

Value-Creating Pedagogy and Japanese Education in the Modern Era

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1. Problems in Modern Japanese Education

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi wrote *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei* [The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy] in response to the numerous problems he encountered while working in the education system of modern Japan (late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries). He hoped to reform an educational system no longer able to cope with the changes taking place in Japanese society.

Modern Japanese education began with the Education Law of 1872 that mandated the objective of “education for all.” The basic structure of the school system introduced at that time was modeled on the centralized school system of France, a system that made it easier for government to control and administer education uniformly. In terms of accelerating the modernization of Japan (which at that time lagged behind the nations of the West), it was urgent to establish a modern school system, to give all citizens access to education, and to raise the standard of education. In order to achieve this massive task of modernization efficiently, the state needed a school system centrally controlled. This would enable the Meiji government to achieve its political objectives quickly – as encapsulated in the slogan *fukoku kyohei* or “wealthy nation, strong army.”

There is no doubt that modern schools were established quickly in Japan as a result of this centralized system. In the year following the promulgation of the Education Law, the proportion of children attending elementary school was a little over 28%; forty years later, it was over 98%. In 1896 when Tsunesaburo Makiguchi graduated from Hokkaido Normal School and took his first steps into the world of education, there was only one university in Tokyo. Some 30 years later (1930), when the Society for Value-Creating Pedagogy (Soka Kyoiku Gakkai) was formed and the first volume of the *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy* was published, that number had grown

to forty-six. The growth and rising standards in education were major factors that contributed to the modernization of Japanese society, enabling the economy to develop and the military might of the nation to expand.

The centralized school system certainly proved the correct choice in terms of modernizing Japan and creating a powerful nation; as society changed, however, this system also created numerous problems. Repeated reforms were carried out at the elementary, middle and higher school levels from the Meiji through the Taisho periods. Attempts were made to put the school system in a more comprehensible form by (a) providing educational content and methods directly related to the mental and physical development of the child (b) improving the system for advancement to higher education and (c) improving the way that schools were run. As the damaging impact of socioeconomic conditions were increasingly felt in education, problems in education were only exacerbated. During the period when *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy* was written and published (from the end of Taisho through the early years of the Showa periods), these problems received considerable attention as a social issue, to the extent that the term *kyoiku kokunan* [“the crisis in national education”] was coined.

Major problems in education at that time included the following:

- The uniformity of educational strategies due to the centralized administration of education by the state, the inherent lack of freedom in the classrooms, and the prevalence of educational methods not conducive to the nurturing of creativity
- Problems with remuneration of teaching and administrative staff in a system controlled by bureaucrats and school inspectors (low wages, delayed or missed paychecks, low social status, and the lack of comparative administrative authority)
- Classrooms focused on the teacher and rote memorization of facts and dependence on textbooks mandated by the authorities
- Intense competition to pass exams as greater numbers of students went on to higher education, resulting in school entrance difficulties and “examination hell”

- Inequality of opportunity in education as a result of the two-track education system and as a reflection of social and financial inequality
- Employment difficulties for graduates of universities and higher vocational schools, owing to the recession and the growing number of institutions of higher education
- A proliferation of socialist and communist ideas among students

Makiguchi was concerned about every issue and was determined to tackle all of them head on. At the root of his determination were powerful humanistic sensibilities. Makiguchi was tormented by the idea that unless something was done about the current state of affairs in which “eleven million children and school pupils are struggling – unable to get into school, suffering the hell of examinations and unable to get work when they leave school” (Pedagogy 8), the suffering would continue into the next generation. Makiguchi believed that problems in education must be solved for the sake of the happiness of children and the younger generation, and these humanistic ideals spurred him to write *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*. Makiguchi wanted happiness for the youth of the next generation as they were to carry with them hopes for the future. He sought ways to approach the problems in education through experience and based on the practice and knowledge gleaned from diligent academic endeavors. The result of his research was *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*, a work infused with the spirit of humanism.

The first volume was published in 1930, the second volume in 1931, the third in 1932 and the fourth in 1934. Thus Makiguchi set forth his ideas for education based on the world of the first half of the 1930s (or, according to the Japanese mode of counting years, the first years of the Showa Era). If the time required for writing *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy* is added to that for publication of the series, it would be correct to view its creation as spanning the years from the latter half of the 1920s through the first half of the 1930s.

These ten years were also a significant turning point in modern Japanese history. It was a period during which the creeds of liberalism and democracy based on respect for human dignity and the ideas of humanism were a powerful force – so much so that the period was

dubbed the era of Taisho democracy. It was followed by years of oppression at the hands of those opposed to this freedom, forces backed by the authority of a state that gave rise to a nationalism grounded in the idea of the emperor as absolute power. It was the beginning of an era of violence.

In April of 1925 the Public Security Preservation Law was passed. Its main aim was to tighten state control over speech and thought and was later to become the legal basis for the arrest of Makiguchi. In May the Universal Manhood Suffrage Law (a revision in the laws governing the election of members to the House of Representatives) granted the vote to all males aged twenty-five and over. It was a manifestation of democracy developing in modern Japan. On the other hand, the passing of the Public Security Preservation Law signaled that Japanese nationalism was poised to move in a dangerous direction. In 1928 (the year Makiguchi encountered the Lotus Sutra) the first election under the Universal Manhood Suffrage Law was held for the House of Representatives. That same year there were mass arrests of Communist party members as the Public Security Preservation Law swung into action. Thus the period during which The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy was in the making was one of great change in Japanese history: Humanism, liberalism and nationalism had existed side by side then competed with one another until the first two were suppressed and finally supplanted by the third.

Amidst the tumult of the modern era, problems in Japanese education became increasingly serious and required a better method of education than what had existed in the past. These problems provided the impetus for Makiguchi's value-creating pedagogy. Responding from an acute awareness of the mood and demands of the times, Makiguchi chose to make his stand with the forces of liberal humanism against the tide of nationalism sweeping the country. He embarked on devising a system of educational theory that would contribute to solving the problems in modern Japanese education. The result was The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy.

2. Education for the State and Education for Happiness

For what purpose do we educate people? For whom do we educate them? It is necessary first to answer these questions and clarify the

goal of education before we begin to educate. Makiguchi likened the goal of education as a target into which an arrow is shot, and stressed the importance of knowing exactly what the target is. In the first volume of *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy* there is a section entitled “*Kyoiku Mokuteki Ron*” [A theory on the goal of education]. It is important to understand the goals proclaimed by Japanese education during this period of heavy state control if we are to understand fully the goal of education Makiguchi set forth. Later, I will describe Makiguchi’s view on the goals of education.

The ideological basis and the goals of education are set forth in the preface to the Education Law of 1872. Accordingly, people were to receive an education not so much for the sake of the state but to enable them to get ahead in life, to prosper and progress in their endeavors, and to lead fulfilling lives (Ministry of Education 21–24). At root was the idea that people should cultivate good character, increase their knowledge and expand their skills. Education and learning were the means to personal advancement, prosperity and fulfillment. The Education Law put forth a centralized model, based on the French school system, as a building block in the formation of a modern state. Its ideology and goals initially were not nationalist in character but, instead, influenced by the utilitarianism of modern Britain. By the 1880s, however, the imperatives of education were transformed by and subsumed under nationalism, with the imperatives of the state taking priority over all else.

Arinori Mori was appointed Japan’s first Minister of Education in December 1885. He believed that education formed the basis of the wealth and power of the nation and, by extension, that the establishment and maintenance of schools served the state. Mori asserted that administrators must not lose sight of the fact that education is provided not only for the benefit of the student but also for the benefit of the state. Mori also proposed that under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of War, military calisthenics be included as part of the curriculum in middle school and higher in order to instill a patriotic spirit in young people. In 1913 these military calisthenics became a formal part of the physical education curriculum in middle and higher schools. In 1925 a system was established in which officers of the military were assigned to schools

to carry out military training. Thus Mori's proposal had the effect of initiating the militarization of school education.

In 1890 (the year after Makiguchi entered Hokkaido Normal School), Mori's idea of education as a tool of nationalism was linked to the idea of "loyalty to the sacred person of the Emperor" in the form of the Imperial Rescript on Education. In it, the emperor instructs his subjects, that is, the people of Japan, on morality. The Rescript was a lecture in Confucian ethics, professing loyalty to the emperor and sacrifice of the individual for the state. The Rescript formed the ideological basis of education in Japan from the middle of the Meiji Period to the end of – that is, Japan's defeat in – the Second World War and dictated the direction of school education. A copy of the Rescript was kept as a sacred object in special facilities at each school along with a photograph of the emperor and taken out and read to students at school ceremonies by someone like the principal. This was a ceremonial act designed to impress upon the listeners that education was for the emperor and the state. Thus the fundamental goal of education was to inculcate young people with the idea of the emperor as center of the universe and the nation before all else and a spirit of loyalty to the emperor and of patriotism.

The ideas embodied in the Imperial Rescript on Education exercised control over school education in Japan until the end of the war. All goals and objectives of practical education were drawn from and came back to the Imperial Rescript. The ultimate goal of Japanese education until the end of the war was to follow the Imperial Rescript on Education and produce citizens of high caliber who were unswervingly loyal to the nation ruled by the emperor and who would not hesitate to give up their lives for this nation. Under the centralized school system described earlier, the uniform control and administration of schools was a simple matter, enabling a system of education to be put in place that did indeed work efficiently for the state and which fulfilled the goals set out in the Imperial Rescript on Education.

While the Imperial Rescript on Education became the final authority on the fundamental goals of education, Makiguchi sought a different kind of education than education for the state. The goal that Makiguchi postulated for education was very different in nature than those goals controlling schools at the time. Makiguchi took the view that people and not the Imperial Rescript on Education formed the

cornerstone of education, and that the purpose of education must be to ensure the happiness of human beings. According to Makiguchi, the goal of value-creating pedagogy was the realization of happiness: “Education is guiding the person being educated in such a way that they are able to achieve happiness” (Pedagogy 124). And: “The life of the person receiving the education should form the subject of that education, and the goal of education be their happiness in that life” (Pedagogy 124). In other words, Makiguchi believed that providing instruction to enable children now and in the future to attain happiness in their lives was the goal of education.

Makiguchi was not the first person to link happiness to the goal of education. Early in the 19th century, John Stuart Mill had described the goal of education as being the means for the happiness of oneself and others, while Herbert Spencer described education as preparation for a perfect life that would bring with it happiness. Makiguchi was undeniably influenced by the views of the educational utilitarianism of 19th century Britain. What is important here, however, is that in an era when “education for the benefit of the state” was enforced by the authorities and schools were steeped in the ideology of the Imperial Rescript on Education, Makiguchi gave priority to people and not the state. He declared unequivocally that the goal of education was to help children attain happiness in life. In today’s Japan where our basic human rights are guaranteed and the right to pursue happiness recognized, declaring education to be for the happiness of children seems almost ridiculously obvious. But at a time when extreme nationalism cast a cloud over the country and the state was linked to worship of the emperor to the exclusion of the individual, what Makiguchi said took considerable courage. At the root of this courage we can sense the strength of Makiguchi’s humanistic beliefs.

Why did Makiguchi position happiness as the goal of education? According to Kant, happiness is something human beings instinctively seek. Because he believed this, Makiguchi asserted that helping children attain happiness in life was the goal of education because education should help us in life. If the things that every person wants out of life were to be distilled and expressed in a one word, this word would be happiness; therefore the goal of education must be to contribute to happiness. It would be fair to say that Makiguchi’s insistence on education for happiness was based on a belief that

human beings and their lives deserve respect above all else, and on a belief in infinite love for all that is life. In the context of Japanese education in the modern era, directed by the state and controlled by nationalist ideology, Makiguchi's belief was foreign and out of step, but from the perspectives of the dignity of human life and of human rights it has a universal value that transcends the ages.

3. Progressive Proposals for Educational Reform and the Fascist System

The title of volume III of *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy* is "*Kyoiku Kaizoron*" [A Theory on the Rebuilding of Education]. In this volume, Makiguchi first identifies value-creating education as a system of education with aims to mold the person's natural individuality into a culturally sophisticated personality. He then proposes reforms for resolving the aforementioned problems in education and for building the ideal education system. He defines his plan for educational reform as a plan for nurturing the people who will build the ideal society, and makes the following specific recommendations:

1. Reform teacher training – more thorough training in teaching materials for different subjects, in knowledge of teaching methods, and in nurturing of a personality suitable for the teaching of morals; establishment of an apprentice teacher system in which teachers would learn by working with more experienced teaching staff.
2. Establish a public education research institute which would have an elementary school attached for the training of teachers and would conduct surveys and studies of the education system, its regulations and policies.
3. Hold examinations for the post of elementary school principal.
4. Improve conditions for elementary school teachers – making salaries, status and position of teaching staff equivalent to those of general government officials and military staff.
5. Abolish the school inspector system of administering, supervising and directing schools.

6. Establish the right of school autonomy, preventing undue control from outside by political or administrative authorities. At the same time, encourage participation of parents in education. (Makiguchi was of the view that parents should have a voice in their children's education and that a mother's participation in school education was part of her household management.)
7. Abolish the higher schools of the period (educational institutions positioned between the old middle schools and universities) as well as the universities in order to make education truly an equal opportunity, and switch to a single-track school system consisting of three stages: elementary school (six years), national people's school, and higher national people's school. Above these institutions would be graduate schools and institutions for academic research. (Makiguchi was a critic of the double-track school system of the time, which reflected and encouraged differences in social class and was a contradiction of the principle of equal opportunity.)
8. Recognize the privatization of school operations while recognizing that the state has supervisory rights.
9. Introduce a half-day school system by conducting lessons at elementary and national people's schools for half of every day. Children would then spend the second half of the day helping in the home or engaging in productive activities for the local community. At higher national people's schools, vocational instruction and studies would dominate, with lessons held mainly at night. Makiguchi advocated a half-day school system – he believed it linked school education directly to productive activity and was beneficial to the lives of students and to society. He believed people needed to continue learning throughout their lives in a way that was related to the conduct of everyday life. These ideas are echoed in the philosophy of lifetime education that has spread through Japanese society rapidly since the 1970s.
10. Replace rote learning with a system of education that concentrates on teaching students how to learn (the concept of *gakushu shidoshugi*).

At the root of these proposals for educational reform are ideas that characterize the modern era and the rationalist and democratic viewpoints. Grounded in the rationalist viewpoint are the proposals for reform in teacher training which requires candidates for elementary school principals to pass examinations, the setting up of a national education research institute, privatization of school management and a half-day school system. The products of a democratic viewpoint are better conditions for elementary teaching staff, abolition of the school inspector system, autonomy for schools, encouraging and assisting parents to participate in education, and the creation of a single-track school system. Makiguchi's proposals for educational reform were rational and democratic in nature and very progressive for their time. It is the humanism of Makiguchi – his desire for children to be happy – that underpins the characteristically modern rationalist and democratic nature of these progressive reform proposals.

By advocating progressive reforms in education (especially by advocating the abolition of the school inspector system and increased autonomy for schools), Makiguchi earned the suspicion and enmity of the officials and inspectors responsible for overseeing education. The atmosphere in Japanese society at the time his *System* was published and in the following years from the late 1930s to the early 1940s was far from conducive to acceptance of these humanist proposals for educational reform. 1931, the year in which Volume II was published, saw the Manchurian Incident and the beginning of a state of war for Japan that would last fifteen years. Nationalist ideology became even more extreme, national life was increasingly influenced by militarism, and in 1934, the year in which Volume IV was published, a “thought” bureau was established at the Ministry of Education. Controls were further tightened on freedom of speech and thought.

In 1937, Makiguchi published *Soka Kyoikuho no Kagakuteki Choshukyoteki Jikken Shomei* [Scientific and Religious Proof of Value-Creating Pedagogy], in which he linked methods of education with Buddhist theory and posited that life must have instructions. That same year, war broke with China and the system of National Spiritual Mobilization was adopted. This National Spiritual Mobilization was a movement aimed at boosting Japanese spirit in order to unite the people as one and form a structure of national unity. It was extremely totalitarian and fascist in nature. The year 1937 was also the year that

the Prime Minister and General Senjuro Hayashi took on the additional post of Minister of Education.

The military began to have an increasing say in education and further steps were taken to make education an instrument of military and war policy. In terms of the actual content of education, revisions were made to the Ministry of Education's *Chugakko Kyoju Yomoku* [Essential Points of Secondary School Teaching] and *Shihan Gakko Kyoju Yomoku* [Essential Points of Normal School Teaching], emphasizing a Japan where the sacred and inviolable Emperor ruled as the absolute being. Even greater efforts were made to raise a generation of young people infused with the spirit of loyalty and patriotism. For example, in the civics' course of the old middle schools, teachers were required to stress the unique nature of the structure of the Japanese nation that was ruled by the emperor and to inculcate their students with these beliefs as Japanese subjects. During military training at schools, teachers were told to heed the Imperial instructions bestowed upon soldiers.

In 1938, the National General Mobilization Law was passed, allowing the government enormous powers of control and administration over the human and material resources of the nation. Another military officer, Sadao Araki, became Minister of Education, resulting in further militarization of the school system. In 1940, the system of parliamentary democracy crumbled to be replaced by a Japanese version of fascism with the disbanding of political parties and the formation of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association. Under extreme nationalism and the fascist system, the humanistic education leading to the happiness for children that Makiguchi wanted was discarded completely and was replaced with education incorporated into the wartime system, created solely to spur on the enthusiasm of young people for the war and serve the national war effort.

As we have seen, Japanese society was increasingly in the stranglehold of fascist ideology in the years after the publication of Makiguchi's System of Value-Creating Pedagogy. An awareness of being at war permeated everyday life, and the conditions in which Makiguchi's progressive ideas for educational reform would be valued and realized were rapidly being lost.

However most of Makiguchi's proposals for educational reform, which under the fascist system never saw the light of day, were eventually adopted under the liberal democratic system established

after Japan's defeat and the end of the Second World War. The single-track school system for example, with its objective of equal opportunity education for all, became the 6-3-3 system. Just as Makiguchi had proposed to abolish the school inspector system and introduce autonomy for schools, unwarranted control of education was removed (Fundamental Law of Education, Article 10). Candidates for the post of elementary school principal were required to pass examinations. And progress was made in the teacher training system by the upgrading of teacher training facilities to university status.

It would be fair to say that these changes were a reflection of the modern, democratic nature of Makiguchi's pedagogy and its humanistic foundations. Although the half-day school system is difficult to implement in its proposed form, we can appreciate the meaning of this concept and the forward-looking nature of Makiguchi's views on pedagogy. When education for life is viewed as important and our access to information grows, we may need to adopt the half-day system.

4. Value-Creation in Education and Humanism

The most fundamental terms in value-creating pedagogy are value creation and happiness. Makiguchi's ideas on education were based on a combination of these two concepts and were rooted in humanistic thought.

In the search for the goal of education, Makiguchi contemplated in depth the systemization of his theories on education, particularly the issue of value. He developed a unique theory termed *kachiron*. This value theory was influenced by ideas from two schools from modern Europe. The first was the philosophy of neo-Kantianism with origins in the philosophy of Kant, known as the father of German idealism. Makiguchi was introduced to the value philosophy of the neo-Kantians through the writings of the Japanese economic philosopher, Kiichiro Soda. To the usual value categories of truth, good, beauty and holiness, Soda added economic value. He discussed values from two angles – as universally applicable standards and as something created by human beings. Makiguchi gleaned two main ideas from Soda's writings – that of including economic value (for which Makiguchi used in his theory of value the general term *ri* or “benefit,

gain” as a category of value) and the idea that value can be created and is important in terms of human existence.

The second influence on Makiguchi’s theory of value creation was the utilitarianism of Britain, which deemed happiness to be the goal of life and the ultimate aim of human behavior. It sought the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Utilitarianism was introduced to Japan from the mid-1870s to the 1890s. As the democratic movement grew during the Taisho years, so did interest in utilitarian ideas. Makiguchi came into contact with utilitarian thought during his youth while looking for the goals of education from the perspective of human happiness. Because he became convinced that education was linked to happiness, his interest grew in utilitarianism.

Makiguchi developed a theory of value that combined the idea of happiness as the goal of life with that of value as something that can be created. He asserted that if we were to distill what everyone wants in our lives and express it succinctly, the goal of life would be happiness. How then may we attain happiness? What do we have to do to reach a state of happiness? Makiguchi’s answer to these questions: By creating value. To achieve happiness we must create value. Everyone alive on this earth must work to create value with the aim of achieving happiness – this was the idea forming the basis of the pedagogy of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi.

From this idea of value creation as the precondition for happiness in life, Makiguchi declared that the purpose of education was for living life and defined value-creating pedagogy as “a knowledge system for teaching people to create the value that is the goal of life” (Pedagogy 13). Based on this definition, the goal of education must be derived from the goal of life, which is, ultimately, the achievement of happiness in life and, more specifically, guiding children toward a happy life. In value-creating pedagogy the main point of education is to aim for a happy life and to develop the ability and attitude required to create value. Although discussed from a variety of angles, the methods and conditions of education, educational research and the state of pedagogy are all with reference to this central point.

It goes without saying that Makiguchi’s belief in a teaching system for happiness in life and in education for the happiness of children both had their origins in his humanism. The concept of value creation and the ideas of utilitarianism are part of a current of humanism that

has flowed through history since the Renaissance. Makiguchi's theory of value creation and the pedagogy based on his theory are generated by his own love for humanity and the stimulated by these ideas. They are part of a lineage of humanism which forms the foundation of modern pacifist ideas.

At the root of Makiguchi's humanism was a belief in the dignity of life, a belief at one with that of love for humanity. This belief is apparent in Makiguchi's views on the definition of value.

Makiguchi did not see value in terms of absolute standards, but as something generated within a relationship between subject and object. The subject, needless to say, is the living being. Makiguchi described his definition of value as follows:

Value cannot exist on any other basis than that of the concept of its relationship to life. (Pedagogy 219)

Value is not generated by anything of a nature unrelated to the shortening or extension of human life. Therefore value is the object in a relationship with the life of a human being. (Pedagogy 293)

Thus value is born of its relationship with life. In Makiguchi's theory of value creation, life is the source of value, and a system of values is founded on the basis of life as the absolute value. Life is therefore central to this theory of value. All pacifist ideas have at their root a respect for life. The fundamental character of Makiguchi's theory of value, in which the worth of a thing is judged according to the degree to which it fulfils the purpose of life, is one of pacifism.

After being drawn to the Lotus Sutra, Makiguchi stated that the roots of the idea of value-creating pedagogy could be found in the central concepts of the Lotus Sutra. More specifically, he describes the educational methods of value-creating pedagogy as grounded in the spirit of mercy found in the Lotus Sutra (Summary 411). The central concept of the Lotus Sutra is explained in the *Juryohon* [Thus Come One], the sixteenth of the twenty-eight chapters of the Sutra. According to the *Juryohon*, the eternal Buddha is constantly hoping to save living beings from their suffering. Since ancient times, he has preached the truth (the Buddhist law) everywhere to many, and will lead those who seek the Buddha with all their hearts and obey his

teachings swiftly into the world of the Buddha. The *Juryohon* preaches the eternal nature of the life of the Buddha, the endless mercy of that Buddha for all humanity, and the idea that anyone can enter the world of the Buddha and be saved by following the teachings of the Buddha. The idea that everyone receives the mercy of the eternal Buddha equally with no discrimination, and that anyone can reach the highest spiritual state possible for a human being (a state of true happiness beyond suffering) by obeying the laws of the Buddha, are the very nucleus of the Lotus Sutra. According to Makiguchi, these are the very ideas at the root of value-creating pedagogy.

The ideas from the Lotus Sutra explained here are a higher, religious form of humanism, and are based on a deep and infinite spiritual love for mankind, that is, mercy. According to Makiguchi, this concept of mercy is the very theme running through value-creating pedagogy. It would be fair to say that this means that value-creating pedagogy is sustained by the spirit of a higher dimension of love for humanity and life. A respect for life forms the basis of pacifism. Value-creating pedagogy, based on a great love for life at the spiritual level, may be viewed as the pedagogy of pacifism. It is especially noteworthy that this view of education appeared at a time of rising nationalism and a militarist stranglehold on society.

5. Significance of Value-Creating Pedagogy in Modern Japan

Makiguchi penned and published his System of Value-Creating Pedagogy at a time when the modernization of Japan that had taken place since the Meiji Period was encountering a number of obstacles – political, economic, social and educational. It was a time when various problems in society were increasing in severity. It was a period during which the tide of the liberal democratic movement receded, to be replaced by an increasingly powerful nationalism that grew in violence, resulting eventually in the emergence of militarism. Sacrificing the good of the individual for that of the nation as a whole was glorified and became prominent in Japanese society. Unemployment and the gap between rich and poor threw a dark shadow over the nation.

Those working in education faced a host of problems – intense competition and the tendency to simply cram students with facts in order to pass exams; increasing uniformity in education as the state exercised greater control; and the lack of equal opportunity in education caused by the double-track school system. Modernization created an emperor who reigned supreme but did not bring “the greatest happiness for the greatest number.” It brought, instead, unhappiness for most. As an educator and a scholar of education, Makiguchi examined this state of unhappiness honestly and earnestly to write *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy* and to explain his value-creating pedagogy to the world.

Faced with this unhappiness in a nation that had developed into a great power, Makiguchi stated clearly that a nation is only a nation because of its people. He assigned the life of the individual priority above all else and asserted that happiness was the goal of life. He linked these ideas to the goal of education. The significance of value-creating pedagogy was four-fold: First, it advanced a theory of value in which life is central and made the happiness of children the goal of education – all this at a time when it was deemed an honor to sacrifice one’s life for the nation. The second significance of value-creating pedagogy was that it linked the idea of value creation to happiness and presented a theory for education and an argument for the reform of education from the viewpoints of creating value and nurturing the character. It avoided being swept along by the times. And, third, Makiguchi’s theory was not utopian in nature but consisted rather of education that actually produces results and was useful to community life. Thus, it was realistic and rational. And the last point, emphasized in the latter half of the *System*, is that Makiguchi positions Buddhist thought as the basis of his educational theory in the midst of the limits of modernity with all its social problems and unhappiness, aiming to overcome the contradictions of modern life.

The significance of value-creating pedagogy as described here is born of humanism based on a love for life. This is the basis of peace. Value-creating pedagogy has played a valuable part in the development of modern Japanese education. The pressure of nationalism failed to crush it. The ideas of value-creating pedagogy

are of benefit in any age and provide us with many valuable suggestions for solving the problems we face in education today.

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