Mindset, Heartset, and Skillset

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When the sun sets, it paints a beautiful image in the evening sky. If you take pictures of the sunset over a couple of days, none of the photographs will be the same. The night stars are beautiful when they shine together, yet they come in different shapes, sizes, and brightness. Likewise, the earth is beautiful and breathtaking because it has a wide variety of constituent parts – many water bodies, plains, plants, minerals, gases, microbes, living beings, and human-created things. Recently, some scientists found that even cells made of the same genetic materials and exist in the same environment age differently (Li et al., 2020). Two glaring facts deserve attention. One, intertwined connections and differences, like similarities, permeate the entire universe. Two, humans already coexist on the same planet. The primordial challenge is: How can living beings harness the power of the intertwined relationships and differences to make their co-habitation meaningful? Our forebearers dealt with the same problem but failed to develop a life-affirming solution to it.

Human inability to successfully tackle this primordial challenge might be due to our failure to grasp the root causes of social disharmony and the essence of diversity. In the U.S., the conversation on how to build a diversity-driven society usually revolves around three dominant analogies – the melting pot, salad bowl, and flower pot (see Pryor, 1992). These approaches offer different ideas on how societies should manage conflict and create space for people from diverse backgrounds to live together. The proponents identify shared beliefs and values, shared humanity, ideals, markets, education institutions, and laws as the glue that would bind people. Despite the pervasiveness of these social institutions and ideas, human unity remains an ideal, not our lived reality. Part of the reason is that the social

institutions we hope would bring us together are social constructs. Therefore, how we construct these social institutions is vital to their effectiveness. When we approach the problem from a constitutional level, it becomes easier to recognize that building diversity-driven societies requires creations. We are co-creators of meaning, connections, and social institutions. Then, the most crucial aspect of our role is how we create what we create and what we identify as our vital ingredients.

Wisdom derived from lived experiences is an essential ingredient for fostering meaningful coexistence. To understand and appreciate diversity and build thriving diversity-driven societies that allow for meaningful coexistence, communities need to ensure that the wisdom derived from the lived experience of all people contributes to the building of that society and its institutions. This co-creation must occur at all levels, not just the macro-level. The focus is on *wisdom* and *process*. Every human being who has ever lived possesses an iota of wisdom, which develops further the more the bearer uses it. Since differences and intertwined connections permeate our entire existence and wisdom is available to everyone irrespective of how little, it is possible to harness them by creating the opportunity for everyone to use their wisdom to enrich human worldview and institutions. The logic is that galvanizing human wisdom, not intelligence, opens the door of deliberation to all. When attempts to bring the wisdom of living beings together are genuine and reflect a good-faith effort, the outcome has a higher probability of honoring all people's inherent dignity. In this regard, Ikeda's argument that human beings can solve contemporary global challenges "when they succeed in bringing together the wisdom of humanity" is groundbreaking (2006, p. 169). Ikeda's recommendation recognizes that there is no single permanent solution; the sustainable solution would depend on people's ability to co-imagine and co-create their shared future. Focusing on the need to harness the wisdom of humanity acknowledges an unappreciated fact, building a diversity-driven society that allows for meaningful coexistence is a moving target. Social relations are malleable and dynamic, requiring continuous enrichment and nurturing. From this perspective, Ikeda's suggestion imposes significant, although not exclusive, responsibilities on leaders to develop systems that amalgamate humanity's wisdom and deploy it to enable people to coexist meaningfully.

Consequently, human societies need leaders who can create diversity-informed processes and people who would value and engage in making such systems work. Since the meaning that would be co-created revolves around human coexistence, learners will be capable co-creators when their education helps them embrace the fullness of their humanity, responsibilities, and the humanity of others for the sake of everyone's lifelong happiness. Education, broadly defined, can help individuals accept their role as co-creators of meaning and human unity when it allows them to acquire the tools for the

critical appraisal of their internal and external worlds, forges their character, and enables them to manifest their wisdom simultaneously. Put differently, education for building a diversity-driven society must empower students to seek knowledge of their inner and outer worlds, consolidate what they know about these two worlds, put the knowledge in their proper perspective, and use the wisdom they gained from the process to live meaningfully. Developing the capacity to explore and embrace the beauty and ugliness of their internal and external world would produce a humbling effect on the learner and help them activate their imaginative empathy. Focusing on character development will equip learners with the moral, spiritual, and cognitive capacity for thriving in an ever-changing diversity-driven world. The emphasis on wisdom is critical because it frees learners from the shackles of dogmatism and rigidity while empowering them to be dynamic, context-driven, and visionary. Wisdom enables people to make good use of information and allows for their character and conscience to guide how they act. These three dimensions map onto the development of skillset, heartset, and mindset. In this introduction, we will elaborate on these three qualities and make a case for why every human being needs to develop all three qualities. We will then briefly outline each article's argument in the volume and conclude with words of appreciation for the people who helped in various ways to make the conference and publication successful.

THE SUBJECTIVE DISCOVERING OF THE EXTERNAL AND INNER WORLD

For education to excel in nurturing people who will build and excel in a diversity-driven society, it needs to facilitate the acquisition of the tools for the continuous critical evaluation of the nature of the internal and external world. Developing in-depth knowledge of what exists within and around them is essential to helping people become aware of their connection and responsibility to others (Böckler et al., 2017). By the outer or external world, we mean the physical and social world outside of the human body. Human societies have excelled at exploring and discovering this world, even going as far as to the moon and back. The collective exploration and discovery of the physical and metaphysical world have helped humanity make significant advancements in medicine, aviation, technology, entertainment, sports, astrology, and the like; but, it has also brought untold hardship upon all living beings (see Brett, 2016; Nishimura et al., 2019).

Education plays two fundamental roles in this context, functional and inspirational. First, it helps learners acquire the skillset necessary to explore and create value in the physical and social world. The acquired skills aid the learners' lifelong quest for meaning and purpose and increase their odds of obtaining gainful employment. Second, through the education process, teachers and adults introduce students to the wonders of the world, literally

and figuratively. Educators expose the world to learners through language, image, activity, co-production, and co-exploration. Through these different efforts, students would discover their immediate community and the world beyond it and perceive the interdependence between the local and global (Makiguchi, 2002). More so, the ideal education would also help students awaken to the complexities of life, how they are part of it, why they need to care about the world, and how they can transform their circumstances. Put differently, learning about the social, physical, and cosmic realms would help learners appreciate their cosmic embeddedness and belongingness.

But knowledge of the external world in which they exist alone is not adequate for helping leaners develop conscientious agency and humanness. Knowledge of the world within them is also necessary. However, we, as a society, know very little about the world that lies within us hence fail to help individuals develop the skills for internal exploration and discovery (see Barrett, 2009; Kotchoubey, 2018). Nevertheless, the objective study of the inner world is not our primary concern in this paragraph. Our goal is to highlight the importance of individual exploration and discovery of the inner world for personal growth and development. An African proverb states, *"si madzemadze ame dokui fe ablɔde de wodoa kluvi ame* (literal trans: the freedom that comes from lack of self-knowledge only makes one a slave.)" (Dzobo, 2006, p. 57). The proverb's meaning is that true freedom comes from having an intimate familiarity with what lies within the individual. An in-depth understanding of the self and internal processes is necessary for individuals to value their inherent dignity and feel empowered to act as conscious societal agents (see Kay, 2014; Nübold et al., 2020). Thus, each person needs to engage in action research of their inner world, exploring and discovering its beauty and ugliness. From the day individuals are born to the day they die, the universe invites them to explore and discover its mysteries and wonders. The extent of the person's exploration and ability to discover much of the world depends on their seeking spirit and the kind of education they received at home, in society, and at school. Did that education inspire them to see themselves as explorers and discoverers? Did the education enable them to discover and appreciate the physical, social, abstract, and non-visible internal world? Did it help them learn to develop a strong sense of self and awareness of others? Did it create the conditions necessary for them to see the connection between their internal and external states? Did it help them develop the capacity to utilize their knowledge to live meaningfully, purposefully, consciously, sensibly, sensitively, and compassionately?

By the inner world, we mean the vast universe within each person, where they process their thoughts, heart desires, feelings, and moral and spiritual commitments. The subjective knowledge of one's feelings, beliefs, fallibility, tendencies, commitments, conscience, and embeddedness aids the development of the right mindset and attitude towards life (see Roeser &

Peck, 2009; White, 1970). In effect, one of the vital roles of education is to help students engage in the unending process of self-examination and discovery. Knowing oneself empowers the individual to accept their strength and flaws, develop an awareness of their life's purpose, and channel their energy towards fulfilling that mission. Knowledge of the internal also determines people's evaluation of themselves and others and how they choose to interact with others (Letzring, 2008).

Another reason why exploring and discovering the inner world is a vital function of education is that the instinct, human and non-human, needs training. All people have a basic instinct, which is their dominant initial reaction when they receive information, and it is not inherently good or bad. Until now, scientists did not think of the instinct as something that needs training. Some scholars talk about it as though it is the most primitive part of human nature. It is not (Gould & Marler, 1987; Marler, 2004). The instinct can grow stronger or weaker, just like the brain or muscles. Think about the instinct as the operating system, working in the background coding and controlling people's internal processes and behavior. Understanding one's basic instinct and how it operates would make learners conscious of how it influences their actions. Such a critical awareness of the instinctive response system, internal processes that guide the human decision-making process, enables the individuals to develop the capacity to override it or moderate its impact. It would help them develop the capacity for reflective and reflexive thinking and self-correction. People who develop this ability can catch themselves when they are being judgmental, unreasonable, or wicked and have the gut to admit it to themselves. Subjects, like literature, humanities, arts, music, intercultural communication, and natural sciences, when taught right, can help learners understand and train their instinct. For instance, exposing learners to good literary works would reinforce their capacity to discern the true nature of different phenomena and strengthen their sense of (in)justice. All in all, having the ability to recognize the true nature of the inner and outer worlds provides internal stability that empowers the doer to be gracious and accepting of others. It encourages them to expand the definition of their tribe to include strangers since it would become more comfortable for them to connect with the human story of others.

HEARTSET: THE COMPASS

So far, we have demonstrated that in-depth knowledge of the inner and outer worlds is fundamental to human wellbeing. They help people navigate the complex world of dependencies, differences, and similarities. When an imbalance exists either in the knowledge of the internal or external, it is problematic. Intelligent and talented individuals with creative and employable skills who lack deeper self-knowledge sometimes find it difficult to relate with others. They, at times, behave like egoistic maniacs who care

more about themselves than others. Ikeda (2006) observes that elites who are intelligent but fail to nurture their human qualities often invent tools or create social conditions that violate others' inherent dignity. On the other hand, individuals more in tune with their inner world than the external world might have the can-do spirit but act as though they are out of touch with reality. Some of these people might be walking contradictions – pious in their words, evil in their deeds, or vice versa.

The people who have too much of both kinds of knowledge do tend to wrongly conclude that they are perfect, right always, and do not need to keep growing. These people are declaring that they have come to the end of their exploration and do not think they can discover anything new in this life. Even a lifelong learner who adopts this posture will be resistant to constructive feedback. The lifelong learners in this category of people tend to acquire new knowledge out of the force of habit or for the sake of entertainment, not meaningful learning. While learning needs to be entertaining, its usefulness depends on how it prompts learners to examine their way of being or modus operandi. When the materials an individual reads do not challenge them to re-examine their deeply held assumptions about the world, their moral commitments, and actions, they live in a bubble that is not conducive to growth. It is possible for people who are not actively striving to grow to change their approach to an issue due to new information they encounter, however. In such cases, the transformative information needs to exist in high intensity before it can filter through their defense mechanisms and enter their learning consciousness. This is why it takes traumatic, embarrassing, or unforgettable experiences for such people to alter their position on an issue at times. For instance, several public officials in the U.S. denied the threat of COVID-19 until someone close to them lost their lives, which allowed them to re-learn and evolve on the issue. A piece of information from a trusted source could also help such a person re-evaluate their actions, but this is not often the case because people with similar lived experiences tend to think alike (Turner & Pratkanis, 1998).

The vital message here is that knowledge of internal and external states alone is not sufficient for a holistic, happy life. Ikeda argues that "knowledge alone cannot give rise to value. It is only when knowledge is guided by wisdom that value – defined by the father of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, as beauty, benefit, and goodness – is created" (Ikeda, 2006, p. 173). The quote implies that wisdom is a quintessential requirement for living value creative lives. Learners would be able to live true to themselves when their education provides them opportunities to manifest their wisdom, activate and strengthen their conscience, and cultivate their character. We refer to these qualities as the right heartset. Ikeda (2006) recommends that educators ought to "creatively and imaginatively use various means and methods to inspire and awaken" learners to their wisdom

and power (p. 181). From the perspective of Ikeda, wisdom is not something teachers teach or pass down to the younger generation; wisdom is grounded in the doers' lived reality. Thus, teachers can only stimulate and cause it to manifest in learners. One effective means of kindling wisdom is shared lived experiences, which makes the shared struggle of mentor and student the ideal pedagogical tool for activating wisdom, conscience, and character. It means educators need to provide a learning environment that allows for the co-creation of solutions, institutions, and meaning. Prevailing interpretations of Makiguchi's advise to educators to come down from their throne narrowly focuses on the need for educators to act as servants dedicated to their students and neglect the vital part of his advice – serve as "partners in the discovery of new models" (as cited in Ikeda, 1996, p. 59). Education is a partnership. It is a call to co-discover and co-create value.

WHY DO THE THREE QUALITIES MATTER?

Figure 1, below, depicts heartsets operating in the foreground while knowledge, inner and outer, works in the background. The rationale is that wisdom helps individuals make better use of knowledge and information, while knowledge aids the development and manifestation of wisdom. An African proverb expresses the same idea by suggesting that the development of all wisdom starts from possessing the spirit of inquiry, and wisdom makes the child fully human (Dzobo, 2006). Acquiring the right heartset aids a student in better integrating and expanding the overlap between their internal and external knowledge, and awakening them to the symbiotic relationship between the microcosm and macrocosm in the transpersonal realm (see Ikeda, 1996; Ikeda et al., 2003; Wickramasinghe & Ikeda, 1998). Education institutions can achieve this task by stimulating and unleashing a learner's ability to discern the value-creating purpose of information and put their knowledge in the proper perspective (Ikeda, 2006).
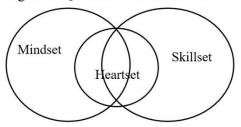

Figure 1: Qualities of a Well-Rounded Person

Students who develop all three qualities, mindset, heartset, and skillset, would become fully human – capable of conscious, conscientious, and compassionate decision-making. Education would have empowered them to develop the penetrating insight into all phenomena and make their character and wisdom the bedrock of their instinctive response system. This ideal-typical living being would be able to embrace their humanness, responsibilities, and others' humanity. They would make mistakes, but they will know how to forgive themselves and genuinely make amends. They will not be robotic in their actions, like individuals molded to live according to some static honor code. Developing and strengthening the three attributes would empower people to live vibrant, free, but responsible lives.

Diversity-driven self-governing societies ***need*** such people. The whole notion of a self-governing community depends on people's ability to know and do what is right willingly, instead of being forced to do what is right. Humanistic societies and humanism would thrive when people develop the right mindset, skillset, and heartset and utilize them to create value for themselves and others. By humanism, we mean the belief that every human being is important and deserves to be treated with respect, compassion, and loving-kindness. This is the essence of the African concept of *Ubuntu*, the view that our humanity reflects the humanity of other people. And more importantly, this is the argument of Ikeda's magnum opus, *The Human Revolution*. Ikeda's central claim is that an individual's ability to gain mastery over their inner world and harness their compassionate wisdom to direct knowledge towards value-creating ends is the most fertile and sustainable seed for societal transformation and human security (Ikeda, 2004). Ikeda reasons that people who engage in human revolution would be humble, listen to others deeply, and forge mutual understanding, which should pave the way for diverse groups of people to co-create solutions to societal problems.

The articles in this special issue of JISE, "The Soka Approaches to Education," seek to improve our understanding of how education can foster such meaning creating human beings. Several articles use Soka education as the springboard for their discussion, while others do not. Through the study of self-identified Soka educators teaching in both public and private PreK – 12 institutions in Brazil, Mokuria and Wandix-White identify some key characteristics of Soka educators. Mokuria and Wandix-White also offer insight into how educators at Brazil Soka School mainstream Soka education and critical thinking around global issues into their courses. Mino and Heto explore how African traditional education and Soka education can help transform schooling in Africa into a life-affirming and transformational event. They encourage educators to harness the wisdom that exists in African traditional education and Soka philosophy to generate new ideas for improving the current education systems. Odari argues that integrating Soka education and U*buntu* philosophy into educational practices in Kenya would

enhance learners' quality of life and inspire them to live contributive lives. Odari observes that *Ubuntu* and Soka education are humanistic philosophies that remind practitioners of human interconnectedness. Williams contends that the youth of African descent, both at home and in the diaspora, need to develop a forward-looking state of mind and attitude if they are going to actualize Kwame Nkrumah's vision of an egalitarian, communalist, social humanist, and united continent. Williams further asserts that they need to develop genuine hope and commitment to a culture of peace and human unity. Ikeda's human education philosophy and global citizenship education provide a framework for fostering such a forward-looking mindset and attitude in students, Williams indicates. Boateng examines the multiple ways liberal democratic societies deny the dignity of some of their citizens. Boateng then explains the role that Soka education could play in restoring the dignity of the oppressed. Jones uses the story of two women to illustrate how some educators are using Soka education and Womanist philosophical ideas to improve the quality of education for children in impoverished communities. Jones notes that it would take educators grounded in African Americans' lived reality to transform schools in low-income and minority communities.

Ntewusu et al. contribute to the special issue by providing an empirical example of how some indigenous African communities educate new inductees and children. In their work, Ntewusu et al. focus on an all-female cult in Ghana, West Africa, and illustrate how the educational practices of the cult empower learners to live freely and fully. Bridges discusses the way Cuba promotes and reproduces various socialist values in its educational system. Bridges states that Cuba intentionally and overtly instructs students to uphold its socialist values and ideology, relying on value formation and other school-based club activities, like the Junior Pioneers club. Gastyne examines the role of arts and intercultural dialogue in helping students become creative and critical thinkers. Gastyne asserts that creative and critical thinking molds learners into independent thinkers. Ongesa, on the other hand, draws our attention to how the Kenyan education system prioritizes examination and rote memorization over critical thinking even though the basic education curriculum lists fostering critical thinking as one of its main objectives. Ongesa claims that the inconsistency between the curriculum's stated goal and reality is due to the lack of periodic review. Heto, Odari, and Sunu analyze Kenya's 2017 basic education curriculum. They argue that Kenya needs to overhaul its education system if it is going to achieve the bold vision of the new curriculum.

Most of the authors presented the papers in this issue at the Second International Conference on Critical Thinking and Value-Creating Education in 2019. The conference, one of many organized by the University of Nairobi, took place over three days from October 23 – 25, 2019. The Organizing Committee, which Indangasi chaired, combined two thematic areas: Critical

Thinking and Value-Creating Education. They felt that the two educational goals were inextricably linked. To understand and appreciate the values that humans live by and even create new ones, they need to critically assess the nature of their social life and the possibilities for enriching it. In the final analysis, critical thinking is a rigorous search for the truth, which reinforces the human capacity to discriminate between good and evil. On the other hand, value-creating education envisions education as a moral pursuit in which learners, through their engagement with their mentors, come to understand the true essence of human life, value it, and help others appreciate their own inherent dignity for the sake of everyone's lifelong happiness.

Soka education is one of the main pillars of a growing academic field called Ikeda/Soka Studies (ISS). ISS is a transdisciplinary field focusing on the philosophies and practices of Japanese thought-leaders Ikeda, Toda, and Makiguchi, and the Soka/sōka, or "value-creating," approaches they pioneered. Ikeda is the leading scholar in this field; he has written and held dialogues on topics relevant to many academic disciplines. Thus, scholarship in this field cuts across many academic disciplines, including education, peace studies, natural sciences, philosophy, literature, psychology, religious studies, mathematics, musicology, and cultural studies. To actualize his mentors' vision of human education and world peace, Ikeda founded educational, research, and cultural institutions in many countries. ISS scholars in education research topics related to value-creating, human, global citizenship, developmental, environmental, human rights, and peace education.

Despite the growing efforts to research and apply Soka education in multiple contexts, many empirical and theoretical questions remain. Scholars can improve our understanding of how social organizations can leverage their convening power to build human solidarity and channel it towards solving collective action problems. The three founding Soka educators recognize the value of bringing people's wisdom and power together to build societies where all people feel valued, but this concept requires theorizing. Anyone interested in exploring this topic can start from Nichiren Daishonin's concept of 'many in body, one in mind.' Another potential area of work that deserves attention is the operationalization of key concepts, like the distinction between wisdom and knowledge, self-reflective behavior, human learning, education dispute resolution, central planning in education, and organically structured curriculum. There is much work to be done in this area, both conceptually and substantively, since the proliferation of individual interpretations and terminologies could blur the true meaning of these concepts. It would be useful for such scholars to clarify what these concepts mean and how non-sectarian institutions can integrate them into institutional practices. They might need to consider developing educational tools and techniques grounded on these concepts. We applaud the pioneering work of the DePaul University Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education and

the Min-On Music Research Institute. In addition, Makiguchi's longstanding challenge to scholars to discover causal laws for value-creating processes remain. Some work can also go into Track 1.5 engagements, dialogues between government officials and academics, on global and regional issues. Although this proposal is calling for policy-focused dialogues, we celebrate similar ongoing initiatives, like the University of Nairobi Soka education team's collaboration with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development and the Soka University of America's annual Culture of Peace Dialogues and 2016 World Summit of Educators. A lot of work needs to go into developing Soka approaches in other fields. Past attempts by the Pacific Basin Research Center (PBRC) to evaluate government policies in the Pacific Basin through a value-creating lens can serve as an inspiration. Soka institutions might also need to consider investing resources, time, human, and financial, into improving the state of education in marginalized and vulnerable communities.

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