

Daisaku Ikeda and Soka Education

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Good morning, everyone. I am Koichi Kandachi, and I am director of Soka Education Research Institute in Soka University.

Today I will talk about “Daisaku Ikeda and Soka Education,” and the purpose of this presentation is to explore Dr. Ikeda’s theory of education from his application of the theory in interactions with students. I entered Soka Junior High School (Soka Gakuen) in 1968 as the first batch of students. In my school days, Dr. Ikeda taught us about what Soka education is from various aspects. I hope my presentation will become an impetus from which you would be able to think further about Dr. Ikeda’s theory of education.

First of all, I would like to talk briefly about Soka Education Research Institute in Soka University. This institute was opened on April 2nd, 2006. Our main responsibilities are collecting and compiling the University archives since the foundation of Soka University. However, history of Soka University is not completed simply by collecting data since the university opened. As you know, the founder of our university is Dr. Daisaku Ikeda. But in the background of realization of Soka University, there are important ideas inherited from Josei Toda. Furthermore, Toda inherited ideas and thought from Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. Thus, we can say that Soka University would have not been founded without mentor-disciple relationships between Makiguchi and Toda, Toda and Ikeda. This is because our research should focus on ideas, philosophy, and practices of these three people: Makiguchi, Toda, and Ikeda. In other words, the culmination of the work of these three men is “Soka Education.”

“Soka Education” was named through discussions between Makiguchi and Toda, and Dr. Ikeda established the environment which this theory of education is put into practice.

Based on this historical background, we began to collect data regarding these three mentors. In

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本稿は日中国交正常化40周年を記念した第7回池田大作思想国際学術シンポジウム(上海師範大学)〔2012年10月27日～28日〕での発表の記録である。

Soka University, “the committee on data collection of Soka Education” was originally established in 1995. The committee was then developed into “Soka Education Research Center” which opened on November 16, 2000. Data and document collection which was started by the committee is continued by the “Soka Education Research Institute.” At the present, a total of 170,000 books, magazines, and autograph manuscripts are conserved and managed in our institute. We are currently in the process of archiving the data, as we prepare for making the data available in catalogs. Moreover, the “Daisaku Ikeda Research Center” and the Japan branch of “The Center for Dewey Studies” are established as part of our institute. We are organizing data in order to assist researchers on Soka education.

As I mentioned earlier, I entered Soka Junior High School (Soka Gakuen), in 1968 as the first batch of junior high school students. Soka Gakuen was the first school which was established as the place to put theory of Soka education into practice. At that time, the founder Dr. Ikeda was 40 years old. He was much younger than my present age. He visited the school almost every month, and he gave a lot of encouragement to students. He played table tennis, outdoor tennis, volleyball and even swam with us, and we were able to create precious memories with him. Dr. Ikeda seemed to be having fun and enjoying himself very much.

I suppose that everyone who is present here today has a lot of opportunities to read Dr. Ikeda’s formal speeches and guidance to Soka gakuen students in school events. Therefore, I would like to talk about my personal memory of Dr. Ikeda, an informal aspect of Dr. Ikeda.

When I was in the second-year in junior high school, Dr. Ikeda made several suggestions on compiling a record of the school’s history. Then 5 junior high school students and 5 high school students were chosen as committee members, and the committee began to work on it. As a committee member, I had opportunities to listen to Dr. Ikeda talk over lunch once a month. I think through these lunches, Dr. Ikeda got to know my name and face well.

In the following year, I became a third year student and on one occasion we went to a seaside school. In Japanese primary and secondary education, there is a traditional custom of experience learning. Teachers take students to oceans and mountains during the summer vacation period, and they provide active learning program which cannot be done in classrooms. Soka gakuen also had such active learning program since the school opened. We spent three days in one facility in Miura-city, Kanagawa prefecture. When I participated in this program, Dr. Ikeda visited us, and he gave us encouragement. In the daytime, we enjoyed swimming in the sea to our heart’s content, and we went back to the facility in the evening time. Dr. Ikeda asked us to the garden and treated us to corn, watermelon, and potatoes. And he spoke to students one by one from the youngest students, those in the first year of junior high school to the older

students, looking warmly at each student's face. Dr. Ikeda said "I don't know you very well yet," or "Nice to meet you," to first-year students because they entered the school only six months ago. Dr. Ikeda remembered several second-year students and he talked to them saying, "Hello, it has been a long time" and "How have you been?" He was smiling all the time. But when it was my turn, his smile was gone. As soon as he looked at my face, he said "You shouldn't be so dependent on the school for everything. Become a person of highest integrity who can contribute to the development of your alma mater." I was shocked and surprised. These words of Dr. Ikeda became the most important prime point of my life. I realized I completely depended on the school, without taking initiative for my future or having clear goals in life. I deeply realized then for what purpose I was studying. I could say that Dr. Ikeda's words profoundly influenced the course of my life. There are many people who have such kind of experiences. Dr. Ikeda's education is in paying attention to each person and nurturing that person. In other words, the essence is to respect and cherish each person without any limits.

This is my personal memory, but in order to explore Soka education, I believe focusing on Dr. Ikeda's message to the first graduates about to leave the school will shed a light on its principles.

He gave a speech saying, "I would say 'congratulation' with my whole heart to you, as the first batch of students from Soka Gakuen." Then he continued:

"What I would like to ask of all of you, which I've shared with you for the past three years of your school life here, is to live a life of integrity as a human being, a life true to yourself. This is my sincere wish for you which I earnestly pray for."

It meant that Dr. Ikeda was hoping for each student to be one's own self, cherishing individuality, and living a genuine life. He continued saying, "You don't have to overextend yourself. You don't have to embellish yourself for appearance sake. I don't want you to live a life of falsehood."

He continued as follows:

"What is genuine life? It is life which has the quality of being authentic, of being yourself. What is most noble in one's life? It is to live one's life on the path of what one believes with persistence, confidence, and pride."

These words are not said to individuals of vast experience and knowledge. Rather, it was a message sent to high school graduates. It was an impassioned message, said with greatest respect, to youth who are taking their first step forward the future.

He continued; the following words gripped my heart. "What we learned in school is not all there is to learn in education. Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American liberal theorist, said 'the things taught in colleges and schools are not an education, but the means of education.' In that sense, the true value of education you received is determined by your fundamental attitude toward your own life."

What was taught in university is not an education, but the means of education. It is only one of the techniques and ways. That's why the true meaning of education is determined by people who had that

education, and it is determined by the graduate's attitude to life.

As we all know, Soka means "Value creation," but exactly what value do we create? The answer lies in the value of each human being, the value of living life as a human being; the value of our attitude toward life. Thus, to create value which arise from the lives and attitudes of human beings: that is the goal of Soka education. And, creating peace is the goal of Soka education. In creating value, it is not something someone else besides oneself would accomplish. We need to create values by ourselves through individual motivation. We need to be forward-looking. If we have negative attitude, we cannot create value. In that sense, creating value is to overcome obstacles, struggles, and hardships without stopping. I think it is important that we demonstrate our ability to positively overcome such obstacles.

To nurture each student who will have this kind of outlook and inner strength; and, for the teacher himself to grow as a person: this is Soka education. As more individuals embrace these values, I believe the creation of sustainable peace can be realized.

Thank you very much for your attention today.