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## CHAPTER FOUR

### Value Creation as the Aim of Education: Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Soka Education

**Andrew Gebert and Monte Joffee**

THE IDEAS of Japanese educator and philosopher Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944) have had an enduring impact in Japan and elsewhere in the world. His influence, which would not have seemed likely at the time of his death, occurred through two related developments. One has been the postwar revitalization and growth of the movement he established in 1930, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value Creation Educational Society). This has grown into today's Soka Gakkai (Value Creation Society), a lay Buddhist organization that is the largest and most influential movement of its kind in Japan, and the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), which claims memberships in 190 countries and territories. The second development has been the growth of a global movement known as Soka (value-creating) education. These are all the more remarkable because during his lifetime Makiguchi's ideas failed to gain widespread acceptance. His educational and religious convictions, a fundamental critique of the period of Japanese militaristic nationalism prior to and including World War II (1931-1945),<sup>1</sup> led to his arrest as a thought criminal and death in prison. The tensions between Makiguchi's ideas and the dominant ideologies in Japan predated this final confrontation, however. Thus, Makiguchi's life serves as a cogent example of how imposed societal regimentation can become a crucible for the development of individuals capable of giving birth to powerful ideas.

Central to Makiguchi's educational approach is his philosophy of value, which stresses the importance of human agency in creating the values of "beauty, gain, and good" to enhance the personal and collective lives of people. Makiguchi positions the creation of value as the ultimate purpose of human existence, defining a happy life as one in which the capacity to discover and create value has been fully deployed. Considering the lifelong happiness of learners to be the authentic goal of education, he structured his educational philosophy and efforts toward developing the value-creating potentialities of students.

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<sup>1</sup> The Manchurian Incident (September 1931) is generally considered the defining moment in the turn to militaristic nationalism in Japan.

Soka education has been refined and given institutional form by Makiguchi's successors, Josei Toda (1900-1958) and Daisaku Ikeda (1928- ). In its practice today, Soka education is a secular approach that contains elements of curriculum, pedagogy, professional development, and standards for interpersonal relationships within schools; it embraces aspects of both progressive and traditional educational ideologies. Soka education is grounded in a belief common to most humanistic philosophies and religions. Among them Nichiren Buddhism, which Makiguchi came to embrace, holds that a determined individual has the inherent ability to significantly influence the interconnected web of life. Nichiren Buddhism rests on qualities such as hope, courage, and compassion--qualities that cross philosophical and religious lines. Soka education emphasizes and nurtures the idea that students should live out their lives as the protagonists of both personal and societal transformation.

Today, examples of Soka education can be found in a network of more than a dozen schools that stretch across three continents and that cover a range from kindergarten to university. It has inspired several independent private schools, such as the Soka Ikeda College of Arts and Science for Women, attached to Madras University in Chennai, India, and educational initiatives such as Brazil's Makiguchi Project in Action (de Melo Silva, 2000). Most significant, Soka education informs the professional endeavors of thousands of "Soka educators," who are inspired by its theories and seek to apply them in a variety of educational settings.

### **MAKIGUCHI'S LIFE: THE PURSUIT OF VALUE**

Dayle M. Bethel has been largely responsible for introducing the life and ideas of Makiguchi to the English-speaking world. His intensive research on Makiguchi began in 1969 and culminated in the publication of a biographical work, *Makiguchi the Value Creator* (Bethel 1973) and in later editions and translations of Makiguchi's major works (Bethel, 1930/1989, 1903/2002).

The descriptor "the value creator," ascribed to Makiguchi by Bethel, is apt because it reflects the centrality of value creation to Makiguchi's pedagogical work. It was a concern that was apparent in his early experiences and research and that continued to draw his interest through to his activities in the last decade of his life.

Makiguchi's felt need to create value was perhaps shaped by the historical setting in which he lived and the particular circumstances of his youth. Makiguchi was born during the early days of the Meiji period (1868-1912), which marked the end of Japan's feudalistic and isolationist policies and its rapid transformation from an agrarian into an

industrial society. The population of the small coastal village where Makiguchi was raised experienced significant dislocation during this time of transition. Governmental pressure to increase farm output resulted in a farmer rebellion that was forcibly suppressed by the authorities and led to the execution of seven farmers (S. Ikeda, cited in Bethel, 1994). Raised by an uncle after his father deserted the family and his mother felt incapable of caring for him, Makiguchi's unsettled early life matched the turbulence of his times.

Makiguchi's own education took place in the midst of the cross currents of Japanese historical transformation as well. Japan's first national system of compulsory education was instituted in 1870, an event followed by the Education Law of 1872, which declared that the purpose of education was to enable students to lead fulfilling lives (Kumagai, 2000, p. 33). In the decades that followed, official Japanese educational policy underwent rapid shifts of direction, culminating in the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890, which went so far as to codify the purpose of education as the production of subjects loyal to the emperor and the state (Kumagai, 2000, pp. 33-34). Although there is often a gap between an intended curriculum and what is actually taught in a classroom (Cuban, 1992), Makiguchi's early schooling took place during a time when educational policies that stressed the development of children's rational and critical faculties held sway; the curriculum in the prefecture where Makiguchi attended elementary school contained elements of a very open and enlightened approach to education (Saito, 1981, pp. 302-303). Receiving only the short formal primary education that was standard at the time, Makiguchi worked in his uncle's shipping enterprise ("Tsunesaburo Makiguchi," 1996). It is possible to conjecture that the informal education he received from this hands-on and community-based work shaped his later views on the need to fuse practical experience in life with structured processes of learning.

In later years Makiguchi often found himself on precarious ledges--geographical, educational, and spiritual--from which he was compelled to "create value." At the age of 14, he emigrated by himself across the Tsugaru Strait to the frontier region of Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island. Then, at 30, with a young family in tow, he moved from Hokkaido to Tokyo with the ambition of publishing his studies on geography, as will be discussed below. Later, as an elementary school principal, he took great personal and professional risks in challenging the inequities and dehumanization of Japanese primary education. Finally, during the years leading to World War II, he confronted the spiritual regimentation of Japan in which the militarist government forced State Shinto religion and emperor worship on the entire population through acts of injecting this official dogma into the most intimate spheres of people's lives.

Creating value out of difficult circumstances is an arduous process. From a young age Makiguchi faced challenges with both courage and integrity. For example, upon moving to Hokkaido, he worked as an errand boy in the police department of the city of Otaru, where his hard work quickly earned him the respect of his superiors. Saito (1989, p. 760) documents that the Otaru civil service was rife with nepotism and patronage and Makiguchi's ties with influential local people could have surely led to advancement in the ranks of Hokkaido administration, business, or politics. Instead of choosing this route, however, Makiguchi enrolled in the Sapporo Normal School, a training school for teachers.

After graduating, Makiguchi taught for 4 years in a "multigrade classroom," a Japanese experimental equivalent of the American rural one-room schoolhouse (Kumagai, 1978, p. 35; Sharma, 1998, p. 11).<sup>2</sup> Beyond his classroom work, he demonstrated a commitment to reaching out to other teachers, publishing frequently in the local educational publication, *The Journal of the Association for Education in the Region of Hokkaido*. In 1898, as an editor of the journal, he came to be regarded as a leading figure among his colleagues (Kumagai, 1978, p. 33; Sharma, 1998, pp. 11-12).

During this time he also taught at the normal school from which he had graduated, and in this work he demonstrated a strong sense of justice. Saito (1989, p. 765) traces school and student records surrounding an incident in which Makiguchi supported a large group of students who struck against several excessively oppressive school policies. As a consequence of their actions, 43 students, out of a class of 50, were dismissed from the program and Makiguchi resigned in apparent protest.

While in Hokkaido, Makiguchi also undertook an intensive study of geography, which led to his concept of "the geography of human life" (*jinsei chirigaku*). Rather than merely examine physical geography, Makiguchi probed the dynamic relationship between geography and the psychological aspects of human life. Bethel describes in poetic language the picture of life he believes Makiguchi envisioned: "The earth, for Makiguchi, was a miracle. Life was a miracle, and he saw life vibrating through all phenomena" (1903/2002, p. xiv). Makiguchi held that education based on an awareness of the connections between human life and the natural and social environment could help develop the moral character of students. He hoped that people educated this way would construct an interdependent and harmonious world wherein military and economic competition between nations would be supplanted by "humanitarian competition" based

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<sup>2</sup> In 1891, the Ministry of Education issued a directive that schools with total enrollment of 70 or fewer students should be organized into one-room schools. At the same time, the Hokkaido Normal School began conducting research into the best methods and practices for this type of education at its attached elementary school. This is where Makiguchi taught for 4 years.

on a recognition of mutual interests and benefit.

His research resulted in the 1903 publication of *A Geography of Human Life*, which was to become a standard text in Japanese teacher education. In 1910 Makiguchi became a field researcher for the Ministry of Education and in 1912 published *Research into Community Studies as the Integrating Focus of Instruction*. According to Saito (1989, pp. 771-772), Makiguchi's scholarship earned him the respect of several prominent scholars, government officials, freelance intellectuals, and journalists who met regularly as a group called the Group for the Study of Local Communities (Kyodokai). With his reputation and record of scholarship, he was able to obtain an elementary school principal's appointment in Tokyo. However, rather than use his connections to seek a plush assignment, he chose a position at an elementary school in a poor neighborhood that also included the duties of managing a night school.

Makiguchi continued to develop his philosophy of value through his educational praxis. S. Ikeda (1969), Bethel (1994), and Saito (1981, 1989) develop a portrait of him as an educator by piecing together school records and impressions of his former students and colleagues. What emerges is a profile of a stern and dignified person who was also extremely kind and deeply aware of the difficult circumstances of his students (Bethel, 1994, p. 39). As a teacher in Hokkaido, he would greet students in the morning with warm water for their cold hands and escort them home when it was snowing (D. Ikeda, 2006, p. 13). Makiguchi prepared meals of bread and soup for the children whose parents could not provide them with lunch and he discretely placed the food in the janitor's room so that needy students would not feel ashamed (D. Ikeda, 2006, p. 14). He is said to have bought stationery at reduced prices from wholesalers for his students' use (Kumagai, 1978, p. 60; Sharma, 1998, pp. 14-15). He also had strong regard for parental involvement and conducted many home visits (Kumagai, 1978, p. 60; Sharma, 1998, p. 15). It is documented that in schools under his leadership there was a considerable decrease in the numbers of cases of both juvenile delinquency and skin disease (Kumagai, 1978, p. 66; Sharma, 1998, p. 15). Makiguchi's school leadership style was controversial, however, because he refused to honor the favoritism and privileges that were typically accorded to the children of wealthy and influential families.

Thus, as seen through his career as an elementary school principal, the main outline of Makiguchi's personality comes into view: an impassioned drive to study and create change, a deep empathy for students, a willingness to take risks, and a desire to construct pioneering theories to explain sociological phenomena. Saito (1989) uses the term "radicalist" to describe Makiguchi's independent and critical frame of mind. In Saito's usage, this term suggests a clear demarcation from the word *radical*, which is frequently

ascribed to political orientations that often ossified in Japan into rigid dogma. Although during his early years in Tokyo Makiguchi conducted dialogues with a group of socialists committed to democracy and pacifism (Miyata, 2000, p. 23), he did not agree with their call to break down existing systems (Makiguchi, 1983-1988, vol. 6, pp. 22-24).<sup>3</sup> Rather, Makiguchi continued to choose to be a change agent working within established structures. By temperament, and as an elementary school principal by profession, forbidden by law from participating in political activities (Gluck, 1985, p. 52), Makiguchi always kept in mind what could be realistically implemented. His "radicalist" vision of the way the world should be was always balanced with a keen pragmatic awareness of how it actually was. The dynamic tension between these two aspects of his thinking--radicalist and pragmatic--gave rise to an approach to educational reform that was at once visionary, gradualist, and doggedly determined.

Starting in 1913, for almost 20 years, Makiguchi served as the head of five different schools and became known as a gifted and dedicated educator; his work, in fact, attracted the attention of several prominent liberal thinkers of that time (Bethel, 1994, pp. 95-96).<sup>4</sup> Under his leadership, the Shirogane primary school, in particular, rose to a level of prominence (Kumagai, 1978, pp. 66-67). Many parents living outside the school district apparently wished to have their children transferred to the school and were willing to pay extra fees to this end (Makiguchi, 1983-1988, vol. 6, p. 92). During this time, he continued to develop his educational theories about value creation, which were to form the basis of his most important work, *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy* (Soka kyoikugaku taikei), published in 1930. Makiguchi's understanding of happiness as the goal of both life and education begins with the recognition that although humans cannot create matter:

What we can create, however, is value and value only. When we praise persons for their "strength of character," we are really acknowledging their superior ability to create value. (1983-1988, vol. 5, p. 13; in Bethel, 1989, p. 6)

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<sup>3</sup> Similarly denoted citations refer to the volume and page of Makiguchi, 1983-1985. Where appropriate, reference is also made to *Education for Creative Living: Ideas and Proposals of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi*, a condensed English rendering of Makiguchi's pedagogical writings translated by A. Birnbaum and edited by D. M. Bethel, or to *A Geography of Human Life*, also edited by D. M. Bethel.

<sup>4</sup> Among the signers of a letter of support for Makiguchi's theories were League of Nations undersecretary general Inazo Nitobe and Tsuyoshi Inukai, who became prime minister in 1931. Inukai's assassination in 1932 marked another turning point in the silencing of liberal voices in Japan's descent into fascism and is often seen as the point when the stature of liberal educators and politicians diminished considerably.

Unfortunately, at the time of the publication, Makiguchi's book did not receive the attention or have the kind of impact for which he had hoped. After repeated clashes with educational authorities, Makiguchi was forcibly retired from his final school principalship in 1931.

A few years prior to this, in 1928, at the age of 57, Makiguchi had embraced Nichiren Buddhism. The conversion was not the result of a solitary epiphany but a gradual process that occurred in the course of sustained and intense discussions with a fellow principal, Sokei Mitani. Mitani convinced Makiguchi that the spirituality of Nichiren's teachings rose above mere personal sentiment; was aligned with rational, scientific, universal laws; and was meant to be fully engaged and integrated with the realities of life in society (Sato, 2000, pp. 53-54). Makiguchi saw a strong and natural connection between his new spiritual interest in Buddhism and his previous work in developing his philosophy of value:

When, however, I reached the point of encountering the Lotus Sutra, I was astonished to discover that it in no way contradicted the scientific and philosophical principles which form the basis for our daily lives. . . . With a joy that is beyond the power of words to express, I have completely renewed the way of life I had pursued for almost sixty years. (1983-1988, vol. 7, pp. 405-406)

It is clear that, for Makiguchi, this newfound Buddhist faith provided a powerful spiritual grounding for the implementation of his educational and philosophical theories. Rejecting either a solitary or temple-centered spiritual practice, Makiguchi founded an independent lay organization, the Value Creation Educational Society (Soka Kyoiku Gakkai) to promote the practice of Nichiren Buddhism among educators and others with the goal of enhancing the ability of people to create value. Increasing the number of people skilled at creating value would realize Makiguchi's stated educational goals as well as his vision for society.

A decade earlier, Makiguchi had developed a close relationship with a young teacher, Josei Toda (1900-1958), becoming the younger man's mentor. The two came to collaborate in a mentor-disciple relationship to develop Makiguchi's pedagogical theories. For example, after teaching in two of Makiguchi's schools, in 1923 Toda established a private school, the Jisshu Gakkan, largely to implement Makiguchi's pedagogical theories free of the government's ever-present interference in public schools (D. Ikeda, 1968). Makiguchi, in turn, referred to the Jisshu Gakkan as the realization of his own vision for



elementary schools and as the greatest realization of his work (D. Ikeda, 2001, p. 86). Toda also helped edit Makiguchi's writings, a task made nearly impossible by the older man's commitments as a full-time principal. Makiguchi's expectations for Toda's future role are clear from this comment he is recorded as having shared with family members:

In the future, there will be a school system that puts the methods of value-creating education into practice. It will span kindergarten to university level. Young Toda will see to it that my work is carried on. (D. Ikeda, 2006, p. 86)

After his retirement, Makiguchi concentrated his efforts on developing the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai, which was to grow to a membership of about 3,000 people by the start of the war in 1941. His people-centered message and the growth of his following attracted the interest of the Japanese Special Higher Police (Tokko) and his movements were subject to constant surveillance (Japanese Special, 1943a, p. 127). This led to direct intimidation, beginning in the early 1940s, as Tokko officers conspicuously attended many of his speaking engagements and interrupted him when he strayed from government-sanctioned positions. Undeterred, Makiguchi kept up an intense schedule of travel and speaking.

Makiguchi was adamant in his stand against the collusion of Japanese political, military, and religious authority that wedded national policies to the cult of emperor worship embodied in the rites of State Shinto. Makiguchi opposed such official policies and beliefs even when virtually the entire religious and intellectual establishment of Japan, including the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, with which he shared a nominal affiliation, capitulated to government pressure. Just a few days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, in an article carried in the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai's monthly periodical, *Value Creation* (*Kachi sozo*), Makiguchi walked a line close to open sedition when he wrote,

We must strictly avoid following ideologies of uncertain origin that cannot be substantiated by actual proof--even if they may be the most time-honored tradition--and thereby sacrificing the precious lives of others and ourselves. In this sense, the question of [compulsory worship at] Shinto shrines must be re-thought as a matter of great urgency. (1983-1988, vol. 10, p. 26)

In May 1943 the government banned the publication of *Value Creation* and in July Makiguchi and his disciple, Josei Toda, were imprisoned on charges of failing to

demonstrate proper respect toward the emperor (*fukeizai*) and violation of the Peace Preservation Law, the core legal instrument for the suppression of dissent. From prison records, it is clear that Makiguchi's resistance continued throughout his ordeal; during interrogation sessions he referred to Emperor Hirohito as a "common mortal" (*bompu*) and described the war as a national disaster in contrast to the sanctioned description of it as a "holy war" (*seisen*) (Makiguchi, 1983-1988, vol. 10, pp. 201-203; Japanese Special, 1943b, pp. 151-152). On November 18, 1944, Makiguchi died in prison of malnutrition at the age of 73, but he left behind the seeds of a system of humanistic education that would be further cultivated by his successor, Josei Toda, and later by Daisaku Ikeda. Makiguchi's philosophy of value creation and his belief that this belonged at the center of teaching and learning remain his legacy today.

### **MAKIGUCHI'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT**

Makiguchi's philosophy of value seeks to clarify the concept of *happiness* in terms of value.<sup>5</sup> Value, according to traditional Western philosophy, has three constituent elements--Truth, Beauty, and Good--and from the early years of modernization and Westernization in Japan, this triad was accepted in intellectual circles as self-evident. Miyata, in his analysis of Makiguchi's theory of value, notes that it represents a pointed critique of the neo-Kantian educational theories then predominant in Japan (Miyata, 1997, p. 31). These systems of thought and their highly abstract related pedagogical theories are compared by Makiguchi to "the winds that violently roil the stratosphere but leave the lower reaches of the atmosphere unmoved" (1983-1988, vol. 5, p. 16) or to "applying eye drops from a second storey window" (1983-1988, vol. 5, p. 38). Makiguchi was particularly disturbed by the sight of teachers struggling to absorb and implement the latest theories from Europe and the United States--introduced by the professional theorists ensconced in Japan's universities--while the lessons of actual educational practice in Japan went unmined. Thus, Makiguchi urges teachers to engage in collating, analyzing, and distilling their own experiences in order to "inductively establish principles" (1983-1988, vol. 5, p. 17) that could be fed back into their daily praxis.

A reflection of his intellectual autonomy, Makiguchi maintains a critical eye towards the authority of the ideas of Japanese educational theorists--an authority that rested on their ability to read in the original the even more authoritative ideas of Western

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<sup>5</sup> Makiguchi was not fully satisfied with the term *happiness* and writes that he struggled for more than a decade to find a more adequate word to express the goal of life and learning but that, in the end, he could not (1983-1988, vol. 5, p. 120).

philosophers. His core stance is always one of scrupulously choosing which ideas he will accept and on what terms; so, while he eagerly embraces the tools of analytical rationality from the West, he remains in many ways rooted in an Eastern worldview. Makiguchi's seemingly effortless grasp of interdependence--between humans and nature and among humans in their social relations--may be understood as a reflection of this Eastern worldview (Matsuoka, 2005, p. 202).

The linchpin of Makiguchi's theory of value centers on his questioning of "Truth" as a value. For Makiguchi, truth is found in the correspondence between an objective reality and the words and concepts applied by humans to that reality. As an educator, Makiguchi was thoroughly committed to the pursuit of knowledge and truth as it was embodied in the student's interaction with experience. Still he argues that "Truth" should not be conceived as a constituent element of value.

To illustrate this distinction, he offers the example of people hearing a report of a disastrous earthquake or fire. The report itself is either true (i.e., corresponds to objective reality) or false. But the truth or falsity of the report is independent from the question of value--*its positive or negative impact on people's lives* (1983-1988, vol. 5, pp. 222-223). Thus, in developing his critique of Japan's neo-Kantian theorists' conception of value, Makiguchi first sought to bring abstract and disembodied "Truth"--largely prior to and outside of lived experience--firmly back to earth.

Whereas Makiguchi considers truth a matter of "qualitative equivalence," value for Makiguchi must be seen as the "relational power of the object measured by the quantitative response of the subject" (1983-1988, vol. 5, p. 219). Value thus arises from the interaction between humans and their surroundings and it is only in this sense that value can be created; truth cannot then be a component core of value. Therefore Makiguchi proposes a change and reordering of the three elements of value. "Beauty" (and its opposite) is a measure of partial, sensory response within an individual. "Gain" is the measure of a relationship that extends and expands the total vital experience of the individual ("loss" is that which shrinks and limits this). "Good" is to the life of social collective what gain is to the life of the individual ("evil" is the societal equivalent of individual loss). Grounded in these definitions, Makiguchi's reordering of "beauty," "gain," and "good"--which, taken together, constitute his understanding of "value"--represents concentric circles of expansion from within the life of the individual to the life of the community.

In terms of his notion of "good" pertaining to the social collective, it should be noted that while Makiguchi acknowledged the importance of particular societies and cultures as the site and context of life, he never regarded these as absolute. In his 1903 work on

geography, he proposed a three-tiered scheme of identity, urging that we be aware of ourselves as simultaneously citizens of a local community, the national community, and of the world. Thus Makiguchi's positing of "society" as the arbiter of moral judgments does not assume separate, incommensurable moral universes for different cultures, but is implicitly open to the idea of intercultural negotiation toward the formation of a larger moral consensus.

Makiguchi's philosophy of value, therefore, is a call for individuals to create "beauty," "gain," and "good"; it represents an invitation for open-ended engagement with a complex and difficult world. Through such engagement, individuals can create potentially limitless value.

It is also important to note that Makiguchi denies the idea of "the sacred" as an independent field of value (as was proposed by some neo-Kantians). He asserts that even the claims of religion should be assessed by the measure of value creation:

Other than freeing people and the world from suffering, what meaning could there be for the existence of religion in society? Isn't freeing people from suffering the value of gain? Isn't freeing the world from suffering the moral value [of good]? (1983-1988, vol. 5, p. 356)

Makiguchi likewise rejects any conception of "happiness" that is solely personal. "Individual well-being entails cooperative and contributive existence within society," he argues (1983-1988, vol. 5, p. 129):

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. (1983-1988, vol. 5, p. 131)

Makiguchi believes deeply that it is possible--even vital--to harmonize personal "gain" and social "good." He is also keenly aware that this cannot be done without enormous effort. This interplay loosely corresponds to the dynamic tension between his radicalist and pragmatic perspectives. His philosophy of value creation thus has the potential to provide a conceptual and practical framework for bringing into dialogue what, in today's parlance, are the often opposing viewpoints of traditional and progressive education. Makiguchi criticizes both as incomplete approaches. He decries traditional education's penchant to simply convey knowledge:

The aim of education is not to transfer knowledge; it is to guide the learning process, to enable the acquisition of [the methods of] research. It is not the piecemeal merchandizing of information; it is to enable the acquisition of the methods for learning on one's own; it is the provision of keys to unlock the vault of knowledge. (1983-1988, vol. 6, p. 285; in Bethel, 1989, p. 168)

At the same time, Makiguchi rejects recklessly individualized conceptions of learning. For him, contemporary pedagogies devoted to such abstract goals as "self-realization" were essentially "methodless" (1983-1988, vol. 6, p. 272).

For Makiguchi, the tug between radicalist and pragmatic perspectives can be resolved through the efforts of teachers to probe the actual roots of individuality. In other words, an educator's responsibility lies in awakening and encouraging individual interests that connect the student with broader human concerns, rather than uncritically accepting whatever students happen to desire or want to do. Makiguchi likewise emphasizes the importance of educators' clearly thinking out formulations of the purpose of education (1983-1988, vol. 5, p. 110). He holds that "the purpose of education should be derived from the purpose of life itself" (p. 111).

Makiguchi's vision presents teachers with a rich but challenging image of their work and requires authentic and courageous teachers who themselves are value-creating individuals living within and contributing to society. In this sense, Makiguchi's philosophy speaks to the art of teaching as well as to the process of learning:

Just as an artist realizes his/her ideal on canvas or in marble, educators should offer to the impressionable minds of children an ideal of life as well as the capacities necessary to realize that. . . . Educators, regardless of their actual success or failure, must be able to envisage being a paradigmatic personality of the first order in society. (1983-1988, vol. 6, p. 32)

Teachers must be able to catalyze meaning in the lives of students and "guide unconscious living to consciousness, valueless living to value, and irrational living to reason" (1983-1988, vol. 5, p. 405; cf. Bethel, 1989, p. 90). As Makiguchi said, "When we realize this, 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" (vol. 6, p. 54). Teachers must first "practice and experience in their own lives the principles and techniques of learning that they are

seeking to help their students understand and acquire" (p. 330; in Bethel, 1989, p. 179).

But teachers are not the only guides in the adventure of learning. Makiguchi holds that the active roles of home and community are also necessary to nurture happy, strong, and contributive youth. He regrets the extent to which the home and community have abdicated important educational responsibilities to the school, with the effect of "turn[ing] young people's entire childhood and adolescence into a study hall at the expense of all else" (1983-1988, vol. 6, pp. 195-196; in Bethel, 1989, p. 151). In Makiguchi's view, the resulting apathy leads to a loss of physical and emotional well-being. To counteract this, Makiguchi strongly calls for the unification of life and learning, as well as of school and community. As early as his 1903 work on human geography, Makiguchi maintains that "the lofty insights, understandings, and principles of the universe are revealed in every tiny village or hamlet" (1983-1988, vol. 1, p. 23; in Bethel, 2002, p. 21). In his 1912 work on community studies, he proposes that students directly observe the complex relations between people and their physical and social world as a foundation for academic coursework. He suggests, for example, that the costs of running a school, as well the sources of funding in taxes and donations, be made known to children, as an object lesson in economics (1983-1988, vol. 3, p. 276).

With this important community connection in mind, Makiguchi recommends (but was not able to implement in his own schools) a program of half-day schooling. He argues that half-day schooling would be more effective academically and more economical as well. The time students spend outside school in family, community, or vocational pursuits would instill an "appreciation for work" (1983-1988, vol. 6, p. 213; in Bethel, 1989, p. 156) and would, he believes, revitalize and redefine the purpose of study:

Study is not seen as a preparation for living, but rather study takes place while living, and living takes place in the midst of study. Study and actual living are seen as more than parallels; they inform one another intercontextually, study-in-living and living-in-study, throughout one's whole life. (1983-1988, vol. 6, p. 212; in Bethel, 1989, p. 156)

Thus, Makiguchi's philosophy of value, forged out of the dynamic tensions of his own work and experience, provides a basis for an approach to teaching that guides the processes of learning inherent in life and living, and through it, Makiguchi seeks to develop the core human capacity to generate meaning.

## **SOKA EDUCATION IN PRACTICE**

Makiguchi's legacy has endured through the efforts of his closest disciple, Josei Toda, who survived the ordeal of imprisonment and, in the chaotic years of occupation and postwar Japan, went on to rebuild the organization his mentor had founded. A crucial part of Toda's genius, according to Richard Seager (2006), a historian of religion, was his ability to reframe abstract Buddhist theory in practical ways. He conceived of the Buddha as the highest potentialities inherent in human life and "enlightenment" as an inner-motivated process of self-transformation or "human revolution." Propelled by Toda's passionate determination to empower the common people, who had borne the devastating brunt of war and defeat, the organization grew rapidly, claiming a membership of more than 750,000 families at the time of Toda's death in 1958.

Soon after assuming the presidency of the Soka Gakkai in 1960 at age 32, Daisaku Ikeda began to bring an international dimension to what had until then been a Japan-based movement. At the same time, he launched a concerted effort to actualize the vision for education set out by his two mentors, Makiguchi and Toda. In a memoir-style essay, he records the words of Toda as he shared with him the "flame" of Soka education:

Daisaku, let's establish a university, Soka University. I hope this can be achieved in my lifetime, but that may not be possible. Should that be the case, Daisaku, I'm counting on you to do it. . . . Let's make it the best university in the world! (D. Ikeda, 2006, pp. 10-11)

Inspired by Toda's vision, Ikeda went on to open Soka Junior High School and Soka High School in 1968, followed by Soka University of Japan in 1971. Currently, there are 12 additional Soka schools: five Soka kindergartens in Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and Brazil; three Soka elementary schools in Tokyo and Kansai, Japan, and in Brazil; an additional Soka junior high school and high school in Kansai; a Soka Junior Women's College in Tokyo; and Soka University of America in California, which received accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in 2005.

In founding the Soka school network, Ikeda provided only broad guidelines about the core principles and goals of each school and emphasized that capturing Makiguchi's spirit was more important than following the specificity of his proposals. Beyond this, the staffs of the schools were given considerable discretion to plan the details of their programs.

Asian studies scholar Daniel Metraux (1994) points out that the staffs of Soka schools

were aware of each school's potential impact on the public's perceptions of the Soka Gakkai (p. 104). Perhaps as a result of cultural pressure to conform to societal expectations, the academic and departmental structure of Soka University of Japan, for example, has evolved into one quite similar to that of other Japanese universities. In Japan, private K-12 schools are highly regulated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) and the degree of supervision also limits the abilities of educators to experiment with substantive changes to the educational program. The Soka schools have, therefore, sought to demonstrate their uniqueness in other ways. T. Miller (personal communication, Feb. 9, 2003), a teacher and observer at various schools within the Soka school network, notes the humanistic quality of student-teacher relationships in the schools; he traces this tradition to the example set by the founder, Daisaku Ikeda, who through his many visits, gifts, and messages to students, has modeled humanistic educational interactions for faculty members (Gebert interview with I. Katagiri & Y. Ushiyama, Tokyo, November 2005).

Among the first Western observers to visit and study Soka schools was Carl Gross (1970) of the Institute for International Studies at Michigan State University College of Education, who reports on "a definite relationship between the philosophy of education underlying the schools and the practices which have been established" (p. 56). In a departure from the drab appearance of many Japanese urban schools at that time, the Soka schools had beautiful artistic landscaping, truly impressive buildings and facilities, and a student-teacher ratio that was--at a little more than 20 to 1 considerably smaller than the then national average of 31 to 1 (elementary) and 40 to 1 (secondary) (p. 59). Although they are inspired by the Buddhist orientation of the Soka Gakkai, the Soka schools have a completely secular curriculum (p. 59).

On the basis of 1967 planning documents that he studied, Gross indicates that the leaders of the Soka Junior High School and Soka High School were from the outset concerned with the equity of educational opportunity. Gross praises their admissions procedures, which incorporated a process of student interviews to "select individuals of character, who have leadership ability, and evidence creativity and initiative" (1970, p. 58); such practices contrasted with those at several other private schools in Japan at the time of his report that relied heavily on academic test or IQ scores and, therefore, disregarded many unique and personal qualities of potential students. Gross reports that the planners were, indeed, looking for "gifted" students, but their views about giftedness seemed highly compatible with interpretations about giftedness that have more recently emerged.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the first Soka schools seemed intent on attracting a student

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<sup>6</sup> See Gardner's conception of multiple intelligences (1983) and Renzulli's notion of tapping the qualities



body made up of active young people with a wide variety of personal and intellectual strengths.

Richard Seager (2006) records his recent visit to Kansai Soka schools in Japan. He summarizes from an English brochure for the schools that lists the principles formulated by Ikeda: (1) Uphold the dignity of life; (2) Respect individuality; (3) Build bonds of lasting friendship; (4) Oppose violence; and (5) Lead a life based on both knowledge and wisdom. He also notes what he sees as a Buddhist influence in aspects of the schools--in their opposition to militarism, in their schoolwide campaigns against bullying, and "in the way harmony and helpfulness pervade the ideals of the school" (p. 108). He further relates an encounter that personalized the educational philosophy of the school:

The idealistic streak in Soka education catches me off guard when, over a lunch of noodles, fresh vegetables and miso soup, a boy of about ten asks me, in a piping voice and amazingly good English, "Professor Seager, what is your dream?" (p. 109)

G. D. Miller (2002) analyzes the evolution of the theory of Soka education as distinguished from its applications. Indeed, the implementation of Soka education extends far beyond the network of Soka schools. Among the membership of the Soka Gakkai International are many thousands of educators throughout the world who are attempting to apply the principles of Soka education within their own cultural contexts. As a means of sharing pedagogical practice with this wider world of Soka educators, more than 20,000 field reports have been collected in Japan from educators working in pre-K-12 schools (both private and public), universities, and more independent settings such as after-school centers or tutoring (Soka Gakkai Educators Division, 2000).

While the reporters frankly reference their Buddhist practice, the frameworks of the teachers' approaches are essentially secular in nature and replicable by people of all persuasions. For example, there are frequent references to "praying for a student's happiness," but this should be interpreted as the focusing of the psychic energy of caring for students and their problems rather than as appeals to a higher, external power.<sup>7</sup> Several common themes emerge from the records that provide important glimpses into the nature of Soka education:

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of giftedness in all students (Renzulli & Reis, 1985).

<sup>7</sup> Nichiren Buddhism clarifies that "Buddha" should not be understood as an external God, savior, or force, but as a potentiality inherent in every individual.

- A commitment to the happiness of individual children is reflected through often-repeated phrases such as "opening the heart of a problem child," "reaching the child," "learning to empathize and connect with the children," "never giving up on students," and "continuing to believe in students to the very end."
- A belief in the efficacy of dialogue is pervasive and includes an emphasis on one-on-one conversations; visiting children at home; reaching out to families; and using creative forms of communication such as writing comments in student diaries and journals, letters to students, and classroom newsletters.
- An acceptance of full responsibility as educators to solve classroom problems is viewed as a key component of the teacher's role. Ikeda's assertion that the teacher is the decisive force in the educational environment is frequently cited.
- There is recognition that personal development is crucial to the teaching process. In almost all the reports, teachers describe inner conflicts, efforts to challenge the urge to run away, and finally learning to appreciate problematic children as spurs to their professional growth.
- There are frequent efforts to reach out and involve the wider community in all aspects of teaching.

Several examples drawn from the Japanese published collection of educators' experiences (Soka Gakkai Educators Division, 2000) also illustrate the broad role teachers can play:

- An elementary school teacher won the admiration of the community by working with students to clean up streams near his school in an effort to increase the local population of fireflies, a traditional symbol of natural beauty in Japan.
- An elementary school teacher was able to restore order, morale, and a positive learning environment among her third-grade students who had been involved in a series of thefts. The turning point was the teacher's success in making a breakthrough with the ringleader of the group.
- The director of a rural kindergarten forged valuable intergenerational ties by encouraging the young families of the students to participate in traditional rice planting and harvesting ceremonies carried out by members of the older generation.
- After being transferred to a difficult school in Osaka, a middle school teacher had his students write their own script for a play about the dangers of sniffing paint

thinner, which they then performed throughout the community. The actions of the teacher had the wider effect of inspiring a demoralized teaching staff.

- A high school teacher challenged student apathy by developing a culture of volunteer activism. As a result, the students held a charity bazaar and collected goods for a school in the Solomon Islands.

From these brief accounts, it can be seen that Soka education stresses the power of the individual teacher to challenge educational difficulties through his or her personal efforts. In each of these cases, much as in the example set by Makiguchi, teachers personally undertook difficult challenges and created a pathway to learning and happiness by dint of personal courageous action. Each of these efforts constituted a "microsolution" rather than a "macrosolution." One can only conjecture what impact widely practiced efforts of this nature could have on a demoralized educational system.

Soka educators are making similar efforts in countries outside Japan. In 1995 Soka educators in Brazil launched the Makiguchi Project in Action (de Melo Silva, 2000). As of 2005, members of Brazil Soka Gakkai International, often retired citizens, have served as volunteers in more than 221 partnership schools. For a 3-month period in each school they organize student-interest activities such as handicrafts, art, horticulture and gardening, culinary arts, and environmental education and plan professional development sessions for teachers and activities for parents. These interventions help to break destructive and despair-inducing patterns of teacher-student relationships as teachers begin to observe and foster the positive characteristics, creativity, and healthy interactions of their students. Questionnaire responses received from participating teachers over the course of the 6 years of the de Melo Silva research document that the interventions cause significant student gains in learning, creativity, motivation, and the quality of interpersonal relationships. This model is currently being replicated in Panama ("Makiguchi Project in Panama," 2001).

Several private schools around the world have also been founded--at least partially--on Soka education principles, including the New School of Collaborative Learning in Beijing, the Centro de Orientacion Infantil in Panama, and the Learning Centers of the International University Asia Pacific. In the United States, the Renaissance Charter School in New York was founded in part on Makiguchi's theories (Joffe, 2006). This school's motto, "Developing Leaders for the Renaissance of New York," is a call to nurture students who are capable of creating value in their community. Visitors to the school have remarked on the overall sense of happiness and engagement among students, and this is supported by data from Indiana University's High School Survey of Student

Engagement (Joffee, 2004). Parent satisfaction is an exemplary 93.7% as measured by a recent school survey (Kadamus, 2005).

Indeed, scholarly research and documentation are beginning to emerge from the work of educators in several countries who are applying concepts of Soka education. In her doctoral dissertation, Iris Pagan (2001) narrates her efforts to employ the principles of "Makiguchian Pedagogy" in a middle school science classroom of a private school in New York. Her findings, which have much to offer to middle school science teachers, suggest that a Makiguchian approach to learning can enhance socially situated learning while also sustaining adequate mastery of science content. Principal Marita Bombardieri was able to transform a problem-ridden vocational high school in Como, Italy, into a center of peace and dialogue in a community beset with the task of integrating a large influx of immigrants (Marrazzi, 2001). Projects such as these test the principles of Makiguchi's thoughts in various global settings. An online quarterly, *Newsletter of International Soka Educators* ([www.eddiv.homestead.com/newsletter.htm](http://www.eddiv.homestead.com/newsletter.htm)), highlights the work of practitioners throughout the world as they attempt to apply the principles of Soka education. In fact, the effort made by Soka educators to share their practices through Web sites, conferences, and correspondence is one of its most promising characteristics.

## CONCLUSION

In a conflict-ridden world full of philosophical and political strife, Makiguchi's notion of value creation is a call to educators and individuals to pursue both pragmatic and radicalist action through a unified theory of education. Rather than succumb to the confusion and paralysis of the educational system today, Makiguchi would urge educators to find ways to create value to improve rather than dismantle the system. As an ordinary citizen living in a perilous time, Makiguchi provided an example of a contributive life as he walked courageously along treacherous paths, seeking always to find a way out of chaos through value creation. The legacy of his struggle is seen in the great number of people who are now working with excitement and ardor throughout the world to realize his vision. By insisting that value creation is a path to human fulfillment regardless of oppressive forces, internal or external, Makiguchi defines the aims of education and speaks to our own time in a clear and compelling voice.

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