upon these conceptual streams, a "culture of care" can become a foundation for teacher education.

This paper centers on teacher education and professional development of pre-service and in-service teachers, even though teachers continue to learn throughout their professional career. Currently, "In teacher education the emphasis is generally on pedagogy alone, the cultural background of children and specific socio-economic contexts are generally ignored both in school classrooms as well as in the training institutions. It is not considered necessary to know whether
teachers have grasped the learning needs of the child and are fully conversant with their home background” (Rajput and Walia, 2002, pg 55). For this reason, teacher education in developing countries has wide gaps between theory and practice.

To identify the presence or lack of a “culture of care” in teacher education programs, my qualitative research conducted during the month of June of 15 in Sao Paulo, Brazil examined an alternative teacher education program- Makiguchi Project in Action (MPIA). My research findings suggest that MPIA, based on Soka education principles, can potentially serve as the antidote to traditional teacher education programs. I chose to study the Makiguchi Project in Action (MPIA) in Brazil because it is a teacher training program committed to supporting and mentoring in-service teachers who receive little to no support by their school or government after they begin their career. MPIA is a non-profit project implemented in public schools by volunteers to improve the quality of public education in Brazil. Due to its focus on teacher training, it was a suitable program to examine for its role in promoting (or not) a culture of care through teacher training. Purposive sampling strategy was used to collect data. Adopting the snowball sampling method, I was able to interview volunteers, teachers and founders through the project gatekeepers. Administrators and teachers were interviewed face to face, telephonically and over Skype. Additionally, I observed classes and orientation sessions conducted by MPIA volunteers. The interview protocol included twenty-two questions with a set of introductory questions to ease the interview process and encourage recall. A set of formal and informal questions probed the interviewees about their experiences during teacher training, their reasons for pursuing teaching as a career, preferred classroom management styles and their approach to teaching diversity. The interview protocol was designed based on the following sections: History, Curriculum Design, Implementation, Classroom Culture and Evaluation. I also took the help of a translator as Portuguese is not my native language, therefore the quotes included in the paper are translations.

Educational policy and its implementation is intricately tied to the historical, economic and political trajectory of its country. Theorists assert that the purpose of education is heavily influenced by elites and intellectuals of that society that help in the reproduction of social structures. Brazil with its distinct political, historical and economic trajectory is not immune to the neoliberal currents sweeping the educational arena. The implications of this analysis can, examined through the theoretical frameworks of colonialism, neoliberalism and culture of care, elucidate the importance of valorizing and embracing alternative educational models; rather than being swept away by the neoliberal currents that fulfill self-serving economic purposes of education instead of fostering an enlightened, liberated populace. Therefore, this paper explores the different approaches to education adopted by Brazil in distinct political and economic periods.
Brazil is an emerging economic country with a colonial past and neoliberal present and belongs to the BRICS association of emerging economic countries. BRICS association allows for greater partnership, negotiation, and collaboration between countries with similar economic standing for better commercial, political and cultural cooperation. BRICS is an association in direct opposition to the international organizations that, in theory, support developing countries with poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, health and sanitation, and equal access to education but end up exacerbating inequalities by charging high loans or enforcing conditions on the loans.

As a BRIC nation Brazil is considered to be on the stage of newly advanced economic development having undergone successive changes politically to embrace capitalism. Even though Brazil is on an upward trajectory of economic development, it is highly vulnerable socially and still suffers from huge illiteracy rates, poor educational conditions, and hygiene and sanitation, gender discrimination and social stratification. Derez and Amartya Sen (2002), advocates of humanistic economics, judge the development and growth of countries by there “expansion of substantive human freedoms- not just by economic growth, or technical progress, or social modernization.” In other words, they suggest that while advances for economic growth must be made, they should be directed at the “enhancement of human freedoms,” “appraised...in terms of their actual effectiveness in enriching the lives and liberties of people- rather than taking them to be valuable in themselves” (Derez and Sen, 2002, pg. 3). Education that cultivates a conscious citizen who aspires for complete freedom and liberation can be the means to create the social transformation and economic expansion that Dreze and Sen (2002) so passionately envision. I am not alone in thinking that education can be a liberating force to transform the social problems that afflict societies and countries today, but there is a stark distinction in the way education is conceived by different stakeholders- educators, Statesmen, international organizations, political figures, and policy makers.

The current social condition of Brazil is one of low literacy rates, poor educational infrastructure, and an insufficient number of trained teachers. Additionally, teacher salaries and educational spending are still very low. There are other significant challenges to the provision of equitable educational access for all. Disparities between rich and poor exacerbates these challenges and a historical analysis reveals that these challenges can be attributed to their political and economic development. The following section of the paper analyses the evolution of educational policies in Brazil based on the political and economic currents and suggests that contemporary economic policies are the roadblocks to the achievement of equitable education for empowerment and enlightenment of individuals.

_Brazil Colonization by Portuguese_ - During the celebration of the successful expedition to India by Vasco de Gama held by King Manuel, plans to organize another voyage were declared. The
letter of Pero Vaz de Caminha, heir to a noble family and charged with the responsibility of being secretary on the Portuguese trading post of Brazil, which chronicled what he saw when he first arrived in Brazil, is often described as the foundational document of Brazilian history as we know it. It is certain though that Brazil thrived for centuries before it was encountered by the Portuguese and introduced to rest of the world; it is difficult to describe the indigenous people because the travelers “tailored their descriptions to fit their prejudices” (Skidmore, 1999, pg. 9).

Colonization of Brazil occurred for various reasons, not very different from the reasons for the colonization of other countries. Brazil was colonized because of the economic and natural resources it possessed, described as the “image of endless fertility [which] led to a variety of overoptimistic estimates of Brazil's agricultural potential.” The catalyst that led to the success of the Portuguese people excelling in exploration and trade was their “religious mission to convert the heathen.” It is believed that the Jesuits, a missionary order aimed at evangelization, were also committed to teaching and education in Europe and overseas. The missionary activities, in the cities and in the countryside, were complemented by a strong commitment to education. This took the form of schools for boys, first in Europe and rapidly extended to America and Asia. Catholic missions, schools and seminaries also led to the Jesuit involvement in education. “Portuguese Jesuits helped the colonization effort immeasurably. This aggressive religious order established mission networks in many parts of Brazil, including the Amazon valley, harnessing vast supplies of indigenous labor to live in Jesuit-run villages and work the Jesuit-run ranches and vineyards” (Skidmore, 1999, pg. 17). From its very inception, the recorded formal educational process began with an economic and imperialistic objective and had severe implications on the formal schooling process that followed.

Colonial Brazil's economy began as a series of crudely constructed trading posts scattered along the coast from Pernambuco in the north to Sao Vicente (modern day Sao Paulo) in the south. This trading structure is called mercantilism, “a doctrine as well as a policy, mercantilism holds that the economic purpose of a colony is to enable its mother country to be economically self-sufficient” (Skidmore, 1999, pg.19). Cane cultivation and processing required a labor force that was filled by using forced labor also known as slavery, bringing African slaves from Portugal, and from the Atlantic islands and later from the African continent” (Skidmore, 1999, pg. 20). Plundering and exploitation further increased when gold was discovered in the 1690’s and the anticipated role of Portugal in the industrial revolution and the betterment of the standard of living was idealized.

Colonization also catalyzed social stratification based on race, played differently than it is widely understood, with some groups viewing themselves as superior to other groups. Skidmore (1999) explains that “in the case of Brazil, the concept of racial differences as an exclusionary mechanism evolved out of the Iberian practice of differentiating insiders from outsiders based on
religion.” The expulsion and forced conversion of Jews to Christianity led to the distinction between “old” and pure Christians or proven believers and “new” Christians or possible nonbelievers. This led to the confusion of religion with race.

As alluded to before, education in this period was a way for the Europeans to convert the natives and preach the Christian faith, according to European standards. The first schools were opened by the Jesuits and thus the creation of formal education is attributed to them. Therefore, education was a force for colonizing the minds and hearts of the people rather than being an agent of liberation and enlightenment. By extension, indigenous and local educational practices were subdued and overpowered by Eurocentric educational pedagogy and theory.

Imperial Brazil and the First Republic 1822-1889-1930- Brazil was the first colony of Portugal that had witnessed the move of the court and seat of power to its colony. However, since 1814, there was widespread opinion to return the court to its rightful place in Portugal which was subdued by the prince regent who elevated the status of Brazil to an equal partner with Portugal by creating the United Kingdom of Brazil. Subsequently, in 1821, the court in Brazil adopted an aggressive stance toward that country with an intention to restore it to subservient colonial status. The destiny of Brazil took a drastic turn when Dom Perdo, son of King Dom of Portugal, “received a petition from residents of Rio de Janeiro requesting that he remain in Brazil. His response was “Diga ao povo que fico! (I say to the people that I am staying)” (Skidmore, 1999, pg. 45). Resultantly, Pedro was crowned the first emperor of independent Brazil. All Portuguese troops that did not swear allegiance to Pedro were forced to leave and the remaining forces defended the Empire against domestic and foreign forces. According to Skidmore (1999), even though it was independent, Brazil would have to be under the direct influence of England because the English had sponsored the transfer of the Portuguese court to Brazil.

Treib (2002) notes that, “following the end of the Second Empire in 1889, Brazil emerged as a contradictory reality, with disproportionate wealth and poverty and flagrant regional differences in terms of development and quality of life, particularly between the South and the Northeast. By 1889, there were power struggles between groups with diverse ideas about how the republic should be run and, finally, political representatives of the ruling class decided to adopt the idea of a federal republic which would allow every region to have a considerable degree of autonomy. Ideological differences persisted and there was rivalry between the army and the navy, the former supporting the republic and the latter, monarchy. It is a long known practice among undemocratic nations to use lack of education as a punishing device to exercise citizenship rights. Certain groups in Brazil tried to fight the oligarchies and importance was given to the establishment of “Grupos Escolares” (primary schools) in 1893. By the 1920’s there was a fight for the democratization of schools and for allowing boys and girls to study the same curriculum.
Turmoil and Resistance (1940-1960)- Income inequalities existed based on race and gender and rural areas lagged behind urban areas in all regions. “In Sao Paulo, the center of industrial growth, 15 percent of Brazil’s population was producing about 50 percent of the country’s manufactured goods by the 1940’s” (Skidmore, 1999, pg. 27). A similar pattern of inequalities was observed with respect to educational expenditures.

Data from a 1987 study by Xavier and Marques illustrates wide differences in per pupil spending across regions, between urban and rural schools within regions, and between state and municipio school systems within states. Across regions, average expenditure per pupil was nearly six times larger in the Southeast than in the Northeast (Plank, pg. 169).

This was also the period when the country lived under the authoritarian government of Gentulio Vargas. Under this political regime, education was used to spread nationalist values and practices. Widespread control and censorship of cinema, radio stations and books was prevalent.

In the 1950’s the LDB law (Principles and Basis of National Education) “was a clear victory for the sectors defending private interests. It assured free schooling only for primary education, though it was not compulsory, and it also did not guarantee the organization of a more democratic and egalitarian teaching system. It kept the traditional structure of teaching and renamed the levels” (Beech, 2008, pg. 71). Simultaneously, there were campaigns in defense of public school and for adult learning. This was the period when Paulo Freire’s adult literacy program was popularized due to its promise to liberate oppressed workers. The tumultuous path of education in Brazil caused dissatisfaction and lack of confidence among the people and therefore alternative educational programs such as Friere’s thrived. This phenomenon speaks altruistically to the inherent ability of people to discern between educational ideologies that favor the elite versus common people.

Subsequently, the movements for public schools came to a halt when the military, supported by the middle classes and Brazilian entrepreneurs associated with international corporations, assumed command of the nation and disrupted all democratic movements. Unfortunately, liberal thinkers like Freire were also exiled from the country suppressing any efforts towards a democratic and egalitarian educational system. The founder of MPIA strongly rebuked the state of affairs in Brazil:

Brazil illiteracy is very high and it is a backward country. We have high illiteracy rates. So they don’t allow the country to develop. Paulo Friere was condemned when he wanted to start the literacy program. We need stupid, dumb people at the time of slavery. We need stupid, servile people. We are very naive, and subservient people who follow directions blindly. That is why they do not encourage education. Justice is not proved. Politicians deceive and do not get imprisoned.
Neoliberalism- Gvirtz and Beech (2008) explain that “after the military coup there was an attempt towards an education policy that aimed to produce the human resources necessary for economic development, submitting, as never seen before, education to economic decisions.” Education as in the US and other parts of the world started assuming an economic focus with its commodification. The introduction of educational policies that catered to the economic ends was not a solitary phenomenon in Brazil. There is sufficient evidence to suggest its failure as well. In their examination of the impact of implementing neoliberal policies for a decade, Amann and Baer (2002) conclude that “the net results of these shifts in policy orientation were disappointing. First of all, they did not result in high rates of economic growth. Second, although the distribution of income and other equity measures did not worsen, they did not substantially improve the country's inheritance of asset and income concentration and high levels of poverty.” No policy is a magic wand, but liberal creed in particular is a ‘utopia’ that has never functioned to deliver the goals it professes because of its foundational inequality.

Under this backdrop, I wanted to conduct a study of teacher education programs that have been successful in transforming the prevalent discourse. My research was driven by an interest in understanding how teachers can create “cultures of care” in their schools and classrooms. As Daisaku Ikeda, an educator and founder of Soka educational institutions around the world, writes, “Teachers are the most important element in the students' educational environment.” It is critical to focus energy on reinvigorating teacher training programs and preparing teachers who are intellectually, psychologically, socially and emotionally prepared to cope with the increased challenges of being an educator. Unfortunately, the area of teacher education faces severe challenges today. In addition to the challenges of quality of teacher education, there is a serious deficit in the number of prepared and trained teachers. Therefore, I curiously began my study of the MPIA with the following questions as the basis of my research.

1. What types of principles/values in these teacher training programs are providing (or not) teachers the capacity to incorporate cultures of care in their classroom?
2. What activities, concepts, practices are prioritized in teacher training, and how do these facilitate or create barriers to the incorporation of cultures of care?
3. According to pre-service teachers, what are the contradictions between the tools teachers are given and their ability to incorporate them in the classroom?

The “Makiguchi Project in Action” in Brazil has introduced enrichment and professional development activities based on principles of Soka education to over 164 local public schools since 1995 (De Melo Silva, 2000). However, due to a fall in volunteer membership they are operational in 50 schools now. The central planning team meets every evening to discuss innovative strategies and ways to implement soka educational principles to share with teachers who have no Soka background. The volunteers offer support in designing curriculum and
innovative lesson plans, gardening, and art activities. Through the use of crafts, volunteers help teachers to discuss controversial and sensitive issues like race and discrimination with the students.

The most important finding about the MPIA was that it was launched in response to the frustration that practitioners were experiencing while educating pre-service teachers and with a commitment to implement the principles of soka education. All my research participants unanimously shared the passion to wipe out oppressive thinking, ignorance and apathy through their work.

The MPIA volunteers were extremely sincere in reaching out to the public school teachers and did so by establishing personal connections with the school principal. After seeking permission from the principal, the volunteers would introduce the project to the teachers and seek their support in implementing it. It was quite astonishing to observe the transformation in teacher attitudes before and after the orientation session with MPIA volunteers.

The in-service teachers were extremely appreciative of the support they received from MPIA volunteers. In addition to the affirmation from teachers, an evaluator of the program had this to say,

I first read Makiguchi book, “The Education for Creative Life” and then I went to see what they are doing. They tried to educate the teachers by helping them make the student happy now, not tomorrow. In the book, Makiguchi gave some keys, tips, some indicators and then I went there to see what was happening. So, for many years I worked at Kennesaw, the country side, ex- Portuguese colony. There I went to evaluate educational project, I worked on education, women’s health and agriculture and water, looking for alternative forms of education. And there Paulo Freire was working for the government of Kennesaw and I went to observe the work that they were doing. IT was a Switzerland group. It’s called Institute of Development in Dutch. So one of their projects was on education based on Paulo Freire’s project there. I was very familiar with the methodology of Paulo Freire and found similarities characteristics in the pedagogy of Makiguchi and Paulo Freire. When you compare the two you will see they are talking among each other.

The evaluator helped establish that she observed social justice educational components implemented along with Makiguchi’s idea of education- components of a culture of care. As I could not observe classes, I cannot state with certainty that the third component of a culture of care- education with human rights, was being practiced by the teachers even though the volunteers alluded to its importance in their training sessions and interviews.
CONCLUSION

It is important to embrace and valorize educational alternatives that have arisen as counter educational models to illuminate the areas that contemporary, mainstream educational policies lack. There is no denying that technological advancement and development must be promoted, but not as the cost of education. The process of examining MPIA’s role in creating a culture of care has been instrumental in understanding the purpose of alternative teacher education programs. The relevance of this research in a time of economically driven policy measures cannot be overemphasized. Through this research, I was able to gain a better understanding of the challenges that alternative teacher education programs experience in creating cultures of care, however, my research was limited in its scope as I observed only one alternative program which is insufficient to generalize about teacher education programs. The strength of my research though is the conceptualization of a culture of care for the educational context which can be readily implemented.
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Ecuador's Intercultural Bilingual Education: Value Creating Pedagogy as a Tool for the Negotiation between Western and Andean world visions

Stephanie Samaniego

Abstract

In this study, I examine the negotiation of western and Andean world-visions in Ecuador’s Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) system. Interviews with Ministry of Education officials, principals, teachers, parents, and activists conducted in the summer and winter of 2015 are used to illustrate the negotiation of world visions. The paper discusses (1) the historical developments that shaped the current state of indigenous education in Ecuador, (2) the current educational opportunities for indigenous youth in Ecuador, and (3) the different world-visions that are being negotiated in the IBE system. I find a crossing of the principles of Intercultural Bilingual Education in Ecuador with Soka Education principles and a possibility of Soka Education as a pedagogical tool for indigenous teachers to interweave the ancestral with the western.

It is June 4, 1990 and Ecuador is in an uproar. The trains have stopped moving from the towns to the cities and communications are at a halt. Down from the mountain tops, up from the valleys are thousands of indigenous citizens clamoring for the state to recognize the cultural plurality of the country. On the walls of the streets are “end of the estate” and “500 years of resistance” (Ramirez). Fast forward twenty-five years later, there is a two story 4,000 square foot school building situated on a small hilltop on the edge of Cebadas, a town about an hour away from the main city Riobamba. The painted name on the schoolhouse, Nunkanchik Yachay, is badly faded and a loud bustling noise can be heard from the children playing soccer on the basketball court in front of the building. These two episodes, Ecuador’s indigenous social movement and a typical day in an Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) school 25 years later depict some of the
complex interactions indigenous groups encounter in a society that is continually influenced by outsider notions.

In Ecuador, 6.8% of the population is indigenous of which there are 14 nationalities. This study focuses on the Kichwa nationality of the Andes and the Amazon. The paper examines Ecuador’s intercultural bilingual education (IBE) system and its historical and present state for Ecuador’s fourteen indigenous nationalities. It addresses how indigenous education has changed and what it currently looks like in the Ecuadorian context. The paper examines Ecuador’s IBE system in three sections (1) the historical developments that shape the current state of indigenous education, (2) the current educational opportunities for indigenous youth, and (3) the different world-vision that are being negotiated as IBE exists in contemporary Ecuador. While findings indicate that more and more of intercultural bilingual education is being defined and judged based on a global metric of success, this is not an inevitable outcome. Efforts to weave the western with the Andean are resulting in different pathways to teach the new indigenous generation about the Quechua language and traditions. I propose that Makiguchi’s Value Creating Pedagogy can ultimately provide a pedagogical tool for interweaving these two worldviews within the Ecuadorian context. Makiguchi’s value creating pedagogy is based on a broad based ethos later influenced by Buddhist traditions. In this ethos is a sense of dignity and respect of the learner. With student happiness at the center of Makiguchi’s work, I believe this framework can support the weaving of western and Andean notions.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS OF INDIGENOUS EDUCATION IN ECUADOR

Historically indigenous people in Ecuador have been excluded from the sphere of education. It wasn’t until the 1940s that the first indigenous schools appeared with the support of strong community actors, including indigenous activist, Dolores Cacuango. In rural communities, such as Cayambe and parts of Imbabura, indigenous schools opened up where local indigenous educators taught in the native language and valorized the culture with its emphasis on protecting the land (Ministerio de Educacion). While these community actors remained strong, the military junta closed down the schools in the 1960s.

Later, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) working to translate the Bible into indigenous languages started building schools in Ecuador. Through their principal objective to evangelize, they trained indigenous educators and created several bilingual schools. While the role of religion as a cultural vision is not a principal subject of this research, it continues to influence and impact indigenous education in Ecuador (Katz and Chumpi Nantip).
Indigenous education in Ecuador was further developed from distance radio literacy programs. One of the first radio literacy programs was the Shuar Federation’s Bicultural Distance Radio Education System (SERBISH), which was established in 1972 in the Southern Amazon. Searching to create a model of popular education based on Paulo Freire’s work, the thirty-third Ecuadorian President Roldós administered a literacy program, the Center for the Investigation of Indigenous Education (CIEI) in 1979. CIEI opened up 300 rural bilingual-education schools and helped to produce a generation of indigenous intellectuals (e.g. Luis Macas) who played a key part in the indigenous social movement and the political party, Pachakutik.

In 1988, President Borjas established the National Directorate of Bilingual Intercultural Education (DINEIB), a government agency overseen by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE). DINEIB was tasked to establish and maintain an education system for indigenous children (Selverston-Scher). King and Haboud point out that the passing of DINEIB represented “significant shifts in education and language policy” (King and Haboud 379).

The intention of the newly formed DINEIB was to develop an education that would be fully informed and shaped by each indigenous nation and nationality. The fruition of this effort was the Model for Intercultural Bilingual Education (MOSEIB) that was released in 1993. Martinez Novo and de la Torre write “the Model established that indigenous people should simultaneously use their languages and cultures in the intercultural bilingual system and have access to general knowledge and technology” (12). The MOSEIB has been updated twice since 1993 and includes kichwa concepts, such as Pacha Mama (nature) and Sumak Kawsay (good living). While the model exists, scholars and educators agree that many of its objectives are lacking in actual schools.

The original structure of the DINEIB has dramatically transformed under current President Rafael Correa. The current IBE system is no longer administered by CONAIE and is run as a sub-secretary of the Ministry of Education. A number of positions have also been eliminated, including directorates for each indigenous nationality and province positions. These province offices have been replaced with district offices. In addition, pedagogical institutes established to support the training of IBE teachers were closed by an evaluation agency. Reports from my interviews reveal that the IBE system is still undergoing many of these changes.

**CURRENT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN ECUADOR**

A 2015 news article reports that $200 million has been invested in IBE in Ecuador (Andes, “Ecuador has invested more than 200 million dollars in Intercultural Bilingual Education”). In addition, the article reports student enrollment increased from 95,471 in 2006 to 148,956 in
2015; primary attendance increased from 88.9% to 95.7%; secondary attendance increased from 24.2% to 54.9%; and there was an increase in funding for materials, uniforms, and infrastructure (Andes, “Ecuador has invested more than 200 million dollars in Intercultural Bilingual Education”). The rate of enrollment in higher education also increased from 9.5% in 2006 to 17.5% in 2013 (Andes, “El acceso de la población indígena a educación superior creció un 17,5% en Ecuador”). These numbers indicate that greater numbers of indigenous youth are enrolling in educational services in 2015 as compared to 2006 and that the quality of their education has also improved.

Despite this report, scholars argue that indigenous youth are perceived to receive a second rate education from the IBE system (Novo; Novo and de la Torre). This is consistent with literature on IBE in other countries (Ortiz; García). Parents desire for their children to attend private schools and indigenous leaders have been critiqued for sending their own children to private schools before an IBE school. Conceptions of IBE as only providing instruction in the indigenous language have dissuaded some communities from IBE. Some argue the program is losing its effect largely due to parents wanting their children to learn Spanish (Oviedo and Willemenesch). In Katz and Chumpi’s study of Shuar mothers, they find that Shuar parents actually see IBE as too entangled with Salesian missionaries and that the education system needs to be “decolonized” (29).

Several scholars mention that despite the advances of IBE, it has been co-opted by the government for political purposes. Lopez mentions that “although there has been a positive evolution in terms of indigenous visibility, legal recognition and political participation through the region, assimilationist-transitional strategies still shape the hidden curriculum of IIBE [Indigenous Intercultural Bilingual Education] in most countries”(48). Researchers Carmen Martinez Novo and Carlos de la Torre have researched race within the Ecuadorian education system and find that social inequalities are reproduced by a system that is largely segregated by class, race, and ethnicity (de la Torre; Novo and de la Torre). Packaged within the interculturality frame, these assimilationist-transitional strategies remain strong as globalized market forces create a more homogenous world.

In the urban capital, Quito, my field work shows that all IBE schools were founded by parents who had experienced racism in schools. Overall, current educational opportunities for indigenous youth depend on income, geographic location, and access. One of my interviewees from the Kichwa nationality attended an elite French school in Quito while others that I interviewed had attended the nearest community school.
ANDEAN AND WESTERN WORLD-VISIONS NEGOTIATED IN IBE

Andean and western world-visions are aspects of IBE that are constantly in conversation. Administration of IBE speak in ways and use jargon borrowed from western concepts of efficiency and economics, leaving alternative world visions on the side. At the local level, principals and teachers work to integrate Andean world-visions in a structure (classroom) that is western and was a space of oppression for much of Ecuador’s history. Examples of teachers negotiating their way within this structure find a third space to meaningfully share alternative cultures and epistemologies. As Ecuador competes for global recognition and President Correa seeks to fulfill that agenda, educational standards have meant closings of community schools. In my interviews, participants mentioned from 2008 to 2010, the Ministry of Education began what they called a “decentralization” process. It meant administration would become more localized and monitoring would become more frequent. The core of this process was an agenda to raise the quality of education as measured by a global metric of success, e.g. TERCE. Several small schools in rural areas took part in the evaluations and as a result were labeled as poor. These schools’ largest inefficiency was having a single teacher for all grades, an unidocente, an image that was conjured up for many I interviewed as a relic of Ecuador’s educational past. One district director of Kichwa nationality explained the process and rationale for what he calls “the unification of schools:”

What [the rural school] was before, we had one teacher for the whole school, for example in Peguche, we had 5 schools that were 200 meters, 100 meters from each other, one school with two teachers, another school with one teacher, another school with four teachers, here you had 60, 50 students, there you had 10, there you had 100, thus what did we do? What happened was to make a merger, it’s to say to merge two institutions into one, thus that is the process of fusions, to fuse and ensure there is only one educational institution from preK to high school because if we have one teacher per school with 10, 15 students, it is no pedagogically [sic] viable, what has been seen is you lose a lot of human talent... a teacher in charge of 10 or 15 students does not meet the goals set out by the Ministry. (District Director).

As described by the director, a teacher for only 10-15 students was not meeting the vision of a quality education according to the Ministry of Education. In discussing his rationale, the director draws from human capital theory and scientific efficiency arguments. The vision of the Ministry through interviews conducted over the summer and winter is characterized by high levels of Math, Reading, and Writing and a growing number of International Baccalaureate programs. Nowhere in the above director’s explanation of the decentralization process is there a mention of the
cultural and communal principles or criteria of evaluation outlined by the MOSEIB. In fact, the director utilizes Andean culture (dress and language) as evidence of cultural maintenance in the IBE system while defending small school closings in the name of efficiency.

The vision of education by the Ministry is closely aligned with President Correa’s vision of Ecuador. Seeing education as a mechanism to eliminate poverty meant single teacher schools had to be eliminated. Under President Correa’s term, plans to construct and develop new schools outfitted with science labs, basketball courts, and new classrooms were being constructed around the country. These new schools were called “Millennial Schools” representing Ecuador’s economic shift in the 21st century. A May, 2015 article in The Citizen, a newspaper headed by President Correa’s political party released a photo op of the President visiting Yasuni School in the northern Amazon province. In it, the newspaper stated “at this school, students come from five small schools [that previously existed] in the area, those [schools] that were closed down in order to improve the quality of teaching and to end single teacher schools” (Nunez). There were no reported interviews from those that had worked in the five schools nor their opinions on how to improve quality teaching. Closing these schools effectively meant improving the quality of education. In an interview with the vice minister of education, he states, “[a millennial school] is what we want, I mean to move from that school of sticks, schools of four sticks on a straw roof to a school that we have in the cities, the same or the best possible” (Vicemister). The vice minister is explicit that an attack on poverty necessarily meant involving the school and that it meant the replacement of rural with the urban, the impoverished with the modern. For Ecuador, millennial schools are social and cultural symbols of an elimination of social inequality and an improvement in the quality of education.

My visit to Chibuleo Millennial School, the only millennial school that is also a part of the intercultural bilingual system, was often utilized by administrators and even university professors in Ecuador as an exemplar. Out of all my principal interviewees, the principal of Chibuleo was most enthusiastic about me seeing the school site. In my interview with him, he described millennial schools had four outcomes: (1) to be a model school of quality education, (2) to enable all students regardless of background, ability, sex, and race, to attend (3) to regularly involve parents and the community, and (4) to place students at the center of education. In was in this last outcome that the principal provided what he saw millennial schools had done for his community: “I saw that the millennial school is also like a process of dignity and care for children their rights, the rights of the child has priority, and to be a priority the child should have good classrooms, a good teacher, good seats, good equipment, thus that is what it is to have a millennial school, we are trying to do that” (Chibuleo Principal).
On the ministry of education webpage millennial schools are described as originating out of the UN Millennial Development Goals. The webpage described that criteria for becoming locate a millennial school required that the area be lacking in education resources, have a high rate of poverty, and/or low educational attainment rates. Chibuleo, the town where the millennial school was built, had fit much of that description, but it was due to their large organizing power, they were able to make a proposal to the Ministry of Education to receive funding for the millennial infrastructure. The nearly four-year old school resides on a large slope where the bottom half remains as it was before and the top half is glistened in large new buildings with the *Ama la Vida* logo. Everyone I spoke with shared a sense of pride in the school as it served as a community resource. In my visit, I frequently saw parents walking on the campus grounds. Their involvement was key to several school events including a sports championship the school had sponsored.

While some administrators suggested a view of quality education as related to success and infrastructure, the Chibuleo principal described it in a way that built off of Andean and western world views:

> For me, quality is that those kids know two things, as much universal science as ancestral science, that the two things are united, like to be two human beings, two human beings in only one, that is what makes a student of quality, he/she knows how to work in the countryside, the knowledge to care for animals, to do all the human things, but also to know math, to know computing, all those things, that type of person is much more adaptable in any space. (Chibuleo Principal).

The principal was adamant that the school lacked a long way to go to provide quality education, but reiterated the importance of the ancestral world view in what they do. He prided over the fact some of their students were trilingual and lamented that this was overlooked by the standards and evaluations conducted by the Ministry. The principal’s view that both western and Andean world views were equally important to intercultural bilingual education was shared by many principals and administrators. Andean world views were often wrapped in bundles of logic that illustrated multiculturalism as learning science, technology, and English. The millennial schools are a place where the negotiation between world views are carried out in complex ways, where the ancestral is tucked in where convenient and where the appearance of a quality education can be furthered. Despite these complex negotiations and based on the principal’s explanation of schooling as a process of dignity and care for students, education can make a difference for all students. My visit to Chibuleo illustrates the power of the millennial schools to be an image of progress and quality as opposed to the single teacher school houses.
When asking what they say as the future of indigenous education in Ecuador, several of my interviewees mentioned the word professional. They expressed a desire for Kichwa youth to be political authorities and engineers. Two out of the three admin I spoke with had their training in engineering or economics. The director of province of Pichincha and of the Shuar nationality said, “before here professionals of nationality believed we were incapable, that we could not do anything, that we were lazy, etc., they told us stupid things, I principally said no, we have to change this, then the proposal that they told me I accepted and I came to work here in the subsecretary of intercultural bilingual education” (Zonal Director). The zonal director shared part of his desire to accept the job was to transform the poor image of indigenous people. Admin along with school principals see the IBE system as successfully as it provides youth formation.

While more and more of intercultural bilingual education is being defined and judged based on a global metric of success, this is not an inevitable outcome. Efforts to negotiate the western with the Andean are resulting in different pathways to teach the younger indigenous generation about the Quechua language and traditions. A prekindergarten teacher at Chibuleo School explained her use of songs to teach children Quechua. When I told her I would love to learn Quechua, she responded, “look, it’s easy” and began to sing a song in Quechua and then in Spanish. She told me “you can create [songs], you do not need to copy, you can create or expand.” Her and another prekindergarten teacher are in charge of the early education students at Chibuleo. When I asked the teacher to define quality education, she shared with me that it was important to teach the students to not lose their sense of identity, dress, culture, and language. In these early childhood examples, I began to see an opening for teaching the various world views indigenous youth experience and encounter. Within this opening, I believe Makiguchi’s Value Creating Pedagogy can serve as a pedagogical tool for interweaving the two worldviews within the Ecuadorian context. In Soka Education, Daisaku Ikeda writes, “I believe this is the ironclad principle --- indeed, the imperishable “golden rule” of human education and moral upbringing: that the fervent involvement of the teacher is precisely what gets the students involved” (148). Amongst all the educators I interviewed, these women were the most passionate about what they taught. Ikeda continues, “In this there is no trace of contemptuousness in the teacher’s attitude toward those who are learning; rather the relationship is maintained on a thoroughly equal and fair basis” (148). In the preK setting of the Chibuleo school, I could see the interactions between these teachers and the learners were one of mutual respect. Teachers came down to meet their students at eye level when they had a question. Students participated in decision-making voicing it was time for lunch and receiving a response back. Ikeda expresses that the teacher’s attitude and passion are key ingredients for creating this equal learning space: “reverberating from such a relationship is the resonance of individual personalities associating
and interacting in earnest and in harmony as complete human beings” (148). Ikeda further stresses that lack of such relationships are the “fundamental cause for the rising misbehavior, crime and other problems we observe among modern youth” (148). Indeed, my observation of the high school classrooms were devoid of such interactions. As students’ progress in the intercultural bilingual system, they learn less of the Quechua language and learning other skills, such as being technological proficient, become important. Building such equal relationships also become more difficult as students learn to accept authority figures, teachers, and that they can become authority figures themselves.

Makiguchi, the founder of Soka education, lived in the context of a militant country whose prescriptions for education were highly authoritative. As an elementary school principal, Makiguchi took bold initiatives that went against his time leading him to expulsions. Ikeda finds that teachers who remain true to the freeing purpose of education can actually meaningfully engage with their students. While several indigenous administrators and educators within the Ecuadorian school system struggle to negotiate between competing interests, Soka education can be a tool with which they can hold onto the liberating ideologies of education.

Conclusion

Over the past twenty-five years, Ecuador’s education system has undergone a number of changes in providing schooling to its indigenous and ethnic minority groups. IBE has transformed in structure with end goals being more defined by the Ministry of Education and less by the communities with which they are in place. The original aspirations with which indigenous leaders had fought are devalued in comparison to rigorous standards and evaluative processes carried out by the Ministry of Education. Despite a system that is increasingly caught up in western notions of success and quality, teachers on the ground level utilize the classroom space to uphold and value indigenous language and culture. Soka education and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s Value Creating Pedagogy can be utilized as a tool to affirm the original liberating intention of intercultural bilingual education. With current global educational trends toward efficiency, the pressure to fit a size fits all mold will only increase, making hope-filled pedagogical tools even more necessary.
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Abstract
In this paper, we examine the following concepts, Peter Elbow’s Believing and Doubting Game, Levi-Strauss’ Bricolage, Cooperrider’s Appreciative Inquiry, and Makiguchi’s value creation, in relation to our work as writing center consultants. We explore the paradigm shifts of writing pedagogy for the past thirty years to ask the question, is it possible to develop a writing center pedagogy that will advance writing center work in the 21st century. Since writing pedagogy has gone through several distinct stages, we have explored these additional methods and added them to our toolkit to make positive changes in the way the Soka Writing Center functions. Through our dialogues with students, we have the opportunity to expand the vision of what’s possible in a writing center.

Introduction
For centuries, philosophers have operated on a paradigm that has emphasized critical thinking. Peter Elbow, a leading scholar of writing center pedagogy, labels this type of thinking, “methodological doubt,” and suggests that we in the West have followed Socrates’ idea who “had a tendency to identify the intellectual process with the doubting game” (Writing without Teachers 150). The doubting game is the “kind of thinking most widely honored and taught in our culture. It is sometimes called ‘critical thinking.’ It’s the disciplined practice of trying to be as skeptical and analytical as possible with every idea we encounter” (“Believing Game” 16). Elbow continues by stating that the doubting game “seeks truth by indirection—by seeking error. Doubting an assertion is the best way to find the error in it” (Writing without Teachers 148). The assumption to doubt its validity is to find its weakness.

Along with doubt came the need for certainty. Descartes’ form of systematized doubting was practiced from the late Renaissance to the early twentieth century, an era in which the goal of certainty was accepted as attainable, even necessary to attain knowledge. In the early twentieth
At that time, the French author, Romain Rolland, stood alone in criticizing his and other nation’s leaders for succumbing to the view that “the fatality of war is stronger than our wills” (42). Why is it, he suggested, that we cannot explore alternatives to thinking that war is inevitable and peace is impossible. Daisaku Ikeda quotes Rolland to make the point that “ultimately, the root cause of conflict and human misery lies in an ignorance of and an inability to believe” (Living Buddhism 35). Similar to Ikeda, Elbow in “Methodological Doubting and Believing” posits that methodological belief is equally as important as doubting and keeps us from “succumbing to the hunger” for certainty (Embracing Contraries 257).

Ikeda’s philosophy of education derives from the Japanese educator Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, (1871-1944). Makiguchi innovated the concept of value-creative pedagogy in Japan that formed the basis for what is now referred to as “Soka Education.” Just as Rolland did in Europe, Makiguchi challenged the monopoly of the Japanese war machine in WWII, and its educational system which “implemented methods such as rote memorization for students to pass exams by storing vast quantities of knowledge” (Okamura 113-116). At Soka University, Makiguchi’s pedagogy is being studied, although, as Ryan Hayashi points out in his 2013 paper, “From a Philosophy to a Methodology: Implementing Soka Pedagogy,” it “does not yet encompass a comprehensive methodology” (14). Although Makiguchi outlined some specific ideas in his writings, many of them have yet to be translated into English.

Makiguchi was influenced by the American educator John Dewey who called for a Copernican revolution, by which the [student] becomes the center around which all educational practices and theories should revolve (Soka Education 9). He studied Dewey’s ideas in an effort to reform the Japanese educational system by developing his value-creating educational theories based on practical classroom experience. In Soka Education, A Buddhist Vision for Teachers, Students and Parents, Ikeda writes:

The university exists for the sake of the students. We must permit no one to take their freedom or dignity away. Faculty members, too, must put the concerns of the students first in all areas. They must respect and treasure the students as comrades and equals. This is the fundamental spirit of Soka University. (184)

Ikeda and Makiguchi stress that learning is an on-going process. Pedagogy has gone through several distinct stages— from transmitting knowledge to permitting learners to become not simply receptors of transmitted knowledge but also the creators of it. In other words, “teachers no longer exist as pipelines for information but have become catalysts to the informing process”
(Makiguchi 103-104). We are examining several of these pedagogies to see how they might be of value in writing center work.

It is important to think about the general purpose of education in order to define our purpose as consultants in the Soka Writing Center. The purpose of education can’t be remote from the purpose of life itself. As Makiguchi said in *Education for Creative Living*, “Purpose in Education must coincide with the larger life purpose of those being educated” (18). What does an individual need for his/her life and what does a society he or she is born into expect of him/her? Education has a higher purpose than collecting and storing knowledge. Education serves to cultivate a contributive individual who uses it for the needs of humanity. As Ikeda writes, “value-creation is the capacity to find meaning, to enhance one’s existence and contribute to the well-being of others.” Jason Goulah, Director of the Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education writes in “Makiguchi and Language, Value-Creative Composition Instruction: A Response to Ineffective Critical Approaches,” that “value creation is perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of Makiguchi’s philosophy” because it is the opposite of “value consumption,” which implies mere memorization and replication of words and concepts others have created. For students to develop agency that is currently lacking, he makes clear that Makiguchi “argued that such agency—that is, creating new value(s), not consuming existing ones—engenders fundamental happiness” (35). Using this as a starting point, we believe that creating value begins from appreciating the skills and potential that students already possess. Through our ongoing dialogue with students, we also “believe” we have the opportunity to cultivate human qualities of compassion and empathy and expand the pedagogical vision of what’s possible in a university writing center.

**Background**

Introduced to Elbow’s “Believing and Doubting Game” as a topic for a regional writing center conference, consultants in the Soka University Writing Center embarked on a research project to rethink how critical thinking and the traditional paradigm has influenced both writing tutoring and, by extension, composition studies. Elbow makes it clear that this paradigm is what he calls “the doubting game” and that he “is committed to it” (*Writing without Teachers* 150). But, because this “doubting game” primarily seeks “error,” he makes it clear that his “goal is only to make the doubting game move over” (150). The doubting game, he writes, “has gained a monopoly in our culture” and he wants equal status placed on what he calls “the believing game” (150). His claim is that “methodological belief” should be considered equally as important, for it seeks not only errors “but truths” (148). Both are needed, but, he writes that “however it happened, it seems as though when [anyone in the academic world] plays the doubting game he is [designed as] being rigorous, disciplined, rational and tough-minded. And, if he refrains from playing [it], he is being
unintellectual, irrational and sloppy” (Writing without Teachers 151). This, he concludes, is a trap, because it is a “negative argument” (161).

Exploring this context or history of the search for a new paradigm in writing center and composition studies pedagogy, we concluded that there was a need to look more closely at the scholarship, including that of Elbow, for the last thirty years. The traditional paradigm was outlined by Maxine Hairston in her 1982 article, “The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in Teaching Writing”.1 Within this paradigm, she writes, the teacher assumes that “composing” a piece of writing proceeds systematically and is mostly rational and linear, but invention is neglected and the teaching of writing is considered as teaching how to edit. It is also referred to as being “product-centered” in research studies, since the text has priority over the writer, and, according to Hairston, studies have shown that, under this paradigm, student writing does not improve (78). Hairston argues that writing teachers in the early 80s were “probably in the first stages of a paradigm shift,” where “the revolution” in the scholarship was “shifting” the teaching of writing from product-centered to “process-centered” (77). A process-centered paradigm prioritizes the writer’s composing process, which she states is nonlinear and inventive. The process itself is “holistic, viewing writing as an activity that involves the intuitive and non-rational as well as the rational faculties” (Hairston 86). This also coincides with Elbow’s idea of the “believing game” which he associates with the character traits of involvement, and a willingness to explore (Writing without Teachers 179). The believing game, he writes, “inspires an atmosphere of [acceptance and trust]” (185). The process-centered paradigm advances the idea that writing itself is an act of discovery.

On any given day at the Soka Writing Center, a student enters with an idea in mind. He or she has visited the center before, but does not come every day for grammar-checks, as some do. This student has above average writing ability, is obviously motivated, writes interesting and excellent papers, and comes just “to talk.” This is significant because, at the end of North’s paper, “The Idea of the Writing Center,” published in College English, he writes that writing centers should “finally be accepted ... as places whose primary responsibility is to talk to writers” (446). When North published his paper thirty years ago, however, the role of the writing center in general was in flux. Was it a language lab? Was it a skills center? The designation, “skills centers,” is mentioned in a 1981 book by Barbara E. Fassler Walvoord titled, Helping Students Write Well. In it she recommends to professors that “you may wish to let the skills center [emphasis ours] carry the ball for mechanics and spend your time on other kinds of writing and learning problems”

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1 In Hairston’s article, she references Kuhn as being the physicist who popularized the term “paradigm shift” in 1962 to characterize changes in scientific concepts.
This is exactly the terminology that North found “abhorrent” because he too was looking for a shift in the concept of writing centers (436).

As he points out, based on historical precedent, the metaphors most used in reference to writing centers were either medical (a “first aid station” or even a hospital for young writers) or athletically mechanical (“carrying the ball” for grammar for the entire English department). He describes their physical spaces as most often being “windowless, battered, [with] no budget and a director with limited status.” At the same time, from his viewpoint, professors and students in that era also seemed stuck between the product-centered and process-centered paradigm, as some deemed the writing center’s role as remedial (“fix-it-shop” for LOC—“lower order concerns”), while others considered its primary purpose as addressing the organization and logic (HOC—“higher order concerns”) of each academic paper (437).

The Soka Writing Center, on the other hand, is a large-windowed, well-lit, and very attractively appointed space, primarily staffed with skilled professionals who have advanced degrees and highly motivated student fellows, who include graduate students and those who love language and words in general. In our discussions about the ideas we are exploring for this paper, we have broached the subject of developing continuing relationships with students. Many of us have had the experience where a student comes into the center every single day for all four years and meets with just one or two particular consultants with whom they have developed a relationship. Our writing center, then, is exactly the type that should have fulfilled all of North’s dreams, where “the object is to make sure that writers are what get changed by instruction,” not text (438). In fact, the most famous and oft-quoted line from his 1984 paper is “Our job is to produce better writers, not better writing” (438). Beyond that, however, North makes specific reference to a concept that also defines Soka Education, which he called “the pedagogy of direct intervention,” but is also referred to by Makiguchi and others as “student-centered” (439). Despite North’s wishes, when he later wrote a revision of this paper, his frustrations had grown.

It is obvious that North wanted to break the “old” paradigm of a writing center, where the focus is to “correct” text, and establish a “new” paradigm, where the consultant is a direct participant in the “composing process” of writing. This is “preferably someone who will really listen, who knows how to listen and knows how to talk about writing too,” and who will “ask questions [student writers] would not think to ask themselves” (440). North’s idea, we feel, is similar to that proffered by Ikeda, which is to have “a dialogue about writing that is central to

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2 He expands on this concept in his article published in *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 33, No. 4, December 1982, titled: “Training Tutors to Talk about Writing.”
higher education” (440). Ten years later, when North “revisited” this issue in a subsequent paper, his apparent frustration in the first essay had led him to lose hope by the time he wrote the second. He must have experienced blowback from the academic community in the ensuing ten years as evidenced in his thinking, which had grown even darker about the future of writing centers: “Regardless of the commitment by a writing center staff to reform, the tendency seems not for the center to become the locus of any larger consciousness. On the contrary, there is a very strong tendency for it to become the place whose existence serves simultaneously to locate a wrongness” (“Revisiting” North 17). This seems strikingly similar to Elbow’s thought mentioned earlier that the doubting game is all about seeking “errors.”

In our opinion, the real hope for addressing the misconceptions surrounding a viable writing center pedagogy appears almost two decades after North’s 1994 “Revisiting” paper. In the 2008 article by Elizabeth Boquet and Neal Lerner titled, “After The Idea of a Writing Center,” they argue that the discourse on writing center pedagogy started by North out of frustration in 1984 did not advance it. Rather it cast more “doubt’ on the efficacy of the writing center mission and “disempowered” writing centers from actualizing change (171). Although they don’t reference Elbow in this paper, they imply that, ironically, North (perhaps unintentionally) emphasized the “errors” being made in both the writing center and the teaching of writing, whereas Boquet and Lerner seem to want to “believe,” like Elbow, that change is not only possible, but necessary.

North desired to quell the misconceptions of the writing center and establish an identity for it beyond the “basement fix-it shop” mentality (177). However, a quantitative analysis Boquet and Lerner performed on articles published in College English (from 1994 to 2008) “show no connection between composition studies and writing center work” (180), thereby illustrating that up to that point (2008), there hadn’t been any definitive writing center pedagogical development. They propose the development of an “emic theory or model, one developed by research that is conducted in writing center settings that could act as a lens to examine other teaching-learning contexts” (182). For those in the academy who doubt the efficacy of writing centers in general, they attest to the fact that such “research is thus both a means of improving practice and a way to defend that practice to a skeptical audience” (183).

As if answering a call, Matthew Heard in his 2008 article, "What Should We Do with Postprocess Theory?" states that “postprocess theory sets itself apart from predecessors by

3 Boquet and Lerner make it clear, however, of the impact of North’s original paper when they write that “no article about writing centers has been invoked more frequently” and “hardly a manuscript passed our desks without citing North” (171).
claiming that the very nature of written communication has been misunderstood until now” (284). He further states that “postprocess theorists trace the early misrepresentation of writing through the first part of the twentieth century, when instructors assumed that error-free writing identified intelligent human beings, to the midcentury, when a new wave of researchers claimed that writing could be perfected” (284). It is this research and others that has acted as a background for our research project this past year, to the point that we agree with Boquet and Lerner’s conclusion that “writing centers are sites rich with promise for the full range of scholarly inquiry” (186).

The Soka Writing Center has been such a site, a place where students from around the world are not only inspired by the school’s mission, but given the agency and validation to believe in themselves as capable writers, proven by the increase in the number of sessions since this research began. Through even more recent research and translation, more concrete methods that Makiguchi implemented in his instruction have emerged. Andrew Gebert’s 2013 article, “The Writing Subject: Makiguchi and the Teaching of Composition,” mentions that Makiguchi was also “frustrated at being only able to make grammatical notations and unable to instruct [students] on how to structure their compositions” (14). He wanted to challenge the “top-down, rote-learning educational methodologies that had long dominated the Japanese educational scene” and free students’ creative energies from such “external strictures to develop fully” (17). His goal, according to Gebert, was “to make composition instruction the object of scientific, rational research” (19).

By researching, exploring and experimenting with different methods, some dramatic changes have occurred in the writing center. Consequently, in research from North to Makiguchi, educators have vented their frustrations in various international publications; however, we are writing this paper out of a deep sense of commitment to and appreciation of Soka students and faculty. Yet the question remains, can we develop a writing center pedagogy?

Valuing the input of diverse disciplines, we propose to look at a bricolage of perspectives to explore the ways in which meaning is negotiated among mutually engaged participants within the writing center community. Bricolage in educational research denotes the use of multi-perspectives to lay the foundation for a transformative mode of inquiry. Our research approaches include Elbow’s believing and doubting game, Appreciative Inquiry and postprocess theory or, to be even more general, creativity.
Bricolage as Groundwork in Appreciative Inquiry, Methodological Doubting and Believing, and Postprocess Theory

In the Soka Writing Center, we have utilized bricolage as the groundwork to purposely explore various research methods to examine writing from multiple and sometimes conflicting theoretical and methodological perspectives to ascertain if it is possible to develop a writing center pedagogy. We embarked on this research as bricoleurs who believe learning is not a formulated system; it belongs to the realm of experience and experimentation based on generative methodologies that provoke and engender active agency by writing consultants and students.

During the last decade, bricolage has gained popularity in academic circles and increasingly educators have used the practice to gather and organize information (Rogers 1), a multi—methodological approach based on emergent design. Bricolage research is grounded in a critical notion of hermeneutics, the act of interpretation; thus, leading scholar of critical pedagogy Joe Kincheloe writes, “bricoleurs focus great attention on the act of interpretation in research, appreciating the distinction between describing phenomenon and understanding it” (“Next Level” 342). He further states, “Bricolage does not simply tolerate difference but cultivates it as a spark to researcher creativity” (“Describing Bricolage” 687). Lévi-Strauss’ concept of bricolage first appeared in The Savage Mind in 1962, where he states the foundation of bricolage comes from a common French expression that describes crafts-people who use tools at hand to construct new artifacts (16). He utilized the bricolage metaphor to seek out underlying structures that strongly influence human meaning-making. “For Lévi-Strauss, meaning-making bricoleurs combine their imagination with whatever knowledge tools they have at-hand in their repertoire [. . .] to meet diverse knowledge-production tasks” (Rogers 3).

Bricolage views research methods actively rather than passively by constructing rather than receiving the correct applicable methods (Kincheloe 21). In this way, utilizing the bricolage approach provides a more active role for us to shape and create research processes that involve far more than just following externally imposed procedures and theories; rather, sessions are constructed from the knowledge of multiple research methods that are best suited to the individual student’s needs at the time. The practice of bricolage allows the consultants to perform in situations not described from one point of view or frame of reference, thus providing them with the capability to meet the unexpected. Etienne Wenger, an educational theorist at the Institute for Research on Learning states that “communities of practice are about content—about learning as a living experience of negotiating meaning—not about form” (229).
In *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Wenger suggests that we all belong to communities of practice. “Designing for learning cannot be based on a division of labor between learners and non-learners, between those who organize learning and those who realize it, or between those who create meaning and those who execute it” (234). Consequently, a planned collaborative journey entails a process of social participation, not a hierarchical structure of tutors as instructors and students as learners. Students are introduced to an active process that envisions possibilities with the assumption that they want to learn purposely and effectively. Wenger notes that “learning cannot be designed because it belongs to the realm of experience and practice” (225). In relation to the largely misunderstood role of writing centers, transforming our tutoring sessions to be more responsive to student’s needs requires value-creating education.

Building on Ikeda’s message, promoting dialogic thinking both transforms and extends beyond the current one-to-one tutoring paradigm and integrates empowerment messages. Not only tutoring sessions but writing workshops and other outreach activities better serve the writing center mission if they are informed by pedagogies that emphasize collaboration, value differences, and generate new ideas. Generativity occurs when people and organizations challenge old assumptions and reconsider what is taken for granted to generate new ideas and fresh perspectives. Generativity is necessary for transformational change, which shifts from problem to possibility centric thinking and learning. For example, in a writing center session with a student named Yoko:

Yoko was writing an argumentative essay. She said, “My professor wants me to be creative.” However, she was unsure how to generate creative ideas. The consultant asked her, “Do you enjoying writing this paper?” Since she said yes, the consultant said that it must be easier to be creative when you enjoy the topic. To continue a lively discussion, the consultant started asking questions relating to her personal preferences. Personal questions within the context of the topic do seem to make Yoko eager to talk, thus generating new, unexpected ideas to ponder and address, which makes her argumentation possibility-centric and more creative.

Human beings have the inherent capacity to be creative; however, an environment conducive to creativity must be provided. If consultants can ensure a safe environment where students can feel free to express themselves, to appreciate their worth, and create on their own, a creative spirit can be achieved among our students. They can be influenced positively by the methodological belief approach that coincides with Ikeda’s belief in the impact of a teacher on a learner’s life. Writing consultants help students overcome the difficulties normally associated with learning. Ikeda also mentions how the role of the teacher supports “Socrates’ metaphor of the
educator as midwife” because the consultant does not do the work for the student (Soka Education 14).

In the spring of 2015, we submitted a proposal to a regional Writing Center conference asking attendees to explore an innovative framework for intergroup dialogue. Via Appreciative Inquiry (AI), we designed a presentation to help writing centers transform the image of remedial models or fix-it consultations into non-hierarchical collaboration. AI is an emergent design that avoids focusing on problem-solving; rather, it emphasizes imagination and innovation, reflects the interdependent nature of dialogue, and values non-hierarchical strategies. AI was developed by David Cooperrider, PhD of Case Western University in the 1980’s and was an outgrowth of action research and situated constructivism: the belief that knowledge is negotiated socially and everyone has different social experiences. It encourages an organization to examine what is working to locate areas of potential for transformation, and it gives the members of an organization the opportunity to have their voices heard. The following session illustrates this idea:

Mary, an infrequent user of the writing center, came in with an assignment asking her to argue that education plays a positive role in removing racism. Because she had different social experiences, she felt she didn’t have a voice to consider an opposite viewpoint. She and the consultant browsed the internet. The consultant talked to her as a peer with the same need to find answers. Collaboratively, they sought answers together and both were learning, which avoided the hierarchy of tutor/student. The student left the session less blocked.

Makiguchi believed that by “carefully guiding the students’ own process of learning,” students can be led toward discovery (Soka Education 14). At times, they seem unmotivated or unable to engage with their assignments because they do not believe in their abilities and often tend to overlook the potential they already possess. Mary’s apathetic attitude may be the result of not seeing the larger spectrum of the task at hand, and that experience gained can be applied to other situations. If consultants help students see their worth and potential through an appreciative approach, students can reinforce their present abilities and discover new capacities.

Makiguchi insisted that in terms of the interactions between teachers and learners, teachers should be “partners in the discovery of new models” (Soka Education 14). Educators Jeanie Cockell and Joan McArthur-Blair consider “the most powerful ingredient of an appreciative outlook is how faculty are encouraged in their teacher education or through their own self-development to see the learning environment through an appreciative lens” (201). It is common for students to view their writing assignments as merely a means to get a desirable grade to get
through the course. Oftentimes, they may be absolutely not invested in the assignment because they find it boring or irrelevant to their lives, and thus stuck and unmotivated to think generatively. Then, hopeless and in despair, they come for help without appreciating their capabilities. AI is about “helping students reframe the challenges that they might have; and it is about seeing that learners bring their entire lives with them into the classrooms and [writing sessions]” (Cockell and McArthur-Blair 201). The purpose is to convince students that their assignments are not necessarily isolated from their lives. By showing them a different perspective of the same topic, to see it in new ways that relate to their lives, the consultant encourages imagination and sparks interest in the writing task. Consultants demonstrate how students can generate new ideas by transferring old experiences into new situations and contexts. Value can be found in every writing assignment, and doesn’t stop at the moment of submitting a paper. That’s why the consultant sees every session as an opportunity to improvise, turning it into an experience of sustainable value.

Even though “teachers can never learn for students [and] students must be allowed to learn for themselves, [consultants] can guide them in the direction of learning for themselves” (Makiguchi 104). This emphasizes self-reliance on the students’ part, a quality that goes further than studying for a course. Likewise, in the writing center, consultants are not there to fix students’ papers by identifying errors and showing how to correct them. Instead, they lead the students in the right direction to practice being self-helpers in order to achieve and appreciate good writing skills.

The inquiry begins with appreciating the best of “what is,” which means the consultant and the students both appreciate their positions and contributions to the session. Writing sessions are guided by affirmative questions that envision possibilities to generate new insights and awareness. For example, rather than a writing consultant asking the student, “What can I do to help you,” an AI question could be, “What skills do you want to develop from designing and writing this assignment?” Questions strengthen and heighten the student’s potential, and dialogue between consultant and student stimulates greater awareness of agency in the session. “The value of Appreciative Inquiry is that it invites [students] into dialogue (dia – logos), which literally means “flow of meaning.” It is through (comm – unity) that [students] are not victims of circumstances, but participate in creating their reality” (Yoder 55). Specific questions lead to more enthusiastic dialogue as the following session exemplifies:

A student named Jose came in and wanted to make sure his paper had coherent organization. Through a dialogue about the transitions between paragraphs, occasional discrepancies emerged between his written statements and the intended ones. As errors
are indispensable in the creative process, the consultant reframed the dialogue to nurture the student’s spontaneity in order for him to see the relevance between the topic and his personal experience. As a result of this experimentation, the conversation became quite energetic and the student left this session, his first writing center experience, feeling more confident.

The practice of AI has led to a multi-methods approach to effect greater change in tutoring strategies. By studying and practicing AI, we have taken innovative action and found a common rhythm that has propelled us to experiment further and expand our areas of inquiry, not unlike an improvisational jazz musician. *Improvisus* (Latin) means “not seen ahead of time.” Improvisation involves exploration, experimentation, and examination like Lévi-Strauss’ concept of bricolage. “The improver begins to enter into a dialogue with her material: prior selections begin to fashion subsequent ones as themes are aligned and reframed in relation to prior patterns” (Barrett 615). Improvisation can be a collaborative and spontaneous process that offers both consultant and student the opportunity to experiment and believe in possibilities, rather than relying on the typical form of writing sessions activated by problem-solving methods.

The writing center is a social space where ideas are put into practice. According to Elbow, “Everyone agrees in the theory that we can’t judge a new idea or point of view unless we enter into it and try it out, but the practice itself is rare” (qtd. in Shapiro 2). Our mission has been to explore Elbow’s viewpoint of “believing and doubting,” not only to rethink the concept of critical thinking, but to explore what influence it has on writing tutoring. Elbow offers the following definition to support his theory: The Doubting Game is the “kind of thinking most widely honored and taught in our culture” (“Believing Game” 1). While he admits that he is on “slippery ground” when equating the doubting game with critical thinking, he argues that “despite all the attempts to de-fuse the word ‘critical,’ it nevertheless carries a connotation of criticism” (“Believing Game” 2). Because of Western culture’s focus on critical thinking, he posits that we have not yet developed a “belief” system that matches our natural tendencies to criticize: “We haven’t learned to use belief as a tool as we use doubt as a tool” (4).

Good writing requires critical thinking, but critical thinking should be freed from the pressures of doubting/certainty. Currently, the emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving mechanics, in Neal Lerner’s words, ”the reduction of good writing to correct writing, should be accompanied by the belief of perceiving oneself as a better writer” (102). Heard brings the concept of “believing” into the picture in a recent study of postprocess theory when he says to teach writing is to actively “exchange beliefs” (284). He suggests dispensing with skill-based instruction in favor
of collaborative and individualized instruction through a curriculum that stresses writing as a hermeneutic activity over writing as a closed skillset (284). Heard does not indicate that writing instruction should do away with process theory (just as Elbow does not indicate doing away with “methodological doubt” nor does Makiguchi want to do away with knowledge) but rather holds the view that this paradigm focuses on student-centered learning. The point is, like Cooperrider, he emphasizes an appreciative mindset that recognizes and emphasizes students’ strengths rather than weaknesses. Acting as bricoleurs, consultants highlight the strengths of “believing” to offer students a new vantage point to acknowledge and trust in their value and inherent potential as writers.

After examining the above innovative approaches to help students develop valuable qualities – confidence, resourcefulness, self-reliance, and self-motivation, we believe the key is to engage students in perceiving their potential through meaningful interaction. University of Vermont professor Nancy Welch examines a playful approach, where she articulates that Lacan’s “mirror stage” leads one to either promulgate accomplishment or protestation. She writes in a 1999 paper that a writing center is “imagined as reprieve from and protest against ‘the classroom as the site of alienating discourse and pressure of the symbolic order’” (66).

To illustrate, one student came into the Soka Writing Center saying he was feeling “judged” in his writing ability and made to feel that he was not a “good” writer. The consultant asked him where that idea originated, inside himself or from others. He laughed and said, “I was told.” The consultant then assured him that, in our writing center, we were not in the business of judging writing ability, but rather, in helping students get excited about writing. Even though the student was confused about his professor’s assignment, he was not protesting against it. Welch comments on a similar type of incident in her article, saying that no matter how the writing center mission is “read,” a student cannot come in and “fundamentally alter [his/her] relationship to” the assignment. It “remains an impervious, unchangeable reality principle with which [the student] must comply” (67). Welch further proposes that if a student comes in saying they are “hopelessly blocked,” the consultant can ask the question, “What kind of writing do you feel confident about?” Then, using whatever the student indicates, whether it is poetry, email or a grocery list, she suggests that the consultant uses that genre to help the student access academic writing. She encourages the consultant to “create a space for writing and talking beyond the present assignment, and approach it with a “sense of play” (69).
This writing session can serve as an illustration of Elbow’s point about the energy released when people are “successful in playing the believing game” (Writing without Teachers 181). According to him, “when you succeed in seeing something the way someone else sees it—and it is different from the way you have been seeing it—this almost invariably produces a release of energy in you” (181). This is perhaps what Welch was referring to in Lacan. And this also is reflected in Okamura’s article on Makiguchi, where he states that “Makiguchi suggested play as one of the methods to cultivate knowledge” (131).

Conclusion

In this paper, we began with the premise to “reframe” critical thinking into appreciative belief, and we acknowledge that Peter Elbow refers to this type of thinking as “methodological doubt,” which does not denigrate critical thinking, but looks at it through a different lens. Evidence from earlier literature on critical thinking emphasizes student inadequacy and incompetence (Tsui 740), which might prove Elbow’s point that the problem with doubt is that it enjoys a monopoly in educational instruction. However, later research looks at this same issue from an instructor’s vantage point to “the specific instructional techniques that effectively enhance students’ abilities to think critically,” (741). Different perspectives show that pedagogy in composition studies has gone through several distinct stages and utilized various approaches that have influenced writing center practice. Utilizing a bricolage of perspectives as a foundation provides the flexibility to actively research and practice multiple methodologies that honor each student’s individuality and creativity in writing sessions. The research has found that gains in student critical thinking occur when “faculty members encouraged, praised, or used student ideas” (741). In this way, we are following in Makiguchi’s footsteps by “working to reform [a] flawed system on one hand and creating value by ensuring students’ academic achievement on the other” (Goulah 34). As Goulah also mentions, Makiguchi “couched composition instruction” in community studies, rather than on “the free or rote methods popular at the time” (23). Acting as bricoleurs, we are adding Appreciative Inquiry, Methodological Doubting and Believing, and Postprocess Theory to our toolkit. To formulate an answer to our earlier question, is it possible to develop a writing center pedagogy, our own research has pointed us in the direction that the only viable methodology to both meet individual students’ needs and enhance the writing consultant’s ability to communicate effectively is to create an appreciative environment of collaboration that spills over into the entire university community. Like Rolland, who understood the importance of exploring alternative thinking to achieve peace, our intention in the Soka University of America Writing Center is to continue our quest to discover whether believing is as believable as doubt.
Works Cited


Montessori in a Soka-Inspired Early Education Environment

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Abstract

We set out three years ago to establish a preschool and kindergarten to implement the Soka vision of education. Creative Learning A Global Village Academy opened in Orange County, California in September 2013. We evaluated and selected curricula, methods and materials to be used in the school based on a consonance or consistency of the underlying principles with Soka pedagogy, as well as on the proven track record of the method or curriculum. The design decisions and initial results of five months of implementation were presented in SECRC10 (Hands, 2014), in 2012. In this paper we summarize our implemented methods, share our observations and results after two years, and examine current and future challenges.

Introduction

Three years ago we aimed to implement the Soka vision of education at the preschool and kindergarten level. We committed to a vision of individual focus on each child, an advanced level of academic learning, and the central incorporation of the arts and global cultures, as the best way to provide an education for these times. We had to address the question -- how does a powerful educational philosophy become implemented in the classroom and in the day-to-day workings of a school?

Creative Learning A Global Village Academy opened in Orange County in September 2013 as a center for early childhood education, with three key values -- Friendship, Exploration, and Culture. We evaluated and selected curricula, methods and materials to utilize in our school based on a consonance or consistency of the underlying principles with Soka pedagogy, as well as on the documented effectiveness of the method or curriculum. Our methods include Montessori, Doman, Dewey, “Village”-style cultural immersion, and linguistic design of self and community. We present our compendium of methods, share observations and results, and present our current and future challenges.
Soka Education

Soka educational philosophy is broad and encompassing, allowing room for cultural and regulatory specification, and encourages individualization based on a compassionate understanding of the child. The seven key elements of Soka Education are\(^1\) (1) Exchanges and Dialogue, (2) Peace and Human Rights, (3) Coexistence with Nature, (4) Foreign Language Education, (5) Reading, (6) Intellect, and (7) Creating Culture. The Soka focus areas are delineated in our previous paper, and indicate a direction and potential curriculum areas but do not specify a day-to-day curriculum. Soka education “aims to encourage children to acquire basic life skills, to develop creativity and the ability to take action, and to strengthen students’ desire to contribute to society in the future.”\(^2\) In addition, Soka education is "based on the spirit of caring for each and every child in order to unlock their individual potential, and to foster global citizens capable of contributing to the betterment of society.”\(^3\)

Establishing Creative Learning A Global Village Academy

Our statement of philosophy, mission, and goals, and our rules for students and teachers present our understanding of key principles of Soka education, and directly reflect the principles and mottoes of the Soka schools.

A Global Village Academy Philosophy\(^4\):

1. Each child is an individual complete with character, personality and varying emotions. We are dedicated to the happiness of every child.
2. Children are natural learners, equipped with talent, curiosity and intelligence.
3. Through healthy and happy interactions with others, the young child naturally learns to appreciate human interconnection.
4. Nature is the greatest teacher, and the natural world, the most beautiful classroom.
5. Culture is creative activity, not just passive observation. Through the cultural arts, children develop their artistic talents and skills while learning about the world.

\(^1\) Center for Humanistic Education, Soka University, Soka Gakuen School, Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 1973. Print.
\(^3\) Ibid.
Our mission is to observe and engage our students as unique individuals and foster their development in terms of rich humanity and practical capabilities. Our goal is that out of their experiences at Creative Learning A Global Village Academy, the children will learn to value each other as friends, enjoy nature, appreciate cultural differences and be happy people.

Rules for students:
1. Greet everyone with a smile!
2. Juniors, respect seniors; seniors, protect juniors.
3. Do not let your parents worry (especially your mother).
4. Do not build your happiness on the unhappiness of others.

Rules for teachers:
1. Be devoted to the happiness of the students.
2. Expect to grow and learn continuously forever.
3. Be prepared to inspire others with the radiance of your own life.

We determined to have an environment and a program that reflected the Soka elements, focused on Culture, Exploration and Friendship, our three key values.

Curriculum Decisions

A typical day at A Global Village includes a combined curriculum of five methods. The first is the Montessori method developed by Maria Montessori in 1918\(^5\). The second is the neuro-educational approach pioneered by Glenn Doman in 1955\(^6\). The third is a “village-style” world cultures approach developed by us to reflect what has existed all over the world as children learn within the family and in the larger community. In addition, where possible for the age group of our students, we include problem-solving, value-creative activities as suggested by Dewey\(^7\). Finally, conversations for linguistic design as developed by Fernando Flores are used to consciously develop self and community\(^8\).

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5 Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, p. 56.
The Montessori and Doman approaches provide the core curriculum at the school. The base structure of our academic environment is Montessori. Along with the curriculum we have also adopted the classroom management style, lesson planning approach and academic progress evaluation carried out in a Montessori environment. The Montessori approach posits that children who have been allowed to take responsibility for their work and have developed an essential level of self-discipline and responsibility experience high self-esteem and are prepared for life.

Doman provides an approach for presenting information to very small children that is respectful and enjoyable, focused on intense, frequent, short interactions. In our experience, Doman presentations are able to be naturally incorporated into the life of a classroom in which the major focus may be another curriculum. As such, the Doman approach, while effective as part of a preschool curriculum, does not constitute a curriculum or provide the basis for a complete lesson plan in itself. However, because of its extreme effectiveness, we consider Doman and Montessori as equally contributing to our academic program.
Dewey’s project-oriented and problem-solving approach is at present showing up only occasionally at A Global Village, given the age of our current students. Our challenge is to identify problems and projects that can be undertaken by our preschool and kindergarten students. We are able to affirm that given a problem to be solved or a project goal, the students will do all of the learning required to solve that problem or to accomplish that (achievable) goal.

Self-invention as a linguistic skill allows even very young people to decide consciously what they become how they want to be, in a context of friendship and loving community. Humans are constantly inventing themselves, constantly becoming. This is a skill that many think occurs in young adulthood, but is actually a possibility for younger people as well. In fact, some consider that character is formed by age five.

In the area of global arts and cultures none of the academic approaches has been as satisfactory as the approach actually in operation in many cultures of the world, which is a very casual exposure to music, dance, and visual arts not necessarily created only for children. Culture is ambient! It is in the air! Using our “village-style” world cultures approach we enable our students to take one more step into a culture, being a participant more than an observer, thus making a stronger human connection to a human experience. Acquisition of cultural arts is supported as a “right-brain” activity. It is natural for our students to arbitrarily begin to hum a song in Portuguese or Hindi or be surprised that their parents don’t know the most famous Vietnamese nursery rhyme.

Montessori – Analysis
We explain our two basic academic approaches including where we deviate from the method as defined in order to support each of our children to achieve the learning that they are capable of. We also share some actual results of our students in the text boxes.
Montessori method is a hundred years old. There are many versions of the Montessori approach, including a strict adherence to original methods (AMI), flexible implementation of the original methods (AMS), and broad approach even more open to recent results in education theory and technology (progressive Montessori). The aspects of Montessori method we embrace fully are the following:

- The materials are attractive, tactile, aesthetically pleasing, and provide intrinsic motivation for work. Almost all our classroom materials available for independent work are Montessori. Children learn by doing, taking physical actions.
- Within broad limits, the students are able to choose their own work. There is a high level of freedom and individual choice.
- Each Montessori work has a clear beginning, end, and process. This provides satisfaction of a job well done. Even when we add teacher-made works, we follow this principle.
- The well-organized classroom provides a sense of order and calm, keeping the mood productive and undistracted. The sense of order and meticulous care of the environment is itself a natural encouragement for calmness and work.
- Working solo respects the child working and prevents conflicts over materials. We keep this principle in most part, providing whole-class activities and group work in addition.

From Shy Kid to Leader

When our son started school at A Global Village he was incredibly shy. The more we made efforts to push him into the limelight, the further he would retract. In his previous care environment, he would sit in the corner and observe the other children all day. He didn't interact with them; he didn't have any friends there. Three weeks into this program he started talking about the interactions he was having here, in six weeks in he was talking about his friends. When I take him to work he interacts comfortably with my peers, staff, and supervisor. He has made some incredible friendships at this school. Even though he only comes once a week now, he still talks about the friends he has from here. Transitioning into first grade in public school has been difficult for our son. He came home from the first day of his new school proclaiming “It was a disaster! Take me back to A Global Village!”

From another parent, “His son is amazing. I would never have known that he was such an introvert; he has done so much for my son!”

This child is not only not an introvert, he is the first to volunteer, the first to offer a suggestion. He also has incredible clarity in assessing what is going on in any given situation, a combination of characteristics that has made him a leader in his class.
- There is no competitive aspect or comparison with others. There is no testing; the goal is mastery. A child who is learning receives repeated presentation, and opportunity for practice until mastery is achieved.
- Injunction to the teacher: Never speak ill of the child in his presence, never speak ill of the child in his absence, respect the child who is working, is not working, etc.
- Montessori provides a clear focus on grace and courtesy as a subject for mastery. In a world that can be chaotic, Montessori provides a haven of calmness, order, and decorum.

Elements of Montessori that we do not subscribe to include the following:

- Montessori can be regimented, insisting on a uniform process for each task, discouraging “creative” alternate use of the materials, and insisting on a strict sequence of lessons.
- Some of the sensorial distinctions (sounds, colors, textures) are so subtle as to be demotivating.
- Working by oneself (or only with a senior/junior demonstrating) lessens the opportunity of peers working together.
- Quiet controlled style is only one option. Other intelligences demand other methods.
- Approval is matter of fact; the benefit of this is that the work can be its own reward. At the same time we see great benefit of the “granny factor” or the “cheerleader” as motivator.
- Part of Montessori effectiveness requires “normalization” of the student, establishing a culture of quiet work and internal motivation. In today’s world the challenges to motivation and focus are quite different from 100 years ago.
Doman -- Analysis

The Doman approach is based on the belief that all children are potentially geniuses. The Institutes recognizes parents as the most important teachers that their children will ever have. Glenn Doman explains that the objective of his “gentle revolution” is “to give all parents the knowledge required to make highly intelligent, extremely capable, and delightful children, and, by so doing, to make a highly humane, sane and decent world.”

Glenn Doman’s methods are based around the following core beliefs:

1. Every child has genius potential. Stimulation is the key to unlocking a child's potential. This is accomplished by offering information in an organized way, joyfully.

2. Teaching should commence at birth. The younger the child, the easier it is for him or her to learn.

3. Children love to learn. “Kids would rather learn than eat; kids would rather learn than play. In fact, kids think learning is play.”

4. The parent (or adult) who knows and adores the child is the best teacher. Teaching and learning should be joyous for teacher and student.

5. Teaching and learning never involve testing. Teaching is a pure process of giving information without asking for it.

Commitment to the Student’s Lifelong Happiness

Our son is extremely emotional; with all the moves we have made, it takes him a while to form new attachments. When we moved here he had difficulty adjusting. He was self-conscious, without a lot of confidence. He would get upset if he felt he was being attacked, or think someone was making fun of him and would completely break down and lash out. He could completely destroy a classroom. I would go in there and it would look like a tornado went through it. He was kicked out of two daycare centers. Once he became upset, there was no pulling him back, no getting through to him until he had exhausted himself. I was wondering if I should quit work to stay home with him. I felt the other preschools gave up on my child. I called A Global Village. They said, “Come visit, let’s see how it goes.” They never saw the very disruptive side of my son! They worked with him and met him at his level.

He loves this place; and is a completely different kid. He never lashes out as he used to. He still sometimes can feel like he’s being picked on or have a problem with someone or something, but never to the point it was before. Here, he is their child too. They care about him as much as you do. They want him to succeed as much as you do. They see how awesome he is, like you do. This place is amazing and wonderful.

Our son left A Global Village and went to kindergarten, where his classmates are learning to identify individual letters by sound, whereas he could read and write sentences even before he started kindergarten. The teacher didn’t know he could read and write until the first conference, because he was hiding his capability. By the first quarterly meeting the public school kindergarten teacher told us that he had already met all the benchmarks for kindergarten. There was nothing more in their curriculum for him to do. He is smart enough to go to first grade, but they could not meet him at that level within the limitations of the elementary school. Needless to say, he is back at A Global Village Academy!

The Doman educational approach is focused on the neuroplasticity of the young child's brain, which posits that presenting information clearly with the appropriate length and frequency, supports brain development. Neuroscientists are continuing to confirm Doman’s revolutionary work about the immense capabilities of very young children, and the role that physical mobility and mental stimulation play on brain development.

Math, reading and general knowledge programs in the Doman system consist of very short, joyful lessons given three times per day on each topic, starting from the age of three months. In a day there may be 10 or 15 short topics addressed. We are seeing accelerated learning using this method.

The Doman approach presents factual knowledge, and is less focused on process whereas the reverse is true in Montessori. Putting the Doman and Montessori curricula and classroom methods together in the implementation of Soka education in the classroom in a single lesson plan initially presented some challenges. We tried interleaving Doman elements and Montessori works in a single work session; we tried using the approaches in separate work periods. Because the Doman presentation is in short bursts throughout the day, we have reverted to the interleaved approach, with good results. The success of this approach relies on careful implementation at a very detailed level.
Results and Observations

Creative Learning Academy is in its third year of operation. Our students enjoy attending and many of the students exceed the expectations we have set for them. Language learning is occurring naturally and spontaneously through music and poetry. We are including some immersion experiences in Spanish. The children are capable and eager to learn. It appears that the only requirements for children to benefit from our academic, art and global cultures offerings are their natural curiosity and love of learning new things. The parent response has also been positive, acknowledging the learning the children are accomplishing. We are including some parent statements about their children’s progress in the text boxes. One parent summed it up, “A Global Village is a place where people know your kid’s potential and care enough and have the resources to see your child reach that potential.”

Joy of Learning

One of the best decisions I have taken for my son is to send him to this school. My daughter is performing above average in the third grade in public school, which looks so impressive in terms of the facilities, equipment etc. When I compare with my son, however, he is altogether at a different level. **Though he is not yet in kindergarten, he is solving the same type of math problems my daughter is solving in 3rd grade and doing so with great enjoyment!** He is also a good reader! He is able to read the words on a truck passing by at 50 miles an hour. **Lastly, there is a good cultural mix here, with people of different backgrounds and different ethnicities. This supports the kids learning to respect other cultures.**

Dialogue and Friendship

Our student, C, had finished lunch and was getting ready for the half-hour “quiet” period. Student R was still eating. The teacher asked the rest of the children to go to their respective quiet time spots. C and R have adjoining quiet spots, and C looked crestfallen. The teacher asked if he was sad, and he said, “I’m all by myself.” **Student R noticed this and very quickly finished lunch, cleared the table, and went to join his friend. As he got to his place, the teacher heard C say, “What should we talk about?”** What an amazing, conscious, participatory way to start a conversation!

While visiting Soka High School in Tokyo, preparatory to opening Creative Learning, I wondered about the impact of technology on relationships among the students. The faculty member responded, “I am not worried about that. Our culture of personal communication is so strong that we regularly hear our students going to lunch or recess, saying, “Let’s have a dialogue about…””
These results we are reporting are not unusual at A Global Village Academy. The experiences and observations shared by our parents are seen across the board. In fact, family after family comments on the improvements they see in their child’s capabilities and comportment. We have heard many more stories about the inseparable friendships the children have formed here, ability in reading, culturally rich learning, and strides in personal development. In observing our students’ progress, we see four elements appearing repeatedly:

- Joyful Academic Excellence
- Creative Cultural Competence
- Skill in Inventing Self and Community
- Value Creation

To what do we attribute the results these children are producing? What is working here is our commitment to our Soka-inspired vision-mission, constantly working with particular students, checking in with each other so that we are doing the right things in the right way. The methods as we are integrating them are enabling our students to exceed our own expectations! Our combined curriculum, which was designed out of our commitment to the success of our students, appears to be a major contributor to student success in the hands of capable committed teachers. We have detailed our methods above. However, this is not a permanent nor exclusive selection; nor are we aiming to be representative schools for these methods, since our overarching goal is the implementation of Soka education principles.

While there are aspects of our selected curriculum and methods that we rejected or chose not to use, for the purpose of achieving a classroom atmosphere of calm, control, and undistracted openness, the Montessori method is unparalleled in effectiveness.

The Doman approach provides an alternative path for motivation by providing the additional factors of encouragement and victory in the work itself. In the Doman method, victory builds upon victory. There is no limit or sequence imposed on what can be presented to the child. They do not have to achieve developmental stages in order to have information presented; rather, having the information presented prompts the accomplishment of developmental stages.

Peace and Human Rights:

Nelson Mandela passed away on December 6, 2013. **We did a memorial service for him the next day, and were possibly the only preschool to do so.**

The children learned one of the important songs of his captivity, that captured the world’s imagination and helped get him released in 1990.
Doman’s presentation approach of quick, intense frequent sessions allows a large amount of material to be presented to the child. It also allows the teacher to flexibly follow the child’s interest.

Both methods are not primarily focused on motivation through problem solving or value creation, though they are effective in support of these processes.

We are observing the benefits of the Montessori approach, particularly to support the academic work. We honor the child’s innate tendencies with the goal of developing focused conscious action in everything they do, in keeping with the Montessori method. We provide an orderly environment with total respect for the dignity of the child’s work. The teachers speak calmly and move calmly, modeling conscious action. The benefits of the Montessori daily living segment, including Grace and Courtesy, and Responsibility for the Environment are absolutely upheld in the classroom. The result is an environment of respect for the dignity of work and of the student.

The Doman approach also supports our goals by enabling the quality presentation of a large amount of information on any given topic with a high level of intensity, frequency and clarity.

Challenges

The greatest challenges for us as educators are the following; in dealing with these we have honed our skills using our various methods and also worked to be radiant examples.

Transition to Kindergarten:

Our son left A Global Village and went to kindergarten, where his classmates are learning to identify individual letters by sound, whereas he could read and write sentences even before he started kindergarten. The teacher didn’t know he could read and write until the first conference; because he was hiding his capability. By the first quarterly meeting the public school kindergarten teacher told us that he had already met all the benchmarks for kindergarten. There was nothing more in their curriculum for him to do. He is smart enough to go to first grade, but they could not meet him at that level within the limitations of the elementary school. Needless to say, he is back at A Global Village Academy.
1. Establishing a Mood of Learning (Motivation)
What motivates a child on a given day? Is motivation a big issue or a non-issue? We have students who say, “I LOVE work!” We also have students whose day in the Montessori work portion is not regularly productive. What educational experiences enhance student enthusiasm? As Montessori says, “We do not want complacent pupils, but eager ones” (Montessori, 1989, p. 11). Our goal is that work itself is its own reward. Completing one step gives access to new materials.

2. Discipline and “Control”
We do not utilize the concept of classroom control. Rather we are interested in building care and appreciation. We believe that in the sense of appreciation for the school and for the self, we will find respect for the system, task completion, using material with care, avoiding distractions, over-socialization, and care of the environment and of the earth.

3. Interpersonal Relationships and Self-Esteem
This area can be difficult in the presence of multiple personalities and preferences. It is really a challenge to the capacity of the teacher. In the guidance from Daisaku Ikeda we find that a person who is engaging in negative action is usually the weak one. We utilize linguistic design principles to create a new possibility for the perpetrator and the victim by simply naming the problem, i.e. the weakness of the bully, in the context of love and acceptance in the community.

4. Technology is powerful, popular, and tempting. We have a policy to govern its use. We use technology when the intended use is creative, collaborative and purposeful. At least two of the three characteristics must be present for a particular use of technology to be made available to students. Computers are used regularly to present the Doman curriculum. We are considering adding another learning paradigm, SOLE (Self Organized Learning Environment), developed by Sugata Mitra, that is computer-based and enables students to carry out conscious investigations.

Future Steps
Based on the results thus far, we have made the decision to extend our program into the elementary grades, and have registered with the Department of Education as a private elementary school. This expansion will offer more scope for project and problem-solving

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approaches in our palette. We look forward to similar great results working with an older population.

**Conclusion**

Based on two and a half years of results operating Creative Learning A Global Village Academy as a Soka-inspired preschool with a compendium of five methods put to use in the curriculum, we report positive results in our students in terms of academic advancement, cultural maturity, personal development and capacity to create value. We have clarified the mix of approaches, the fine-tuning of our implementation, and the fundamental commitment to the desired result as the reasons for this success. We have also identified four sub-areas in which we are developing effective solutions based on our approaches, and which we will continue to clarify in the future. Lastly, we have introduced our next step forward, which is to create an elementary program built on our experience with preschool and kindergarten, and based on similar pedagogical foundations.
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