

Makiguchi Project in Action – Enhancing Education for Peace

by Dilma de Melo Silva

“Education comprises formative processes that are developed within family life, communal life together, work, educational and research institutions, as well as within social movements, societal organizations and cultural manifestations.”

Law Number 9394 of December 20th, 1996

This is a report on two innovative educational projects in Brazil, the Makiguchi Project in Action and Literacy Poles, initiated and overseen by the Brazil–Soka Gakkai International (BSGI) Educators Division. The supportive, volunteer efforts that facilitated the successful outcomes of both projects arose from identifying the common desire to enhance the quality of education in Brazil.

The Makiguchi Project in Action was the convergence of two events: Brazil’s adoption in 1997 of the National Curriculum Parameters, as a result of Law Number 9394, and the 1994 publication of *Educação para uma Vida Criativa* (Editora Record), the Portuguese edition of *Education for Creative Living: Ideas and Proposals of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi* (Iowa State UP). In 1994 educators and psychologists of the BSGI Educators Division developed a series of lectures and consultations on the quality of public education out of which a direction and framework of implementation were created for the Makiguchi in Action Project. Since then, the project has been sponsored in 55 schools and introduced in 1,103 classrooms to more than 34,000 students.

From 1983 to 1987, the Literacy Department for Youth and Adults created and implemented an experimental project in adult literacy to benefit the membership of the BSGI. With awareness of the high level of functional illiteracy that affects an estimated 56 million Brazilians, the project was further developed as a public outreach program administered at designated Literacy Poles in major cities. As of this writing, over 800 students have completed the 40-hour program and qualified for public literacy examinations.

Introduction

The objective of the present work is to examine the implementation of the Makiguchi Project in Action and the Literacy Poles, both developed by the BSGI Educators Division, in an attempt to highlight the practical elements of the successful outcomes. Several instruments administered by the Educators Division were used in the collection of data for this report: To gain an overview from the pedagogical spectrum, interviews were done with school administrators, teachers, parents and students of several São Paulo City and State public schools. For statistical and qualitative purposes, a questionnaire was sent to 100 teachers who participated in the Makiguchi in Action Project. They were asked to evaluate student participation and the project overall, and to suggest ways the project had an effect on the student's quality of life. Reports, testimonies and additional comments from teachers and students were also documented in an effort to determine the potential contributions of the Makiguchi in Action and Literacy Poles to the Brazilian educational system in general.

The institutional participants in the Makiguchi Project in Action are educators and specialists in various areas of education and as such have volunteered their professional expertise without political or religious bias and without financial remuneration. The training received through the Project focuses on the integration of roles in the task of education carried out by the school, the family and the community and seeks to inspire a collective commitment to that task. Out of these cooperative efforts, results of practices are shared toward finding effective solutions to improve the quality of teaching.

These and other educational outreach activities have come about as a result of the more than 500 volunteers who participate in the BSGI Educators Division, which is subdivided into three groups: the Makiguchi in Action Project, the Literacy Department for Youth and Adults, and the Science of Education Research and Development Department.

The tenets of the Educators Division are derived from its parent organization's social aims and principles, as perhaps most succinctly expressed by Daisaku Ikeda, the president of the Soka Gakkai International and founder of a number of cultural as well as educational institutions: "Peace begins inside one's mind. This is a

concept that finds resonance in the Buddhist conviction that human life possesses the inherent ability to create value and to promote harmony within society as well as within ourselves and our environment. Culture is the living expression of that human capacity; education is the vehicle to polish the creative potential of the individual. Therefore, education and culture are key ingredients to the realization of peace.” (trans. from *Revista Terceira Civilização*, 8)

The Educators Division used as its groundwork the pedagogical thesis of Japanese educator Tsunesaburo Makiguchi as outlined in *Educação para uma Vida Criativa*. His thesis places great emphasis on the sensory-emotional and cognitive development of the student: Above all, the student must enjoy school. Education therefore must apply itself to the development of the unlimited potential and talent of the student and to the cultivation of the student’s character.

1. Overview of the Brazilian Educational System

The current levels of the basic educational system are as follows (from highest to lowest):

SCHOOL DEGREE/DIPLOMA	YEARS OF ATTENDANCE
SUPERIOR: Bachelor, Masters and Doctorate	Graduate: Various Undergraduate: 4–5 years
EDUCATION FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS: Technical, Vocational	3–4
SPECIAL EDUCATION: (For Physically or Mentally Impaired)	
MEDIUM HIGH SCHOOL:	3
FUNDAMENTAL: (Elementary and Junior High Schools)	8 (Compulsory)
LITERACY COURSE:	
PRE-SCHOOL:	

Source: Ministry of Education/INEP [National Institute for Pedagogical Studies], 1999

The enactment of Federal Law Number 9394 (December 20, 1996), the Law of Guidelines and Foundations of National Education, consolidates and broadens the public duty towards education in general and toward compulsory education in particular. Written into the law’s provisions of minimum requirements to be met by school curricula is the flexibility at the school administrative level to evaluate and adopt curricular components directly relevant to the quality of

education administered and to the processes of developing good citizenship. In its specification of the *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* [National Curriculum Parameters] (13–16), the Ministry of Education encourages school initiative in the formulation of educational projects and recognizes the fact that responsibility for the entire educative process rests with all those involved in doing the educating. The Parameters were designed to aid schools in (10):

- Review of educational objectives, course content, ways of conducting activities, learning expectations and assessment procedures
- Assessment of teaching practices and their congruency with the educational objectives
- Preparation of lesson plans that can guide the work and progress within the classroom
- Discussion with the working team of factors affecting the greater or lesser participation of students in school activities
- Identifying, producing and/or requisitioning new materials to improve the learning experience
- Enhancement of the range of educational themes for discussion with parents and legal guardians

The Parameters suggest curricular integration of cross-cultural themes which take into account local and regional realities, democratic values and social issues in addition to standard curricular subjects (Portuguese, mathematics, the natural sciences, history, geography, arts and physical education). The introduction of local and regional themes is to include content that is consistent with the given educational objectives and didactic-pedagogical orientation. Examples of social issues include ethical values, cultural plurality, sexual orientation, environment and health.

While the responsibility for implementation of the educational directives rests primarily with the school teachers, often found is a lack of professional preparation and support to do so. Innovative approaches to obtain the requisite support are necessary to achieve desired results in the schools.

At present in Brazil, education is faced with the overarching problem of social inequality. An associated increase in violent and criminal behavior is sadly reflected in the schools. On February 1, 2000, the *Sindicato de Especialistas de Educação do Magistério Oficial do Estado* [State's Official Teaching Trade Union for Specialists in Education], formerly the Official Teaching's School Directors Union (UDEMOM), released five studies that show the occurrence of school violence in the São Paulo capital and other cities:

OCCURRENCES OF VIOLENCE IN 308 SCHOOLS
OF THE GREATER SÃO PAULO REGION

TYPE OF VIOLENCE	% OF ALL REPORTED INCIDENTS
Sexual assaults	46
Physical attacks	46
Threats or other aggression	27
Theft, mugging or robbery	26
Graffiti	26
Unemployment- or alcohol-related	19
Property damage	14
Damage to vehicles	11
Stoning	9
Fires	9
Drug use	7
Gang activity	7

The findings suggest the deterioration of social values present in the schools. They may be evaluated as a reflection of the immediate need for new social models and paradigms within the school environment and the broader need of repair in the social fabric that can provide support of a more equitable reality based on humanism and peace.

2. The Makiguchi Project in Action in São Paulo

With the aspiration to support the renewed commitment to education exemplified by the adoption of national curricular guidelines, the BSGI Educators Division sought out the educational framework, principles and approaches espoused by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi from which an innovative program could be designed. More directly, the program was conceived as a response to the local and regional school needs for education professionals and teaching tools that would give

rise to innovative teaching practices, the higher achievement of educational objectives, and the placement of emphasis on student creativity and happiness.

The educators, psychologists, artists and other specialists comprising the Educators Division's project team identified core competencies around which to focus teacher support. First was the pooling of human resources and experiential wisdom to inspire teachers to develop their professional abilities. Second was to determine a practical framework for a humanistic model of an educational system, a vision of which was aptly described by Daisaku Ikeda:

There are schools for teaching young people knowledge and technical skills. Yet there are no educational institutions that teach life or how to live, no schools that help people truly cultivate themselves. However, such training lies at the core of humanistic education. (The New Human Revolution 4: 148)

One of the fundamental points discussed and analyzed by the Division is the role of the teacher as a facilitator of learning. The facilitation of learning, it was determined, hinged on not only the teacher's ability and creativity to transform the classroom environment into a place from which student willingness to learn can flow but also the concerted efforts on the part of both teacher and student happily involved.

Broadly acknowledged was the ineffectiveness of coercive teaching models in which teachers face down to the students and discount teacher-student interaction as part of the educational process. The national curricular parameters ask for a reformulation of such models. From its consultations, the Educators Division proposed ways by which to achieve that reformulation by enhancing the role of the teacher to free the student from ignorance and in which the teaching of a subject becomes not an end but a means of developing the student's capabilities.

2.1 The Project's Inception and History

Educators Division consultations at the developmental stage of the program highlighted points of emphasis derived from Makiguchi's educational proposals. It was important that through the implementation of the project several insights would be gained:

Educators must come to realize that the teaching imperative must be the facilitation of learning not teaching. Education, for its role in the development of the student's ability to create values, must be considered as a lever to effect change in society. Educators must be viewed as human beings with a demonstrated ability to continue their self-improvement and a demonstrated commitment to the fundamental role they play in the educational process. This demonstrated commitment translates into the educator's active involvement in creating a favorable environment for the development of each student. The school must be viewed as the place within which students take active roles in their own growth and are at the center of the complex interactive processes facilitating that growth.

In September 1994, the Makiguchi Project in Action was initiated at Caetano de Campos Primary and Secondary State School (EPPSG) as the Spring Program and offered to the second-year students of the elementary level. The program offered workshops in gardening and arts and crafts (paper flowers, wrapping packages, etc.) for students and parents. The program concluded in December 1994 with an Ecology Luncheon that served the vegetables grown by the students.

As part of the three-month Spring Program, the students researched the nutritional values of foods. They also wrote and performed a play in which the characters were vegetables. Through these activities, the students and their friends learned in a very practical and creative way the importance of diet.

In the gardening workshop there were unforeseen difficulties encountered with ants, birds, snails and other pests that can harm the plants. The students together with instructors and parents dealt with each problem and found solutions. The successful outcomes for the students proved broader than the activities, most notably in positive behavioral changes: a decrease in absenteeism, an improvement in study habits, and an increase in constructive interactions with other students and instructors. What had become clear in the Spring Program was the importance of the participation of the student's family in reinforcing the educational process. Parents were encouraged to come to the school, receive workshop training and become actively involved as in the gardening workshop where they prepared vegetable beds, planted seeds, watered and harvested with the students.

Due to the remarkable successes of the Spring Program, the following year the program was offered to every class from the first-through fourth-year classes of the elementary level at Caetano de Campos. In his December 14th letter, school director Paulo de Tarso Semegini requested the authorization and support of the Educators Division in expanding the program to 32 classrooms and acknowledged the invaluable contribution of BSGI to education through the efforts of its Educators Division.

In 1995 the Spring Program became the Makiguchi Project in Action and was implemented in four more schools in state and municipal public schools. The workshops were expanded to include the art of origami, children's theater, paper flower-making and choir.

As teachers and directors who had been involved in the Makiguchi Project in Action transferred to other schools, word spread of the success stories achieved and requests from surrounding schools to implement the program increased. Student-created exhibits and cultural events further publicized the learning experiences gained in the Makiguchi Project in Action workshops. As a result, a strong concentration of schools in the São Paulo City East Zone implemented the Project.

To provide forums of exchange and interaction, the Educators Division organized meetings, seminars, symposiums and conferences that discussed assessments of the program and ways to improve program offerings. These findings were then reflected in new proposals and objectives, written materials were prepared for the teachers, and centers for research and development were created.

2.2 Participation

As of May 2000, the Makiguchi Project In Action has been offered in the classrooms of 55 municipal, state public and private schools in the state of São Paulo and one school in Curitiba, Paraná. Participation has included 1,103 teachers and 34,015 students.

AREAS WHERE PROJECT TOOK PLACE

TYPE SCHOOL	EAST ZONE	SOUTH ZONE	OTHER
Schools for Child Education	5		3 (São Vicente City)
Municipal Schools	5	3	1 (Curitiba City)
Private Schools			3

State Schools	20	2	6 (downtown, Guaruja City, Piracicaba City, Limeira City, Santa Barbara do Oeste City)
State Schools, Fundamental	4		2 (Arraes City, Campinas City)

TOTAL NUMBER OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

INSTITUTIONS	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
(SCHOOLS FOR CHILD EDUCATION)			
Municipal	8	99	3,362
Private	1	10	102
(1ST TO 8TH GRADE SCHOOLS OF THE FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL)			
Municipal	10	230	6,501
State	34	755	23,954
Private	1	5	48
Piracaia City Parents & Friends of the Handicapped Association	1	4	48
TOTAL	55	1,103	34,015

2.3 Administering the Project

The Project begins when a school initiates a request. Then a project team within the Educators Division creates and submits a project proposal for approval by the school directors and counselors. Next, the proposal must be ratified by the competent educational organizations at the state and municipal levels. Once a partnership is established, workshops and lectures for the teachers take place during either the designated “pedagogical collective working hour for state schools” (HTPC) or “special integral working hours for municipal schools” (JEI) before or after class hours.

At these monthly teacher preparation times, teachers meet with the members of the Makiguchi Project in Action to gain an understanding of the program objectives and their application in the classroom. The

teachers are also taken through a step-by-step orientation about the activities of each workshop.

The preparations vary with the type of activity selected by the teachers. For the workshops for arts and languages, for example, there is an initial activity to encourage group integration followed by a directed activity, a creative activity and then a closing activity. After the workshop training the teacher organizes the educative content and goes over with the students the knowledge and techniques gained in the workshop training.

Working with artistic activities allows an encounter with one's true self, thereby giving meaning to one's existence. The project emphasizes that the use of artistic-expression activities provides a better way for self-knowledge, and by experiencing his/her own individuality, the student is able to find the ascending path toward greater humanity. One becomes conscious that he/she is creating something, understands and sees his/her expression being respected. It is this way that makes it possible to grow and become happy.

At the end of school year, the schools prepare reports and promote exhibits of the results achieved and make them available to teachers, parents and the community at large.

Workshop training with parents is done bi-monthly in two-and-a-half-hour sessions. The training begins with a lecture from the BSGI Science of Education Research and Development Department on the theme of the role of parents in their children's education. From there, attendees are divided into smaller groups that will take part in the program workshops.

2.4 Workshops

Over the past six years, the Makiguchi Project In Action has developed the following program workshops that are offered in the schools. The goal is to promote activities that enrich the students' lives and make education a more create and pleasant "duty":

1. Jewelry: Making necklaces, rings, barrettes and key holders using paper, magazines, beads and wire
2. Art of Wrapping: Making gift boxes from empty packages; pencil holders, scissors holders and rulers using special microwaved paper

3. Porcelain Painting: Painting decorative motifs of fruits, flowers and animals; doll modeling
4. Newspaper and Straw Crafts: Weaving baskets, frames and pencil holders; making straw vases
5. Flower Making: Making flowers using silk stockings
6. Art and Language: Human rights education through theater; learning musical and percussive instruments made out of scrap metal; using historical narration techniques; producing plays out of creative games; writing songs and ballads; learning stage make-up; and other arts
7. Origami: Making animals, flowers, dolls and other objects
8. Gardening and preservation: Learning horticulture, field planting and the uses of medicinal herbs

2.5 Application in the Classroom

All workshop activities are reflected in the teacher's lesson plans for the semester. For example, the origami workshop incorporates into the art of paper folding a playful way to introduce ideas of geometry, shapes and proportion, and color combination. Lessons from workshop activities can be applied across disciplines, such as arts education, Portuguese, science and mathematics. The vegetable garden workshop, for example, incorporates a wide variety of applications. The students learn about space and planning, measuring perimeter, volume and depth, nutrition, health, ecology, artistic appreciation, communication skills, respect for the work of others, and teamwork. In addition, the workshops may be expanded to include activities outside the classroom. There are testimonies of students and parents who use the knowledge acquired in the workshop to cultivate their own vegetable gardens and to make their own arts and crafts.

Teachers submit their semester lesson plans to the Makiguchi Project in Action department of the Educators Division. These contain also the name of the school, individuals in charge, teachers involved, a timetable for the workshops, the objectives and a methodology for presenting the results.

2.6 Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of the Makiguchi Project in Action are action-oriented. The activities of teaching and learning as well as building and creating are all done together to facilitate a pleasant student experience. As Tsunesaburo Makiguchi said:

Study is not seen as preparation for living, but rather study takes place while living, and living takes place in the midst of study. Study and actual living are seen as more than parallels; they inform one another intercontextually, study in living and living in study, throughout one's whole life. (Bethel, 10)

Accordingly, education is a dynamic and open human relationship. It cultivates a critical conscience of the various issues in life for the student, such as morals, culture, ecology, technology and politics. It cultivates also an awareness that every person has a wealth of untapped potential.

Human intelligence expresses itself through diverse styles and in the form of capabilities that we must respect. This holistic thinking involves forms of contextual, intuitive and creative comprehension that sees learning as a continuous process in which every situation in life may facilitate learning by being an internal process of self-discovery. Learning must be active, self-motivated and sustainable and must stimulate the human spirit by becoming a well-rounded and interdisciplinary process, thereby integrating the community through its global perspectives. The resources are available within everyone. People can use these resources whenever they want to by being conscious of their potential. Wisdom is the ability to know how to use them to live a better life.

All activities have as their premise Makiguchi's idea that the essence of the educative process is happiness. As Makiguchi has said:

Unfortunately, the effects of psychological toxification in children caused by forced learning of masses of unintelligible information are not immediately visible. Consequently, the detrimental effect of this poisonous process in children's lives are not recognized. The situation is serious, but when we search for the causes of the problem, we are faced with the paradox that teachers and parents alike see themselves as providing for the future well-being of the children even though they make them miserable in the process.

Sooner or later, everyone concerned with education must come to realize that schooling that sacrifices children's present happiness and makes some future happiness its goal violates the personalities of the children as well as the learning process itself.

... [T]he purpose of education is to enable children to become responsible, healthy cells in the social organism, to contribute to the happiness of the society, and, by doing so, to find meaning, purpose and happiness in their own individual lives. (Bethel, 22)

In this sense, it is not the better economic budgeting of school programs, but to instill joy and appreciation for work that becomes the main focus of the proposed changes." (Bethel, 10)

Another significant component in his pedagogy is the creation of value or the capacity to find significance in life to enhance one's own existence and contribute to the welfare of others. In practical terms, this means to contribute in identifying and cultivating aptitudes, directing the students to a field in which their talents will be best adapted, and enabling them to participate creatively so that they become happy and competent.

Creating the dynamics of the workshops and lectures depends greatly upon the roles of the school, family and community in the educational processes. Makiguchi emphasized the importance of these roles:

Effective education, Makiguchi insisted, can only be carried on as a three-way partnership between the school, the home, and the community. At the heart of his program of educational reform, therefore, was a proposal to create a completely new education system, in which each school, home and community each were to be responsible for a specific part of the educational task. (Bethel, 9)

The workshops emphasize an integration of these three roles by covering the following topics in training workshops:

- For Teachers: Self-esteem, motivation, creativity, work, cooperation versus competition, the creative teacher and socialization, human rights, duties and ethics, globalization and citizenship

- For Parents: The creative family, effective communication, respect for the individual, understanding teenagers, building your child's self-esteem, education for living, the accumulation of knowledge, perseverance and responsibility, team spirit, and family harmony

The following chart illustrates the differences between traditional educational principles and those utilized in the Makiguchi Project in Action:

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION	HUMANISTIC EDUCATION
•Focus on teaching	•Focus on learning
•Emphasis on the transference of knowledge	•Emphasis on the development of abilities and attitudes to learn
•Teach how to do	•The students learn while doing
•Works with the logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligence	•Works with multiple intelligence, including emotion and creativity
•Rewards submission	•Rewards participation
•Low motivation	•High motivation
•Low index of progress	•High index of progress
•Inertia, routine	•Active participation, happiness
•Teacher transfers knowledge	•Teacher stimulates learning process
•Vertical relationship between teacher-student	•Horizontal relationship between teacher-student
•Approach through specific disciplines	•Interdisciplinary approach
•Non-personal relationship	•Valuation of affectionate ties

2.7 The Nature of Learning and Teacher's Training

This Project has contributed to spread the theories and humanistic ideals on education of Makiguchi. According to him, education has the purpose of: (1) developing the unlimited potential and talent inherent in each individual (2) cultivating humanism that develops the internal motivation of the individual in the sense that makes him/her able to create value in his/her life and within society (3) enriching the personality of each individual through the establishment of a broad and flexible mind by cultivating a spirit capable of transcending difficulties. These ideals were incorporated into the design of the Makiguchi in Action program to help the teacher:

- Be conscious that the acquisition of knowledge by the students involves a complex process of reorganization and mental construction to interpret and to learn curricular contents.

- Propose problems and challenges that encourage the student to develop hypotheses of their own and test them.
- Recognize that mistakes are part of the learning process.
- Intervene positively in the student's formulation and reformulation of discoveries and desired results.
- Determine the relevance of evaluative criteria used in the teacher's evaluation of and respect for the student.
- Approach education from the premise that a student's action as opposed to inaction creates an opportunity to exercise both reason and emotion and to balance logic with intuition and creativity.
- Create conditions in which the student experiences happiness in the school and thereby finds the school relevant to his/her life.

The proposal has points in common with the assertions made by Peter Mittler of Manchester University (also a consultant to UNESCO): "There is a need of a movement for educational inclusions, the curriculum must change, we need different value systems in the schools, we need different approaches for the training of teachers" (trans. from *Revista Presença Pedagógica* 6).

2.8 Difficulties in Implementation

One of the difficulties faced by the Educators Division in the implementation of the Makiguchi Project in Action in the schools was a certain apprehension from some of the teachers. The training and workshop activities meant deviating from routine schedules, and teachers resisted any proposal to alter what they knew well and experienced every day. Some expressed the insecurity of facing new and potentially challenging situations that could arise from greater interaction with the students and dealing with students bubbling over with energy and excitement. Only after the first results in the Spring Program did these teachers begin to show interest and become involved.

To win over the shy teachers, it was necessary to convince them about the advantages of working in groups and of participating in

community work. The rediscovery of the community as a form of solidarity helped them to break immobility and reticence.

Another difficulty faced was the transfer of teachers and directors to other schools. It was especially difficult when a director was transferred because conflicts with the new director inevitably arose. It was necessary to gain the consensus and support of the new director and the school's program team because it was impossible to implement the program when they were at cross purposes. It was incumbent upon the Educators Division to bridge the communication barriers. Finally, due to low wages many teachers taught in more than one school and they were unable to attend all the training and workshop activities. In these cases, it became necessary to implement the Makiguchi Project in Action through the school's planning. Of course, delays in coming up with school plans caused loss of time and fragmentation of the program activities.

2.9 Reports and Testimonies of Teachers, Directors and Supervisors

Through direct observation in the classroom and interviews with teachers before and after taking part of the activities, measures of the program's impact were made by the Makiguchi Project in Action department of the Educators Division. Through these encounters, many insights were shared about ways of learning and teaching. The teachers felt valued, stimulated, their self-esteem rises and there is an exchange of experiences. They each felt integrated with learning itself and with the two-way relationship that constitutes the teaching network between teacher and student.

At São Miguel State School, located in the East Zone of São Paulo City, there are 60 teachers and 2,000 students in the first through fourth grades. Some 30 teachers were involved in the Makiguchi Project in Action. In their interviews, they expressed excitement over the results on their students. Pictures of the various workshop activities lined the school hallways. One of the teachers related:

I was discouraged with my second-grade class. There were many difficult students who did not know how to read or write. I didn't know what to do with them, and I seriously considered retirement so I could leave the school. With the activities of the Project, I found within myself a capacity unknown to me before. I decided not to retire because the class began to respond to my

proposals. We've been able to get out of our old routine. The students are happy because they are productive, and I am even happier because they are happy.

This testimony suggests many gains: the teacher feels more secure, works with more confidence and finds internally a capacity unexplored from years of routine activity. Supported by new methods of creative learning, the teacher and student alike are able to express themselves through non-verbal language with positive results.

The program coordinator at the school lends support to the teacher's claims, in stating:

The activities of the Project made the school more capable and conscious of its role; the school acquired a good reputation among other schools; the teachers became more effective because they knew that they must search for innovations.

We've had many advances. Naturally, there is still skepticism and resistance, but most participate and cooperate in the Project.

Concerning parent participation, the process has been slow because only a few actually take part. Some mothers do achieve practical results. One of them took part in the jewelry making activity. She learned how to do it and made many pieces of jewelry and sold them all by the end of the year. She increased her family income that way.

In fact, the school's standing rose within the Region's Board of Education East-2 system. Its achievements were hailed in schools in other areas.

Commitment to the project and its successes was strong. Although the São Paulo State Official School Teachers Association (APEOESP) assembly called a strike for better working conditions and wages, teachers involved in the Project elected to remain in school to participate in the monthly training activities. One teacher took the activities to other schools at which she works.

A parent of a student enrolled at the Reverend Tércio Moraes Pereira School made the following comment:

Our objective [as parents] is to improve our living standards and we want to know that people will help our children and will help with the school.

All aspects of student learning are integrated with the activities. For example, there is a history telling activity. After the history telling, the teacher moves on to other disciplines. The class is not limited to only that space, time or place.

These testimonies suggest that an effective partnership was struck between the Project team and the schools to stimulate dialogue with the teachers and propose ideas and strategies that can be implemented by the school's technical and administrative team. They also reflect improved teacher relationships with the students.

Of broader import, the very existence of the program has helped to articulate and provide the impetus for improved teaching methodologies. The renewal of teacher confidence – signified by the teacher's opportunity to depart from routine methods, pool available human resources and utilize available materials – accounts in part for the enthusiasm with which the Project has been met.

2.10 Report of Findings

The most important impact of the Project to be determined is its potential to create positive values within Brazil's social realities. When the workshop activities are conjoined with group commitment and practical problem-solving to create a more just and humanistic society, educators are able to become the catalyst in the transformation of shared ethical values.

The following tabulates responses by 100 teachers from 17 schools to evaluate change perceived as a result of the Makiguchi Project in Action. The respondents represent 10% of all teachers who have undergone workshop training.

ITEMS	IMPROVED	NO CHANGE	WORSE	NO RESPONSE
Learning (students' school progress)	94	3	0	3
Teacher/student relationship (sensory-emotional)	93	1	1	5
Discipline (classroom & school behavior)	74	18	1	7
Student motivation, participation, enthusiasm to learn	92	3	0	5
Student interest in research (creativity/curiosity)	84	9	0	7

Development of student's potential	83	5	0	12
Teacher overall understanding of the students	81	9	0	10
Student development of social conscience (respect, tolerance, cooperation)	80	14	0	6
Teacher knowledge of the students (praising performance)	90	2	0	8
Teacher-parent relationship	47	39	1	7
Information exchange between family and school life	47	36	0	17
Parental involvement and participation	34	45	1	20
Teacher relationship with other teachers	85	6	1	8
Teacher relationship with students	85	7	0	8
School truancy	50	35	0	15
TOTAL	1,119	232	5	138

The results can be subdivided into four areas: attitudes toward teaching, the sensory-emotional relationship, decrease in school truancy and parental participation.

The most dramatic results were found in attitudes toward teaching, with over 90% reporting that attitudes had improved. There were mixed results for the sensory-emotional relationship. Problems in school absenteeism and low parental participation may suggest the effects of socio-economic realities, instability of the home environment and other factors unidentified or otherwise beyond the reach of this program.

Overall, these evaluations serve to document the positive impact of the Makiguchi Project in Action on the Brazilian education system.

2.11 Minimizing Violence and Social Exclusion

In the reports by teachers, directors, and parents, we only find references that relate directly to the sphere of the school; for example, progress in school objectives, better discipline, motivation,

productivity, and self-esteem. Nevertheless, consideration from an extracurricular point of view must be given to the student's situation and upon the necessity to improve the student's standard of living.

Exclusion from society is a menace to youth and may be a contributing factor to school truancy and school failure, leading step by step to delinquency and crime. Demands made by the Project on students' schedules are within the minimum school requirements and serve only to integrate the student into social organization. Statistical research to date offers no conclusive evidence that would link Project outcomes with a decrease in social isolation. An assertion can be made, however, that the implementation of the Project offers a kind of intervention in social exclusion and can serve to bolster the educative capacity in areas suffering from socio-economic inequalities and disadvantages.

Many schools, for example, are situated in peripheral zones of São Paulo City, where there is a high level of crime and violence. The living condition of children and teenagers is troubling, not particularly welcoming, sheltering or protective of youth or their dignity. There is spreading poverty exacerbated by illegal drug trafficking and an associated lack of access to basic necessities. Postive actions are desperately needed to help decrease social exclusion and the risk of resorting to crime. Even within the school environment, students are victims of attacks, thefts, muggings and other violent activity.

There are two views on decreasing violence in the schools. One seeks the palliative effects of more stringent policing and construction of more barriers, padlocks, alarms and bars. The other one seeks to address the causes at root of the problems by creating community awareness of the schools and validating the school's role in the community through guidance for the parents as well as community meetings and open lectures. This view also suggests the need for extra-curricular activities such as cinema, theater, music and sports events.

The proposals of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi parallel the latter view, in that the search for solutions begins inward. It also tries to integrate the three basic poles of the educational process: school, family and community. The Makiguchi Project in Action has begun to seek solutions to minimize the difficulties concerning violence and social exclusion faced in the schools. According to the projections of the Educators Division, more medium- and long-term programs will

afford opportunities to collect qualitative and quantitative data on the social impact of the Makiguchi Project in Action.

3. Literacy Poles

According to 1995 UNESCO data, the illiteracy rate in Brazil is the second highest in Latin America (after Bolivia). Based on parameters provided by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE in Portuguese): “We consider illiterate an individual over fifteen years of age that cannot read or write. According to the 1996 National Research of Sample in Residences (PNAD) Brazil has 15.5 million people that fall under this definition, which corresponds to 14.7 % of the population” (IBGE/PNAD).

One of the main factors for social exclusion is illiteracy. It occurs more frequently within the elderly segment of the population and in the poor and urban areas. Illiteracy increases in proportion to age and is more prominent among women. In addition (IBGE/PNAD):

[M]ore than one third of the Brazilian adult population is considered to be a functional illiterate – a person who is unable to use reading and writing in daily activities. In Brazil, those over 20 years old and have only four years of formal schooling are included in this definition.

If we use the current IBGE census which indicates a population of approximately 166 million, we have about 56,606,000 functional illiterates.

In his published dialogue with Daisaku Ikeda, Austragésilo Athayde, the late President of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, spoke of the grave situation that affects a significant part of the population:

Regardless of the efforts of several reformers who have fought arduously for the past fifty years, literacy still remains a black stain in Brazil. It ranks the country as one of the most backward countries in Latin America. Attempts by various organizations to eradicate the problem have also failed due to the enormity of the problem. (p 176)

The literacy needs of many individuals within the BSGI prompted the formation of the Literacy Department for Youth and Adults and its development of a literacy program.

3.1 Course Design

After five years of experimentation (from 1983 to 1987), the Literacy Department for Youth and Adults was created within the BSGI Educators Division. The program it proposed consists of 40-hour courses for each fundamental-level primary grade, or a total 160 hours.

The Educators Division deemed it necessary to create a literacy program for youths and adults who did not have the opportunity to study, who sought to improve their status in the job market and their standard of living, and who desired the ability to exercise their citizenship with dignity. In addition, the literacy program fulfilled a proposal made by the President of the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research, who called for action to improve the education of the nation through the development of “programs in partnership with non-governmental organizations for specific actions to fight school failure and illiteracy and to stimulate programs of continuous development in service” (*Revista Presença Pedagógica* 45–46).

The Literacy Department for Youth and Adults provides education for individuals who otherwise would not have the opportunity to receive formal schooling. Students receive education at designated Literacy Poles throughout São Paulo City and in other Brazilian states. The learning activities derive from the larger organizational principle that human beings are endowed with the capacity to overcome their deficiencies through the creation of value. The sensory-emotional and intuitive approach to thinking that is utilized necessarily went beyond the technical transmission of reading and writing.

Below is a comparative listing of elements in the Literacy Department’s programs with the more traditional adult literacy classes.

COMPARISON OF PROPOSALS

OTHER PROPOSALS FOR ADULTS	PROPOSAL OF BSGI LITERACY DEPT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different levels of participants in the same classroom• One teacher per classroom• No individualized assistance• Classroom with excessive numbers of students (up to 40)• No specific support material for each participant• One methodology for all students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different levels in different classrooms• One teacher and assistant monitors• Monitors assist each individual• Classrooms with a maximum of 20 students• Support material developed from the daily life of each student• Many methodologies geared to individual students

- | | |
|---|--|
| •No specific training for teachers | •Continuous training for teachers and monitors |
| •No operational support | •Operational support from volunteers for cleaning, feeding, security |
| •Many school days per week | •One school day per week |
| •Little concern for family ties | •Extra class activities, strengthening family ties |
| •Reading and writing capacity after 400 hours | •Reading and writing capacity after 40 hours |

3.2 Implementation

When a BSGI member expresses an interest in participating in the literacy program, the individual is invited to enroll at one of the nearby Poles. A series of exams is administered to determine the individual's level of writing and reading comprehension. The students are assigned to different classrooms according to their level of placement.

An assigned monitor assists in carrying out the classroom activities and is responsible for helping students through the exercises given by the assigned teacher. Monitors identify the students' difficulties and inform the teacher so that supplemental exercises can be prepared.

The usual, more traditional literacy programs bring together up to 40 adults of different placement levels who are assisted by only one (paid) teacher. BSGI's teachers and monitors are all volunteers motivated by the spirit of service for the happiness of others that is a guiding principle of Buddhist philosophy. The actions of these coordinators is based on a life philosophy directed at the development of the individual.

Each teacher-monitor team receives training before entering the literacy course. Support and preparations are accomplished through courses, lectures and seminars. In-class observations of teachers and monitors are made by the pedagogical team to guide the literacy activities and ensure that the goals are being achieved. Classroom texts include evaluation notebooks, newspapers, magazines, audiovisual material, pamphlets, recipes, advertisements, even song lyrics – in short, everything relevant to the student's daily encounters interests, needs and difficulties.

Operational support at the Literacy Poles is donated by BSGI and includes teachers, monitors, secretaries, cleaning staff, security staff and meal preparation.

Classes take place once a week, usually on Saturday morning, and last for four hours. They are divided into two stages. The first stage is the class itself and the second is an evaluation of what has been learned. In order to complement what the student has learned in class, the student does a variety of exercises at home, such as motor coordination exercises, reading, comprehension and interpretation of texts. The assignment of “homework” has a positive effect on the family for, according to reports from the students, they are able to receive help from relatives (a grandson or granddaughter, nephew or niece, son or daughter).

The program is designed so that students who complete eighty lessons are eligible to obtain a certificate of the fourth-grade level in public school (which corresponds to the first four-year cycle of compulsory schooling in Brazil). Students may then choose to continue their studies within the educational system.

From August 1987 through the first semester of 2000, 884 students have completed their studies and qualified to take the public examinations. Despite the short duration of the courses, the students acquire the essential requirements to pursue further schooling.

LITERACY POLES AS OF MAY 2000

POLE LOCATIONS	TEACHERS	COORDINATORS	STUDENTS
Greater São Paulo & Other Cities in São Paulo State (10 locations)	41	325	385
Brasilia, Recife, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro (5 locations)	20	92	123

Because there were no formal teaching materials for a 40-hour course, the Educators Division developed its own resource pack geared to the specific needs of the course. All supplementary materials are organized and at the disposal of all the teachers, monitors and students for purposes of consultation, research and use. Anyone may contribute to the repository of materials.

Beginner’s classes give priority to learning to read and write, and the teaching methods employed are similar to those for children learning to read and write. The class then gradually introduces ideas in arithmetic. By the final classes, lessons include history, geography, science and general education as well as the continuation of Portuguese and mathematics.

Every week, coordinators at the Poles met with the Educators Division to evaluate the literacy activities. Problems and difficulties

were voiced, solutions were suggested, and proposals for improvements were made. Experiences were exchanged, providing for mutual enrichment. The processes then can be broken down as follows: first, activity planning in the Literacy Department; second, execution of these activities in the classrooms; and third, a return to the Literacy Department for further refinement and/or redirection of the literacy activities.

3.3 Reports and Testimonies of Participants

In the process of learning to read and write, students are asked to write reports about their progress in the course and the resultant improvements they note in their lives. These self-evaluative reports attest to the success of the literacy program in terms of meaning to the students' lives.

Joana Maria de Souza, Pole Carlos Rizzini:

Throughout my life, I have cherished a great desire to learn how to read and write. I've become wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother and I remembered the saying: Hope is the last to die. I had the opportunity and great joy to be one of the students of the Literacy Course for Youth and Adults when I was 71 years old.

The report of Joana Maria de Souza, born in Petrolina City, Pernambuco State, is a portrait similar to those of hundreds or even thousands of Brazilian women unable to attend school. Joana relates her happiness merely to sit in a classroom and her gratitude for being able to take and successfully finish the course.

Fábio de Abreu, Pole Saúde (São Paulo, May 25th , 1999):

My name is Fábio de Abreu. On March 9th I started the course to learn to read and write. This course is helping me a lot in my work, my home and in the [BSGI] organization. I am improving my reading and writing and this has brought many improvements in my life. I thank the teacher for all their support to help improve my life.

After only three months in the literacy course, Fábio de Abreu's report already shows a reasonable control of written expression.

Teruko Kawamuro (Pole Saúde):

I am attending Portuguese classes once a week at night. I read and write but I don't understand and speak. For that I have a very insecure life. When I was told about the beginning of the Portuguese classes, I had a hope, despite the difficulties, because I have the help of patient people that encourage me to continue for this reason, I am going to attend the classes till the end.

Teruko was able to advance two levels during the two semesters in 1999 and reached the fourth grade of the fundamental level. She passed school examinations corresponding to her level in public school and obtained her certificate to pursue further studies.

Maria Alves Ferreira (Pole Interlagos):

I was born in Acopiara
in Ceará state
till I was 19 years old
I lived there
Then I got married
and in São Paulo came to live
My life has been
Of many difficulties
But I've been always optimistic
and face the adversities
with my head up
fight against the evil
I am not a poet
But some verses
I had time
notebook, pens and space
To the team of the course
All my affection

Maria describes her life from the time she was born in Ceará State until she came to São Paulo.

Mankichi Kamakura (Pole Sul Culture Center):

I started the BSGI Literacy Course with a lot of shame. In the first day I wanted to run away. People would ask, you came here to help? Oh, good. And I timidly answered. No I came here to learn with all of you. What a shame. I am enjoying to study. The only thing I want to know is to study.

Mankichi came to Brazil when he was four years old. By the end of the program he overcame all limitations and began encouraging others in similar situations to enroll in the BSGI literacy programs.

4. Programmatic Support

In 1994, a group of psychologists and educators within the Educators Division developed a series of lectures and consultations for parents and children on the difficulties of teaching and learning. In 1995, this same group took part in the Makiguchi Project in Action by offering lectures to parents and teachers in the Caetano de Campos school focusing on the aims of creating happy and harmonious families, enabling positive attitudes in relationships between parents and children, and encouraging behavioral changes through the rethinking of the roles of parents.

In 1998, the group called itself the Psycho-Pedagogical Research and Development Nucleus and expanded its objectives and research to the teaching of learning. When the Educators Division was formed, the Nucleus became the Science of Education Research and Development Department.

Its function is to support the activities of the Makiguchi Project in Action and Literacy Poles by providing research on the philosophical foundations of education, supplemental resources, suggestions, courses, lectures and workshops. Its main focus is to awaken the humanistic conscience of educators and to outline the creative, intuitive, and rational processes necessary to that self-realization. Resources used to supplement the basic educational and philosophical teachings of Makiguchi include the works of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, B. F. Skinner, Jean Piaget, Lev Yvgotsky, Rubens Alves, Edgar Morin, Emilia Ferreiro and Paulo Freire.

4.1 Operations

In support of the activities of the Makiguchi Project in Action, the Science of Education Research and Development Department sought to identify the educational factors in the development of the child and the child's world. The ideas and proposals of Makiguchi were the primary resources utilized in framing the relational factors of the teacher-student and parent-child relationships conducive to

discovery of the student's capabilities. In support of the Literacy Poles activities, the research department identified factors that would serve to reinforce self-motivation, self-esteem, and a sense of citizenship. They also provided performance evaluation tools for the teachers and monitors. For both programs, the research department created the course tools, including games, group activities, music and videos.

Training workshops and lectures by the research department were designed to help the educators learn to rely on internal resources (thinking, feeling and acting) and through interaction with their colleagues discover strategies for changing behavior.

In the schools, the researchers gave training lectures that typically included: warm-up exercises to focus on integration and interaction); explanation of topics; group activities; synthesizing the message of the educational concepts presented; and a survey of the results according to the objectives proposed by the team. A feedback report from participants describing their experience in the training lecture is returned to the research department.

Feedback reports, comments and evaluations from each program implementation are utilized by the research department to suggest areas for improvement, assess progress toward program objectives, and develop and refine course tools.

4.2 Testimonies

To determine the effectiveness of the lectures, evaluative questionnaires were developed. Following is a sample of comments received:

The group activities brought together teachers who had become distant due to personal problems. They increased our self-esteem and provided us with very pleasant moments. (Coordinator Manuel Cláudio do Nascimento, Umberto Conte Checchia State School)

It made possible the integration of teachers from the two different terms with the school's director. (Sueli Aparecida de Souza, Umberto Conte Checchia State School)

We believe the theme is rather important for our school community. The exercises help us with disciplinary problems. We

will use the activities during the teachers' meeting, and we will try to keep up with the work during the special integral working hours and within the classroom. (Adolfo Salla, Presidente Prudente de Morais State School for Fundamental Education).

It provided the integration of teachers through highlighting mutual support, more complicity, work with more humor, and united team spirit. (Coordinator Simone Peoso Julian, Annita Guastini Eiras State School)

The lectures help us to reflect on our daily attitude towards the parents and the children. The lecture in the meeting with parents was very interesting. The parents are helping even more with their children's schoolwork. It is always good to hear from different voices about topics that emphasizes what we've been doing and about helping the students, about whom we are always concerned. (Flaviana Zacarias, Passo Seguro School)

All the lectures and workshops were of extreme importance for both my practice and for myself. What drew my attention most was the point that emphasizes we have to know ourselves first and then deal with people whom we don't know. We learn about ways to reach our objectives, and working with the philosophical proposal that the school presents. When we do so, work flows and we always feel good. There are times we think about giving up or we are discouraged, but then I always remember something that was said or that I've learned in one of the lectures and it cheers me up, both in my professional career and in my life! (Ariane Carla Oliveira, Passo Seguro School)

After the lecture on self-esteem I spent the whole day feeling very happy, and everything around me seemed to be very good. During the lecture, I searched for good things inside myself and I came up with the feeling that I have a lot of good things to offer. (Vasti Evangelsita, Eunice Laureano da Silva State School)

5. Lessons Learned

The humanistic education espoused by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi in his ideas and proposals were found to have application in the educational challenges that Brazilian society faces today. The pragmatic focus on

enhancing interactions among students, teachers, directors, supervisors, parents, and community proved effective in making the educational processes a collaborative endeavor.

Having created and carried out Makiguchi Project in Action and Literacy Poles programs over a number of years, the departments of the Educators Division have provided the following reflections:

- We are convinced that teachers' commitment to the continuation of their professional learning is fundamental to their role in the educational process. The teacher is the multiplier, the one who will implement the activities with the students. If the teacher feels motivated he/she will motivate others to act in a meaningful way.
- Teachers must be the focus of all activities. Strategies and techniques in the development of programmatic content must be passed back to them in the form of "how-to" tools, guidance and training. This enables them to feel secure about the implementation of the activities in the classroom. In so doing, more effective teaching strategies develop, creative abilities are discovered, and there is an overall increase in competence. The Makiguchi Project in Action breaks down old paradigms, and sometimes teachers experience difficulties in implementing group activities. They need guidance in order to inspire class participation. It is necessary to share the knowledge, results and experiences among teachers.
- The linear model of classroom structures in our schools must be changed. Most corporations today emphasize an employee's ability to work in teams. In this sense, even the arrangement of chairs in the classroom makes a difference. Instead of straight rows, which obstruct the students' ability to see, we rearranged the chairs to favor group activities.
- Education is a crucial part in the intricate process of the development of human beings. Teachers, students and parents grow together within the collective work of the school when they are involved emotionally with the activities, when their affective universe has been touched. New values linked to humanism are created, recreated or stimulated. Each and any act of life is directed by values.

Because values are socio-cultural guides, it becomes necessary for the educator to know them.

- People who cannot read lose self-esteem. The Literacy Poles program addresses this problem in tandem with the technical aspects of learning to read and write. Students who have undergone the program see themselves as valuable individuals and cultivate the desire to be citizens within society. Adults do not have much time to go to school. This factor is taken into account in offering the course once a week usually on Saturdays and in keeping the course duration to forty hours per fundamental grade level. The focus of concern is to bring out of social exclusion the 34.1% of the population described by the state as functionally illiterate and the adults over age 20 with less than four years of compulsory education.
- Each participant of the Literacy Course needs a personalized follow-up. The large number of students who have undergone the literacy program makes a comprehensive follow-up difficult. It becomes necessary to create a structure that addresses this crucial problem in the Brazilian educational system. As Aloysio Biondi says: “The Brazilian Ministry of Culture and Education should mobilize the population and not rely on the NGOs as the only alternative to fight the problems of education in Brazil” (*Revista Educação* 62–63).
- The literacy program proposed by the Literacy for Youth and Adults Division operates at low cost. The program is administrated and managed primarily by volunteers. This point suggests the untapped resource of potential volunteers who can be trained and whose services a few hours a week would be a positive contribution to education, their community and Brazilian society at large.

Both Daisaku Ikeda and Autragésilo de Athayde emphasize in their dialogue entitled “Human Rights in the 21st Century”:

Ikeda: It is regrettable that currently there still are around one billion illiterates in the world, a proportion of one in four individuals of the adult population.

Therefore, literacy is one of our most important tasks.

Athayde: We hope that in the 21st century, the development of humanity will have the attitude to face new situations of time and space. This is the responsibility of leaders and educators; nevertheless, to achieve that new stage of development, we must also enlist the culture of the next generations.

For this reason, it becomes essential to promote actions that are based on education. Our official and persistent commitment is fundamental as its starting point. (177)

Works Cited

Revista Terceira Civilização [The Third Civilization] May 1998 Special Edition.

Ministry of Education. Fundamental Education Secretariat. *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais Secretaria de Educação Fundamental–Brasília*. 1997.

Ikeda, Daisaku. *The New Human Revolution*. vol. 4. Santa Monica: Soka Gakkai International–USA, 1996.

Bethel, Dayle M., ed. *Education for Creative Living: Ideas and Proposals of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi*. Trans. by Alfred Birnbaum. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989.

Revista Presença Pedagógica. Editora Dimensão. Nov/Dec 1999.

IBGE/PNAD. *Almanaque Abril* (2000)– Education in Brazil. Rio de Janeiro. April 2000.

De Athayde, Austragésilo and Daisaku Ikeda. *Diálogo-Direitos Humanos no Século XXI* [Dialogue: Human Rights in the 21st Century]. Record, 2000.

Revista Educação [Journal of Education] March 2000.