

SGI President Ikeda's Essay
An All-Star Cast Is Assembling
By HO GOKU

Soon we'll be greeted by the smiling faces of cherry blossoms [this essay was published in Japan in mid-March].

Tens of thousands of brilliant, talented young graduates have already passed through the gates of Soka University, our citadel of wisdom and intellect, on their way to the 21st century. Just the other day, I heard that 162 of our students (including correspondence course students) passed the prefectural teacher employment examinations for 1998. As the founder of Soka University, I cannot tell you how happy this makes me.

In recent years, because of the economic downturn and lackluster performance of private enterprise, the number of applicants for the exam has risen. Birthrates, however, have continued to decline. And fewer school-age children means fewer new teachers have been hired.

Yet, in spite of the intense competition, each year, for seven consecutive years, more than 100 Soka University students have passed the exam. People all over Japan have praised this wonderful record.

I congratulate our students on their unbeatable spirit. At the same time, I express my profound gratitude to their teachers and the university staff members who have encouraged and supported them.

From Soka University's first graduating class in 1975 to the present, more than 2,400 graduates have secured employment as teachers in public and private schools. I'm sure this would delight first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the father of value-creating education.



Education is the most important task we face. It shapes our future leaders.

In the spring of 1930, Mr. Makiguchi wrote in a letter to a friend: "Recent educational policies as well as teachers in the classroom have become completely bureaucratic and lifeless, destroying the whole purpose of education. This places Japan's very future in grave peril."

The decline of education results in the moral and spiritual decline of the nation's citizens and of society itself. Thus, Mr. Makiguchi advocated educational reform and desired more than anything to foster outstanding educators.

On Nov. 18 of the same year he wrote that letter, Mr. Makiguchi, together with Josei Toda (later second president of the Soka Gakkai), founded the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai.

Mr. Makiguchi believed that the purpose of education is to bring happiness to children. The kind of teacher he envisioned who would carry out that sacred task was not of someone sitting ensconced on the throne of learning, an object of veneration, but a public servant who guides those aspiring to ascend that throne themselves.

His was a revolutionary cry for humanistic education.



Mr. Makiguchi often used to say to his family: "In the future, there will be a school that puts the methods of value-creating education into practice. It will go all the way from kindergarten to the university level. Young Toda will see to it that my work is carried on."

And Mr. Toda said to me, his disciple: “Let’s work together to found Soka University. If not in my generation, then in yours. I’m relying on you. Let’s make it a world-class university!”

That was late autumn 1950. Mr. Toda’s business ventures were in difficult straits, but he could still look serenely into the far distant future.



Education will be my final work.

Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda were both teachers. Although I never studied as a teacher nor taught in the classroom, I realized the wish of both these great mentors, establishing the Soka educational system and gaining wide recognition for the ideals and principles of value-creating education throughout the world. That has been my mission as their disciple.

Mr. Makiguchi’s authoritative statement of his educational ideals, *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*, has so far been translated into four languages. This pleases me immensely.

Also, in Brazil and the United States, a number of schools have incorporated Mr. Makiguchi’s ideas into their teaching curricula. They have all had remarkable results. The students are excited about their studies, and their grades are improving. In Brazil, in particular, value-creating education has gained widespread public acceptance: In 1995, there was one school using this method; today there are 18.

We are facing a worldwide educational crisis, and over the years, Mr. Makiguchi’s educational ideas have come to shine as a hopeful remedy, a light in the darkness.



I have many bound volumes of essays written by Soka University graduating students in what has become a school tradition. They include essays from students from the first graduating class through those of recent years. There are some two dozen volumes all told.

I keep them before the Gohonzon and continue to pray for the growth and happiness of each graduate. I frequently go through the pages, asking after this person and that, sometimes sending books, short messages or poems to encourage them. They are all precious students who have come to study at the university that I founded. Ours is a bond forged through the vows of youth.



Many of our students go to Soka University of America in Calabasas, Calif., for short-term language study programs and to experience life abroad. The day when SUA’s Orange County campus will open is also fast approaching.

Soka University is involved in exchange programs with 67 universities around the globe.

An all-star cast is now assembling in preparation for a grand performance on the stage of the 21st century.

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