

Educating Global Citizens in a Time of Crisis

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Introduction: The Need for Education to Focus on Human Beings

AS humankind faces the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must deeply consider the essential role of education in fostering global citizens who can rise to the challenge and lead the way to peace and happiness.

During the pandemic, we have seen the manifestation of both the positive and negative aspects of human nature. On the one hand, we see examples of negative behaviors such as self-centeredness, prejudice, and racism. On the other, we are inspired by the courage and selfless dedication of frontline workers who heroically dedicate themselves for the sake of others.

We need to optimize the role that education can play in bringing out the best in human beings, fostering them to be balanced and wholesome, strong and resilient, and empathetic individuals who work not only for themselves but also for the sake of others.

The urgency to do this is highlighted by the fact that in the last two centuries, we have seen progress in science as never before and yet, in spite of this, global society today continues to be threatened by not only the COVID-19 pandemic but also by other escalating crises such as terrorism, environmental degradation, global warming, ethnic conflicts, religious antagonism, school violence, teenage depression, apathy, and suicide.

It is increasingly apparent that the fundamental problem lies in the fact that our methods of education have not succeeded in impressing on us the need to make human transformation and human happiness the priority and focus in all our undertakings.

Here, I will discuss how lessons from the Lotus Sutra taught by the Buddha as well as the principles of education for global citizenship based on the thoughts of Dr Daisaku Ikeda and the Soka education system that he founded can help us in tackling this problem.

Perspectives on Education from the Lotus Sutra

As a life educator and a skillful mentor for all human beings, the Buddha taught the Law to which he was enlightened. Of all the teachings of the Buddha, the Lotus Sutra expresses this law of life most clearly and powerfully. His entire life was dedicated to saving people from misery and suffering by awakening them to this universal law of life. It was a noble process of educating people about the true nature of their lives and teaching them the way to peace and happiness.

The educational messages of the Lotus Sutra can be summarized as follows:

1. All people possess the supreme dignity of life and are endowed with the potential to live life to the fullest.
2. The purpose of the Buddha's appearance in this world lies in his compassionate behavior as a bodhisattva, i.e., one who strives to awaken people to their highest potential, and revitalize and empower them to live happy, creative lives amidst the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death.
3. All life and all phenomena are interconnected.
4. The full blossoming of each person's unique potential leads to a world of coexistence and harmony.
5. Life is eternal while undergoing the constant cycle of life and death.
6. A movement to create peace and happiness will be led by a group of bodhisattvas called the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who, in contemporary terms, are exemplary global citizens.

The Lotus Sutra has been recognized by many renowned modern-day educationists as a source of essential principles of education.

For example, the Lotus Sutra reveals the principle whereby human beings can manifest noble qualities in the midst of the terrible realities of a world filled with fear, greed, and hate, just as the lotus flower blooms in purity in a muddy pond.

Reflecting on the educational philosophy of the American educator John Dewey, educationist Dr Larry Hickman mentioned this principle: "I think he [John Dewey] would have loved the metaphor of the lotus, rising from muddy waters to produce a pure bloom, since it was so close to his own ideas about taking things as we find them and reconstructing them so as to create value."¹

The well-known story of the dragon king's daughter in the 'Devadatta'

chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which tells of how a female child with a reptile's body attains enlightenment earlier than even the Buddha's leading disciples, imparts another significant lesson in the equality of all living beings. This illustration of how each individual, no matter who he or she may be, can discover and reveal life's maximum potential has captured the attention of educationists as an important principle of creative education.

Educationist Dr Jim Garrison wrote:

[M]y experience reading the Lotus Sutra ... has been splendid.... The poignant message of moral equality expressed by the notion of Dharma rain in the 'Parable of the Medicinal Herbs' greatly impressed me. For me, the greatest moment of insight, the most expedient means for realizing my unique potential at that particular moment in my life, came when I read about the instantaneous enlightenment of the eight-year-old daughter of the dragon king at the end of the 'Devadatta' chapter. It sent chills down my spine. I instantly understood many things and still return to it for new insights. What I immediately comprehended was the profound sense of moral equality among not only men and women but all living things.²

It is clear from these examples that the messages of the Lotus Sutra over two thousand years ago already contained the essential principles of education for global citizenship. Further in the article, there will be many more examples of how Buddhism, in particular the Lotus Sutra, clearly articulates the concepts of global citizenship. In fact, the ideal bodhisattva way of life described in the Lotus Sutra can be regarded as a model of what a global citizen should aspire for.

Let us now move on to look at the modern idea of global citizenship education.

Education for Global Citizenship

In recent years, there has been much interest in education for global citizenship.

UNESCO has actively promoted global citizenship education through activities such as the launch of the UN Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative in 2012, which made fostering global citizenship one of its three education priorities.

The modern concept of education for global citizenship goes back at least a hundred years. Two great educators in the last century, John

Dewey (1859–1952) in America and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944) in Japan, cherished visions of global citizenship. Both men envisaged the fostering of global citizens as people capable of creating value on a global scale.

It was John Dewey's firm conviction that there was a need for novel approaches to education that put human beings at the center. He emphasized that "everything which is distinctly human is learned".³ Makiguchi, the father of Soka education (value-creating education), asserted that the purpose of education must be the lifelong happiness of learners. He believed that true happiness is to be found in a life of value creation.

Makiguchi's idea of value creation arose from his profound study of the inner workings of life based on the Lotus Sutra, the essence of Buddhist philosophy.

In simple terms, Makiguchi's concept of value creation is "the capacity to find meaning, to enhance one's own existence and contribute to the well-being of others, under any circumstance".⁴ On a wider scale, when increasing numbers of people lead lives of value creation, it expands into a movement to create peace and happiness for humankind.

Josei Toda, Makiguchi's closest disciple, spoke about the concept of 'global citizenship' at a youth study seminar in 1952. Inheriting the spirit of his mentor and imbibing from him the essence of the Lotus Sutra, Toda's concept of global citizenship was infused with the passion to stop the unceasing cycle of war that had plagued humankind through the ages and to open the path to happiness, peace, and harmonious coexistence for all human beings.

Toda's actions, based on this philosophy of global citizenship, eventually led to his Declaration Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons in September 1957, a year before he passed away. Underlying this declaration was the life philosophy of the Lotus Sutra, especially as taught by the 13th-century Buddhist priest Nichiren, which expounds the inherent dignity and potential of all human beings.

To actualize the ideals of humanistic education, Daisaku Ikeda, Toda's disciple, established the Soka school system, which now consists of educational institutions all the way from kindergartens to universities.

On June 13, 1996, Dr Ikeda delivered a lecture at Teachers College, Columbia University, in which he clearly put forward three essential elements for global citizenship that educators should aspire to foster in their students:

- The *wisdom* to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living.
- The *courage* not to fear or deny difference; but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures, and to grow from encounters with them.
- The *compassion* to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places.⁵

The three elements of global citizenship — wisdom, courage, compassion — are essential to enable humanity to overcome the negative forces which divide people from people as well as people from nature. They are the positive forces necessary to achieve 'goodness' and move us in the direction of harmonious coexistence, empathy, and solidarity with others.

The ultimate goal of value-creating education is to foster resilient global citizens who are capable of recognizing and fighting against the evil that leads to destruction and divisiveness while continuously exerting themselves for the greatest good of happiness and peace with wisdom, courage, and compassion.

Let us now examine the essential elements of global citizenship put forward by Dr Ikeda, using various examples to illustrate them.

The Wisdom to Perceive the Interconnectedness of All Life and Living

The interconnectedness of all life is at the core of the Buddhist worldview. In his lecture at Teachers College, Dr Ikeda cited a beautiful metaphor from the Buddhist teachings to illustrate this worldview:

Suspended above the palace of Indra, the Buddhist god who symbolizes the natural forces that protect and nurture life, is an enormous net. A brilliant jewel is attached to each of the knots of the net. Each jewel contains and reflects the image of all the other jewels in the net, which sparkles in the magnificence of its totality.⁶

The German philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe expressed it poetically in his masterpiece *Faust*:

Lo, single things inwoven, made to blend.
To work in oneness with the whole, and live.⁷

Everything is related to one another in some way and is mutually supportive. A major problem in modern society is that everything is seen in isolation.

Human beings, especially the children who will inherit the earth, need to be taught to see the connections between people and people, between people and the land and between nature and society. For example, a bowl of rice should be appreciated as a product of the interaction and effort of many people including paddy farmers who cultivate the rice, people who transport it, those who sell it, as well as those who cook it. Environmental factors such as the weather also have to be conducive to the cultivation of rice. Every aspect is linked to and supportive of the other.

As a proverb from Cote d'Ivoire succinctly puts it, 'Many fingers are needed to pick up a single grain of rice.' This African proverb emphasizes unity and interaction. Many people interacting in unity are needed to produce a single bowl of rice. It is important to inculcate in ourselves and in our children a sense of gratitude for the wonderful connections that support us.

The opposite of interconnectedness is isolation and fragmentation, looking at things in compartments. Its negative impact is felt in all areas of life and society. A good example of this kind of fragmented view can be seen in medicine where there is often a tendency to just focus on the physical body while neglecting thoughts, feelings, and the spirit — the whole person in effect.

Dr Felix Unger, president of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts stated, "Its strong inclination towards the natural sciences has caused medicine unintentionally to regard patients as peculiar cases describable in natural-scientific terms."⁸

He emphasized, thus, the tendency in medicine to compartmentalize rather than to take a complete, holistic approach to healthcare.

To illustrate, when a child is brought to a doctor because of abdominal pain, the problem may have nothing to do with the liver, stomach, or any abdominal organ. An approach that focuses only on one part would lead to wrong diagnosis and treatment. The pain could be a manifestation of the child's stress, resulting from fear of examinations or what may happen to a sick parent. It may be caused by the worry in his little mind that his parents could die.

It is important to see the interconnectedness of all life and living. Research has shown that such consideration of multifactorial interaction is essential when managing and treating illness.

Similar examples can also be cited in many other areas of modern

civilization and emphasize the importance of reviving an educational approach that nurtures the wisdom to perceive the interrelationship of all phenomena.

The Courage Not to Fear or Deny Difference

The second element of global citizenship is “the courage not to fear or deny difference; but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures, and to grow from encounters with them”.⁹

Engaging with people who are different from us, respecting them from the bottom of our hearts and interacting positively with them require courage.

In ‘The Parable of the Medicinal Herbs’ (5th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, three kinds of medicinal herbs and two kinds of trees coexist harmoniously. They differ from each other in height and form and absorb only what they require to grow when the rain falls, each in accordance with its own unique characteristics. The rain here represents the boundless revitalizing energy of the universe. This analogy describes the ideal of harmonious coexistence that arises from respect for the uniqueness of each individual.

In the 13th century, Nichiren explained the principle of ‘cherry, plum, peach and damson’.¹⁰ These are flowering fruit trees that endure the harsh cold of winter and, as spring approaches, each blossoms in its own time, with its own unique and beautiful flowers. It would be unthinkable if a cherry tried to look like a plum or a peach tried to look like a damson. They would have lost their individuality. In the same way, human beings are diverse, expressing their own unique mission and personal qualities.

An important aspect of global citizenship education is to instill the courage to recognize and respect the uniqueness and dignity of all life. In addition, we need to direct our efforts to the task of helping each other believe in and unleash this unique creative potential that lies within each individual, bringing it forth to its fullest.

For example, in medicine, it is important that doctors strive to help people have faith in and manifest their own unique inherent energy to fight disease.

As Norman Cousins stated in his book *Human Options*:

The greatest force in the human body is the natural drive of the body to heal itself — but that force is not independent of the belief system [of the human being], which can translate expectations into

physiological change. Nothing is more wondrous about the fifteen billion neurons in the human brain than their ability to convert thoughts, hopes, ideas, and attitudes into chemical substances. Everything begins, therefore, with belief. What we believe is the most powerful option of all [with regard to healing].¹¹

Medicine and education share the common goal of stimulating a person's latent potential and empowering them. Education should strive to inspire the unique creativity and inner potential of the student while medicine should try to bring out the patient's inner life force to combat disease. Knowledge and learning should not be accumulated just for their own sake but must be directed to the task of nurturing and unleashing this positive creative potential.

The true story of Helen Keller is a remarkable case in point. At 19 months of age, an acute illness nearly took her life and left her deaf, blind, and unable to speak. This misfortune made her very different from the other little girls of her age. It is difficult to imagine the dark and silent world that the child had to live in.

Fortunately, Helen's teacher, Anne Sullivan, was courageous enough to believe in her. Under her guidance, Helen learnt to read and speak, overcoming her disabilities to become someone who was able to instill hope and courage in countless others. She made important contributions to the improvement of social conditions for disabled people.

This inspiring story of victory provides a precious lesson in education for both teachers and healthcare workers. Anne Sullivan had the courage not to fear how different Helen was from other children. Her courage in turn inspired Helen to manifest the great potential latent within her life, enabling her to transform her destiny into a source of strength for helping others.

The Compassion to Maintain an Imaginative Empathy

The third characteristic of a global citizen is "the compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places",¹² transcending national boundaries.

Despite external differences, the human condition is remarkably similar throughout the world. It is essential to develop the ability and compassion to relate to and empathize with others no matter how different we are on the surface.

Having worked as a medical doctor in a number of different

countries, among the most indelible memories engraved in my heart is the appearance of mothers desperately worried about their sick or dying children.

I could see the same suffering and pain in the eyes of all these mothers, regardless of ethnicity and cultural background. The love of a mother and her concern for her child are exactly the same everywhere. A mother's noble love is indeed selfless and universal.

A person with imaginative empathy need not necessarily be widely traveled. There are people who have never left their own countries and yet possess genuine concern for the suffering of others around the world.

Dr Ikeda once described his mother's response just before the end of the Second World War when she heard that a young American pilot had been beaten with sticks by a Japanese mob, blindfolded, and led away by the military police. Her immediate reaction was "Poor thing! How terrible! How worried his mother must be about him!"¹³

This ordinary mother can be said to be educated to the highest degree in imaginative empathy. It is the goal of humanistic education to foster in students such empathy that crosses national boundaries.

The ability to empathize with people far away is not some abstract concept but develops through caring about those in one's immediate surroundings. In his lecture at Teachers College, Dr Ikeda cited the works of Makiguchi and Dewey to emphasize this point.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi wrote, "The community, in short, is the world in miniature. If we encourage children to observe directly the complex relations between people and the land, between nature and society, they will grasp the realities of their homes, their school, the town, village or city, and will be able to understand the wider world."¹⁴

John Dewey pointed out that those who have not had the kinds of experiences that deepen understanding of neighborhood and neighbors will be unable to develop regard for people of distant lands.¹⁵

It is therefore important for one to start by treasuring and empowering the person right in front of one's eyes. This is an essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Using the example of splitting joints in a bamboo stalk, Nichiren described this principle of the Lotus Sutra clearly as follows:

The Lotus Sutra offers a secret means for leading all living beings to Buddhahood. It leads one person in the realm of hell, one person in the realm of hungry spirits, and thus one person in each of the nine realms of existence to Buddhahood, and thereby the way is opened for all living beings to attain Buddhahood. The situation is like the

joints in a piece of bamboo: if one joint is ruptured, then all the joints will split.¹⁶

Only when one is able to show compassion to and empower those in one's immediate surroundings will it be possible to enable all people to do so. Dr Ikeda stated in his lecture at Teachers College that compassion in Buddhism does not involve the forcible suppression of our natural emotions, our likes and dislikes. Rather, it is the realization that even those we dislike have qualities that can contribute to our lives, and can afford us opportunity to grow in our humanity.¹⁷ He added:

[I]t is the compassionate desire to find ways of contributing to the well-being of others that gives rise to limitless wisdom. Buddhism teaches that both good and evil are potentialities that exist in all people. Compassion consists in the sustained and courageous effort to seek out the good in any person, whoever they may be, however they may behave. It means striving, through sustained engagement, to cultivate the positive qualities in oneself and in others.¹⁸

The Strength to be Undeclared by Even the Harshest Adversity

A truly global citizen is one who embodies wisdom, courage and compassion, fights against evil, and strives ceaselessly for the happiness of others and for peace, while always remaining cheerful and undeclared even in the midst of the harshest adversity and suffering.

To foster a strong indestructible spirit is an essential goal of value-creating education. Indeed, it is not too much to say that their education has failed if students are so weak that they collapse in the face of suffering and hardship.

According to Buddhism, human beings cannot avoid the four sufferings of birth (and the accompanying pain of day-to-day existence), aging, illness, and death. Indeed, Buddhism emerged from a quest to seek a solution to the impermanence and sufferings of life.

Chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra, 'Simile and Parable', states, "There is no safety in the threefold world; it is like a burning house, replete with a multitude of sufferings, truly to be feared, constantly beset with the griefs and pains of birth, aging, sickness and death, which are like fires, raging fiercely and without cease."¹⁹ These sufferings, in particular the inevitability of death, have troubled humankind since ancient times.

When he met his mentor Josei Toda for the first time, Dr Ikeda's first

question was “What is the correct way to live?” Toda’s answer was clear: “Many difficult problems arise over the long course of life. We must find the answer to the question of life and death. This is the key. Unless we find the correct answer to that, we cannot lead a truly correct life.”²⁰

Nichiren wrote that we must “first of all learn about death, and then about other things”.²¹ Hence, it is clear that any system of education is not complete unless it confronts unflinchingly the suffering of impermanence and nurtures in the student an undefeated spirit in the face of birth, aging, sickness, and death.

In the preface to *Discussion on Birth, Aging, Sickness, and Death*,²² Dr Ikeda stresses that a major focus of the 21st century must be the earnest search for a solution to these four sufferings. He emphasizes that the path to peace and happiness depends ultimately on whether humanity can establish the absolute life state of ‘eternity, happiness, true self, and purity’ without being shaken by the sufferings of ‘birth, aging, sickness, and death’.

The Lotus Sutra teaches that life is eternal, and that birth and death are inherent in life itself.²³ When human beings polish their life condition to the highest degree and become enlightened to the essential nature of life, both life and death are filled with joy, and both are expressions of the great process of eternal life.

The mission of humanistic education is not just to guide students through the school syllabus and help them pass their examinations. More than that, it needs to foster young people with the spirit never to be defeated no matter what happens, those who can win over the toughest challenges, including the challenge of death, to create value and expand the circle of happiness and peace both for themselves and others.

Walt Whitman (1819–91) described this resilient human spirit poetically:

But that I,
Turning to thee O soul,
Thou actual Me,
And lo,
Thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou matest Time,
Smilest content at Death,
And fillest,
Swellest full the vastness of space.²⁴

In his lecture at Harvard University on September 24, 1993, Dr Ikeda stated:

The greater self of Mahayana Buddhism is another way of expressing the openness and expansiveness of character that embraces the sufferings of all people as one's own. This self always seeks ways of alleviating the pain and augmenting the happiness of others, here, amid the realities of everyday life. Only the solidarity brought about by such natural human nobility will break down the isolation of the modern self and lead to the dawning of new hope for civilization. Furthermore, it is the dynamic, vital awakening of the greater self that will enable each of us, as individuals, to experience both life and death with equal delight.²⁵

Dr Ikeda then quoted Nichiren's words, "We use the aspects of birth, aging, sickness, and death to adorn the tower that is our body."²⁶ To conclude his Harvard lecture, he stated, "It is my earnest desire and prayer that in the twenty-first century each member of the human family will let shine the natural lustre of their inner 'treasure tower'. Filling our azure planet with the chorus of open dialogue, humankind will move on into the new millennium."²⁷

The Importance of Teacher–Student Interactions

Having examined the essential characteristics of global citizens in some detail, we must now consider what is required in the actual educational process of fostering them.

A UNESCO document on global citizenship education highlights the importance of human interactions, specifically teacher–student interactions:

Global citizenship education requires skilled educators who have a good understanding of transformative and participatory teaching and learning. The main role of the educator is to be a guide and facilitator, encouraging learners to engage in critical inquiry and supporting the development of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that promote positive personal and social change.²⁸

Educating global citizens is not a specialized task that happens in some distant place by some special people. It takes place right where we are. All of us can be involved. Dr Ikeda highlighted this point in his lecture

at Teachers College:

The work of fostering global citizens, laying the conceptual and ethical foundations of global citizenship, concerns us all. It is a vital project in which we all are participants and for which we all share responsibility. To be meaningful, education for global citizenship should be undertaken as an integral part of daily life in our local communities.²⁹

This emphasizes further the importance of the teacher and teacher–student interaction.

In concrete terms, Dr Ikeda emphasizes that the process of fostering global citizens is possible because,

[O]ur daily lives are filled with opportunities to develop ourselves and those around us. Each of our interactions with others — dialogue, exchange, and participation — is an invaluable chance to create value. We learn from people and it is for this reason that the humanity of the teacher represents the core of the educational experience.³⁰

Although buildings and facilities are important, it is clear that what essentially makes a school is a teacher dedicated to serving students. In other words, the teacher is the most important element of the educational environment. Hence, it is essential for teachers to strive to become truly global citizens themselves. Rather than seeking after their own praise or glory, genuine teachers give their lives to sowing the seeds of happiness and peace in their students.

Drawing from my own experiences with my teachers, I would like to emphasize the influence of the teacher in the educational environment.

The memory of one of my primary school teachers will never be erased from my heart. She was very strict, yet extremely compassionate. I may not remember what she said but I can never forget that she always smiled beautifully and warmly at the children. In that warm smile, my school friends and I could feel her sincere wish for all of us to grow as human beings.

In high school, I met a senior who acted as my counselor during times of difficulty. He never failed to warmly guide me whatever trouble I was facing. I will never forget that once when I had lost my self-confidence, he said to me, with a warm twinkle in his eyes, that he had absolute belief in me. He said it with so much conviction that it inspired me to win over my own weakness.

I remember that when I was a medical student in London, a surgery professor commented during an abdominal operation that no matter how different people might look from the outside, they all looked similar inside when we opened them up during surgery. I thus learnt to respect the unique differences in my patients while appreciating their common humanity. This lesson came from a casual remark in the course of our daily routine but it was an unforgettable educational experience for me.

I regard Dr Daisaku Ikeda, on whose thoughts I have based this discussion, as my mentor in life. After I graduated from medical school, I met him for the first time on November 18, 1987, at a meeting commemorating the 57th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai and the 20th anniversary of the Soka school system. It is a day forever engraved in my heart as my prime point.

In every interaction with Dr Ikeda since then over the past 35 years, I have been able to feel his profound compassion and his earnest wish for my growth as a human being. I am deeply grateful to my mentor and am determined to advance together with him in my heart all my life. Dr Ikeda is a supreme educator and a humanistic leader who has devoted his entire life to the promotion of peace, culture, and education. On that day of our first meeting in 1987, among the many points Dr Ikeda discussed to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Soka school system, he emphasized the spirit ‘never to be defeated no matter what happens’:

I hope that we, too, will continuously seek self-improvement, always trying to polish ourselves through study and maintaining a seeking mind throughout life. Youth, in particular, should absolutely never lose their serious attitude towards study.... It is impossible for favorable conditions to continue indefinitely; this is true for either groups or individuals. There are bound to be days of violently stormy weather and days of cold and snow. There may also be times when, in the midst of extreme suffering, you become utterly exhausted emotionally. Nevertheless, by persevering and overcoming adversity, you can develop a state of life that cannot be thrown off course by anything. Thus suffering, as it were, is the mother of a life of value and the source of glory.³¹

At this unprecedented time when we are facing the challenges of warfare, environmental degradation, and most recently the global COVID-19 pandemic, these words, more than ever before, express the crucial message that educators must convey to students.

Today, when complex problems such as depression, apathy, and suicide are on the rise, the important task of education is undoubtedly to foster, through genuine warm human interactions, people with hope and dreams for the future, possessing the spirit ‘never to be defeated no matter what happens’.

Let us now look at specific examples of human interaction in the Soka education system.

The Soka Education System: A Model of Human Interaction in Nurturing Undefeatable Global Citizens with Wisdom, Courage, and Compassion

The starting point of education is human interaction. Intense one-on-one interaction at the deepest level is what enables humanity to advance toward realizing its full potential. Although true education takes time, through such persistent interaction, people manifest their inherent potential and grow.

Nichiren described the patient art of a good teacher beautifully: “Teaching another something is the same as oiling the wheels of a cart so that they turn even though it is heavy, or as floating a boat on water so that it moves ahead easily.”³² Under his mentor Josei Toda’s personal tutelage, Dr Ikeda studied history, literature, philosophy, economics, science, organization theory, and other subjects for a period of 10 years. Most of all, it was the deep human interaction between him and his mentor that Dr Ikeda really treasured. Founding the Soka education system was one way of expressing his profound gratitude. Elaborating on the reason he founded the Soka education system in his lecture on global citizenship education at Teachers College, Dr Ikeda said:

The burning commitment to peace that remained unshaken throughout his [Toda’s] imprisonment was something he carried with him his entire life. It was from this, and from the profound compassion that characterized each of his interactions, that I most learned. Ninety-eight percent of what I am today I learned from him. The Soka, or value-creating, education system was founded out of a desire that future generations should have the opportunity to experience this same kind of humanistic education. It is my greatest hope that the graduates of the Soka schools will become global citizens who can author a new history for humankind.³³

As the founder of the Soka schools, Dr Ikeda exerted himself tirelessly

to interact with, encourage, and empower all the students with the conviction that this will enable the unique individual qualities of each of them to blossom like flowers in full bloom. The novel *The New Human Revolution* by Dr Ikeda, in which he himself appears with the name ‘Shin’ichi Yamamoto’ and his wife with the name ‘Mineko’, is full of examples of actual episodes of such human interaction in the Soka schools, some of which I will cite to illustrate the practice of humanistic education.

A passage in the chapter ‘Glorious Future’ of *The New Human Revolution*, which chronicles events that happened in Soka High School, states, “He [Shin’ichi] never put on affectations, but joined the students in their activities, and spoke to them as an equal. Furthermore, concerned about the students’ health and how they were getting on in their daily lives, he listened to their problems and encouraged them with all his might.”³⁴

The same chapter describes in detail a moving episode in which Dr Ikeda emphasizes the need for an educator to plant the seeds of growth in students by fully trusting their potential, accepting them for who they are without any prejudice, wholeheartedly encouraging them, strongly supporting them as well as earnestly helping them to establish connections, and finding opportunities for them to display their potential:

[T]he students were told by their teachers that Shin’ichi wanted to speak with those who were not doing very well. They therefore looked somewhat ashamed when they entered the room, but Shin’ichi greeted them with a broad smile.

“Please don’t be nervous,” he said. “I didn’t come here to scold you. I want to encourage you.”

He then proceeded to ask each of the students in detail if anything was troubling them, whether they were in good health, how long they take to commute to school, and what their situation at home was like. If they were experiencing any problems, Shin’ichi wanted to help them, offer them advice, and do whatever he could to support them. He also wanted to make the encounter an opportunity to draw forth the students’ potential outside of the classroom.

As they spoke with Shin’ichi, many of the students seemed to appreciate and understand his intent. One even pledged on the spot to

try harder in his studies. Hearing this, Shin'ichi nodded and smiled warmly as he remarked, "That's right. Do your best. Don't give up. It's important to continually advance, even just a little."

To another, he said, "You mustn't beat yourself up for getting poor marks. Please continue to have a challenging spirit, always striving to do better next time."

"Find one subject you can excel in," he urged others. "Don't be defeated by your own weaknesses."

In this way, Shin'ichi put his entire being into encouraging each student.

The students had worn gloomy expressions when they arrived, but when they left, they looked happy and refreshed.

It was the teachers who were most amazed by Shin'ichi's actions. Seeing him meet with the struggling students rather than with those who were doing well touched them deeply. They realized that helping even the worst student become the best was the true spirit of value-creating education, and they determined to do their utmost towards that end.

Shin'ichi's encounter with the students turned out to be a great source of inspiration for students and teachers alike. In later years, one of those students would go on to become a university professor.³⁵

In a chapter on Soka University in *The New Human Revolution*, Dr Ikeda emphasizes the importance of educators having the determination that their students will surpass them:

When Shin'ichi heard that there was a *shogi* (Japanese chess) tournament taking place, he went along to participate. Employing a vigorous offence, Shin'ichi defeated his opponent in 30 minutes. "I'll beat you next time!" the student said energetically.

"I hope you do," Shin'ichi replied, "and not just in *shogi*. I want you to surpass me in everything — in your studies, in your communication skills, in all you do. I will rest assured if you do."

It was a profound expression of the unlimited trust and expectations

Shin'ichi had for the students. The youth nodded, his eyes shining with determination.³⁶

Reflecting the spirit of the founder, it has become a tradition of the Soka education system for not only the educators but also for the senior students, filled with gratitude, to work to open the way for their juniors, warmly encouraging them to achieve even greater victories than their own.

In the chapter 'Young Shoots' about the Soka Elementary School in *The New Human Revolution*, there is a story about a nurse named Chieko and her children Shinka and Hirotaka. Chieko had died from bowel cancer. The chapter relates how Shin'ichi Yamamoto encouraged Chieko's two children, who were then still studying at Soka Elementary School, to be strong and undefeatable in the face of the challenges of sickness and death.

When Shin'ichi Yamamoto heard about Chieko's death, he resolved to watch over her two young children throughout his life, so that she could rest at ease. The next day, July 17, he met with Shinka and Hirotaka during the Glory Festival.

He said to them, "Your mother lives on. She is alive in your hearts. So please don't worry. Think of my wife as your mother, and me as your father. Now you have two fathers. There's nothing to worry about." At these words, tears welled up in the children's eyes. Shin'ichi embraced them in a warm hug.

"Don't cry," he said. "You are young lions. Please don't let yourselves be defeated. I want you to become strong. It is important to be brave."

The children tried not to cry, but tears fell from their eyes.

Earlier, in March of that same year when Chieko was in the hospital, Shin'ichi invited Shinka to attend a commemorative lunch following the graduation ceremony and had her sit next to him. On that occasion, he also encouraged her, saying, "I know it must be very hard with your mother in the hospital, but please stay strong. Be brave and become someone who is never defeated."

Shin'ichi's wife, Mineko, attended Chieko's funeral on his behalf, at which time, she also encouraged Shinka: "Please grow into a

wonderful person, just like your mother.”

Sincere words rouse courage in the hearts of others.

Shinka and Hirotaka Hayashida resolved to live their lives strongly and bravely, like lions.

Later, Shinka followed in her mother’s footsteps and became a nurse, while Hirotaka became a reporter for the *Seikyo Shimbun*.³⁷

These examples from *The New Human Revolution* illustrate how the ideals of education are put into practice in the Soka education system through the behavior and actions of the founder, Dr Ikeda. The last example, in particular, highlights inspiring the courage to win over the sufferings of life and death as an integral part of humanistic education for global citizenship.

The Founder’s Great Expectations for the Future of Graduates of the Soka Schools

Dr Ikeda, as the founder, deeply trusts each student of the Soka school system from kindergarten to university and cherishes boundless expectations for the future of the graduates. ‘The Future’ chapter of *The New Human Revolution* describes the great expectations Dr Ikeda has for young children studying at the Soka Kindergartens in Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Brazil, and South Korea. In January 1991, at the ground-breaking ceremony for the Hong Kong Soka Kindergarten, the first Soka Kindergarten outside Japan, “Shin’ichi was thrilled at the prospect that emissaries of the future would now gather at this spot, eventually to take wing and soar into the vast skies of peace of the new century.”³⁸

In the same chapter, there is an account of Dr Ikeda’s visit to the Malaysia Soka Kindergarten on December 1, 2000, that describes his sincere feelings for all the students of the Soka School system throughout the world:

Shin’ichi then planted commemorative trees and took part in a ceremony to unveil a plaque inscribed with guiding words for the kindergarten: ‘Hope, Courage, Friendship’. Shin’ichi said to his wife, Mineko, “What cheerful, happy children. I’m so glad to see this. I’ll always remember their faces. I’ll never forget them. I feel as if I have

met the future today, and that future is filled with the light of great hope. I'll watch over the students at the Malaysia Soka Kindergarten, and all the children of Soka education around the globe, as long as I live!"³⁹

Each time I reflect on the guidelines, 'Hope, Courage, Friendship', I am deeply inspired and profoundly grateful to Dr Ikeda for concentrating in these words the essence of humanistic education. Let me share my understanding of these guidelines on how to create maximum value and achieve absolute victory in life.

'Hope' is not simply wishing that things will turn out well. It is the strong conviction that whatever happens, no matter how painful, there is significance in it and eventually it will turn out to be a great benefit if one continues to advance without giving up. Hope is the power to believe in the future. It is the conviction that winter never fails to turn to spring.

Hope comes from having a great objective or goal. Dr Ikeda says in the 'Bells of Dawn' chapter of *The New Human Revolution*, "When we have a goal, the sun shines brightly and a beautiful rainbow of hope shimmers in the sky of our future. When we have a purpose in life, each step forward is filled with strength."⁴⁰

'Courage' means conquering fear and cowardice and basing oneself on deep, resolute faith. It is the determination to take one courageous step forward and then another even when it appears as though one is facing a deadlock.

Dr Ikeda once said in a lecture to young people, "Courage gives rise to resolve, action, and joy. It is a source of hope. It breaks through limitations, opens the way forward, and assures victory. And courage spreads, creating more courage."⁴¹

'Friendship' refers to the bonds and interactions among human beings. There are many important bonds and interactions in education such as those between teachers and students, between fellow students, between fellow teachers as well as between seniors and juniors. There is also the bond between a school's founder and its students. Ultimately it refers to the profound bond between mentor and disciples.

In society, it expresses the sincere spirit to consolidate bonds of human relationship with everyone around us — in the family, in the local community and expanding outward to the world at large. It is through such bonds that we inspire each other to develop courage and maintain hope.

In response to a request by representatives of Malaysia Soka

Kindergarten, on July 26, 2014, Dr Ikeda gave the alumni of Soka Kindergarten the name ‘創華会’ (which can be translated into English as ‘Soka Bloom of Excellence Group’), expressing his profound prayer and boundless hope that graduates of the kindergarten without exception would reveal their unique potential to the full and grow to become excellent people with noble characters who will make contributions toward world peace and the happiness of people around the world. The characters, ‘So’ (創), meaning ‘to create’, and ‘Ka’ (華), meaning ‘excellent bloom’, which together make up the name ‘創華会’, are also characters that appear in a wonderful *haiku* (Japanese poem) that Dr Ikeda had composed eight years earlier, on December 6, 2006, for his friends in Malaysia.

May the brilliant flowers of Soka
bloom in their full glory
in Malaysia

マレーシア
創価の華の
満開を

(Mareshia Soka no Hana no Mankai o)

The ‘flower’ in this *haiku* refers to the unique brilliant flower of each person’s life with all its limitless potential and energy. Dr Ikeda expresses his earnest wish in the *haiku* that this flower of everyone’s life blooms in its full glory. He encourages everyone to strive to develop an unshakable, lasting state of happiness in the depths of each of their lives and help others to do the same, even in the midst of adversity and challenges. This poem brings to mind the lotus flower flourishing in a muddy pond. In a poetic way, it also symbolizes the goal of education to inspire human beings to bloom as beautiful flowers, triumphing over all obstacles to illuminate this dark age.

Conclusion: Fostering an Unending Succession of Global Citizens

In concluding his lecture at Teachers College, Dr Ikeda proposed that, in coordination with the United Nations, critical issues facing humankind such as peace, environment, development, and human rights should be incorporated as integral elements of education at all levels.

Emphasizing that education must never be subservient to political interests, Dr Ikeda expressed his hope to see more world summits of educators and educational exchanges among young global citizens.

In summary, a global citizen is defined by Dr Ikeda as,

[A] person of wisdom who recognizes the equality and interconnectedness of life; a person of courage who respects others' differences; and a person of compassion who empathizes with others. The bodhisattva in Buddhism, he argued, is a model of just such a person, and education is the work of the bodhisattva, who brings benefit to self and others.⁴²

Patient unremitting effort in education to create a solidarity of global citizens, emerging in endless succession, is crucial in order for humankind to win over the current unprecedented challenges.

At the end of his *2021 Peace Proposal*, titled 'Value Creation in a Time of Crisis', Dr Ikeda declared:

The lotus flower blooms fragrantly, unsullied by the muddy waters from which it draws sustenance. This illustrates that however deep the chaos and confusion of the times, we can refuse to let this overwhelm us, staying always true to ourselves. The limitless power of value creation, which is intrinsic to life, enables each of us to transform our circumstances into an arena where we can live out our unique mission, imparting hope and a sense of security to all those around us.⁴³

In one of his essays, after Dr Ikeda shared that on January 2, 2022 the cornerstone laying ceremony for the Soka International School Malaysia, a combined junior high and senior high school, took place, he passionately called upon everyone to begin the ascent of a new summit of peace and happiness together, proclaiming: "Youth are the hope of humanity. The bright baton of Soka education bequeathed to us by Presidents Makiguchi and Toda, who gave their lives for peace and humane values, is now being carried forward by youthful global citizens around the world."⁴⁴

Notes

¹ Jim Garrison, Larry Hickman, and Daisaku Ikeda, *Living as Learning: John*

- Dewey in the 21st Century (Massachusetts: Dialogue Path Press, 2014), 227.
- ² Ibid., 258.
- ³ John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry* (Chicago: Gateway Books, 1946), 154.
- ⁴ Daisaku Ikeda, 'Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship', in *A New Humanism: The University Addresses of Daisaku Ikeda* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010), 54.
- ⁵ Ibid., 55.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust/ Part One*, trans. Philip Wayne (Penguin Books Ltd, 1986), 46.
- ⁸ Felix Unger and Daisaku Ikeda, 'Dialogue: The Humanist Principle—Compassion and Tolerance [1]', *The Journal of Oriental Studies* 15 (2005): 8–9.
- ⁹ Ikeda, 'Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship', 55.
- ¹⁰ Nichiren, *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings* (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2004), 200–01.
- ¹¹ Norman Cousins, *Human Options: An Autobiographical Notebook* (New York: WW Norton and Company, Inc., 1981), 205.
- ¹² Ikeda, 'Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship', 55.
- ¹³ Daisaku Ikeda, 'A Religion of Human Revolution Part 8', *SGI Newsletter* 9829 (2018), 10.
- ¹⁴ *An Anthology of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's Works* (in Japanese), ed. Takehisa Tsuji (Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha, 1994), 40, quoted in Daisaku Ikeda, 'Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship'.
- ¹⁵ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 213.
- ¹⁶ Nichiren, *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* (WND), vol. I (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 1999), 512.
- ¹⁷ Ikeda, 'Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship', 55.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 56.
- ¹⁹ Burton Watson, trans., *The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras* (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2009), 105.
- ²⁰ Daisaku Ikeda, 'A Religion of Human Revolution Part 7', *SGI Newsletter* 9813 (2018), 1–2.
- ²¹ Nichiren, *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* (WND), vol. II (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 1999), 759.
- ²² Daisaku Ikeda 池田大作, *Sho ro byo shi to jinsei o kataru* 生老病死と人生を語る (Discussion on Birth, Aging, Sickness, and Death) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shinbun sha, 2006), 4.
- ²³ Nichiren, *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, 127.
- ²⁴ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1926), 348.
- ²⁵ Daisaku Ikeda, 'Mahayana Buddhism and Twenty-First-Century Civilization', in *A New Humanism: The University Addresses of Daisaku Ikeda*, 175.
- ²⁶ Nichiren, *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, 90.
- ²⁷ Ikeda, 'Mahayana Buddhism and Twenty-First-Century Civilization', 175.
- ²⁸ UNESCO, *From Global Citizenship Education: Topics and Learning Objectives* (UNESCO, 2015)
- ²⁹ Ikeda, 'Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship', 57.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 58.

- ³¹ Daisaku Ikeda, November 18, 1987, Speech commemorating the 57th anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai and the 20th anniversary of Soka Gakuen, in *Buddhism in Action Volume 6* (Tokyo: NSIC, 1992), 311–12.
- ³² Nichiren, WND I, 1086.
- ³³ Daisaku Ikeda, ‘Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship’, 59.
- ³⁴ Daisaku Ikeda, ‘Glorious Future’, in *The New Human Revolution* 51 (Malaysia: Soka Gakkai Malaysia, 2003), 76.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 78–79.
- ³⁶ Daisaku Ikeda, ‘Soka University’, in *The New Human Revolution* 61 (Malaysia: Soka Gakkai Malaysia, 2005), 124–25.
- ³⁷ Daisaku Ikeda, ‘Young Shoots’, in *The New Human Revolution* 105 (Malaysia: Soka Gakkai Malaysia, 2015), 87–88.
- ³⁸ Daisaku Ikeda, ‘The Future’, in *The New Human Revolution* 89 (Malaysia: Soka Gakkai Malaysia, 2010), 70–71
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 87–88.
- ⁴⁰ Daisaku Ikeda, ‘Bells of Dawn’, in *The New Human Revolution* 120 (Malaysia: Soka Gakkai Malaysia, 2021), 95.
- ⁴¹ Daisaku Ikeda, ‘To My Dear Friends of the Youth Division Part 1’, *SGI Newsletter* 9996 (2018), 10–11.
- ⁴² Daisaku Ikeda, ‘Vow’, in *The New Human Revolution* 122 (Malaysia: Soka Gakkai Malaysia, 2020), 254.
- ⁴³ Daisaku Ikeda, “Peace Proposal Commemorating the 46th SGI Day ‘Value Creation in a Time of Crisis’”, *SGI Newsletter* 10719 (2021), 37.
- ⁴⁴ Daisaku Ikeda, ‘Ascending a New Summit of Kosen-rufu Together’, *SGI Newsletter* 10927 (2022), 2.

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