

Opening Ceremony Speech by President

Masashi Suzuki

Good morning to all distinguished guests present here today. Thank you very much for joining us today at the 1st International Symposium on Global Citizenship Education.

Firstly, I would like to sincerely thank the four keynote speakers, including Dr. Jim Garrison, for having accepted our offer to be here today, participants who have prepared paper presentations for the parallel sessions, and everyone present here today to make this symposium possible.

As Soka University approached its 50th anniversary in 2021, the “Soka University Grand Design 2021-2030” was formulated as a new 10-year mid-to long-term plan toward 2030. The theme of the Grand design is “a university that fosters ‘global citizens’ that can create value,” as it sets forth the direction of the university’s development for the next 10 years.

When considering global citizenship and value creation, the lecture delivered by the Founder Mr. Daisaku Ikeda, titled “Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship” at Teachers College, Columbia University in the City of New York in 1996 is of great significance.

The lecture is the culmination of Mr. Ikeda’s philosophy on global citizenship education, and it is of great significance to the education and research of Soka University. It also offers important approaches for the future direction of Soka University.

In the lecture, Mr. Ikeda states, “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.” He further defines “global citizens” as “people capable of value-creation on a global scale,” and points out the three requirements of a global citizen: that is, wisdom,

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courage, and compassion that will be explained in detail in the keynote speeches later.

Since Mr. Ikeda's lecture at the Teachers College, Soka University has been steadily researching and practicing global citizenship education. In particular, the Ikeda Research Institute for Soka Education (IRISE) has taken the lead in pursuing the significance of global citizenship education and its importance from various perspectives. The research institute is also responsible for organizing and holding this "1st International Symposium on Global Citizenship Education."

In 2014, the book titled "Living as Learning, John Dewey in the 21st Century" was published. It is a dialogue between three experts, namely Dr. Jim Garrison and Dr. Larry Hickman, who served as the presidents of the John Dewey Society of America in the past, and Mr. Daisaku Ikeda. In the book, founder Ikeda discussed how Mr. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the father of Soka Education, was also greatly influenced by Dewey's educational philosophy.

The book says, "Makiguchi paid keen attention to Dewey's philosophy and emphasized the excellence of his ideas. In his celebrated *The School and Society*, Dewey advocated "living primarily, and learning through and in relation to this living." President Makiguchi incorporated this aspect of Dewey's philosophy in what he called "the Life of Great Good," the practice of life-reformation that was the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai's goal." (Living as Learning, John Dewey in the 21st Century pp.61-62)

In this way, it is clear that Mr. Makiguchi's Soka Education was inspired by the philosophy of Dewey, who placed "life" itself at the center of education.

Global citizenship is not an abstract concept. Rather, its true value lies in its tangible manifestation in our actions and interactions with others in creating a peaceful and sustainable world. It is in this way that we can build a world in which we can live with others while maximizing our own potential. Therefore, global citizenship education must explore better ways for learners to embody global citizenship in their daily lives.

With this in mind, we have chosen "Restoring Learning to Daily Living: Global Citizenship and John Dewey" as the theme of the symposium this year. With great pleasure, we have invited Dr. Jim Garrison, a leading scholar of Dewey, and Dr. Chiharu Fujii, President of the Dewey Society of Japan, to deliver keynote speeches today.

In addition, we are pleased to have Mr. Shigeru Aoyagi, Director of UNESCO Bangkok, a United Nations agency that aims to develop and implement programs related to education and culture based on the idea of global citizenship. We are also pleased to be joined by Professor Masumi Odari, a graduate of our university who is setting examples as a global citizen and is currently teaching at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. They will also be delivering their keynote speeches later.

Once again, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to the four keynote speakers here today.

My specialty is mathematics and mathematics education. About every ten years, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan establishes the Course of Study, which is the curriculum guideline, as a standard for school education. The first Course of Study was issued in 1947, shortly after World War II under the influence of American education.

It was an education guideline incorporating Dewey's philosophy of education and emphasizing the connection of education with society and life.

However, this guideline soon came under severe criticism on the grounds that it did not reflect the systematic nature of learning. Dewey's philosophy was not accepted at a time when the prevailing view of academic achievement was to consistently cram knowledge.

Since then, the view of academic achievement has changed significantly in anticipation of a global society in the future in which AI and communication technology are highly evolving. Systematic cramming of knowledge has become obsolete.

The theme of the latest Course of Study revised in 2017 is active learning, expressed as "proactive, interactive, and deep learning," and the required academic ability is "the skills to apply what one has learned to life and society." After 70 years, the world of education has changed significantly in the direction of "Restoring Learning to Daily Living" once again.

In that sense, the theme of this symposium is aiming for the direction most strongly desired in the current educational world.

Finally, it is my sincere hope that all distinguished guests and participants will engage in meaningful discussions about global citizenship and global citizenship education at today's 1st International Symposium on Global Citizenship Education.

Once again, thank you very much for your attendance today.