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Special Issue
Soka Approaches in Education

Editor-In-Chief
Amany Saleh

Editor
Krishna Bista

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Special Issue
Soka Approaches in Education

Guest Editors
Prince Paa-Kwesi Heto & Henry Indangasi

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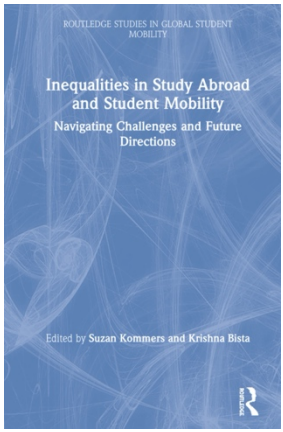
For questions –

Editor-in-Chief: Amany Saleh, Ph.D. E-mail: asaleh@astate.edu

Inequalities in Study Abroad and Student Mobility: Navigating Challenges and Future Directions

By Suzan Kommers, Krishna Bista (Routledge, 2021)



Bringing together a range of contributions from diverse international scholars, this edited volume explores issues of inequality in student mobility to consider how schools, universities, and colleges can ensure equitable access to international study and exchange.

Featuring evidence-based accounts of students' experiences and exploring opportunities for study abroad in school and university contexts, *Inequalities in Study Abroad and Student Mobility* analyses how pedagogy and student support services can be designed to accommodate linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic differences. Chapters foreground issues of access and opportunity and offer unique insights to inform institutional policy in developing more effective, inclusive, and equitable ways to internationalize exchange and study abroad programs and initiatives for all.

Reviews

"This book is a valuable addition to our understanding of the relationship between inequalities and international education – both at home and abroad. Besides offering insights from cases around the Western world, all chapters also offer useful implications for daily practice."
Christof Van Mol, Assistant Professor, Tilburg University, Netherlands

"Inequalities in Study Abroad and Student Mobility presents a remarkable set of voices that, taken together, provide a deep, critical, and valuable analysis of some of the most pressing issues for international higher education. The contributions that Bista and Kommers have brought together are well positioned to lead the way toward a new internationalization that is guided by values and principles."
Gerardo L. Blanco, Associate Professor, Boston College, USA

"The COVID-19 crisis made the risk of growing inequalities in higher education even more visible. *Inequalities in Study Abroad and Student Mobility* is a must-read book addressing the topic of inequalities in internationalization and study abroad in a holistic manner.
Giorgio Marinoni, Manager of Higher Education, International Association of Universities, France

"An impressive and important collection. The editors have assembled twelve strong contributions that not only lay out the challenges inherent in study abroad access in an unbalanced and vulnerable world, but offer well-reasoned prescriptions for greater equity, effectiveness, and sustainable positive impact.
James E. Callaghan, Assistant Vice-President, Georgia College & State University, USA

"This book makes an important contribution, particularly now as student mobility faces new restrictions worldwide.
Joshua S. McKeown, Associate Provost, State University of New York at Oswego, USA

"This book brings together an impressive collection of international scholars, providing evidence-based accounts of inequalities in student mobility. The book is an important contribution to an under-explored dimension of study abroad."
Paul James Cardwell, Professor of Law, University of Strathclyde, UK

"It offers both practical and research-driven insights that can guide institutional policy and practice in promoting diversity, empathy, and inclusive internationalization on campus."
Ravi Ammigan, Associate Deputy Provost, University of Delaware, USA

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Mindset, Heartset, and Skillset

Prince Paa-Kwesi Heto
INDIE Education Initiative, USA

Henry Indangasi
University of Nairobi, Kenya

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).

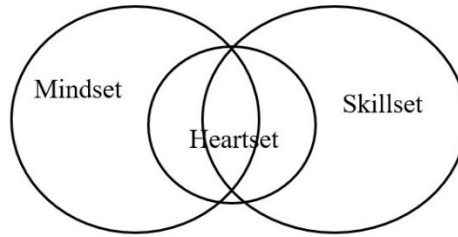
The vital message here is that knowledge of internal and external states alone is not sufficient for a holistic, happy life. Ikeda argues that "knowledge alone cannot give rise to value. It is only when knowledge is guided by wisdom that value – defined by the father of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, 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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Care and Value-Creating Education Put into Action in Brazil: A Narrative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

This narrative inquiry highlights the experiences of self-identified Soka educators in a PreK-12th grade school in São Paulo, Brazil, as well as volunteers through a program called "Soka Education in Action." Through their narratives, the role of care in value-creating education is explored as a critical aspect of education that supports students' academic and personal growth and development, as well as educators' professional identity and self-actualization. This study clarifies the essential qualities of Soka educators as understood and articulated by practitioners in the field. The narratives shared by study participants illuminate Soka education as a catalyst that fosters global citizenship by encouraging students to recognize their roles as agents of societal change and instruments of social justice.

Keywords: Brazil, care, Soka education, teacher attributes

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary education around the world continues to be driven by standards-based high-stakes accountability systems that ensure that those who score the highest on exams will gain entrée into the best universities, which often increases a young person's chances of being "successful" in society. Such an approach can be competitive and demoralizing for those students who

may not excel academically or who lack the cultural capital often required for the Euro-dominant and heteronormative views of societal "success" (Breinholt & Jæger, 2020). Many educators seek fresh ideas to counter the persistent pressure bearing down on education from market-driven economic forces. One such educational philosophy that emerged in the 20th century is called "Soka" educational philosophy. As ideas of Soka educational philosophy move westward into the schoolhouse from its Eastern origins in Japan, our current era is an ideal time to pause and explore the emergence of this approach to education in the context of Brazil, a country where these ideas have spread in Pre-kindergarten (PK) through 12th grade settings.

This paper uses narrative inquiry as a method of research to engage with self-identified Soka, or "value-creating," educators in two contexts in Brazil: (a) at the PK-12th grade Brazil Soka School and (b) through Soka Education in Action (formerly known as The Makiguchi Project in Action), a network of volunteers who conduct professional development linked to Soka educational philosophy in Brazilian public schools. This value-creating approach to education is rooted in a culture of care that seeks to foster students to become global citizens who will act in the world as agents of social change in their local communities. A major focus of this paper lies in its aim to clarify the quintessential qualities of Soka educators, as understood and articulated by practitioners, using narrative inquiry as a methodology.

The research that comprises this paper was conducted by the first author in São Paulo, Brazil, in December 2018 through extensive interviews and visits with educators who self-identify as Soka educators. Some of the data was also collected during a previous research trip to Brazil in 2015. Since Brazil is the only country outside of Asia with a formal PK-12th grade Soka school, this research is especially important as educators around the globe are seeking ways to put the theoretical ideas about Soka educational philosophy into action. Since the Brazil Soka School has an International Baccalaureate (IB) component on the high school level, this study is particularly relevant because of the ways the educators bring together value creating ("Soka") education with critical thinking around global issues. A central component of Soka educational philosophy is students' lifelong happiness (Goulah, 2010; Ikeda, 2009). The role of care in Soka education will be explored as a critical aspect of education that supports students and educators to create value under any circumstance, along with how to support educators to expand their capacities to show care for their students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundation of Soka educational philosophy is rooted in the ideas of the Japanese educator Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944), considered the "father" of Soka, or "value-creating" education; his philosophy of education emerged from reflections on his pedagogy as a teacher in Japan

prior to World War II. In his era, many scholars viewed Makiguchi as having "radical" ideas because his ideas about education were counter to the ultra-nationalistic views many educators in his time espoused. Makiguchi vehemently opposed the militaristic Japanese educational system while also seeking "to choose to be a change agent working within established structures" (Gebert & Joffee, 2007, p. 70). A fellow teacher, Josei Toda, took Makiguchi as his mentor and learned about value-creating education from him (Goulah, 2010).

Daisaku Ikeda took the mantle of Soka educational ideas from Toda and crystallized them into a school system primarily situated in Asia, which, according to the Soka Gakuen Educational Foundation (2009), includes 6 Soka kindergartens, 3 Soka elementary schools and 3 Soka secondary schools; the only official PK-12th grade Soka school outside of Asia is in São Paulo, Brazil, which is at the center of this research. Ikeda (2006) succinctly shared his ideas about Soka educational philosophy in an address in 2005, explaining 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. The font of wisdom is found in the following elements: an overarching sense of purpose, a powerful sense of responsibility and finally, the compassionate desire to contribute to the welfare of humankind (p. 173). Ikeda clarifies central aspects of Soka educational philosophy, emphasizing compassion and the importance of students developing a sense of purpose to improve life for all people.

In simplest terms, Ikeda's core ideas about Soka educational philosophy focus on:

- centering students' entire education on their lifelong happiness—both for themselves and others, so students develop the spirit to contribute to the well-being of all;
- focusing on curricular ideas towards developing students to become global citizens and recognizing the interconnectedness of all life by including these topics: (a) peace education; (b) human rights education; (c) environmental education; and (d) development education;
- emphasizing the importance of teachers developing meaningful and caring attitudes towards all students (Ikeda, 2010; Nagashima, 2012; Sharma, 2011).

The above ideas are pillars of Soka educational philosophy; the remainder of this paper focuses on attributes of self-identified Soka educators, including a brief history of Soka education and how it is applied today in Brazil in both formal and informal settings.

Value-creating, or Soka, pedagogy first developed by Makiguchi, is now seen as a "spirit of educating, an ethos, or conceptual foundation of

education rather than defined methodology (Goulah & Urbain, 2013, p. 309). The notion of creating value in education shifts the narrative about the "why"—the very purpose of education--and links education's purpose directly to a form of happiness that students generate from within themselves together with teachers, regardless of the time or circumstances. At the same time, the idea of students and teachers creating value is linked to their well-being and greater societal good. Ikeda (2009) emphasizes this point, noting that "our worth as a human being is determined by whether we live in a society solely for ourselves or strive to realize happiness for ourselves and others" (p. 139). This point about Soka educational philosophy is critical. Ikeda, who is currently 92 years old and lives in Japan, persists in devoting his life to Soka educational philosophy and seeing it actualized, while also writing extensively on nuclear disarmament, peace, and essays that center on humanistic views of life and ways to apply these ideas to education and daily living (Garrison, Hickman & Ikeda, 2014; Ikeda, 2001; Sherman, 2016).

It is important to address the term "soka" and its use, based on research conducted by other scholars and researchers. Goulah and Gebert (2009) write "any proactive engagement with one's environment that generates more beauty, gain, or good falls under the rubric of *soka,* or value creation" (p. 126), suggesting that the principles of soka can be applied in a wide range of areas beyond education—by asking ourselves how value is being created in any given situation. While this is true, the term "soka" would not necessarily be capitalized all the time as is used by educational scholars; the term "Soka" (capitalized) as an educational philosophy will be used throughout the paper to align with other scholars in the field.

To date, there is little published research on how Soka educational philosophy is directly applied in formal educational settings. Two key articles, however, include the following: 1) Silva (2000) studied Brazil's "Makiguchi Project in Action" (now called "Soka Education in Action"), and 2) Guajardo and Reiser (2016) conducted research on ways global citizenship education is applied in a higher education setting at the Soka University's Faculty of International Liberal Arts (FILA) in Japan. The research at the heart of this paper seeks to fill a gap in scholarly research on ways Soka educational philosophy are applied in both formal and informal settings in Brazil, while specifically using narrative inquiry to identify quintessential qualities of self-identified Soka educators.

NARRATIVE INQUIRY AS A METHODOLOGY TO STUDY SOKA EDUCATION

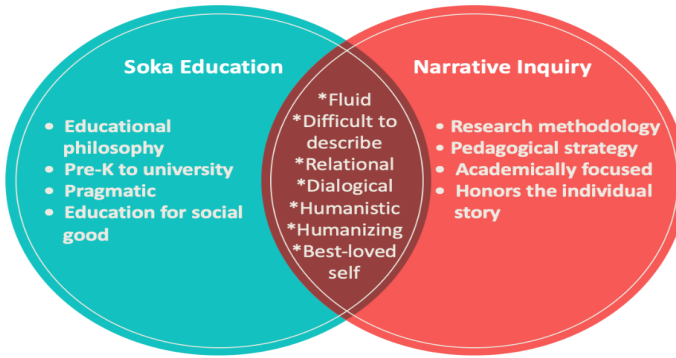
In his work, "My Pedagogic Creed," John Dewey (1897) wrote: "education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living" (p. 22). As Dewey's philosophical shift in education ushered in a fresh

approach to education into Western consciousness, education scholars such as Eliot Eisner (1988) suggest we need to reconsider how we study education, saying "method influences how we think and what we are permitted to feel" (p. 19). Further, Eisner (1988) insists that educational researchers need to go "back to the schools, not to conduct commando raids, but to work with teachers as colleagues in a common quest and through such collaboration to rediscover the qualities, the complexities, and the richness of life in classrooms" (p. 19). These ideas, then, are at the heart of narrative inquiry: relational research and the centrality of teachers' voices and stories.

In essence, narrative inquiry—as a research methodology in education—emerged to support Deweyan notions of the very purpose of Western education—ideas that parallel those of Makiguchi. Narrative inquiry is a relational approach to educational research, in which the educators and researchers function together as collaborators; however, it is the stories of educators that are lifted up as the heart of the research. Their words and stories become the data that are honored, rather than critiqued and evaluated. A key component of narrative inquiry as a methodology is that researchers collaboratively engage "…in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). This methodological approach perfectly fits this research, which explores how self-identified Soka educators make meaning of their experiences and articulate what they believe to be the qualities essential for those who aspire to be Soka educators.

Soka educational philosophy is directly connected to the methodology of narrative inquiry, linked together by three important concepts, especially in relation to research of Soka education in Brazil: 1) *teachers as curriculum makers* (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Craig & Ross, 2008); 2) the term the *"best loved self"* (Clandinin, 2015; Craig, 2013; Schwab, 1954), and 3) ways that *knowledge communities* (Olson & Craig, 2001) provide an important space for relational and dialogical knowing. In figure 1, the Venn diagram shows unique aspects of both Soka educational philosophy and narrative inquiry, and in the center, how they converge.

Figure 1
Venn diagram comparing Soka educational philosophy and narrative inquiry



Based on this figure, it is clear that narrative inquiry is well-suited as a research tool when studying how Soka education is applied in various educational contexts.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

This research in Brazil focused on two distinctive programs: 1) The Brazil Soka School, a private school, with a total of 422 students during the 2018-2019 school year and a staff of 52, which included 41 teachers and administrative staff members, and 2) the Soka Education in Action Program, which has a total of 48 teams and 336 volunteers in 20 cities throughout Brazil. These teams of volunteers reach out to local public schools and provide free professional development activities that are linked to principles of Soka educational philosophy once a month for eight months.

The research for this study, conducted in 2018, centered on identifying quintessential qualities of self-identified Soka educators. The data used for this research came from 10 self-identified Soka educators who work in disparate educational settings in Brazil: three of the volunteers were from a focus group who were active volunteer educators in the Soka Education in Action Program; one of the interviewees was the pioneering founder of the Makiguchi Project in Action (now called Soka Education in Action) and the founding principal of Brazil Soka School; and six of the interviewees were teachers at the Brazil Soka School in 2018, at the time of the research. The interviews occurred in São Paulo, Brazil, in December 2018, and pseudonyms are used throughout this paper to provide anonymity.

In addition to conducting interviews, the first author spent time as a participant observer in the Soka Education in Action program and attended two introductory sessions in public schools in São Paulo. At the Brazil Soka School, time was also spent interacting with students and staff during all

shared meals/snack times, as well as during the staff's end-of-the-year all-day professional development activity, which provided opportunities for observations, interactions, and organic engagement.

FINDINGS

The woman who worked tirelessly to take responsibility for bringing Soka education to Brazil had a position as a supervisor at an adult literacy program in São Paulo in the 1970s; at that time, only literate adults could vote, so literacy programs developed to support people to learn to read so they could vote. The pseudonym used for this pioneer of Soka education in Brazil is "Delia." In her own words, this is how she described the situation that prompted her to take action:

> *This literacy program was done in 400 hours. They* [the students] *didn't have bathrooms, paper, coffee nothing…the facilities were filthy dirty and substandard. This one teacher wrote 'A,' 'B,' 'C' and repeatedly told the students to copy, copy, copy. I would watch this go on each evening. No one could stand it. It was terrible. Students worked hard, came to class exhausted, dirty, illiterate, and had to copy endlessly over the course of 400 hours from 7:00 to 11:00 PM every night! It's like teaching donkeys to carry bricks. And I said, 'Ah, so that's how it's going to be…' …The students came from work smelly—oil rig workers, construction workers—and they came directly from work. There were 40 students in each class. The teacher went crazy one night. She told them, 'Copy, copy, copy'* [what she had written on the board]. *She wasn't teaching anything.*
>
> *One day, there was a lot of chaos and confusion at the school. A student got on top of the teacher's desk and pooped, and he told her, 'Eat, eat, eat!' That was the teacher who always said, 'Copy, copy, copy.' It was an adult learner and he told her, 'Eat, eat, eat' after he pooped on her desk. I could not stand it. I quit. I ran out of there. Soon after that, I went to the Ministry of Education. At that time, I made the determination to start a literacy project for 40 hours. From 1983-1988, I trained 5 volunteer teachers to do a 40-hour literacy program. From a 400-hour literacy program, I reduced it down to 40 hours. Ten nights—four hours a night—for them to learn how to read and write.*

Essentially, a key reason Soka education came to Brazil was as a result of a single woman's determined efforts to address educational, economic, and political injustices, which lead her to take action to create a solution beyond the official government-sanctioned ideas on how to solve

issues of literacy. Her efforts also stemmed from her desire to respond to what she had learned from Daisaku Ikeda about Soka educational philosophy. As the only daughter and a descendant of Japanese immigrants to Brazil, Delia had come to learn about Makiguchi, Toda, and Ikeda from her parents. In all four interviews with Delia over a 3-year period, she shared how much she had to struggle and challenge resistance from many Brazilians who thought she was crazy and adamantly opposed to her efforts to start a Soka school in Brazil.

In addition to learning about the historical roots of Soka education in Brazil, this research focused on clarifying the quintessential qualities of self-identified Soka educators. After coding the data and inductively identifying patterns shared by the interviewees (Maxwell, 2013) based on their narratives, it became clear that the self-identified Soka educators who were part of this research articulated and shared these qualities—as educators who are: *reflective, selfless, mindful, compassionate/empathetic, seekers, and agentic.* Each quality will be explained in more detail.

The quality of being *reflective* frequently emerged as educators shared about the process of becoming teachers who focused more on students' needs rather than their own. Educators opened up about experiencing cognitive dissonance (Cooper, 2007), which helped them recognize Soka educational philosophy as a sound philosophical educational alternative to the data- and assessment-driven approaches they had experiences and saw as dehumanizing for students. A key aspect articulated by educators centered on their reflecting on how their practices aligned with the educational ideas and posture towards students. For example, a teacher/administrator at the Brazil Soka School, Marcia, commented: "I guess I always think to myself: am I being true to what Daisaku Ikeda has been doing?" By studying and discussing key concepts about Soka educational philosophy together, the educators interviewed for this research shared how they often reflected on their own practices and ideas about education, with the goal of upholding this approach to education that centers on students and their life-long well-being.

The quality of being a *selfless* educator emerged, as the self-identified Soka educators often described the challenges this presents. One of the Soka Education in Action volunteers, Olivia, clearly articulated this point, when she shared:

> *When teachers change their attitudes, they are able to connect with the students because the teacher focuses on what the student needs. Because then it is not about their ego...what matters is how the teacher conveys it. This is what Makiguchi did. Treasuring the differences between each person. If there is someone that is very rational, they might get it faster. If the student is more artistic, then there are other ways to teach the student and the teacher has to adjust.*

> *The teacher has to reinvent another way to teach depending on the student. You can't force a student to learn something.*

From this quote, which was echoed by other educators, selfless educators constantly challenge how to connect with students and support them to learn—persisting to creatively seek out ways to ensure that each and every student is able to learn and grow.

To be *mindful* as a Soka educator is linked to the notion voiced by the educators interviewed, who shared the importance of being mindful of each student's strengths, challenges, and unique life circumstances. The Soka educators interviewed shared the view that by being *mindful* of each student's distinctiveness, they developed the spirit to support each student in developing their potentialities and capabilities. For example, one of the teachers at the Brazil Soka School, Damario, who knew nothing about either Soka education, nor the school's founder, Ikeda, before he started working there, shared this: "*You have the content, and you provide the student with that. Soka education goes beyond that; it changes destinies, stories, it's not only about imparting knowledge. It's to help students achieve their goals when they may not know that yet*." This teacher quickly came to realize the power and profound value of Soka educational philosophy by encouraging teachers to be mindful of each student's unique potential—regardless of the content area. Damario taught high school science, demonstrating that Soka education is about teachers' underlying beliefs and philosophy, as well as attitudes and approaches in teaching—far beyond their academic disciplines.

The self-identified Brazilian Soka educators who were interviewed for this research shared that the qualities of being *compassionate/empathetic* are paramount. In the focus group with the volunteers in the Soka Education in Action, one of the educators shared this example, which illustrates this point that others also expressed in different ways:

> *A Soka educator has to show students the path and how to get there. This is to be benevolent. A Soka educator uses words and, in their attitudes, they need to have compassion, wisdom and benevolence. The essence that Makiguchi wrote about was that he washed students' cold hands and feet [on cold winter days]. He had the feeling for the students to be comfortable in his presence. Because when someone is comfortable, they aren't afraid to ask questions.*

The self-identified Soka educators recognized an inextricable link between them showing students empathy and compassion, which is another way of describing "care" and students' capacities to learn and grow.

Another key finding that emerged from this research was the importance self-identified Soka educators placed on being *seekers*—regularly seeking to study and learn more about Soka educational philosophy. Both for the volunteer Soka educators in the Soka Education in Action project, as well

as the Brazil Soka School teachers, the desire to study was palpable. A science teacher, Elisabete, who knew nothing about Soka educational philosophy before beginning to work at the school expressed her ideas this way: "*I need to study more about Soka education and use my classroom also like a living laboratory—everyday asking myself, 'What's working? What isn't?' And again, to study more about Soka education*." She looked forward to weekly book studies on the book by Ikeda (2010) entitled *Soka Education.*

Elena, another pioneer of Soka education in Brazil from the 1970s, continued to volunteer regularly in 2018 through Soka Education in Action even when she struggled to walk due to rheumatoid arthritis. She expressed her views on this topic this way:

> *So, the biggest challenge we face is to study together to create a consciousness about Soka educational philosophy. So many teachers already have these ideas about education, but we name them. It would be better if before a teacher starts teaching that they already have this kind of educational philosophy. Our biggest difficulty is this: when a teacher sees their actions based on this philosophy their consciousness shifts and there is a shift in their heart.*

The self-identified Soka educators in this study acknowledged the importance of having a seeking spirit to study Makiguchi and Ikeda's ideas about Soka educational philosophy, in order to have a shift in consciousness and awareness about the very purpose of education and the significance of their roles as educators in the educative process.

The final quintessential attribute of a Soka educator that emerged in the course of conducting this research is the quality of being *agentic.* For the self-identified Soka educators, being agentic included the notion of being protagonists in their teaching, as well as fostering students to be the protagonists in their learning—with the focus being on taking action to create a more just world. Consistently—based on observations, interviews and informal dialogues—the Soka educators and students shared the idea that their working at or attending a Soka school, or volunteering at a public school and sharing ideas that illustrated concepts about Soka educational philosophy, they were serving as agents of change on both the local and global scale—through education.

In an interview with a PE teacher, Martin, who shared his struggles to understand how Soka educators are in any way different from other educators, came to this realization, which encapsulates the idea of Soka educators being "agentic:"

> *We see the Founder [Ikeda, the school's founder] as a humanist, a pacifist. To create a school system that transmits these important values will provide another way to support a social change in society—independent of religion. I think that*

> *for us to develop young people with humanistic values who know that they have great potential and that those youth around them also have great unlimited potential—to up this into action and create social change…independent of any religion—will create a significant movement for Brazil and the world.*

This sentiment was echoed in many talks with students and teachers in the course of seeking to make meaning and understand some of the essential qualities or attributes of Soka educators. The view of connecting the work done in education to greater societal change based on individual agency and linked to the agency of others, is a unique and distinguishing aspect of Soka educators.

Additional Findings

Liminal spaces. Another important finding of this research is that learning about Soka educational philosophy for students and teachers often occurred in liminal spaces, also called "third spaces" (Bhabha, 1994), such as at sports festivals, a book club, or in library exhibits, which showed that consistently studying and sharing Ikeda's writings about Soka educational philosophy is critical in order to maintain fidelity to the founding principles. This became very clear through meeting with several of the original volunteer educators from the Makiguchi Project in Action, now called "Soka Education in Action." Delia studied the teachings and writings of Makiguchi and Ikeda for five years with a small group of mostly women before modifying the original 400-hour government literacy program to a 40-hour one. Delia continued to seek from Ikeda and study Makiguchi's writings until the Brazil Soka School officially opened in 2001—after receiving permission from the Soka Gakuen, the name of the official administrative arm of Soka schools, housed in Tokyo. She is now in her mid-80s, but she shared that she visited Japan 32 times—always with the spirit to seek and learn from Ikeda and Soka educators in Japan about how to put Soka educational philosophy into action in Brazil.

Other examples highlight how important regular study is in order to put the ideas of Soka educational philosophy into action. During the 2018 school year, teachers at the Brazil Soka School studied Ikeda's book *Soka Education* every Friday, and different teachers took responsibility to do a chapter review. Elisabete, a physics teacher who never known about Soka education before starting at the school, shared her story as her eyes filled with tears when she described sharing the last chapter:

> *I told them that I was very confused still, but I know this is something very important. Because I know Soka education is not something separate from our reality—that it is something we live and that I'm still learning to be a Soka*

> *educator. Today, I have the consciousness that I no longer feel anxious at all about this—thinking this is precisely what it is. Here, our school is our laboratory; here is where we learn about Soka education, and we learn when we are in our classrooms with our students. We learn day by day. Something that is very important to me is this: who is teaching me the most? My students.*

This teacher came to precisely the same conclusion as Dewey and Makiguchi: schools and classrooms are very much living laboratories where educators constantly engage in questioning, researching, trying out new ideas, and learning through the process. Several other staff members shared how moved they were when Elisabete shared her realization at the book study, and this is particularly cogent because she was learning about Soka education as she sought to apply the ideas and principles in her daily work as a teacher.

Through Brazil's Educational Coordinating Group, called the *Coordenadoria Educaccional,* the umbrella organization overseeing the Soka Education in Action group, one of the volunteer educators shared that a group of women who support their work have been systematically going through each of Ikeda's 30 volumes about his life's work, called *The New Human Revolution,* in order to focus specifically on what Ikeda says about education, Soka education, and humanistic education. This is yet another example of the role study plays, along with the value of a seeking spirit to understand Ikeda's views about Soka educational philosophy. In this way, self-identified Soka educators can hope to apply the ideas of Soka educational philosophy in a manner that aligns with the original ideas of Makiguchi, along with the current ways Soka education is expressed through Ikeda's vision and writings.

The Role of "Care" in Soka Education. Again, a distinguishing aspect of Soka education is the emphasis on linking education to students' lifelong happiness, which can be directly linked to the qualities of being *compassionate/empathetic.* Historically, learning was based on personal relationships between the student and the teacher. Noddings and Shore (1984) note that teachers and their students lived together and developed extensive personal relationships, with teachers caring for the intellectual and personal growth and development of students as far back as the Middle Ages. Today, care in education represents a complex phenomenon for several reasons: a) some do not see teaching as a caring profession because the teachers' goal must be delivering adequate academic achievement and the cultivation of global competence among students (Narinasamy & Mamat, 2013; Noddings, 2007; Wilde, 2013), making care an accessory to the real work of teaching (Wilde, 2013); b) there is no clear, collective construction of what it means to care and how teachers can create and maintain caring relationships with students (Adler, 2002); c) teachers and students have differing perceptions of

what care looks like, and that difference is affected by several variables, including age, ethnicity, gender, cultural mismatch of the teacher and student(s), and other demographic factors (Hayes, Ryan, & Zseller, 1994). Despite the perplexity of care in the context of teaching and learning, whether-or-not students thrive in their learning environment is often predicated on the relationship between the student and the teacher, and whether-or-not the student believes the teacher cares about the student as an individual—a unique and valued human being.

Unfortunately, learning how to care for students has not been well-articulated in most teacher education programs (Knight, 2004). This leaves teachers struggling to figure out how to effectively and appropriately demonstrate caring behaviors that leave students feeling valued and authentically cared for. This struggle is exacerbated as pre-service teachers gain classroom experience under an education system that has become so focused on rigid curriculum and high-stakes testing that the endless list of things to do overshadows the practice of care (Cooper, 2004). Over time, these teachers become veteran educators juggling large class sizes, short periods, curriculum demands, and their own isolation, which contributes to the "emotional vacancy of schools" (Hayes, Ryan, & Zseller, 1994, p. 2). Consequently, as teachers *live* their personal teaching philosophy, even if the early written version describes a desire to care for students and outlines behaviors and practices that might demonstrate that care, the reality most often reveals care as ancillary at best.

In terms of Soka educational philosophy, Makiguchi was clear about the role of teachers to care genuinely about their students. Makiguchi (1936/2015) wrote that ideas about "if teachers fully embodied the spirit of one who is a servant of chrysanthemums, determined to bring beautiful flowers to bloom, education would succeed without fail" (p. 245). For Makiguchi, the essence of his views on education is distilled in this powerful image—of teachers who carefully and attentively serve as loving gardeners who patiently care for each flower, confident that each one will bloom—based on teachers' compassion.

Examples of care in action at the Brazil Soka School were plentiful in the course of this research. Part of this was because a common feature of all Soka schools is connected to meals—how they're prepared, served, and eaten. All meals were prepared by kitchen staff, who consider themselves Soka educators—along with the porters at the entry and the cleaning staff. For each meal, fresh fruits and vegetables were served, and the open dining room concept meant that all staff and all students ate together. Meals, then, became a way for all of the staff to interact with each other and with students—so that showing care through sharing meals became part of the fabric of everyone's life on a regular basis.

Another component of caring was clear when teachers shared their attitudes towards students who might be failing. Consistently, teachers shared that it was unacceptable that a student "wouldn't get it." Rather, the onus was on the teacher to persist in finding innovative and creative ways to connect with each student and support them until they understand and master the skill or subject. This point was made often: teachers show care by persisting in their spirit to support and care for each and every student.

Linking Critical Thinking in an IB School with Soka Educational Philosophy. The Brazil Soka School has developed two international partnerships that support their efforts to foster students to become critical-thinking global citizens. One such collaboration is with the UNESCO Associated Schools Network, and the other one is with the International Baccalaureate Programme. The challenge for the Brazil Soka School is integrating these various program goals, while also maintaining a Soka educational foundation and spirit. A clear example was shared by a teacher whose pseudonym is "Antonio;" he highlights how he brought together the confluence of ideas of Soka educational philosophy with critical thinking.

During the 2018 school year, the country of Brazil hosted an International Forum on Water. Antonio, an IB social studies teacher, created a lesson where the students signed up and learned about the countries that participated and researched water issues in those countries. They created a "mini world water forum," and each student explained water scarcity issues in the country they researched. Also, the school held a cultural show, and as part of that project, they learned about the history of Soka education. As parents and guests entered the classroom, they were greeted by a student dressed as Makiguchi, who invited everyone to enter and learn about current environmental issues. This activity linked students' academic studies to local and global issues, which is a Soka educational idea.

Antonio explained the lesson in this way:

> *On the floor, the students created a crime scene—like an outline of a person on the floor of a crime scene and the students wrote stories in little squares—about Chernobyl and Fukushima—about disasters that have happened in our world that show this kind of lack of harmony between human beings and nature. And when talking about the future, they talked about themselves and their roles as Soka students with regards to all these challenges. It was like in a laboratory that has an instrument that teaches about waves—a wave machine. You hit this apparatus and create a wave and then it goes back. So, the students explained that such a relationship that they had with Makiguchi was as if*

Makiguchi hit that apparatus and started the wave and that wave went out into the world and returned to their lives.

The activity allowed students to learn about an important Soka educational principle—about their roles as students to take action in the world—while also exposing them to serious international environmental crises. Through this example, we see how a self-identified Soka educator creatively brought together central ideas about Soka educational philosophy together with a lesson that also links to both the UNESCO and IB partnerships that all support students to develop and strengthen critical thinking skills while fostering students to become global citizens.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This research on Brazilian self-identified Soka educators provides rich examples of pioneers in the field of contemporary PK-12th grade Soka education in action. The attributes of self-identified Soka educators gleaned from this research include the following qualities: *reflective, selfless, mindful, compassionate/empathetic, seekers, and agentic*. Recognizing and naming these attributes is essential to further expand ideas about Soka educational philosophy and what it means to be a Soka educator. Brazil is a vast country—larger than the continental United States—and the efforts of the educators at the Brazil Soka School and volunteers in the Soka Education in Action professional development program might seem minuscule in the large scheme of educational efforts worldwide. However, we might see this from a different view based on an address Ikeda gave to students from the Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High Schools in Japan in 1973—at their first entrance ceremony. At that time, Ikeda said, "in comparison with the wide world, the Soka schools may be as small as a poppy seed, but if our students remain true to this ideal [of the school's principles]…our impact will be felt all over the globe" (Unger & Ikeda, 2016, p. 87). Through these words, we sense Ikeda's conviction in the important role of Soka education and the unquestionable impact of Soka educators and students.

Pereira (2008) shares that "Ikeda himself has always reinforced the idea of Brazil as the fountain, the pioneer, the model, the 'monarch'…and the farthest country from Japan but the closest to his heart" (p. 108). This point is extremely important: based on this research conducted in Brazil, those who seek to apply and spread ideas of Soka educational philosophy will benefit by strengthening their commitment to align with Ikeda's spirit and heart about education. Whether one is an educator who works at a Soka school sanctioned by the Soka Gakuen (the administrative offices over officially-sanctioned Soka schools), such as the Brazil Soka School, or in the field of education on any level, this research found that it is essential that self-identified Soka educators study and seek to understand how to apply Ikeda's views on education, along with his insights on the importance of deeply caring for

students—showing compassion and empathy. This includes a spirit to work tirelessly to develop classrooms and schools where each child will be nurtured and cared for so that all children who experience Soka educational philosophy in action develop their greatest potential and are able to experience a long life of fulfillment and happiness while working to make the world a better place for all.

The research presented in this paper on Soka educational philosophy as it is being applied in Brazil is just the tip of the iceberg. As this educational philosophy that originated in Japan is taking root in PK-12th grade settings throughout Brazil, suggestions for future research include: a) an in-depth look into a pilot public school in São Paulo that is based on principles of Soka educational philosophy, comparing it to similar public schools in the area—specifically around areas of the school's culture and climate, along with issues of discipline; b) a broader and more in-depth study on the various "Soka Education in Action" projects throughout Brazil, since this research focused on the São Paulo region; c) the role of Brazilians of Japanese descent in applying Soka educational philosophy in Brazil; and d) comparing the success of the Brazil Soka School with similar private schools in Brazil, in terms of looking at a wide range of elements that contribute to markers of a school's success in Brazil.

In informal interviews, it became clear that many self-identified Soka educators started small private schools, such as a language school, a tutoring school, and a small high-tech high school. In the absence of any formal guidelines about what constitutes a "Soka" educator, research on how and why these educators consider themselves to be Soka educators warrants further research. Brazil is unique in that so many educators are taking the initiative to apply ideas they have studied about Soka education, and systematic research on the success of their endeavors could shed light on how future educators can incorporate such ideas about Soka education in various realms.

IMPLICATIONS

Brazil is the only Western country with a PK-12th grade school imbued with Soka educational philosophy, while also functioning under required national curricular guidelines. This is significant because the Brazil Soka School serves as an exemplar for educators worldwide to see that such an approach to education is possible—regardless of the local conditions. This means that while functioning under strict educational criteria established by the federal government, the educators at the Brazil Soka School were simultaneously able to create a school ecology based on care, with the end goal being students' lifelong happiness linked to creating a more just world for all humankind.

At the same time that the Brazil Soka School is developing its foundation, a robust network of volunteers who have informally, but systematically, studied Soka education for decades are also broadly spreading the ideas of Soka educational philosophy with public school educators throughout Brazil. The Soka Education in Action network of volunteers is functioning throughout the country of Brazil, and for precisely this reason, the research conducted on both the Brazil Soka School and Soka Education in Action is pertinent and essential as a record of how this educational philosophy is put into action at the grassroots level.

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Educating Humans

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ABSTRACT

African traditional education and soka approaches to education share a common vision of human education, which is key to transforming the education crisis facing Africa. We make this case in four steps. First, we explore the history of education in Africa to illustrate the roots of the crisis. Second, we introduce soka approaches to education, its history, and fundamental principles. Third, we analyze the convergence of African traditional education and soka approaches to education in terms of their underlying philosophies. Fourth, we investigate possible applications of both philosophies to improve schooling in Africa. The last section outlines how harnessing the insights of both philosophies will engender an African renaissance based on young people striving to live creative and contributive lives.

Keywords: African Traditional Education, Education Crisis, Human Education, Psychological Crisis, Schooling in Africa, Soka Studies.

INTRODUCTION

What needs to be done to transform the state of education in Africa? Shocking statistics illustrate the learning crisis plaguing education systems across the continent: for instance, three quarters of grade 3 students in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda found it difficult to understand the sentence "The name of the dog is Puppy" even when they read it in their local language (Sow, 2017; World Development Report, 2018). African schools also have to contend with a resource crisis. Many schools lack classrooms, textbooks, and other essential teaching and learning materials (Addy, 2013).

While much of international attention focuses on this learning and resources crisis, there is a serious, unquantifiable crisis affecting education in Africa. It is a cultural and psychological crisis, characterized by a deep disrespect for the dignity of life. Upholding the dignity of life means understanding that all living beings are inherently worthy. To illustrate, many research studies have documented that despite the expansion of tuition-free education, a significant number of parents across the continent are less enthused about enrolling their children in schools or freeing up their children's time for their studies (Johnson, 2013; Oyeniran, 2017; Pansiri & Bulawa, 2013). Teachers and school administrators are often late or absent from school; others sexually abuse students, mock students in front of their peers, or create a hostile school atmosphere, which inhibits teaching and learning; further, many teachers simply show no interest in teaching (Adhami, Chenelle, Freeman, & Gulino, 2018; Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Heto, Odari, & Sunu, 2020; Moletsane, Juan, Prinsloo, & Reddy, 2015; Mulkeen & Chen, 2008). Similarly, some learners abuse and bully their teachers, refuse to go to school, or show little interest in learning (Gbollie & Keamu, 2017; Du Plessis, 2018, Heto et al., 2020; Woudstra, van Rensburg, Visser, & Jordaan, 2018). These problems point to a pervasive lack of respect for the dignity of life in schools. This is a recapitulation of the prejudiced attitude with which European colonizers initially designed formal education systems on the continent. Consequently, we think any genuine attempt to reform schooling needs to address the human issues at the root of the educational crisis on the continent.

We turn to African traditional education and *soka* approaches to education to understand how to transform Africa's schools into life-affirming and transformational institutions. The first section introduces the history of education in Africa to explain the roots of the current education crisis. The second section reviews the literature on African traditional education and *soka* approaches to education and illustrates their convergences. The third examines the potential applications of both philosophies to schooling in

Africa. The last section discusses how the implementation of human education can engender an African renaissance. We conclude with recommendations for future research in this field.

HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA

This section reviews the history of education in Africa with a focus on the purpose that drove each educational approach. Although we recognize the diversity of the continent and range of objectives that each educational approach sought to achieve, we highlight cross-cutting trends to illustrate the dominant aims shaping each time period. While many early European explorers presumed that Africans had no prior form of education, the history of education in Africa predates Europeans. We call these indigenous educational approaches African traditional education. Before the Europeans' arrival and colonization, Africans had their own system of transferring knowledge from one generation to another (Boateng, 1983). They helped children acquire a variety of skills, including farming, carpentry, hunting, drumming, singing, dancing, public speaking, and the like (Omolewa, 2007). Beyond technical skills, the focus was on the holistic development of each child into a capable citizen in the community (Fafunwa, 1974). In other words, the community strove to raise each child into an excellent human being with virtues such as humility, generosity, and bravery (Omolewa, 2007). We introduce the general characteristics of African traditional education in greater detail later on in this paper.

Subsequently, various foreign forms of education became influential on the continent: the two primary ones were Islamic and Christian. Boahen (1966) credits Mansa Musa, the ruler of the Mali Empire from 1307 to 1337, for being the first person to promote a foreign religious education on a large scale in sub-Saharan Africa; he brought scholars from his trip to Mecca to teach Islam, sent students to Morocco for studies, and provided resources to advance the learning of *fiqh* (religious law). Musa transformed several villages – prominent among them, Timbuktu – into urban learning centers that attracted scholars throughout the Muslim world (Boahen, 1966). After the Morrocan invasion of 1591, scholars from Timbuktu and other learning centers scattered throughout the Sahara, thus, providing opportunities to rural pastoralists to learn about Islam (Hill, 2009). The purpose of education at this time was two-fold: to teach a selected few to attain the status of *ulama*, or scholars, and to assist many people to gain basic literacy skills (Singleton, 2004).

Aside from Islamic schools, Christian missionaries also built schools when the Europeans arrived on the continent. European missionaries tried to

convert Africans to Christianity, but by the mid-eighteenth century, their efforts were not producing the desired results, especially in West Africa (Boahen, 1966). According to Boahen (1966), the lack of success was due to two factors - one, the commercial activities of the missionaries were given priority over their missionary work, and two, there was a high rate of mortality among the missionaries. The missionaries addressed these issues by having African converts help them.

The missionaries provided the converts with formal education - a Western-style education with a predetermined weekly schedule and prescribed curricular activities in a classroom setting. The focus of formal education was the acquisition of reading and writing abilities, instead of technical and vocational skills. The Europeans trained the Africans to be good Christians, but the ultimate goal of Christian education in Africa was to train many indigenous converts, who would help spread and sustain the Christian message (Frankema, 2012). The number of trained converts who helped the missionaries carry out their missionary work provides a clue into the strategic role education played in advancing Christianity in Africa. For example, seven out of eight official staff members in the Protestant missions on the continent between 1903 and 1925 were African (Beach & Fahs, 1925). While the missionaries obtained the initial funds for mission schools from larger missionary societies in their homeland countries, they depended on the contributions of African converts and colonial government to meet subsequent funding needs (Beach & Fahs, 1925). In essence, the success of the missionary activities did not depend on the passive acceptance of Western culture and religious values by the Africans; rather, it was in large part due to the active role the indigenous people played in promoting Western culture and values.

The missionaries succeeded in convincing the Africans to uphold the European way of life, religion, and government through religious indoctrination and making the life of converts appealing to non-converts. Europeans disdained the African way of life and taught the converts to renounce them (Boahen, 1966). Many converts complied because association with the Europeans brought certain privileges. As custodians of the Afro-European culture, the converts' lifestyle became the standard for society. Africans needed to acquire Western education and adopt an Afro-European way of life in order to gain prestige, financial security, and respect in the new world (Frankema, 2012). Boahen (1966) asserts that the legacy of formal education is a new kind of African identity: "educated; Christian; having European taste in clothing, food, drink, and music; exposed, through reading, to ideas and influence from abroad but still maintaining his African roots, and

shouldering his responsibilities to his extended family and his traditional authority" (p. 122). In other words, the new elite were a fusion of African and European, but through their education, they were trained to view many aspects of life from a Western viewpoint. This opened opportunities for the Westernized elite to participate in the colonial power structures, while most of those without formal schooling were shut out.

The colonial education system built upon the legacy of the missionary schools to achieve the objective of the colonizing powers: grooming Africans to serve the needs of colonial administrations. The colonial schooling system was unequal and dehumanized the Africans. It was a dual track system. The Africans attended less resourced, crowded schools while Whites attended the well-resourced schools (McKeever, 2017). There was also an urban-rural gap because the schools for Africans in urban areas had more resources and performed better than those in rural communities (Thomas, 2002). In Francophone Africa, many individuals criticized native schools for focusing exclusively on academic training to the detriment of practical training (Gamble, 2009). The pervasive attitude of teachers and school administrators at this time was that not all students were educatable, so they made education selective and elitist by using different tactics to encourage students who were struggling in their studies to dropout (Feldmann, 2016). The caregivers, teaching and non-teaching staffs, often yelled at, insulted, scolded, and degraded students, especially those they considered uneducable (Cağrı, 2011). The larger ramification of these practices was an education system that stripped students of their self-esteem and ruined their psychological wellbeing.

In light of these pervasive issues within the colonial schooling system, immediately after independence, governments in post-colonial Africa reformed their education systems to attempt to resolve the problems with the colonial and missionary education systems. They sought to remake the education system to offer children the skills and knowledge they needed to participate in the economic life of their states and imbibe in them the social values they needed to actively participate in the communal life of their nation-states (Ojiambo, 2018). The main goal of post-colonial education was to help learners develop their African Personality, or pride in their Africanness (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru & Makuvaza, 2017). Educationists advocated for schools to teach the post-colonial African students about their Africanness and develop attitudes congruent with the reality and struggle of their people (Nkrumah, 1970).

These reforms did not produce the desired effects, however. While the post-colonial education system succeeded in raising the consciousness of

learners, it was unable to exorcise the legacy of the missionary and colonial education system. When one reads Julius Nyerere's (1968) "Education for Self-Reliance" today without the title and author's name, it can easily be mistaken for a contemporary text, since all of the problems outlined in the book about four decades ago continue to plague education systems on the continent. One possible reason for the lack of significant progress is that the reforms were just modifications to the system that the post-colonial elites inherited rather than a fundamental shift in the entire system. While debates on the language of instruction and discussions on the need for decolonizing education continues, they very rarely translate into significant changes to the schooling systems left by former colonizers.

The next major shift in post-colonial Africa was through the influence of global education movements led by international institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank. The United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched the "Education for All" movement in 2000, and the United Nations designated achieving universal primary education a millennium development goal. As a result, the total primary school enrollment rate in sub-Saharan Africa increased 42 percent from 1996 to 2002 (UNESCO, 2009). Consequently, gross secondary school enrollment rates doubled from 26 percent in 2000 to 43 percent in 2017 (World Bank, 2017). With the focus being on expanding access to education, quality suffered. Schools were built without adequate personnel to support them, or schools were built so poorly that they eventually collapsed on top of students (Asumadu, 2019; BBC News, 2019). Even when teachers were hired, delays in salaries provoked massive demonstrations that created disruptions in schools across the continent. While it expands the goal of access to include universal secondary and early childhood education, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals have placed a greater emphasis on quality of education, which includes gender equity, quality teachers, and global citizenship curricula (United Nations, 2019).

As a reflection of the impact of global education and economic policies, the rhetoric employed by modern African governments suggests that the underlying framework driving education policy is one that instrumentalizes education for the purpose of economic growth. Under this framework, education is a tool for human capital development by giving young people the skills and knowledge necessary for success in their careers. The expansion of education is presumed to lead to the development of the country as school graduates contribute to the economy. At the same time, many graduates are unable to find employment because there is a mismatch between what they learn at the university and what society needs. Dominant

concerns raised about education include the lack of teaching practical, career-relevant skills and the absence of opportunities for students in STEM (Cunningham, 2006).

Overall, the shifts in the purpose of education in the African setting throughout the different movements can be summarized in the table below. This is not to say that each approach did not aim to produce other outcomes; instead, we attempt to distill all factors into one underlying purpose that guided the implementation of each approach to highlight important trends.

Table 1: Dominant Purpose of Educational Approaches in Africa

Educational Approach	Dominant purpose
African traditional	Cultivating humanity, raising contributive citizens
Missionary	Civilizing and Westernizing
Colonial	Training to serve colonial administration
Post-colonial	Reclaiming Africanness and promoting national development
International	Ensuring access and creating economic growth

The consistent theme across the different formal educational epoch on the continent has been that the people in positions of power and authority used education to produce individuals who can serve the needs of society, whether it was religion, the state, or the economy. Under this framework, educating students was a means to a greater end, rather than the end in themselves. In sum, education has not centered on the happiness and development of children. Throughout these periods, informal or African traditional education has persisted to varying extents although it has been mostly overshadowed by formal schooling in the modern context. Indigenous pedagogies continue to fade as the dominant actors in raising children have shifted increasingly from the family and community to schools. We argue, however, that returning to the philosophy and purpose of African traditional education is necessary in challenging the continuously instrumentalized state of education in Africa and reviving the human-centered aspects that are often missing in the current schooling systems. The next section introduces another human-centered pedagogy called the *soka* approach before going on to compare both educational approaches and to explore their relevance to the modern African context.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE *SOKA* APPROACH TO EDUCATION

The *soka*, or value-creating, approach to education is a humanistic educational philosophy that considers the lifelong happiness of students as the primary goal of education. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, a 20th-century Japanese educator, developed the philosophy through action-based research. In 1930, Makiguchi published a book called *Soka Kyoiku Taikei* (The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy) in which he explained his theory of education. Makiguchi argues that education exists to nurture in students the ability to live happy lives – happiness, in this context, means bringing out one's potential to live meaningfully and to make a positive impact on others; in other words, happiness implies creating value with one's life. Makiguchi defines "true education" as an unending process that involves "awakening in the student a method for acquiring knowledge through his or her own powers, [and] providing the student with the key to unlock the storehouse of knowledge" (Makiguchi 1980, p. 68; Ikeda, Saito, Endo, & Suda, 2009, p. 117). Education by this definition is a process of helping students engage in self-discovery by providing them with the tools they need to move from unconscious living to being conscious participants in the affairs of society. Josei Toda, the disciple of Makiguchi, coined the term "human revolution" to describe the process elaborated in Makiguchi's theory. Redefining lifelong learning and growth as human revolution enabled Toda to broaden the relevance of Makiguchi's ideas beyond professional educators.

Daisaku Ikeda, Toda's disciple, expanded on his mentor's efforts to make Makiguchi's theory accessible to all people through his writings and speeches and built education institutions to actualize the ideals of the *soka* approach to education. Ikeda has founded Soka schools based on the pedagogy of Makiguchi and Toda from pre-primary to university level that span 7 countries – specifically Japan, US, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, and Brazil (Soka Gakkai, 2020). The schools seek to raise global citizens, who will make contributions to the wellbeing of humanity. Rather than focusing on test scores, the *soka* framework encourages teachers to cultivate human relationships with their students and to continually reflect upon themselves to improve their teaching (Inukai, 2018). It is important to note that many educators, who are inspired by Ikeda' vision, also implement *soka* approaches to education in their own classrooms even though they may not be at the Soka schools.

In the next section, we will engage in a comparison of the underlying philosophy of African traditional education and Soka approaches to education

to illustrate how they converge in their shared understanding of human education.

HUMAN EDUCATION THROUGH TWO LENSES

African traditional education and *soka* approaches to education share three common aspects. First, both start from the premise that although people are born biologically as human, it is only through education that they become fully human (Tedla, 1992). Education exposes learners to the world and helps them develop the wisdom to intentionally choose acceptable behaviors over unacceptable ones. African traditional education allows learners to gain the experiences and acquire the skills, virtues, and knowledge necessary to manifesting human qualities in all aspects of life (Tedla, 1992). One becomes fully human, in the context of African traditional education, by manifesting the virtues that the community deem as essential in one's daily life (Okrah, 2003). In most societies, these virtues include care and concern for others, generosity, courage, and wisdom. There is an implicit expectation that a well-groomed person would consistently manifest these virtues for the rest of their lives. The Eʋe people, spread across West Africa, use the phrase "*amenyenye gborbor eno zi deme*" (Eʋe: the spirit of becoming human has settled in him/her) to describe someone who has become truly human. The word "*amenyenye*" translates into "becoming human" instead of "to become human" because humanity is not an irreversible state that one attains. Becoming human is a continuous process of growth and a lifelong journey. The belief is that the spirit of humanness can be unsettled, and it needs continuous nurturing for it to remain stable within.

Along the same lines, Ikeda recognizes that it is possible that some people may not fully manifest their humanity because they fail to fully engage themselves in what makes humans different from other living beings. The Buddhist concept of the five components is key in Ikeda's understanding of human education. According to Ikeda,

> [b]oth the sentient and insentient are made up of the temporary combination of what are called the five components of life – form, perception, conception, volition, and consciousness... In addition to forms, animals are endowed with perception, conception and will. Plants, too, are now thought to have perception, that is, sensitivity and emotion. It is only with the advent of humanity that the fifth component – consciousness – emerged. The autonomy or identity of humankind is firmly rooted in this function of discernment (Ikeda, Simard, & Bourgeault, 2003, p. 160).

In the quote above, Ikeda explains that both human and non-human animals possess the first four components of life. All living beings learn, build complex social organizations, react and adapt to their environment (Ikeda et al., 2003). Scientific studies are increasingly showing that animals and plants acquire, memorize, and recall information (Gagliano, 2017; Trewavas, 2014). More so, we now know that non-human living beings use what they learn to modify their behavior and adapt to their changing environment (Gagliano, Renton, Depczynski, & Mancuso, 2014). In essence, education as learning is not unique to humans.

This also aligns with African epistemology when it comes to conceptualizing the relationship between humans and non-human living beings. The general belief is that plants, animals, and the environment are an interconnected continuum of human beings, and the life force or spirit in these things have the ability to learn and grow (Ikuenobe, 2014). It is for this reason that Africans seek to learn from the actions or characteristics of non-human living beings and inanimate objects. In constructing proverbs, Africans use animals, inanimate objects, and plants as symbols to provide a representation of humans and abstract ideas (Dzobo, 2006). This is also the reason why African traditional education is not compartmentalized into different subjects; rather, all subjects are integrated together in a multidisciplinary approach that recognizes that interdependence of all fields (Omolewa, 2007).

What sets someone fully human apart from all other living beings is the fifth component: consciousness. Educating children to understand and harness the power of the fifth component is vital because that is "where 'humanity' begins" (Ikeda et al., 2003, p. 175). An individual becomes truly human when they develop the capacity to give full play to all five components in their life and can harness their combined powers to enhance their lives and that of others. Learning about the fifth component of life enables people to "define the position of the self in relation to the eternal universe," which is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for becoming human (Ikeda et al., 2003, p. 165). Put differently, all human beings possess the qualities of good or evil; thus, the tendency that each person manifests in their daily interactions depends on how they strengthen their inner mindset and nurture their character.

Second, both philosophies are based on an appreciation for the interconnectedness of all life and the oneness of self and the environment. *Soka* approaches focus on enabling students to appreciate the interconnectedness among all humanity and the environment rather than regurgitated segmented facts (as cited in Ikeda, 2012). According to Ikeda (2010), an education that fosters humanity helps learners develop the capacity

to understand the true nature of all things and to find meaning in order to enhance their life and contribute to the well-being of others. An educated human being, Toynbee and Ikeda (2009) suggest, is an individual who has been able to "cultivate the penetrating insight that discerns the pulsating energy of life and all aspects of the universe; to employ them in oneself; and, using this reactivated vital force, to perceive the realities of life, society, and the universe" (p. 77). Put differently, people who obtain education ought to develop the ability to understand life and the world around them, so that they can participate in it meaningfully. People who have the ability to discern the interconnectedness of all life and activate a vital life force tend to live happy and harmonious lives because their way of life promotes joy and peace wherever they are.

Soka approaches to education identify lifelong happiness as the purpose of education. Lifelong happiness means living a life in which one is able to create value out of every situation – in other words, it means bringing out the human potential of creativity, which also resonates with the concept of becoming fully human. According to Makiguchi, value, from a *soka* perspective, has three components - beauty, gain, and good (Bethel, 1994). Beauty is something that is emotionally satisfying and evokes a pleasurable sensory response. Gain means acquiring the material and non-material things that contribute to the maintenance and development of one's life, and good refers to the conscious actions, word, or thoughts that one can use to benefit society. Creation means increasing the usefulness of a natural order to human life by transforming the ordinary order of nature into a special one through human activity.

Makiguchi is advocating for societies to educate learners to become people who can live lives dedicated to creating value that is favorable to the improvement of human existence. He believed that "the aim of education is to develop character in both the self and others that can contribute to the mutual benefit and welfare of the individual and the whole" (Garrison, Hickman, & Ikeda, 2014, p. 45 – 46). Ikeda (2004) explains that cultivating one's humanity benefits society: "A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation, and, further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind" (p. viii). Ikeda, in the quote, is expressing his conviction that the cultivation of one's humanity, human revolution, has the power to transform societies. This stands in contrast with other educational approaches that place the greatest emphasis on the intended wider impact of education on society, rather than on the happiness and cultivation of humanity of each student.

Similarly, Africans teach their children to see their environment and others as an extension of themselves (Ikuenobe, 2014). Tutu (1999), in explaining the African philosophy of Ubuntu, notes that "I am human because I belong, I participate, and I share" (p. 34). Ubuntu expresses the idea that no one exists in a vacuum, and the development of each person's humanity is crucial in and inseparable from the transformation of the entire community. The philosophy conscientizes Africans to realize that their very existence and humanity is a derivative of others – it is only by recognizing and contributing to the upliftment of others that people can also experience true joy; this is because all people and things are interconnected (Tutu, 1999). Put simply, cultivating one's humanity and using it to contribute to the continuous improvement of oneself and others leads to true happiness.

Finally, the essential way to educate human beings effectively is through relationships with other human beings, who model the ideals of humanity. For both *soka* approaches and African traditional education, the student-teacher relationship is vital. In African traditional education, all community members participated in raising each child. Much of the learning happened through informal interactions, where the child observed what an elder did and then imitated the action themselves (Okrah, 2003). Children also became apprentices to specialists in various fields to learn about their techniques before eventually starting their own independent practice. The student and teacher share a mutual respect for each other and have a direct passion for the activity, and much of the learning is student-led based upon students' interests and creativity (Omolewa, 2007).

In a like manner, Makiguchi advocated for a shift from a teacher-centered to a student-centered education. Rather than just transmitting knowledge, *soka* educators serve as facilitators of learning and mentor their students in building the skills needed for value-creation and self-led discovery (as cited in Gebert, 2012). Ikeda has also written extensively on the role of the mentor-and-disciple relationship in empowering people to bring out their full potential. Learning from a role model enables the disciple, or student, to activate their own unique latent abilities because the mentor is able to demonstrate what the student is striving to accomplish. Furthermore, the mentor cares for the disciple and strives to foster the disciple to surpass his/her abilities. These relationships are crucial in a human education and cannot be replicated through a textbook. All in all, our understanding of both *soka* approaches and African traditional education leads us to the conclusion that education for lifelong happiness is the same as educating individuals to become fully human because it requires that learners develop the human virtues required to create a life of happiness.

To put our discussion so far in some context, we outlined the history of education on the continent in the first section and concluded that existing formal education systems on the continent continue to be influenced by Western philosophies of education despite several attempts to reform them. After that, we discussed the purpose of African traditional education and *soka* approaches to education and elaborate on the shared underlying concepts of both philosophies. Explaining both philosophies shows why these two philosophies ascribe a different purpose to education than the Western approaches to education prevalent in Africa.

Before comparing Western philosophy to indigenous and Soka philosophies, we would like to make an important distinction. While the idea of human education and humanistic education also emerged within Western frameworks, the kind of Western education imposed on Africa was not human-centered because the Europeans did not regard Africans as equally human. When any system of thought, no matter how empowering, is forced upon a subjugated people, dehumanization is inherent in that system.

Western philosophy is no stranger to humanism: The ideals of cultivating humanity and developing one's virtues as a human being date all the way back to Aristotle. However, Europeans introduced their own style of education across the continent based on racist assumptions of African inferiority and backwardness. As the famous poem, "The White Man's Burden," by Kipling (1899) illustrates, Europeans viewed Africans as "Half devil and half child." European colonizers claimed that they were doing benevolent work by civilizing the savages and making them more human, or European, when in reality, they imposed educational systems that belittled the colonized people's humanity. In essence, they were trying to fit Africans into their own standard of what it meant to be human rather than enabling Africans' inherent potential to flourish in unique and different ways.

Furthermore, unlike African traditional education and *soka* approaches, some of the Western education philosophies adopted a different conception of human nature altogether. Some dominant Western philosophies of education started from the premise that children are inherently good or innocent, which eliminated the need for educators to help students cultivate their humanity (Hennum, 2014; Skolnick, 1975). African traditional education and *soka* approaches to education look at this issue from a different perspective. Children do not start out as good people, who become evil as a result of the corrupting influence of society; instead, all people are endowed with the potential for good or evil. It is through education that people come to choose their moral commitments or manifest their innate potential for good or evil. People do not become permanently good or evil; they demonstrate

their moral commitment to living good or evil lives through each decision they make continuously. From this perspective, the acquisition of employable skills is as important as the wisdom to put that skill and knowledge to a value-creating use. In the next section, we will discuss possible ways in which educational reformers may be able to employ insights from African traditional education and *soka* approaches to improve the state of education in their country.

APPLICATIONS

This section presents the unique contributions of African traditional education and Soka approach to education and how they can improve the state of education in Africa, where formal Western style schooling continues to dominate the landscape. We can apply the shared principles of both educational philosophies to modern African schooling in the following ways: fostering humanizing student-teacher relationships, teaching the interconnectedness of all life, and making education's purpose to raise humans. To clarify the purpose of this section, we argue that exploring the wisdom that exists in African traditional education and informed by *soka* philosophy will generate new ideas that can improve the current educational context. This proposal should not be construed as a call for a pure return to traditional education practices or to introduce *soka* approaches without consideration for the local context. We also do not prescribe specific policies because it is better suited for local educators to adapt these concepts to their own context.

First, schools should be a place of enriching, humanizing student-teacher relationships. While some aspects of African traditional education had structures, such as the initiation rites, much of African traditional education consisted of many spontaneous, unstructured interactions between the child and members of the community (Shizha, 2014). It was through these informal interactions that what Ikeda (2006) calls "life-to-life exchanges" occur. For instance, a child could sit with an elder at the fireside and learn about the trials he overcame when he was young and the history of the clan, or while preparing a meal together with their mother, children could learn the medicinal benefits of certain herbs and where to find them. While the interaction between children and elders in traditional African society could serve as a good model for transforming modern societies, the hierarchical relationship between the elder or teacher and child or student influenced these interactions, which often prevented children from being able to freely question the authority of their elders (Murphy, 1980).

To further humanize these informal interactions, we suggest adding the *soka* concept of the oneness of teacher and student. Ikeda (2015) outlines

the mentor and disciple relationship as the oneness of mentor and disciple based upon a shared struggle. The relationship between mentor and disciple is not a hierarchical one where the mentor is superior to the disciple; it is an egalitarian relationship, and at times, the roles can be reversed. One who was the mentor before could become the disciple at another point, and vice versa. The oneness of teacher and student illustrates interdependency. One cannot exist without the other. Therefore, this relationship is based on mutual appreciation. Applying this oneness to the informal mentoring interactions in African traditional education humanizes the teaching process by transforming teachers and students into partners for learning. What does this look like practically for modern schooling? This could mean incorporating periods for unstructured interactions among students and teachers, such as sharing meals together or engaging in sports activities together. Teachers and students can jointly create and implement a curriculum for studying a topic in greater depth. Schools can also create more inclusive spaces, where these informal interactions are likely to happen, such as open outdoor study areas.

Second, learners should learn the interconnected nature of all life through holistic, multidisciplinary approaches. Rather than remaining within the boundaries of each subject, schools inspired by African indigenous philosophies can promote multidisciplinary learning that explores the intersections between different subjects and use different modes of thought to inform students' understanding of topics (Sefa Dei, 2020). For instance, students can apply the principles of mathematics in analyzing patterns in music, and they could also develop a deeper appreciation of literature by studying the historical context that influenced the author's writing. This approach enables students to recognize the interdependency of all life and to develop empathy for all living beings. This can mean allowing students to study multiple subjects rather than requiring them to study the same courses throughout primary school or the same elective courses for the entirety of senior high school, which is the case in many African education systems (See Heto, Odari, and Sunu in this volume for examples). Modern schooling can learn from African traditional education's approach of providing a broad-based education not limited to just one sphere of society. Learners can appreciate the currently neglected subjects of art, literature, and sports and become people who can innovate with an integrated perspective across different fields.

Third, societies should reimagine schools to focus on educating children to embrace the path of becoming fully human. When we reimagine schools with an awareness of the inherent dignity of all lives and the entire world as one community, our schools would naturally come to foster human

beings who, despite being firmly rooted in their locality, would contribute to the happiness, peace, and prosperity of people, far and near. Realigning schooling with this purpose requires reexamining every aspect of education, including its structure, curriculum, delivery, and evaluation and reforming them to uphold the dignity of life. This purpose should permeate all stakeholders at campus, including students, lecturers, and staff. At SUJ's dedication day, Ikeda shared the following remarks that are now displayed on the university's campus as a constant reminder to students: "For what purpose should one cultivate wisdom? May you always ask yourselves this question!" (Ikeda, 2006). In the same way, educators can continually challenge students to reflect upon the purpose of their education and to think about how to use the privilege of receiving an education for the benefit of others. Teachers can also constantly reflect on whether their teaching is empowering students to become good human beings and whether the teachers themselves are serving as model citizens through their behavior and attitudes (Inukai, 2018). In the same way that African traditional education functioned to meet the needs of the wider community, modern schooling can be reformed to meet the needs of humankind through raising capable people with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviors necessary to building a more peaceful and sustainable future (UNESCO, 2015).

AN AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

As a philosophy and pedagogy, African traditional education is highly relevant in its potential application to modern schooling in Africa and the world in the same way that *soka* approaches strive to pave the way for a people-centered education for the happiness of humanity. The application of African traditional education and *soka* approaches to modern schooling will engender an African renaissance of liberation and empowerment.

Re-aligning education to the purpose of educating humans will create a shift from a dependency mindset to an agency mindset because such an education will encourage students to constantly think about their role in making a positive contribution to the world. The dependency mindset arises from the inferiority complex that was created as a result of colonization and colonial education (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1994). As people were encouraged to discard indigenous traditions and adopt the Western way of life, they turned outward for knowledge and help. This promoted a dependency mindset since Africans needed to essentially borrow from the Europeans to transform their society to fit the Western way of life. This dependency mindset has been elaborated upon by African thinkers across the continent (Mhango, 2017; Moyo, 2009). Let us take the realm of education for example. If Africans

wanted to ensure that their children would obtain formal education, they would need training on teaching in the Western way and resources, such as classrooms and textbooks, which school authorities design to look and feel Western. To obtain all of the necessary components, they would most likely need to turn to aid from Western countries. In this system, schools are labeled as incompetent or resource-poor when they are lacking in these areas, and schools also blame their failures on their lack of resources. This deficit-based mindset paralyzes the situation rather than promoting innovative ways to resolve challenges.

On the other hand, applying African and *soka* philosophies engenders a sense of agency. This is because these educational philosophies require the active participation of both the learner and the teacher in transforming themselves and their realities. It does not necessitate certain resources or a style of teaching, but it depends upon the inner determination of both parties to advance their own learning and development. Because of its highly participatory nature, African traditional education empowers families and community members to become active teachers in their children's education instead of standing on the sidelines and becoming marginalized from the process, and it empowers students to take ownership of their own learning rather than passively waiting for a teacher to feed them information (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003). Traditional societies perceived adults who refused to participate in teaching the youth as inimical to the community (Tiberondwa, 1978). Adapting this participatory aspect of African traditional education will help reverse the disempowerment of families and community members that has taken place as a result of the introduction of missionary and colonial education. African traditional education also preserves the cultural heritage of the community by transmitting traditions, history, and values from one generation to the next and builds pride and identity among leaders (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003). All of these aspects will create a tremendous shift towards an agency mindset, which would fundamentally transform African societies. Human beings are not simply the products of social systems and evolutionary determinants; they can transcend and transform the dictates of social systems and biological and environment determinants through their agentic actions (Bandura, 2006). The vital role of education is to help people cultivate agentic capabilities to enable them to participate actively in the drama and dance of their lives.

This shift towards an agency mindset will animate Africans to turn to indigenous knowledge for inspiration. This will in turn create a shift from colonially imposed structures to new approaches based on a revival of indigenous values, which will help Africans develop pride in their identity.

African traditional education will promote innovation by encouraging new ways of thinking that embrace the multidisciplinarity of the world. Students can grapple with contemporary issues in a holistic way that takes into consideration the effects of one's actions on all living beings. For instance, African indigenous knowledge has already been applied in Sub-Saharan Africa to develop innovative solutions to problems in diverse contexts - medicine, agriculture, science, and law (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). In another example, Isabirye (2009) found that the indigenous music education practices of the Busoga in Uganda were highly engaging, joy-filled, and community-centered, enabling children to develop their own sense of agency and passion to revive traditional music. After the master musicians taught them the steps for making a traditional horn, some of the children even developed alternative ways of creating the horn using other available materials and taught it to other students; this generated a wave of excitement among the children as they practiced making and playing the newly invented instrument. Human education goes beyond teaching children how to memorize knowledge and formulas that are pre-made by others; it helps them develop the latent potential within their life and the intrinsic motivation to explore and create new knowledge on their own accord.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we made a case for how African societies can harness both African traditional education and *soka* approaches in transforming modern schooling and promoting an African renaissance. In step one, we explored the history of education in Africa to dig deep into the roots of the current crisis. In step two, we explained *soka* approaches to education and its emphasis on value creation and human revolution to foster contributive citizens. In step three, we examined the underlying concepts of human education, human relationships, and interconnectedness that are central to both philosophies. We then explored possible ways that African educators can apply these pedagogies to improve schooling in Africa such as creating space for informal, unstructured interactions among students and faculty, encouraging learning through a multidisciplinary approach, and revamping education systems through a focus on the humanizing function of education. We finally discussed the larger implications of humanizing education reform. We explain that providing such a human education will empower African youth to develop pride in their own identity by moving away from deficit-based ways of thinking about the continent and rechanneling youthful energy into thinking about how young people can live contributive lives to enrich their communities and enhance the wellbeing of humanity.

Practically, implementing such an education shift requires further scholarship. Future research can analyze different aspects of both educational philosophies from a comparative perspective and explore case studies of educators in the African context implementing human education at various levels of schooling. Other avenues of research include collaborative efforts among experts of *soka* and African traditional education in developing curricula and pedagogy.

When the happiness and the humanity of each child is placed at the center of education, learning will generate the joy and confidence to equip each student to become a self-motivated, lifelong learner who can handle any challenge in life. We hope that research on both philosophies will facilitate rich discussions on the paradigm shifts needed in education to foster the abundant human potential of Africa.

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The Role of Value Creating Education and *Ubuntu* Philosophy in Fostering Humanism in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Soka (value creating) education is a Japanese concept propounded by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and further developed by Josei Toda and Daisaku Ikeda. This educational philosophy aims to foster individuals who can find meaning in their lives and contribute to the well-being of others to better society. Ubuntu, an African philosophy, espouses togetherness and collectivism. Like value creating education, Ubuntu promotes working for the good of all not solely the individual. Examining these two philosophies, this paper explored their role in promoting humanism. Focusing on the education system in Kenya, this paper investigated how the institutionalization of both philosophies can foster global citizens and realize a more humane Kenya. Furthermore, this paper illustrated the importance of educators as agents of change, aiding students to become global citizens who work towards building a more humanistic society. This paper concluded that integrating both value creating education and Ubuntu in the education system can serve as a tool to nurture individuals who will not only improve their quality of life but also contribute positively to promote a more just and prosperous world.

Keywords: humanism, Kenya, Makiguchi, Ikeda, value creating education, ubuntu philosophy

INTRODUCTION

According to the Population Reference Bureau (2019), 75 percent of the African population will be under 35 years old by 2030. A younger population presents a great opportunity to improve the situation in Africa. Many African countries, including Kenya, face countless challenges: poor leadership, corruption, poverty, climate change, and insecurity, which are

exacerbated by rapid development and modernization. Moreover, in place of the traditional African way of living together in harmony, a more egocentric and materialistic way of life is becoming the norm for many. The culture of togetherness, which promotes the "what can I do for my people" way of thinking, seems to have shifted to a culture that emphasizes "what can others do for me?" Consequently, most African societies have become, as the late Tanzanian President Mwalimu Julius Nyerere stated, a "man eat man" society; people are greedier, enriching themselves at the expense of others (Soyinka & Amin, 2016, p. 171). This way of life is contrary to the traditional African values of togetherness, compassion, and respect. The challenges of poor leadership and corruption have become major hindrances to the future of Kenya. Kenya can unlock its potential and prosper when the education system harnesses value-creating and Ubuntu philosophies to foster youth who are book smart and humane.

Within the education sector in Kenya, the egocentric societal ills of modern Kenya take the form of academic dishonesty, bullying, and the destruction of school property. Academic dishonesty is defined here as "cheating during tests, plagiarising, buying assignment papers, falsifying data, using dishonest excuses, getting others to take examinations, misusing resources, and manipulating academic staff" (Thomas and De Bruin, 2012, p. 14). In secondary schools, exam cheating is a serious and prevalent issue. According to the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC, 2020), they cancelled the result of 1,309 candidates who took the 2019 nationwide Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination because they cheated. The students caught cheating brought unauthorised notes to the examination center, used mobile phones to access information during the examination, and tried to have someone else take the examination for them (KNEC, 2020). The number of cheating cases was lower than 2018, when approximately 4,519 results were invalidated. The lower cases were in part due to the stringent measures KNEC and the Ministry of Education introduced to discourage cheating. Despite efforts to curb cheating, these malpractices continue to exist, proving to be a deeply rooted problem. The Cabinet Secretary and National Intelligence Service report that cheating not only involves candidates, but also parents, teachers and top examination officials of the KNEC (Wangui, 2020; Wanzala, 2018).

Examination malpratices are not limited to secondary schools. They infest institutions of higher learning as well. Siyat Shukri Ahmed's (2017) research to ascertain the methods used and the causes of examination cheating found high instances of cheating at the university level. Sampling 60 students from Umma University, a private university in Kenya, the study found that out of the 60 students he interviewed, 33 percent had cheated sometimes or rarely and 10 percent answered that they always cheat. Out of those who cheated, 26.8 percent used mobile phones and 40 percent relied

on written notes, while 10 percent adopted means of impersonification (Ahmed, 2017). In a study on examination malpractices at the Moi University's School of Engineering, a public Kenyan university, Starovoytova and Arimi (2017) found that 82 percent of the 95 students who responded to their questionnaire admitted cheating at some point during their academic life, while only 18 percent had nevercheated. The University of Nairobi (2020), a public Kenyan university, stipulates that those caught cheating in examinations and those who plagiarize or get others to write their dissertation papers and theses shall be expelled. Similarly, Kenyatta University (2018), also a public university, expels students who are found to have cheated on examinations. Despite cheating being widely condemned and strict punishment enforced in universities across the country, cases of examination cheating continue to prevail.

Similarly, the National Education Sector Strategic Plan for 2018 – 2022 notes that bullying is widespread in Kenyan schools (Ministry of Education, 2019). The report also asserts that Kenya has one of the highest rates of bullying incidents (Ministry of Education, 2019). The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines bullying as "any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths, who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated" (2019, para. 1). A study by the Ministry of Health, sponsored by the CDC and the World Health Organization, highlighted the extent of bullying in Kenyan secondary schools. The study surveyed 2,890 secondary school students between the ages of 13 and 15 and found that 57 percent of them were bullied on one or more days in a month (WHO, 2018). The study also showed that 2.1 percent (approximately 60 students) were bullied every day of the month (WHO, 2018). In this study, bullying took the form of being kicked, locked indoors and/or being made fun of because of their religion, race, color, or looks (WHO, 2018).

The disrespect for others has also extended to the disrespect for property. In Kenya, there has been an alarming number of unrest in schools. During these unrests, arson and property destruction occur. The National Crime Research Centre (NCRC), found that protesters burned over 130 schools, mostly public secondary schools, between May and August (during the second school term) of 2016 (NCRC, 2017). Top reasons for the unrest, included strict school rules, fear of exams, peer pressure, and strained teacher student relationships (NCRC, 2017).

Academic malpractice, bullying, and public property destruction are but a few examples of the destructive behaviours among youth in the Kenyan society. As these issues perpetuate, so does the inability to foster young Kenyan leaders who possess the power to become changemakers and create an altruistic society. How then can we nurture a society that respects

humanity? This paper first examines value-creating education and the *Ubuntu* philosophy to provide a better understanding of these concepts. The paper then discusses the institutionalization of value-creating education and the *Ubuntu* philosophy in the Kenyan educational curriculum to foster students with strong core humanistic values. This paper will also analyze the integration of these two philosophies into teacher training programs to redefine their role as agents of change.

VALUE CREATING EDUCATION

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi propounded the value creating education theory in the 1930s amid increasing militarism in Japan (Bethal, 1984). Makiguchi, a teacher, principal, and a Buddhist leader, opposed the nationalist education, which focused on indoctrinating children to support Japan's military state (Garrison et al, 2014). Toshiko Takagi's (1986) children book, titled *The Glass Rabbit*, illustrates the education system during the war. She states that they, the children, "were taught to make sacrifices by thinking of the soldiers at the [war] front" (Takagi, 1986, p. 11) and that "everyone just had to nod and accept things as they were" (Takagi, 1986, p. 13). Makiguchi rejected this ideology that brainwashed children towards nationalism that affirmed war and led many to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their nation. He was against education that solely exists for the sake of the nation. Makiguchi believed that a nation was made up of people, and thus, a nation's prosperity, enrichment, and health depended on whether the people were living happy and fulfilled lives (Makiguchi, 1993). Without focusing on the students' needs, education would not serve its intended purpose.

Makiguchi also rejected the hierarchical structure of the education system and the learning structure where children were crammed with information, making them feel uninterested with the subjects taught (Makiguchi, 1993). He proclaimed that happiness was the ultimate goal of human life, and that education should be the means by which to "acquire competence as creators of value and thereby find happiness in the process" (Bethel, 1984, p. 57). Makiguchi stressed that of prime importance was fostering children who can live happy lives as members of society. Influenced by his Buddhist faith and the idea of interconnectedness of all beings and the responsibility of each individual to respect every being on earth, Makiguchi envisioned education as the tool to nurture individuals who accept responsibility not only for their lives, but also for their society (Sharma, 2008, p. 55). In an effort to promote value creating education, Makiguchi, with Josei Toda, his mentee, published the first volume of his book *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*. This book was developed based on Makiguchi's 32-years experience as an educator and his hope for an education system that enabled children to live fulfilling lives (Kumagai,

2000, p. 35). Makiguchi believed that happiness was founded on the pursuit of value; beauty, benefit, and good. Expounding on this idea, Ikeda explains that:

> Through one's interactions with one's environment, people can bring ever more beauty, comfort, and justice into the world. The creation of value is, Makiguchi asserted, the outcome of one's active engagement with others. Any situation or circumstance presents both challenges and possibilities. The actualization of positive possibilities—including those that may be far from apparent—is the essence of value creation (cited in Sherman, 2016, p. 5).

Creating value translates to caring for others and working to have a just and inclusive society.

After Makiguchi's death in 1944, as a result of being imprisoned by the militarist government for his pacifist ideology, Toda continued his mentor's work to actualize value creating educational philosophy. Toda, who lived through the World War II, believed that respect for humanity would be realized if education fostered people with a "profound respect for [the] sanctity of life" (Ikeda, 2010, p. 110). Toda's mentee, Ikeda, further concretized the concept of value creating education as a means to cultivate human character that enables each student to live a more fulfilling and happier life. Ikeda (2010) explains the concept of value creation more simply as "the capacity to find meaning, to enhance one's own existence, and to contribute to the well-being of others" (p. 112). Thus, Ikeda stresses the importance of value creating education to foster global citizens who undertake the task of building a humane society. For Ikeda, global citizens carry three important traits: "the wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life; the courage not to fear or deny difference but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures and to grow from encounters with them; and the compassion to maintain an empathy that extends beyond one's immediate surroundings to those suffering in distance places" (2010, p. 112-113).

UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY

Similar to the principles of the value creating education philosophy, *Ubuntu* philosophy centers on humanity and human values. According to the *New World Encyclopedia* (2020), *Ubuntu* originates from the Bantu languages of Zulu and Xhosa, and can be translated to "humanity towards others, humanness, or being human." Christian Gade (2011) finds that the term *Ubuntu* has been used since the 1850s and can be defined as "humanity, humanness, human kindness" (pp.307-308). Fainos Mangena (2016) in *Hunhu/Ubuntu in the Traditional Thought of Southern Africa*, states that the term *Ubuntu* is expressed in the Nguni/Ndebele phrase "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu," meaning "a person is a person through other persons." Likewise, in the Bantu language of Swahili language, "utu" means humanness and

holds the idea that every action should be done for the benefit of the whole community. Jordan. K. Ngubane (as cited in Gade, 2011) in An African Explains Apartheidwrites:

> Supreme virtue lay in being humane, in accepting the human being as a part of yourself, with a right to be denied nothing that you possessed. It was inhuman to drive the hungry stranger from your door, for your neighbor's sorrow was yours. This code constituted a philosophy of life, and the great Sutu-nguni family (Bantu has political connotations that the Africans resent) called it, significantly, *ubuntu* or *botho* – pronounced *butu* – the practice of being humane (p. 309).

The above definitions highlight *Ubuntu*'s celebration of humanity and its lessons on the need to care for and respect each other. *Ubuntu* acknowledges that we are all connected and that what we do consciously or unconsciously impacts others.

Although *Ubuntu* as a term has appeared in various African sources from as early as the 19th century, it was Nelson Mandela who championed the spirit of *Ubuntu* during the transition from apartheid to democracy. During a 2006 interview, Mandela shared his understanding of *Ubuntu* by narrating the story of a traveler who, whenever he passed by a village, was offered food and water even without asking. For Mandela, the spirit of caring for the welfare of each other and the community at large is the spirit of *Ubuntu*. Mandela's story teaches us how the life of the other is as important as our own. "*Ubuntu*," therefore, is a relationship in which each person understands the other's pain, tries to care for them, and wants to contribute to their happiness.

In his book *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Desmond Tutu (1999) writes:

> 'A person is a person through other persons.' It is not, 'I think therefore I am.' 'I am human because I belong. I participate, I share.' A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are… Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the summum bonum—the greatest good. Anything that subverts, that undermines this sought-after good, is to be avoided like the plague (p. 29).

Tutu stresses that *Ubuntu* is about compassion and harmony, and it encompasses doing good for the world. *Ubuntu* is challenging ourselves to not only recognize and appreciate our similarities, but also welcome and respect our differences.

Michael Onyebuchi Eze highlights that the acknowledgement of the "other's" uniqueness and differences shows our humanity, which requires us to view the 'other' as a "mirror for [our] subjectivity" (cited in Mohamed Diarra, 2018, p.121). Understanding each other is important for humans to peacefully exist. Without social harmony, destructive and divisive disharmony thrives, separating people from people and people from nature (Tutu, 1999). Therefore, the appreciation of social harmony, interconnectedness, compassion, and respect for others are *Ubuntu* values that enable communities to thrive. These same values are also reflected in value creating educational philosophy. Education is a powerful medium in which we can nurture, translate, and transfer, these values to our current and future young leaders.

THE ROLE OF VALUE CREATING EDUCATION AND UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION

If we want to work towards achieving a peaceful and inclusive society, value creating education and *Ubuntu* are important philosophies that we must not only understand theoretically but put into practice. These two philosophies encompass three pivotal elements to promoting humanness: the acknowledgement of interconnectedness, the goal of harmonious coexistence as the center of our actions and behaviour, and the focus on the self in creating change. Integrating value creating education and *Ubuntu* into the Kenyan education system, from primary to university, is vital in re-envisioning education. There is a need to nurture these values in each individual, beyond conceptual discussion, to shape empowered future leaders who can create a more humanistic and sustainable society.

Ngogi Emmanuel Mahaye (2018) asserts in *The Philosophy of Ubuntu in Education*, that "Education must create a consciousness among both children and adults that will encourage and enable them to think positively in the reclaiming and reconstruction of their history, cultural heritage, identity and personhood" (p. 7). Mahaye (2018) further states that Ubuntu in education gives learners the primacy to humanness and an adoption of a more holistic view by the learners rather than reducing their abilities or potential. The purpose of education is "to free the minds of the oppressed in order to destroy social classes and create one human consciousness within the society" (p. 17). Similarly, Makiguchi and Ikeda believe that true education is about transforming students to be better human beings, who create value. Ikeda, founder of Soka University, which is grounded on value creating education, states in his acceptance speech in

1992 when receiving his honorary doctorate from the University of Nairobi, Kenya, "the rich humanism pulsing through the African culture would without fail become a wellspring of wisdom for the world in overcoming the deadlocks of modern civilization" (*Varsity Focus*, 1993, p. 8), and that "the African heart has the abundant wisdom that connects people with people, people with nature and people with eternity" (Nishiura, 2007, p.272). Ikeda's speech reveals his belief that Africa as a whole is a continent of great humanity and holds great promise in addressing the myriad challenges it faces.

How can we practically apply these philosophies to serve humanity? School is a community and an important space to start to teach these core values (Mahaye, 2018, p. 16). Students spend most of their time at school. It is at school that they interact with different people and engage with potential role models (teachers). Schools then are a critical place where students can be taught from an early age how to relate with one another, respect each other's differences, and learn that they all need each other to flourish. Education should focus on "teaching purpose of life and cultivate strong enriched minds and genuine humanity" (Ikeda, 2006, p. 279). With an education focused on each student's potential and the development of human values such as compassion, kindness, justice and respect, a culture of humanity can thrive. Thus, the school environment provides a productive space for children to learn about humanness and the role of self and interconnectedness.

Humanness is based on the idea of interconnectedness. In *Ubuntu*, "a person is a person through other persons." This view parallels the concept of "oneness of life and the environment" in Nichiren Buddhism, on which value creating education is based (Garrison, Hickman & Ikeda, 2014, p. 175). This principle ideates that one's life and his/her environment are inseparable like one's reflection in a mirror. To understand the 'we,' we must first comprehend the 'I' and 'I's' role in the larger 'we.' Part of applying these philosophies first involves ensuring that each member of society works towards improving their character, exuding the fundamental human qualities of kindness, respect, compassion, and gratitude. From his book *The Pedagogy of Value-Creating Education* (1930), Makiguchi believes that there is a need to transform the way people live their lives. He advocates for "a consciously interactive, independent mode of existence, a life of committed contribution" from a passive and dependent way of living (cited in Goulah, 2010, p. 270). Nzimakwe (2014) echoes Makiguchi's statement when he asserts that in *Ubuntu* "no idea or situation can be transformed into reality unless there is a totally transformed human being driving it" (p. 35). In essence, the responsibility of self in creating change should be realised. When one works to better oneself, they are in part improving the community at large.

Contributing to the welfare of others is essential in harnessing harmonious relationships. Thinking of others requires us to practice global citizenship that is "respect[ing] and to understand people of different cultures and to grow from [our] encounters with them" (Ikeda, 2010, p. 112). Working to understand others enables us to become more empathetic and develop appreciation for our commonalities and differences. Eze (2011) echoes this view in his paper "I am Because you are":

> ...a person's humanity flourishes through a process of relation and distance, of uniqueness and differences. A realization of the subjective gifts (of humanity) we bear to each other motivates an unconditional desire to view and harness other people's uniqueness and difference, not as a threat but as a complement to one's own humanity (p. 12).

As such, tolerance, respect, empathy, compassion and a sense of responsibility towards others become important to develop harmonious relationships.

At all levels of education, more focus is spent on cramming and passing national examinations. Little emphasis is placed on teaching life skills. Education, however, is dynamic and can be challenged and used to simultaneously hone values and career skills. Education should not only serve the nation or economic growth but should also develop students who can contribute positively to realising a just world. Acknowledging that there is a huge gap in resource distribution to schools, we cannot ignore the fact that the world is becoming more digitalised. This can create an opportunity for students to interact with others whether locally or internationally to learn more about other cultures, environment, views and thoughts. This interaction will build interpersonal skills and give students opportunities to learn about tolerance of diverse views. Combining cross-cultural interactions with homestay activities and community service such as volunteering in orphanages and aging homes can further nurture responsibility, compassion, and respect for each other.

Moreover, classes should incorporate literature texts not only from Kenyan authors but also from the broader African context and world. These global experiences through books will enable students to not only improve their communication skills but also learn and be exposed to different cultures, belief systems, and issues. This will help in encouraging empathy toward others who seem different from oneself. Students would also develop critical thinking skills that would challenge them to re-examine their thoughts, beliefs and perceptions about others and the world at large.

Exam-driven curricula and the scarcity of resources and teachers has made students irrationally competitive. They have also forced teachers to adopt teaching styles that provide no time to focus on the growth of each student's character. Educational institutions tend to be fixed on the school

and teachers' overall academic performance, which can contribute to some students' lack of integrity, respect and compassion. As noted earlier, arson was attributed to strained teacher-student relationships (NCRC, 2017, p. 24). Part of institutionalising value creating education and *Ubuntu* should entail in-service training for teachers. Teachers are key in promoting values these two philosophies define.

Students spend a majority of their time with their teachers. This relationship contributes in moulding the characters and personalities of the students. Therefore, to actualise the principles of value creating education and *Ubuntu*, teachers must play an active role as agents of change. Makiguchi (1983-1988) compared a teacher's role to that of "an aide, guide and midwife, empowering and assisting the activities of the learners themselves" (vol. 6, p. 54). Similarly, Ikeda (2008) emphasizes that "an educator dedicated to watching over and fostering students must be genuine and sincere" (p. 196) and must have "the compassion to devote oneself wholeheartedly to serving young people (p. 196). Mahaye (2018) also posits that *Ubuntu* begins from the Principal and teachers and that teachers who embrace *Ubuntu* treat all learners equally (p. 17). Teachers who practice *Ubuntu* in schools should be committed, caring and dedicated to their students in spite of the students' different backgrounds and circumstances. Educational goals of developing capable individuals cannot be achieved without teachers devoting themselves in guiding the students in their character building and instilling in them core values such as empathy, respect, compassion and justice.

For teachers to effectively act as agents of change, they themselves would have to internalise and practice the philosophies of value creating education and *Ubuntu*. According to Muthamba (2017), teachers are not trained on life skills and most rely on school counselors to deal with students' needs. Many teachers often substitute life skills with examinable subjects like physics and mathematics. Therefore, in addition to holding the credentials to teach, this paper recommends the inclusion of value creating education and *Ubuntu* philosophies in the syllabi for teachers training colleges and universities. Incorporating these two philosophies as mandatory subjects at the university level, will not only produce graduates grounded on the values of these two philosophies, but will also develop teachers who "practice and experience in their own lives the principles and techniques of learning that they [seek] to help their students understand and acquire" (Bethel, 1989, p. 179).

A significant paradigm shift is needed in the way we understand the true value and process of education, and the role of educators as agents of change. Learning value creating education and *Ubuntu* values can help create solutions to the challenges facing African societies such as xenophobia in South Africa, the civil unrest in Ethiopia and Somalia, tribal clashes, and the

refugee crisis brought about by poor leadership that is exacerbated by selfishness, greed and indifference. This paper proposes education curricula that focus on nurturing students and teachers with uphold compassion, wisdom and the courage to embrace others and their differences.

CONCLUSION

Though originating from two different countries, value creating education philosophy and *Ubuntu* share several similar perspectives on how a society can become more just and prosperous. Both philosophies demonstrate a humanistic-based approach centered on the understanding of the interconnectedness of all lives, the importance of building harmonious relationships and of possessing values such as respect, appreciation, compassion, and kindness as the way to attain happiness for everyone. Recognizing the paramount role these philosophies can play in creating a better society, this paper promotes their integration into educational curricula as a tool to foster young leaders who emulate core values that impede issues that continue to plague societies including racism, tribalism, corruption, and injustice. This paper suggests that institutionalizing value creating education and *Ubuntu* philosophies from Primary to University level education can be the first steps in shaping a more humane society in Kenya and the world at large.

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Daisaku Ikeda's Philosophy of Value-Creating Global Citizenship Education and Africana Humanism: Africa as the Continent of the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

Daisaku Ikeda proclaimed that Africa would be the beacon of hope for the world in the twenty-first century. Contemporaneously, Kwame Nkrumah was excited about the potentially galvanizing role a united Africa might play on the world scene. Nkrumah envisioned the reawakening of an African personality, which would provide the foundational essence for the United States of Africa and accelerate African psychological, political, and economic decolonization. Nkrumah's conceptualizations of unity mesh with Ikeda's paradigms of global citizenship. This paper shows how Ikeda's philosophy of value-creating education for global citizenship could amalgamate Africana educational models toward global citizenship as a unifying factor in Africa and the diaspora and as an instrument for making Africana Humanism the spirit of the 21st century.

Keywords: African and African Unity, Daisaku Ikeda, Global Citizenship, Kwame Nkrumah, Diaspora, Humanism

INTRODUCTION

W.E.B. DuBois (1868-1963) announced in 1903 that the problem of the twentieth century was the problem of the color line. Daisaku Ikeda, upon his first visit to the United Nations in New York, October 14, 1960,

proclaimed: "The twenty-first century will be the century of Africa. The world should support the growth of this young sapling" (1995, p. 184). Contemporaneously, Kwame Nkrumah (1912–1972), the first president of independent Ghana in West Africa, was excited about the potentially galvanizing role a united Africa might play on the world scene. Nkrumah (1963) envisioned the reawakening of an African personality, which would provide the foundational essence for a United States of Africa and accelerate African psychological, political, and economic decolonization. Ikeda's philosophy of value-creating education for global citizenship has a function to enact in amalgamating Africana educational models toward global citizenship as a unifying factor in Africa and the diaspora and as an instrument for making Africana Humanism the spirit of the 21st century.

Ikeda has discussed African political, economic, and educational programming in many of his annual peace proposals presented to the United Nations. He has presented proposals for aiding Africa's development based on his conceptualization of global citizenship and in resonance with African paradigms of communalism, humanism, and *ubuntu*. He believes that African philosophies, like ubuntu, embody humanistic ethos, which can enable individuals to manifest happiness and self-fulfillment in their daily lives (Indangasi, Mwangi, & Odari, 2018). Ikeda advocates for societies to nurture in students the *ubuntu* spirit, which aligns with his understanding of global citizenship.

Global citizenship education is an ethos or ideology of human unity that can help sustain shared life on this planet. The purpose of education, according to Ikeda (2010), is to make people fully human. Becoming fully human means developing the ability to find meaning in life and situations and utilize that to ignite hope in the individual's heart and bring happiness to oneself and others (Mino & Heto, in press). Ikeda's philosophy of value-creating education for global citizenship can work in tandem with Africana notions of humanism to transform Africa toward an egalitarian, communalist, social humanist, and united continent as envisioned by Nkrumah and other Pan-Africanist philosophers and activists. Students of value-creating, global citizenship educational practices can contribute to the realization of Africana humanism and global unity.

VALUE-CREATING EDUCATION (SOKA)

Value creating pedagogy, as outlined by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), aims to revitalize teaching and learning processes and improve education. He proposes that the creation of value is a uniquely human

endeavor that augments daily life, the process of living, and the joy of learning. Makiguchi introduced his pedagogy to circumvent the deleterious effects of the militarized educational program prevalent in Japan during his lifetime. He develops his philosophy of education in opposition to the militarized education system that taught students that the purpose of their life was to serve and die for the emperor and nation. Makiguchi abhors the devaluation of human life in favor of values, such as the nation, the emperor, and war. He believes in the right to self-determination for all students, not just the privileged. Thus, he argues that the real aim of education is the happiness of the learner in a contributive and transformative personal and social context (Goulah & Gebert, 2009; Gebert & Joffee, 2017). Makiguchi wants education systems to focus on nurturing in all students the ability to create value (beauty, gain, and good) out of any and all circumstances, even the most adverse. Beauty refers to an individual's creativity and ability to produce things, broadly defined, that are pleasing to all human senses. Good stands for contributing to the wealth of others and society. Gain means earning benefit for oneself; this is not restricted to financial benefits only.

Makiguchi delineates six transformative indices, whereby the results of value-creating education can be evaluated. These indices demarcate the progress of humans from self-centeredness toward personal well-being in the context of the greater social good:

> 1) from unconscious, emotional modes of living to a life of self-mastery, consciousness and rationality; 2) from a life of less to one of greater value creation; 3) from self-centered to a social and altruistic mode of living; 4) from dependent to independent modes of living in which one is capable of making principle-based judgement; 5) from a life dominated by external influences to a life of autonomy; 6) from a life under the sway of desires to self-reflective modes of living in which one is capable of integrating one's actions into a larger sense of purpose (Ikeda, 2010, p. 20).

Ikeda has proclaimed the need and provided many guidelines for the development of value-creating processes (Soka). His significant contribution has been an unrelenting declaration of the absolute value of dialogic practices, inner transformation, the equitable evaluation of the rights of all humans to participate in these non-violent processes, and the essence of wisdom, compassion, and courage toward global citizenship for peace. Value creating is a dynamic act of creating something new and unique, not yet apparent. It may be difficult to categorize a newly created value or to name or specify it. The proof is in the motivations, long-range goals, and behaviors. The aim to

nurture and lead learners toward value creation can be implemented and enacted in educational environments wherein mentors and learners share in the process.

IKEDA'S PHILOSOPHY OF VALUE-CREATING EDUCATION FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Ikeda's philosophy of value-creating education was expanded through interactions with Josei Toda (1900–1958), his mentor, and built upon the system of value-creating pedagogy developed by Makiguchi, Toda's mentor. Urbain (2010) refers to Toda's concept of "one-worldism" as a call for people to replace their love for their nation-state with love for humanity. Toda advocates for people to connect and honor the dignity inherent in the life of others. Urbain (2010) argues that Ikeda's notion of global citizens is the same as Toda's clarion call for people to relate with each other.

Ikeda's philosophy of value-creating education for global citizenship contributes to beauty, gain and good, wisdom, compassion, and courage for the betterment of humanity. The values of beauty, gain, and good are creatively manifested as an outcome of education for global citizenship, resulting in individual happiness and contribution to the improvement of society and the world. Value creation takes place in sustainability with the global community of the earth and the universe in humane harmony and harmony with the natural environment. Ikeda's philosophy of global citizenship education also incorporates the existential phenomena of humanism and human unity: *humunity/hunity* (Williams, 2016, p. 65). This is the basis of Ikeda's concept of human revolution, which is the inner transformation that leads to dialogue and global citizenship. The end goal manifests as environmental balance, equilibrium, homeostasis, harmony, joy, human happiness, and peace.

Major themes and concepts of Ikeda's philosophy of education are congruent with Urbain's (2010) findings of three major components of Ikeda's philosophy of peace: 1) inner transformation, 2) dialogue, and 3) global citizenship. Additional major themes emerge from Ikeda's philosophy of value-creating education of authentic student-centeredness, mentor-disciple, teacher self-development, humanism, and contributive and agentic characteristics. Wisdom is an essential element of global citizenship as it relates to the ability to perceive the interconnectedness, interrelatedness, and dependent origination of all phenomena. Global citizenship, as outlined by Ikeda and in tandem with the proposals of his mentor, Josei Toda, aims to

bring people together despite diversities in ethnicity, nationality, political orientation, or any other potentially divisive components of human life.

In his 2014 peace proposal, Ikeda has an entire section on how value creation starts with hope. He uniquely positions hope as an essential component of global citizenship education. Global citizenship then is a way of being; an attitude towards life in which one chooses to remain hopeful while manifesting their humanity. Ikeda's understanding of global citizenship is based on hopeful wisdom, compassion, and courage emerging from the processes of value creation and human revolution. He explains how these elements work together in a 1996 address he gave at Teachers College, Columbia University:

> 1) the wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living; 2) the courage not to fear or deny difference but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures and to grow from encounters with them; 3) the compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places (2010, pp. 20–1).

In the Columbia speech, he presents the model of altruistic global citizenship orientation as exemplified in the actions of Bodhisattva Sramana: encouraging others by addressing them with kindness and concern through dialogue, giving alms and assistance to needs, acting on behalf of others, and joining and working together with others. These models form the basis for his proposals in the 2014 peace proposal for a development summit, educational program for global citizenship toward youth empowerment through decent employment for all, active participation in problem-solving, and youth exchanges (Ikeda, 2014). His action proposals encompass practical economic, as well as philosophical, imperatives based on the belief in the inherent dignity, respect for and right to human life. His educational targets include universal access to primary and secondary education, elimination of gender disparity, and global citizenship education emphasis on environment, development, peace, and human rights.

The theme of global consciousness is one of the most challenging and intractable components of global citizenship education—the transcendence of nationalism and the nation-state. This is a common reality of daily life: the reluctance, unwillingness, or sheer ignorance of how to think beyond one's global location. This has also been a political impediment to Pan-Africanism and the creation of a United States of Africa as proposed by Kwame Nkrumah and supported by Ikeda in his 2001 peace proposal (see Urbain 2014, p. 137–140). African politicians have been reluctant to relinquish their country

boundaries even though they were artificially created under vicious colonial onslaughts.

IKEDA, NKRUMAH, AND AFRICANA HUMANISM

Through numerous dialogues with African leaders, ambassadors, and cultural personas, Ikeda has bolstered his claim for Africa as the continent of the twenty-first century. In a published dialogue with Hancock and Shorter (2017), he stated:

> Africa is the spiritual home of jazz and the cradle of humanity. I have long declared that the twenty-first century will be the Century of Africa and have promoted increased exchange with Africa. The twenty-first century cannot be prosperous unless humanity's place of origin prospers (p. 167).

As Africa emerges as the continent of the 21st century, based on history, culture, and global citizenship education, the expectation of magnanimous contribution to world peace is enhanced. Nkrumah was excited about this potentially galvanizing role for Africa and the gifts that the African personality had to offer the world in terms of humanism, communalism, and a politically-conscious spirituality of consciencism to combat the western industrial capitalist-imperialist complex of rampant greed, profit, and exploitation (Rodney, 1981). Nkrumah craved the resurrection of African personality, humanism and democratic socialism that would be the fertile soil for continental freedom and development.

How did Nkrumah perceive the usefulness of the idea of the African personality within the framework of his political and economic goals and his vision of Africa for the Africans? His desire to see Africa emerge on the world stage as a viable power was predicated on his vision of the African personality. In his address to the crowd of over 100,000 at the Polo Grounds in Accra on Independence Day, 5 March 1957, he avowed: "We must change our attitudes and our minds…We are going to create our own African personality and identity…Our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent" (1973, p. 21). Martin Luther King, Jr., Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Ralph Bunch, Charles Diggs, Horace Mann Bond, Mordecai Johnson, Phillip Randolph, and other visiting diasporans joined Nkrumah and his cabinet on the platform that day in Accra (Rahman, 2007, 179–80).

In *Consciencism,* Nkrumah explains:

> The philosophy that must stand behind this social revolution is that which I have once referred to as philosophical

> consciencism; consciencism is the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western and the Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality. The African personality is itself defined by a cluster of humanist principles which underlie the traditional African society (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 79).

Nkrumah spoke to the people's capacity and the realities of the prevailing situation of consciousness and strove to inspire a new and uplifting paradigm. Nkrumah envisioned a United States of Africa based on principles of African humanism and Pan-African socialism. His vision so endangered the western imperialist, neo-colonial intentions, and profit motives that they had to stop him somehow. His demise came about due to unpropitious congealing circumstances of domestic disappointments among the Ghanaian population and the hard power machinations of Western intrigue in support of the coup of 24 February 1966 in which Nkrumah was deposed when he traveled out of the country; just as the West had orchestrated the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, a strong and like-minded ally of Nkrumah, on 17 January 1961. Lumumba proclaimed in August 1960: "The African personality must express itself. That is what our positive neutralism means" (Skurnik 1968, 320). The possibility of a Ghana-Guinea-Congo union was an anathema to the West. African unions had to be deterred at all costs. Lumumba, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. were all touched by Nkrumah's vision, and all died by the bullet.

Nkrumah became acquainted with a leftwing set in New York. They provided a significant contribution to his philosophical development in their belief that a humanistic approach to revolutionary philosophy placed people before ideology. Nkrumah explicated an African revolutionary form of this humanism in his philosophy 'consciencism.' "As with all the philosophies Nkrumah absorbed during his twelve years in the West, he recast Marxist humanism in the mold of the necessities of Africa's revolution…The revolution exists for humanity; humanity does not exist for the revolution" (Rahman, 2007, p. 84).

Nkrumah's vision of 'socialism' for Africa was not that of the Stalinist state-controlled monolith. His socialism approximated the structures of European social democracies more than any Soviet or Maoist declarations. His experience of participation in the Father Divine movement in New York influenced him greatly. Father Divine espoused the "promotion of a socialistic ideal based on the innate human capacity for utopian goodness. Nkrumah

inserted this innate capacity into his concept of African personality and consciencism" (Rahman, 2007, p. 65–75).

Historical, cultural consciousness served as the underlying foundational component of the African personality in its geo-psychological and geo-ideological formations. To be rooted in one's place and sense of history provides the creative soil from which cultural adaptations emanate. Also, one's situation, location, or physical placement in the diaspora, and the distance from loci of Africanity or the proximity to westernized/Europeanized demographic centers of influence impacted the subsequent African and diasporic personality formulations. Nkrumah extolled the occasion in April 1958 when he hosted the first Conference of Independent African States in Accra: "…I felt that at last Pan-Africanism had moved to the African continent where it belonged. It was an historic occasion…The African personality was making itself known" (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 136).

Ikeda's concept of global citizenship, which entails a broad view of the cosmos linking all humanity combined with Nkrumah's view of the galvanizing role of Africa and the diaspora, holds the promise of a more united world view to come. If Nkrumah had succeeded in leading Africa on to the world stage as an egalitarian, communalist, social humanist, united continent, the world would truly be a different place today.

HOPE FOR THE RISE OF AFRICANA HUMANISM

Value-creating education for global citizenship has a great role to play in efforts to enhance the educational experiences of African students. The youth are the only future. It is imperative to awaken in them the desire to live contributive lives based on the fundamental principle of respect for human life and human unity. Value-creating education can inspire youth to identify and counteract the root causes of violence, poverty, discrimination, and hopelessness in their lives, homes, schools, and communities, through the creative commitment to dialogue to facilitate the transformation from a culture of violence to a culture of peace. This revitalization can enhance interpersonal human relationships throughout the diaspora on the individual, familial, and global levels.

Ikeda's human education philosophy and global citizenship education provide a path for achieving Africana humanism and global unity envisioned by Nkrumah, Lumumba, and DuBois. It offers people, especially the youth, the means of developing a healthy appreciation of life. When humans feel good about themselves, there is hope, belief in opportunity, and enhanced life chances. A forward-looking state of mind and attitude can emerge. A primary

component of value-creating practice for global citizenship is to nurture this attitude through educational activities. The dominant-negative paradigm can be changed through educational actions with a conscience.

Ikeda makes his philosophical contribution toward human unity and interrelatedness from his stance as a man of the East and from the influence of Buddhist thought. Eastern philosophy extols the unity of all phenomena. The capitalist West has lauded a dogma of rugged individualism, individual rights, and liberties. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* applauded a me-first, divinely ordained personal, pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps belief system (Weber, 2003). Independent thought and action remain elements of global citizenship education within the underlying frame of a unifying consciousness, not an egoistic selfdom above all else. The realization of interconnectedness leads to individual freedom and liberation.

CONCLUSIONS

Value-creating education for global citizenship embodies an underlying philosophy that reinforces the importance of each human being in holistic oneness with the environment. The humanity of unity in diversity: *ubuntu*. Education for global citizenship has the potential to improve the quality of life, enhance inter-ethnic group relations, foster cross-cultural harmonious interactions, and lessen inter- and intra-group violence aiming toward the institutionalization of a culture of peace. Regional unities such as the African Union can be based on a firm foundation of educational practice, which will direct the youth toward self-esteem and social purpose. The Africana heritage of holistic traditional philosophies and practices often celebrate the oneness of human life and the environment, including nature, the importance of the ancestors and cultural traditions, and history (Williams, 1980).

Value-creating global citizenship education curriculum models, ethos, and spirit can enhance opportunities for the happiness of lifelong learners. Happiness is based on advanced, in-depth, caring, and insightful learning activities that relate to family, local communities, and the global world. Global citizenship orientation can appeal to Africana youth who too often find the current educational practices to be irrelevant and counterintuitive to daily realities and needs. Curriculum and extra-curricular activities can be designed to promote maximally optimum conditions for value creation. Human-unity-minded educators need to collaborate to create a new wave of educational practices toward fostering happier students who would follow and implement their dreams. The goal is to create a global society in which all are valued, imbued, and armed with resilience and

contributive lifestyles. Structural and institutional change has its rewards, but a fundamental change, originating from within, is essential to attaining this goal. This is what Ikeda terms human revolution: individuals have the choice and, hopefully, the chance to transform their inner state of life. There is a crucible of value-creating potential, a cauldron of capabilities existing within each person. Global citizen education can add to young people's repertoires of coping skills and enhance international cooperation.

The youth are our only future. Reawakening the love of life in local communities based on the fundamental principle of respect for human life and human unity can inspire youth. Identifying and counteracting the root causes of violence through the creative commitment to dialogue can facilitate the transformation from a culture of violence to a culture of peace. The factors that need emphasis and further examination are those which unite us. From what we have in common, we can further build and sustain unity and united action.

The prevailing and dominant global materialistic pattern veers us away from Africana humanism. We will lose our youth if we do not correct these contradictions and inequities. Our focus must be on the bestowal of the heritage of resilience upon our youth. Nothing can be perpetuated without the youth on board. It is all up to them now. The recognition, maintenance, and perpetuation of the African personality must be a youthful undertaking at this juncture in time. A restored vision of Nkrumah's idea of the African personality and Africana unity, in tandem with Daisaku Ikeda's philosophy of global citizenship education, can emerge as an amalgamation force toward liberation. The opportunity derived from projects applying a value-creating-modeled curriculum in the Africana community is well worth advancing, generating opportunities for the advancement of *ubuntu* and Africana humanism on the continent and in the diaspora.

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Reinstating the Inherent Dignity of Marginalized Communities In Ghana

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ABSTRACT

When a representative democracy implicitly or explicitly undermines minority rights and prevents marginalized people from actively participating in a democratic process, it facilitates social exclusion. This paper focuses on how Ghana's democracy, coupled with traditions, aggravate social exclusion. The research discusses the democratization process of Ghana and its role in the marginalization of minorities. Particularly, this paper looks at the class-based marginalization of women on the one hand and the sex-based marginalization of the LGBTQI+ community on the other, in Ghana. Finally, this paper explores how Soka Education, as a way of life, can support these marginalized communities in Ghana.

Keywords: Democracy, Ghana, LGBTQI, Soka education, Social Exclusion, Women.

INTRODUCTION

Democracy in Africa is not new. It has a long history that predates the wave of democratization that occurred on the continent in the 1990s. Democratic values were prevalent in African political systems that existed before colonization (Bradley, 2005). According to Bradley (2005) and Bansah (2015), African political systems were collectivist systems, where leaders made decisions based on a consensus. Bradley (2005) states that the main distinctions between Western and African democracies were that the voice of the people was represented through state bodies in the west, whereas African democracies identified with traditions and ethnicity.

One primary concern about democratic systems, whether traditional or western, is the extent to which they represent the people. A sign of a healthy democratic system is the ability of rules and practices to protect minority rights (J.E.W., 1965). Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. For a long time, western democracies pretended that democratic rules that applied to a subset of their population, mainly white adult males, were sufficient to make them democracies (Dahl, 1999). In traditional African systems, collectivism, whether egalitarian or utilitarian, puts the groups' interest over that of the individual, but who made the final decisions for the group? Mill (2010) points out that government systems based on the rule of a majority group often produce systemic inequalities and the social exclusion of minorities. Social exclusion is the deliberate or unintentional marginalization of a minority group by a dominant group (Burchardt et al., 2002). It is no doubt that humans desire a community in which they can belong. Societies, no matter how large or small, act as shelters for their members. They also create some form of safety and solidarity for their members. Social exclusion occurs when the rules governing a society do not capture all the members' voices and experiences (Williams et al., 2005). According to Williams et al. (2005), Minorities feel compelled to conform to unjust laws because of safety reasons and their need to belong. Oppressed people obeying laws that deny their inherent dignity illustrates the complex nature of social exclusion. For instance, individuals would rather be silent than to demand their civil rights in unfair systems to avoid ostracization. LGBTQI+ members and women are noticeable groups who find themselves in such a situation. How much liberty do minorities need to surrender in exchange for societal acceptance and equal treatment? How can minorities regain their humanity?

In this paper, I examine the ways in which multiparty democracy in Ghana serves as a veneer for the continued marginalization of women and people in the LGBTQI+ community. I then explain how Soka education could help reverse the marginalization and restore the dignity of oppressed people.

Soka is a Japanese word that means value creation. Soka education focuses on the shared humanity and uniqueness of individuals (Ikeda, 2006). It is a stance toward learning and living in which an individual commit to valuing their inherent dignity and that of others (Heffron, 2008). The founder of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was against the Japanese government's effort to militarize the education system (Gebert, 2009). He fought against this system as he believed that education should enable children to live happily rather than serving as a factory for producing mechanized humans for the state (Gebert & Goulah, 2009). Ikeda (1996) emphasizes that value creation is essential for the restoration of individual enfranchisement and eventually, world peace. Soka education's approach to global citizenship and empowerment could help the LGBTQI+ community and marginalized women in Ghana to dismantle oppressive systems that inhibits them from actualizing their potentials. While each individual could benefit from Soka education's liberating effect, leaders need to remember that society exists for people, meaning individuals do not need to trade their liberty for social acceptance and equal treatment under the laws.

DEMOCRACY BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER COLONIZATION; THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY.

Scholars have written extensively about the democratic political system of the Akan and Igbo Kingdoms in pre-colonial Africa (Bansah, 2015). Before the introduction of colonial rule, African societies had political systems that varied from participative democracy to different forms of monarchies and decentralized systems (Bansah, 2015). Societies held public forums where issues affecting the whole communities were discussed and reached a consensus. Adult men and women participated equally in the decision-making process during community gatherings. In the Akan kingdom, women shared power equally with men in different spheres in the kingdom, including the home. Hierarchies existed in pre-colonial Africa, but the systemic emphasis was on representation and inclusion. Democratic values in these Pre-colonial kingdoms emphasized accountability and the voice of the people. Kings and queens did not act on whims but in close consultation with their subjects.

The imposition of colonial rule transformed traditional political practices. Despite the relentless resistance from the different kingdoms – the Akans, the Anlo, the Gas, and the Northern kingdoms – the British succeeded in introducing their system of government through oppressive governance, indirect rule, and the creation of a western educated local elite class (Acemoglu et al., 2001; Bansah, 2015; Pinto,2019). The British provided

western education to a small group of Ghanaians, specifically men in the South, through whom they ruled and maintained their oppressive systems (Abass & Doskaya, 2017). This in turn intensified the already existing social classes and elitism in Ghana with women relegated to the lower classes (Fletcher, 2013; Okoreeh, 2018; Pinto, 2019).

The creation of the elite also gave rise to the independence movement. In the late 1940s, in an attempt to abolish colonization, two major parties, the UGCC and CPP, were formed (Morrison, 2004). Minorities also created their parties based on territories and ethnicities to represent the voices of their people. The Northern Peoples Party (NPP) and the Togoland Congress (TC) are two examples. Even though the whole country was in agreement to fight against colonization, representation mattered to each group, mainly because of the social stratification created by the colonial administration. The northern part of the Gold Coast, for instance, was a deprived area because the British had no interest in establishing their institutions there even though they traded in the north. Although historians have not adequately acknowledged the contribution of women to the independence movement, elite women groups, like the Native Ladies of Cape Coast (NLCC), as well as market women, played key roles in the independence process (Akurang-Parry, 2004; Johnson, 2019).

In 1954, the Gold Coast adopted a new constitution, allowing for the election of government officials through single-member constituencies, which replaced the system of appointing officials through tribal councils. The electoral process gave rise to two major parties, the UGCC and CPP. The strong supporters of the UGCC were the upper class anti-colonial male elites. Although they opposed colonialism, most of them worked in colonial institutions (Morrison, 2004). The members of the CPP, on the other hand, consisted of equally trained intellectuals who belonged to the working class. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, a well-educated activist, led the CPP. Whereas the UGCC was campaigning for Ghana's independence in the least possible time, the CPP advocated for "independence now." The CPP won twice over the UGCC and the other political parties because their policies reflected popular opinion better, and they demanded equity. In 1957, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and the CPP led Ghana to independence from the British.

As a radical socialist, Nkrumah embarked on economic projects that would allow the average Ghanaian to earn a decent living (Biney, 2008). As a Pan-Africanist, his visions transcended Ghanaian nationalism as he was dedicated to creating a united Africa. For instance, his administration built the Akosombo dam to generate electricity for Ghana, spearheaded other state-run companies, and built educational institutions in Ghana and across the

continent (Fischer, 2016). His commitment to a united Africa saw to his relentless economic and political support for African countries that had not yet achieved independence and, the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 (Asante, 2012; Berry, 1994; Biney, 2008). Although Dr. Kwame Nkrumah had great visions for Ghana and Africa as a whole, his rule threatened Ghana's democracy when he introduced the Preventive Detention Act (PDA) in 1958. Biney (2008) explains Nkrumah's one-party state:

> Nkrumah's decline into authoritarianism was marked with the introduction of the Preventive Detention Act (PDA) in 1958 and its subsequent amendments, the detention of political opponents, the non-existence of civilian groups and political bodies unaffiliated to the Nkrumah's ruling Convention People's Party (CPP), increasingly stringent security measures after 1962 and the lack of independence of the judiciary. This was followed by the inauguration of a one-party state in 1964 (p. 139).

In 1966, Ghana's military and police service, with help from the US and Britain overthrew Nkrumah's government through a coup d'état (Quaidoo, 2010; Quist-Adade, 2016). Ghana's government underwent three military regimes, characterized by political instability with no sight of democracy, until 1992 when the government reintroduced a multiparty system independent of foreign control. The 1992 constitution restored universal suffrage, assured a free and fair election, and the protection of all citizens. The return to multiparty democracy led to the formation of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the National Patriotic Party (NPP), the two major parties that currently dominate Ghana's politics (Morrison, 2004).

Although the restoration of universal suffrage in the 4th republic allowed citizens to participate in government, it was far from being a real democracy. If anything, it brought about an elite unanimity, which was missing from the first three republics (Osei, 2015). Ghanaians identify the two major political parties with two main ethnic groups; the NDC is the Ewe party and the NPP, the Ashanti party. Even though Ghana is known for having free and fair elections, the lack of recognition and representation in the rural areas from the colonial period still lingers on (Stacey, 2015). The north-south socioeconomic divide inherited from the colonial era persists (Langer, 2009). Also, the governing elites act as though they are above the law and evade calls for accountability despite paying lip service to the idea that their power comes from the electorate.

Women's involvement in politics is traditionally limited in scope. Apart from exercising their voting privileges, the furthest they can go is to

stand as candidates to be elected into office or organizers for their political affiliations during campaign seasons (Bawa & Sanyare, 2013). Bawa & Sanyare (2013) posit that in cases where women are elected into office, the tokenistic and performative nature of their positions limit their active participation in governance. Graham (1971) and Steady (2007) as cited in Bawa & Sanyare (2013), recognize the marginalization of Ghanaian women in political spaces as a reproduction of Victorian political systems, which was introduced by the British colonizers. Since homosexuality is considered a taboo and the LGBTQI+ community is criminalized in Ghana (Mohammed, 2019), there is no LGBTQI+ representation in Ghana's governance. The challenges outlined above diminishes the quality of Ghana's democracy.

Ghana's sociocultural background cannot be discussed without acknowledging the role of religion. Although Ghana is a secular country with no national religion, a critical majority of the population are either Christians or Muslims. The 2010 government census revealed that approximately 71% of Ghanaians are Christians and 18% Muslims. This implies that although politicians may not exactly practice their faith in their positions, their religious beliefs and traditions influence their ideologies and decision-making processes. The religious background of the people therefore informs their attitude towards women and the LGBTQI+ community. For instance, most believers believe that the Bible, teaching handbook for Christians states that a woman is subordinate to a man in God's order of hierarchy (Bawa, 2019). According to Kligerman (2007) and Gunda (2010), Muslims and Christians justify their homophobia and transphobia with the teachings of the Quran and Bible respectively. Politicians, on the basis of religious teachings criminalize gender-nonconforming people and sexual minorities (Gunda, 2010). Although democratic laws aim to protect the rights of individuals, they also allow the right to preserve religious norms, whether discriminatory or not (Stopler, 2003). The laws of Ghana are no different. The law, together with religious and cultural practices, perpetuate class-based discrimination against women and sex-based discrimination against the LGBTQI+ communities in Ghana.

THE CLASS-BASED MARGINALIZATION OF GHANAIAN WOMEN IN THE HISTORY OF GHANA'S DEMOCRACY.

The systematic relegation of women in public life started during the colonial era. Women lost their political, economic, and social power when colonial institutions displaced traditional democratic institutions (Abass & Doskaya, 2017). Initially, the colonial administration excluded both men and women from colonial administrative duties, but the colonizers had to employ

the locals since they did not have enough European staff (Abass &Doskaya,2017). Oppong et al. (1975) as cited in Abass & Doskaya (2017) posit that local men were chosen over local women because colonial systems were heavily patriarchal. To make them productive in their colonial jobs, men received western education, allowing them to eventually gain political power and elite status (Abass & Doskaya, 2017). On the other hand, the colonialist objectified local women (Sutherland-Addy & Diaw, 2005). The few women who had the opportunity to attend school learned subjects, like home management, typing, and note-taking, because the colonial administration saw women as homemakers or secretaries. The imposition of religion also played a major part in the relegation of women. Christian missionaries preached to married women that submission to their husbands in the home was the accepted way to live (Yita & Dako, 2012). Women from matriarchal societies, like the Ashantis, suffered the most under the European and religious patriarchy. This form of institution insinuated that men were the leaders of the home, and by default, should own and control property (Manuh, 1997; Yita & Dako, 2012).

A few women, however, managed to obtain higher education, just like their male counterparts. These literate women formed social movements to demand equality under the law (Abass & Doskaya, 2017). The most popular elite women's group was the NLCC (Akurang-Parry, 2004). According to Akurang-Parry (2004), They corresponded with other women-led social groups, especially Anti-colonialist Afro-European women groups, to cause change (Abass & Doskaya, 2017; Denzer, 1987). Their main goal was to carve a niche for women in the colonial government that systematically excluded them from governmental decisions. They also sought to be the political mouthpiece of all women, especially in the southern part of the country. Drawing from solidarity systems that existed before colonial rule, elite women and market women held community meetings that allowed women to contribute to public deliberations (Akurang-Parry, 2004).

Although these women wanted a good life for all women, social stratification was prevalent. First, these elite women were from affluent and influential homes (Akurang-Parry, 2004). Also, the elites lead the movements, making it easier for them to discard traditional practices that offended their western-educated sensitivities. Again, women in other parts of the country, especially in the Northern part of the country, were excluded from the women's movement. Due to this, representation was a little questionable. Undeniably, the social, political, and economic climate at that time was not in favor of women, and so these elite women may have been doing what they thought was best for every woman. Though not popularly

recognized, elite women also played significant parts in Ghana's independence process (Abass & Doskaya, 2017).

Admittedly, there has been a significant increase in the number of women who have attained paid jobs in the civil service since independence; however, there is still a lack of representation and inclusion in the political offices (Sossou, 2011). There have been many interventions aimed at achieving gender equality in public institutions. For instance, the Girls' Education Unit was established in 1997 to ensure that girls are enrolled in basic schools and take care of matters relating to girls' education (Bardley, 2000). There have also been women empowerment interventions from international bodies; the SDG No Poverty Project (UNDP, 2020) is a typical example. Despite all of these interventions, women have not attained parity due to patriarchal and discriminatory practices that are deeply ingrained in key institutions since Ghana's independence. Most of these interventions provide solutions without addressing the root causes of women's marginalization. Sossou (2011) writes:

> To overcome the institutionalized power relations and bring about total transformation in the system, actual processes of empowerment have to occur at several levels. The empowerment process must challenge and change the of ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and practices in gender relations; in institutions and structures such as family, the household, the villages, the marketplaces, and the churches; and in the local communities (p. 8).

In the quote, Sossou notes that some social and institutional practices and beliefs makes it difficult for interventions to empower women to succeed. For instance, both women and men would choose a male president over a female president because, culturally and socially, some Ghanaians consider men to be better leaders than women (Sossou, 2011). In the summer of 2019, at the *Women Deliver 2019 Conference* held in Canada, the current President of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, said that Ghanaian women are not dynamic enough to obtain better leadership positions. He went on to say that the female representatives in his cabinet lack dynamism and activism (The Charleston Chronicle, 2019). Such beliefs are holding back the career advancement of women.

The percentage of female representatives in parliament is 13.5%, and the percentage of women in the labor force, both private and public, is about 67% of the female abled adult population (Dzradosi et al., 2018). Although the percentage of female representatives in government is relatively insignificant, it is an increment from the previous government. The issue,

however, is the extent to which these women effectively advocate for all women in governmental spaces. First, these women representatives are educated, wealthy, abled, heterosexual elite women (Sossou, 2011). Most of them have not experienced the lives of working-class women, transgender women, lesbians, bisexual women, and disabled women - who have been deprived of basic human rights - so rather than being the mouthpiece of all women, they conspire with their fellow parliamentarians to fulfill their political agendas. Consequently, female representation does not translate into inclusive governance since the experiences of women from different contexts do not reflect in policies. Considering the history of women's marginalization, representation and affirmative action are not enough; they do not create value. For Ghana to become a real democracy, the political leaders need to dismantle the patriarchal system and rebuild it in a truly inclusive way that centers the voices of marginalized women.

THE SEX AND GENDER BASED MARGINALIZATION OF LGBTQI+ COMMUNITIES.

Ghanaians started debating LGBTQI+ rights seriously and publicly in 2006 when the Gay and Lesbian Association of Ghana attempted to hold a national conference to advocate for their rights (Baisley, 2015). Homosexuality is a criminal offense under Ghana's 1960 Criminal Code. Chapter 6, Section 104 of the Criminal Code considers LGBTQI+ sexual orientations as unnatural and is in the same classification as bestiality (Solace Brothers Foundation, 2015). The law enforcement community prosecutes members of the LGBTQI+ community under this section of the criminal code with some regularity. Many Ghanaians approached the conversation from a moral perspective rather than a human rights perspective. Opponents of LGBTQI+ members consider them as sexual deviants who engage in unnatural sexual activities. Leading opponents of the conference were religious leaders and the former president. Opponents labeled sexual minorities as mentally ill, animals, and deviants, which allows them to advocate for denying their basic human rights (Baisley, 2015). Some of the religious leaders even offered to cure non-heterosexuals and transgenders from mental and spiritual illnesses.

Another inhumane argument made by opponents is that non-heterosexuality is "unghanaian" and that it is a form of western imposition (Essien & Aderinto, 2009). In 2011, the former president of Ghana, John Evans Atta-Mills, warned Ghanaians to desist from such immoral acts because it is not part of Ghanaian culture and traditions (Baisley, 2015). The current president of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, declared in an interview with

Aljazeera that the country has no intention to legally protect sexual minorities and gender expansive people, and assured religious leaders that it will not happen under his watch (Duffy, 2018). Proponents of LGBTQI+ rights rejected such characterization and offered multiple examples to show that non-heterosexuality is indigenous to African societies. Alimi (2015) stated that most African cultures embraced homosexuality and sexual diversity in pre-colonial Africa. He stressed that in the Northern part of Nigeria, the term *"yan daudu"* is used to describe effeminate men who were partners to other men. The Nzema people, who are part of the Akan clan, held ceremonies for same-sex marriages in pre-colonial Africa (Evaristo, 2014). The intolerance of the identities of sexual minorities rather, on the contrary, is a colonial import (Nyeck & Epprecht, 2013).

Britain, Ghana's colonizer, criminalized homosexuality and transsexuality from the 16th century through the 20th century (Whipple, 2012). More so, the two dominant religions in Ghana Islam and Christianity perpetuates transphobia and homophobia since the bible and Qur'an explicitly condemn the identities of sexual minorities. Furthermore, given the willingness of the same leaders to adopt western religious practices, it is hypocritical for them to deny the human rights of their fellow citizens on the grounds that their sexual orientation and gender identities are foreign. Debating the humanity and basic rights of LGBTQI+ people only depicts the extent to which Ghanaian democracy preserves the status of heterosexuals and cisnormative people.

In the quest to legitimize the rights of sexual minorities in Ghana, proponents argued that people do not choose their sexuality. They likened the persecution of sexual minorities to that of slaves and people with disabilities (Baisley, 2015). In a 2011 debate, advocates equipped that the inability of Ghanaians to accept that denying sexual minorities of their human rights is dehumanizing suggests that they did not learn anything from the history of the slave trade (Baisley, 2015). The advocates suggested that homosexuality and transsexuality are human defects similar to a disability, making sexual minorities deserving of the same human treatment given to people with disabilities (Baisley, 2015). Proponents framed their arguments using dramatic analogies, hoping that it may resonate with the Ghanaian public (Baisley, 2015). Agreeably, sexual orientation is not a choice, but comparing it to slavery and disability wrongly appropriated the generational trauma of people whose ancestors were enslaved and demeaned people with disabilities. Sexual minorities deserve equal rights just like every human being; however, obtaining their rights does not have to lead to the dehumanization of other oppressed minorities.

The systemic denial of non-heterosexual rights explains the country's unwillingness to provide appropriate sex education and healthcare for sexual minorities. As of 2017, 17% of documented cases of HIV infections in Ghana were men who have sex with men (Kushwaha et al., 2017). The laws of Ghana refusing to protect sexual minorities exposes them to violence, abuse, and discrimination from the public. Because Ghanaians continue to treat homosexuality, transsexuality and gender expansiveness as moral issues, they blame the victim of such hate crimes and fail to prevent them from occurring (Keifer, 2016). In the Ghanaian society, coming out to family and friends may expose sexual minorities to mental health deterioration, homelessness, and economic hardship due to ostracization. Some gender expansive people and sexual minorities are forced to self-stigmatize themselves in an attempt to escape rejection in cisheteronormative societies. (Keifer, 2016). Some members in the LGBTQI+ community are in heterosexual relationships and participate in homophobic mainstream cultures due to societal conditioning and the fear of being disowned. Social exclusion in Ghana prevents sexual minorities and gender expansive people from living to their full potentials. As a result, LGBTQI+ members seek asylum in countries that recognize their rights.

In the debate of LGBTQI+ rights in Ghana, foreign interventions have threatened to cut off the foreign aid Ghana receives if Ghanaian laws are not adjusted to protect them (Baisley, 2015). Although it can be seen as a way to pressurize the Ghanaian government to accept them, it can also be observed that the focus has shifted from the humanity of LGBTQI+ members. Instrumentalization of humans is deeply problematic to the human lives at stake and society as a whole. Not only does the instrumentalization of minority groups dehumanize their existence, it also inhibits their ability to explore their capabilities.

Amidst all the systemic discrimination sexual minorities face, they have been able to create safe spaces for themselves. Associations, like the LGBT+ Rights Ghana and the LGB gathering (Derby et al., 2020) continue to organize both online and offline to create a safe space their members in the best possible way. Together with other equal rights allies, they educate Ghanaians through social media, dialogue sessions, and other informative programs. This form of resistance to social pressures shows the self-determination of the LGBTQI+ community to claim and demand their rights in a democracy that intentionally excludes them.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Soka Education or value-creating education, at its core, is a social justice project. Though there is no universally accepted definition of social justice (Bogotch, 2002), some of its widely accepted principles focus on dismantling institutions that actively participate in any form of ostracism (Gewirtz, 1998; Theoharis, 2007). The founder of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was an activist who denounced the militarization of education and the lack of care in Japanese schools. He believed that education should allow students to develop their full potential because it would help them contribute to the development of their locality and the world at large. His advocacy for value-creating education and opposition to the militarization of the Japanese education system and society was fundamental since the Japanese culture was extremely conservative at that time (Ikeda, 2018). The Japanese government imprisoned him for his anti-war views and commitment to value creation in education, but he died in prison instead of recanting his beliefs (Ikeda, 2018). The lesson here is that Makiguchi put his life on the line in criticizing the oppressive structures of the Japanese government in his time. Although his context was different, he demonstrated how adherents to Soka education principles ought to challenge oppressive systems, including oppressive liberal democratic systems. Liberal democracy in Ghana promised to cater to the needs of all people, but it failed to be inclusive from the onset. Ghanaians need to oppose the existing liberal democratic regime in the country – a fallacy as it stands – to ensure that it becomes more inclusive of women, gender non-conforming people and sexual minorities. Projection of the voices of oppressed minorities is an initial step to dismantling the status quo, which is deeply rooted in bigotry and discrimination. On the intricate relationship between human rights and democracy, Landman (2018) states that:

> Democracy and human rights are grounded in the shared principles of accountability, individual liberty, integrity, fair and equal representation, inclusion and participation, and non-violent solutions to conflict (p. 49).

According to Landman (2018) and Kirchschlaeger (2014), since human rights protect the rights of every human being and transcends national laws, it the responsibility of a liberally democratic nation to prevent the violation of such laws. Kirchschlaeger (2014) posits that fundamentally, human rights reflect the simultaneous intersections of political, moral and legal rights. Koch (2005), Landman & Cavalho (2009) and Landman & Kersten (2016 as cited in Landman 2018) emphasize that in order to fulfill human rights, the state is required to be intentional about investing in and implementing policies for the

radical comprehension of human rights. Human rights education is critical in overcoming the reductive and simplistic idea of democracy and, in empowering oppressed minorities to defend their rights (kirchschlaeger, 2014).

From its beginning, Soka education, as a social justice movement, focused on recognizing the inherent dignity of each individual and helping them manifest their humanity. It placed a premium on human qualities, such as compassion, wisdom, and care for oneself and others. Additionally, other principles that are essential in achieving social justice, include "respect, care, recognition and empathy" (Theoharis, 2007; p. 223). An individual who manifest these social justice qualities in their daily lives gears towards global citizenship.

Makiguchi's global village analogy captured his view of global citizenship. He argued that a global citizen is someone who, despite having firm roots in their local community, is able to understand how people in other parts of the world support his or her existence (Makiguchi, 2002). Makiguchi reasoned that we will be able to treat each other with respect and care when we recognize the interconnectedness of our lives (Makiguchi, 2002). He asserted that instead of Japan focusing on teaching the administrative compositions of the country, teachers should teach students about the essential features of the world, the people that live in it, the potentials and complications that exist in the world (Armstrong & Martin, 2000).

As difficult as it is to define, global citizenship views individuals as inhabitants of the world, who encourage diversity rooted in ethics and emphasize on the significance of humanity (Dower & Williams, 2002). Brecher et al. (1993) point out the complexities of global citizenship by stressing on the existing world order and social stratifications. They explain that global citizenship can further aggravate marginalization if approaches to make the world a global community are based on top-down dominant methods. In the quest to decolonize oppressive systems, embrace diversity, achieve integration, restore justice and advance human solidarity, global citizenship must aim to amplify the voices of marginalized people. Global citizens should recognize that they are not truly free until everyone else, especially oppressed people are free. Recognizing that every individual's voice matters and providing respectable and meaningful help to marginalized people are key in fostering global citizenship. In his 1996 speech at Teachers College Columbia, Daisaku Ikeda stated three embodiments of global citizenship. He stated as follows:

- The wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living.

- The courage not to fear or deny difference, but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures, and to grow from encounters with them.
- The compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places.

Taking a stand against oppression automatically means fighting against a system that perpetuates injustices around the world. Global citizens must examine their positionality in systems that foster and thrive on injustices. Global citizens who belong to the numerical majority in a society automatically enjoy benefits from unjust systems explicitly and implicitly. For instance, because heterosexuality is considered the standard sexual orientation, heterosexuals benefit from societal acceptance like healthcare systems and legal protection. Reevaluating one's positionality will enable them to have a critical sense of their role in creating a just world.

It is also important to be well abreast with global issues and news concerning marginalized people around the world. The internet provides access to resources, ranging from queer and feminist theories, to blogs and videos that have been curated by women and the LGBT+ community in Ghana. Reading, watching and engaging widely with these resources wide will enable people to gain an insight on exactly how power dynamics work to discredit the lives of marginalized people. There are respective women's right and LGBTQI organizations that work both online and offline to create social change in Ghana. A typical example is Marie Stopes International, a healthcare organization that offers contraception and safe abortion services to Ghanaian women in deprived areas. Global citizens need to proactively search for and support such organizations. The use of social media is also a way to enhance solidarity and global citizenship; through spreading awareness, joining campaigns and sharing the stories of marginalized people Mehra et al., 2004). Makiguchi (1989) in their book *Education for Creative Living, Ideas and Proposals of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi* state that:

> "If education is to achieve its purpose of fostering the abilities of students to create value toward the well-being of all of society as well as themselves, it must diversify its efforts into three methodological areas: the nurturing of virtue, of benefit, and beauty. Each constitutes but one side of the complete human personality, this kind of threefold education is a necessity" (P. 50).

It is important not to limit education to the classroom. Education in its broader context occurs everywhere and is never-ending. Human rights denial of

oppressed minorities inhibits the development of potentials of all human beings. A truly democratic society fosters an environment that allows its members to explore their potentials with emphasis on these three elements or similar contextual ones. The happiness and freedom of each member of a society is the happiness of all of society. Conventionalism as it stands now stifles the growth process of oppressed minorities, therefore, inhibiting their ability to contribute creatively and fully to their societies. In Ghana, women, gender expansive people and sexual minorities are forced to conform to a system that actively excludes their humanity. This lack of empathy silences the voices of these minority groups and ultimately, inhibits them from fully actualizing their potential. To create value, education should lead human beings into recognizing their full potentials (Heffron, 2018). Structures including so-called democratic ones does the complete opposite by upholding systems that thrive on conformity. In a bigger context, these structures even stifle the personal development of the people who defend them because it facilitates narrowmindedness.

Makiguchi advocated for the use of community epistemologies and lived experiences of students to foster empowerment (Gebert, 2009; Gebert & Goulah, 2009). He believed that children, through the knowledge rooted in their lived experiences are already empowered. In her empowerment analogy at TedxSussexUni in 2019, Kelechi Okafor shared a story of her time in a Special Forces Program in South Africa. She shared that she and other trainees were made to run up a hill with heavy backpacks in a chilly weather to spend the night on top of the hill. She asserted that they slept through the cold with their backpacks as their pillows and were only told that everything they needed for the night were in their backpacks. She concluded by comparing the backpack to the untapped power people have in real life. Living in oppressive systems, where survival is the order of the day, sometimes distracts people from the power they have. For this very reason, it is important to recognize and respect the lived experiences of marginalized people before anything else. Practitioners of Soka Education need to recognize that it is their responsibility to foster humane environments for themselves and all human beings they come into contact with, not because of personal benefits but because that's the human thing to do. In Ghana, in the quest to support women, sexual minorities and gender non-conforming people, all collaborative efforts should actively and intentionally focus specifically on these groups. Although they are constantly dehumanized, oppressed minorities continue to display their resistance simply by providing safe spaces and taking the burden to educate the public about why their

humanity matters. It is salient, therefore, to acknowledge the resistance of oppressed groups and center their voices in all collaborative efforts.

While it may take a while for Ghana's so-called democratic system and traditions to be decolonized, Soka educators as global citizens can and should aim to collaborate with the oppressed minority to provide them with the support they need to make their lives a little less easier. Some ways to do that can be sharing fundamental resources; facilitating safe healthcare environments for marginalized women, sexual minorities and gender-expansive people; Spreading awareness and educating the public by participating in active campaigns both online and offline. Because democratic systems benefit the majority, allies can use their privilege to advocate for the rights of the oppressed. Global allies can be the bridge that links gender expansive people, sexual minorities and marginalized women to opportunities worldwide. Daily interventions, as little as creating safe spaces for members of the LGBTQI+ communities and marginalized women in public can go a long way to create change (Solodiuk, 2016). Active participation in campaigns and protests organized by minority-led leads can also be a way to advocate for the rights of minorities. Global allies can also help fight injustice by donating to LGBTQI+ communities and marginalized women. Soka education as a way of life means prioritizing the dignity of life in every given circumstance.

This paper has explored the paradoxes of democracy; particularly, how it promotes the exclusion and marginalization of women and the LGBTQI+ community in Ghana. It has also explained the democratization process of Ghana post-independence, which was heavily influenced by the British democratic system. The paper has identified two particular groups that are severely marginalized by Ghana's current democratic system; women and the LGBTQI+ community. Finally, this paper has discussed how Soka education as a social justice movement, through the principles of global citizenship and empowerment can help support marginalized women and the LGBTQI+ communities in Ghana.

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Value creating education philosophy and the womanist discourses of African American women educators

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ABSTRACT

The paper documents the initiative of two African American women educators who have utilized these theoretical approaches to solve the educational challenges in their respective communities. Marva Collins and Corla Hawkins decided to build schools in their own communities after realizing that the public schools were not equipped to educate minorities. The story of these two women demonstrates that individuals can address systemic injustices in their communities. Collins and Hawkins were not wealthy. What they possessed was a passion for helping others. Their example can inspire more individuals to take steps using liberating philosophies, such as value-creating education and womanist approaches in education, to transform the state of education in their communities.

Keywords: Achievement Gap, African American, Care, Community Development, Societal Inequalities, Soka Education, Womanist.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have written extensively about the educational challenges in predominantly minority, especially African American, communities in the U.S. (see Witherspoon, 1987; Brittain & Kozlak, 2007). Educational inequities have led to a learning crisis in brown and black communities, which is reflected in an achievement gap between African Americans and Whites. This learning crisis has left many children of color behind (Witherspoon, 1987). The urgent nature of the problem calls for new approaches and strong community participation in the efforts aimed at solving the crisis. This paper introduces two educational theories that can help turn around low performing schools. Those left behind have a bleaker economic future, poorer health outcomes, and unstable family situations (see Ferguson, Bovaird, & Mueller 2007; Frisvold & Golberstein, 2013). The paper documents the initiative of two African American women educators who have utilized these theoretical approaches to solve the educational challenges in their respective communities. Marva Collins and Corla Hawkins decided to build schools in their own communities after realizing that the public schools were not equipped to educate minorities. The story of these two women demonstrates that individuals can address systemic injustices in their communities. Collins and Hawkins were not wealthy. What they possessed was a passion for helping others. Their example can inspire more individuals to take steps using liberating philosophies, like value-creating education and womanist approaches in education, to transform the state of education in their communities.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. Section II presents the problem statement. In this section, I highlight the extent of the learning crisis globally before narrowing the conversation to issues that also impact African American communities. Part III introduces the Womanist philosophy and practices that have inspired the work of both Collins and Hawkins. These are student-centered approaches to learning that have resulted in the adoption of a culture of care and social justice as its central focus of praxis. The two philosophies utilize humanistic approaches in education. Section IV tells the story of two women who took action to address the learning crisis in their communities, highlighting how these philosophies have informed their efforts and work. The conclusion, in Section V, discusses how I intend to expand on this initial project.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In a 2013 report called *The Global Learning Crisis*, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) argue

that a significant majority of students currently enrolled in school are not learning (UNESCO, 2013). UNESCO Institute of Statistics estimates that as many as 617 million children find themselves in this situation (UIS, 2017). In other words, 6 out of 10 school children and adolescents worldwide are not achieving the minimum proficiency levels in mathematics and reading (UIS, 2017). About 200 million young people leave school without acquiring the skills they need to excel in society; an estimated 775 million adults – a significant majority of whom are women – lack the most basic reading and writing skills globally (UNESCO, 2013). The World Bank Group (2018) indicates that over 80% of second-grade students in Malawi, India, Uganda, Kenya, and Ghana cannot read a single word of a short text. According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report team (2014), the global learning crisis costs governments about $128 billion annually.

This problem is a worldwide phenomenon that affects both developed and developing nations. However, within-country analysis of the problem in the U.S., Ghana, and Nepal shows that the situation of the disadvantaged is much worse (Heto, Odari, & Sunu, 2020; World Bank Group, 2018). The crisis affects individuals from low-income backgrounds disproportionately. For instance, many students from a low socioeconomic background in the United States perform at a lower level than most of their peers from good socioeconomic backgrounds. In 1966, the Coleman Committee, which was commissioned by the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to study how to equalize the educational opportunities for children from different racial, religious, and national origins in the United States, brought to light the significant disparities in the learning outcomes that exist between students from diverse backgrounds. The Coleman Report (1966) shows that in both math and reading, the average 12th-grade black student placed in the 13th percentile of the score distribution. A similar study was conducted 50 years later, in 2016, reveals that the gap persists, albeit with small improvements (Camera, 2016). The average 12th-grade black student only placed in the 19th and 22nd percentile for math and reading, respectively (Camera, 2016). In 2015, 47% Asian and 32% White 12th-grade students achieved NAEP mathematics proficiency scores compared to only 12% Hispanic and 7% black students (NAEP, 2015a). The percentage of students at or above proficiency levels in English is slightly better than Mathematics but not by much. NAEP (2015b) reveals that 17% Blacks and 25% Hispanics 12th-grade students are at or above proficiency in NAEP reading compared to 46% White and 49% Asian students. The White – Hispanic achievement gap in Civic education among 12th graders have narrowed from where it was

in 1998 compared to 2010, but there have been no significant changes in Geography and Economics.

While not encouraging, the data shows that we are making some progress towards eliminating racial and ethnic achievement gaps. However, Hansen, Mann Levesque, Quintero, and Valant (2018) argue that the lack of significant improvement is due to poverty. In other words, economic inequality can explain a substantial part of the achievement gap and why we have failed to close the deficit over the last five decades. Hansen et al. (2018) support their argument by showing how the achievement gaps can be found by accounting for students' eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, our best proxy for poverty, which has not changed much. There is a racial component in the income-based achievement gap in the United States. These two variables, race and income, are closely correlated in America. However, the work of Hansen et al. (2018) shows that the problems causing these gaps are broader and more intractable. There are many ongoing initiatives within the Black community to find solutions to the persistent learning gap. This paper focuses on two of such efforts. In the next section, I introduce the theory and philosophy that informs the two projects.

THE TWO PHILOSOPHIES

Value-Creating Education

Daisaku Ikeda, a prolific Japanese writer, is the leading scholar in the value-creating education community. However, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, an elementary school teacher and principal, developed the value-creating education pedagogy. He wrote the book, entitled *Soka Kyouikugaku Takei* (trans: The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy), in which he advocates for a new philosophy and approach to teaching and learning. His mentee, Josei Toda, edited and published the book in 1930. Together, Makiguchi and Toda started the value-creating education grassroots movement to offer an alternative to the militarized education system that the Japanese government forced upon its citizens. They initiated the movement to create agentic, and critical thinking individuals to challenge the external authorities that were imposing restrictions on them. (Ikeda, 2015). Makiguchi believed that the purpose of education was to help students learn how to manifest unshakeable happiness in their lives and in the lives of others (Ikeda, 2015, p. 85). He believed students could do so as they gained insight into the affairs of society and a genuine connection with the environment and people's humanity, allowing them to consciously participate in the communal life of their societies (Goulah & Ito, 2012). Based on Ikeda's assertions in dialogues

on Value-Creating education, human education is needed to liberate learners from unconscious living enabling them to connect with others and the world around them. According to Ikeda (2010), Makiguchi believes that a critical understanding of social injustices and how social institutions function, is vital to practicing value-creating teaching.

The lived experience of Daisaku Ikeda demonstrates the transformative and life-affirming impact of the value-creating approach to education. Ikeda transformed his illness and hopelessness as a youth into a purpose-driven life because of Toda's mentoring, one of the pioneers of value-creating education. Ikeda met Toda when he was 19 years old after the Second World War. Like many people in Japan at that time, he was disillusioned by the war and had questions about the purpose of life. The war had interrupted his education, and his life-prospects were bleak. Meeting Toda changed the trajectory of his life. Toda taught him, privately, using value-creating pedagogy. In describing his training, Ikeda stated, "For some ten years, every day before work, Josei Toda would teach me a curriculum of history, literature, philosophy, economics, science and organization theory" (Ikeda, 2010, p. 6). Ikeda's quote reflects on the interdisciplinary education he received from Toda. Out of appreciation for the excellent tutelage he received, he created opportunities for other young people to obtain a similar education. The Soka school system consists of schools from kindergarten to universities spread across three continents and seven countries. The goal of Ikeda is to create a ripple effect to contribute to the happiness and development of others in their local communities. He has received over 300 honorary doctorates and professorships from universities worldwide for his social justice, education, and peace work.

In this section, I offer an overview of the origins and goals of the value-creating education pedagogy. I used the life story of Daisaku Ikeda to illustrate the transformative potential of value-creating education. The next section will review the womanist theory and epistemology as it relates to Makiguchi's value-creation education and Ikeda's concept of humanitarian competition.

Womanist Theory

Womanism is a term coined by Alice Walker, the author of "Womanist Prose," to represent an ontological standpoint. She uses womanism to describe the cultural, historical, and political positionality of African American women, a group that has experienced slavery, segregation, sexism, and classism in the U.S. (Perkins, 1983; Collins, 1991; Higginbotham, 1992). Like value-creating education, the womanist theory is

an embodiment of humanism, which seeks the liberation of all people, not just the oppressed (Collins, 1990). Womanist teachers use systemic injustices as educational tools for liberating their students (Bartolome, 1994). They help students understand how different systems of oppression affect them daily, allowing them to rediscover their agency. Edwards, McArthur, and Russell-Owens (2016) argue that the humanizing work of womanist educators occurs in an environment that builds positive self-awareness, allows people to develop connections outside of research and classrooms, spotlights the voices and lived experiences of marginalized groups, and creates a space for being-ness that promotes listening and active engagement.

Not all African American teachers are womanists, and not all womanists, are African American, however. Womanism is a politicized appropriation of some black cultural values. The womanist approach is political because womanist educators consciously take on a maternal role in the educational environment to help students develop the skills they need to excel at navigating the harsh realities of racism, sexism, and other "isms" pervasive in society (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2013). Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2013) calls it an enactment of political clarity because the teachers understand the risk involved in teaching the political, but they engage in this labor of love for the sake of leaving the world better for human beings. Since it is a risky and socially constructed approach to being and teaching, individual educators choose to adopt it or not.

Some educators choose to become womanist educators because they see themselves as both ethically and ethnically responsible for fostering a new generation of humanistic leaders, who would dismantle humanly created systems of oppression while creating the opportunity for those who have been oppressed to become happy. Many successful Black women educators exemplify a Womanist epistemology (Fine, 1991; Beauboeuf -Lafontant, 2013), caring for students in a manner that resembles mothering, sometimes with tough love. In order to accomplish their goals, of helping students attain happiness, some of the guidelines that Womanist educators adopt are:

1. Reject a hidden curriculum about race and ability despite socially constructed expectations of subpar performance among students of color.
2. Believe in and confirm the talent and potential of every student, while expecting academic excellence, is key to critical caring with political clarity and color consciousness.
3. Practicing political clarity and color conscious caring without one's own community is arguably easier than doing so with students from different cultural or racial backgrounds.

The womanist approach shares the same social justice orientation as value-creating education. They want to liberate learners and nurture them into individuals who will consciously take part in the communal activities of their societies. It is a commitment to help everyone, especially those that are vulnerable, to live fulfilled lives, irrespective of how they define it. In some sense, it is to ensure that all people have the knowledge and wisdom to resist attempts to strip them of their dignity. Womanist teachers see themselves as dynamic agents for social justice because they define themselves as having a sense of connection with and responsibility to the human struggle for freedom and justice. Womanist educators often reconcile themselves to the paradox that "peace is the struggle" -- that is, "life is lived on the edge, and that's when the best self emerges" (Beauboeuf, 1997, p. 150). Put simply, womanist educators realize that they can become the best version of themselves through dealing with and overcoming the systemic injustices that construct their lived realities. Educators, who care about the happiness of their students, do not avoid difficulties; instead, they embrace it as part of their mission (Toynbee & Ikeda, 2007).

THE TWO APPROACHES IN PRACTICE

In this section, I will tell the story of two women who utilize womanist and value-creating education approaches to improve the quality of education in their community. Chicago educator, Marva Collins, established her school for children in the projects, out of frustration with the public school system. After spending several hours and days searching for a school for her children, Collins learned more about the poor state of education in her community. Her experience introduced her to the life of students of color in public schools. Students living in the projects had to deal with additional social problems, like poverty and neighborhood crimes, that the school system was unable to help the students navigate (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2013). "Collins realized through her search that the problem was pervasive, meaning she could not escape it. So she decided to provide an alternative; that is the kind of education she wanted for her children" (Collins, 1991).

According to Collins, she acted on her convictions to create an alternative school for students living in the projects. She reasoned that what they needed was an education that validated their lived experiences that made them feel their lives mattered (Collins, 1991). Their objectives were consistent with womanist and value-creating approaches to education. Driven by her desire to help, Collins started a school, the Daniel Hale Williams Westside Preparatory School, in her house. She devoted her time to educating

her students for the sake of their lifelong happiness. She also spent her free time advocating and working to solve problems that beset urban school systems. In 1979, Westside Preparatory School gained national prominence following a story and interview on the television show *60 Minutes*. Collins, who was considered an unorthodox educator, used her interview to spotlight the educational problems in black communities.

The secret of Collins' success was her desire to contribute to the happiness of her students, and her willingness to connect with them as human beings. As she asserted in her book, describing her teaching methods, "I didn't know anything about educational theory, and I have often thought it worked in my favor" (Collins, 1991, p. 47). Without preconceived ideas, she attended to her students as individuals, talked, listened, and identified their individual needs. Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2013) contends that womanist educators understand that "oppression is an interlocking system, providing all people with varying degrees of penalty and privilege" (p. 374). Beauboeuf-Lafontant is referring to how systems of oppression have different impacts on people. As a result, educators working with children from subjugated communities need to have the skills to identify and differentiate their lessons for all students.

THE PRACTICE OF MATERNAL CARING

"*In both the lay and academic analyses of Exemplary Teachers committed to social justice, the maternal image is particularly visible in the pedagogy of African American women teachers* (*Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2013, p.* 374).

Collins viewed her ability to act as a mother to her students as a strength rather than a weakness. Caring for students, like a mother, enabled her to make decisions with a clear sense of purpose, which is to create a structure in which she could educate and shelter her students/children from oppressive systems. Indeed, in the Ten Teaching Commandments that she developed for her own faculty, the first reads, "Thou shalt love the students as you would love your own children" (Collins, 1992, p. 178). The maternal approach to education from a womanist perspective is an empowering tool for both male and female teachers. "Rather than envision mothering primarily in terms of women's individual relationships with men and children … the African American teachers regarded mothering as a communal responsibility" (Casey, 1990). Casey's introduction to the African idea that it takes a village to raise a child and that children are a gift to the whole community and, therefore, the entire community needs to work together to care for and nurture them. The communal approach to care, other mothering, provides the space for students

and teachers to develop trust-based relationships and contribute to each other's happiness (Watson, 2018).

Similarly, Corla Hawkins, another Chicago teacher, exemplifies the womanist and value-creating approaches to education. Like Collins, Hawkins began her school, Recovering the Gifted Child Academy, after seeing many children from low-income backgrounds fail because the public-school system did not provide them the kind of intervention and resources they needed. She embraced her role as an educator and a mother figure in the life of her students, earning her the nickname "Momma Hawk." Her students, mostly middle-school-aged, affectionately called her "Momma Hawk" because she cared about their emotional and psychological well-being in addition to their intellectual well-being (Valente, 1996).

Hawkins' commitment to education emanates from her desire to be an ally of those among us who are vulnerable. She noted, "I felt I could take the dysfunctional family structure these children were used to and replace it with a new family structure that stresses success, personal achievement and self-esteem. God gave me a dream - to take care of children of rejection" (Valente, 1996, p. 375). This quote provides an insight into Hawkins' motivation for starting her school. She described it as a God-given dream, which implies that she sees it as a noble mission that a divine being conferred on her. Taking care of students from difficult family situations gave her the satisfaction that she is fulfilling her life purpose. The quote also offers insight into Hawkins' philosophy of education. It shows that she sees her work as providing a nurturing family for her students. School is an extension of the family, not an isolated institution that produces robotic individuals. This view aligns with Makiguchi's advice to teachers to dethrone themselves and work with students as equal members of the human family (Heffron, 2018).

Womanist educators develop high expectations for their students and work to make students believe in themselves. Hawkins believed in her students and found different ways to communicate that to them. A former student revealed that she helped them see their potential. Foster (1997) explains that, "Having a teacher who believed in him helped him focus on his priorities while avoiding the social problems in his segregated neighborhood" (p. 379). Similarly, Collins expressed her appreciation for her students often, and consciously tried to find something admirable about each student so that she could compliment them (Collins & Tamarkin, 1990). She was convinced that any student, even a slow learner, could become an excellent student in the company of a good teacher since good teachers make students realize their inherent potential and help them develop the tools for polishing and manifesting them (Collins, 1990).

CONCLUSION

Scholars have, for a long time, documented the appalling state of education in black and brown communities in America extensively. As these studies show, the poor state of education, coupled with the precarious financial situations of black and brown people, undermines the ongoing efforts to close the achievement gap. While students, from privileged backgrounds receive better training, and earn better scores on proficiency tests than their black and brown peers, this essay shows that educators are taking action on their own to solve the problem. These individuals are utilizing different approaches and theories. This article discusses two such approaches. The story of the two women discussed in this essay offers proof that individuals can make a difference. Collins and Hawkins were not wealthy. What they had was a passion for helping others. We can learn from them the spirit of service to one's local community. Their example can inspire more individuals to take steps using liberating philosophies, like value-creating education approaches and womanist education to transform the state of education in their communities. However, in order to succeed they will need to develop a critical understanding of the problem(s) and a genuine commitment to social justice. I intend to assess the effectiveness of such efforts. I will study them to understand what motivates the people, how they approach their work, what makes their methods unique and compelling.

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The *Okule* Cult Education and Practice in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Using oral interviews, archival sources, observation, and published materials, we discuss the recruitment and training processes of the Okule Cult, an all-female cult. We analyze information obtained from the Nawuris of Northern Ghana to give insights into the relevance of Okule education practices to communities in Ghana. Knowledge about how members of the Okule cult educate new inductees and younger members advances our understanding of the continued importance of African Traditional Education. It would aid efforts to decolonize education on the African continent. The findings of our study can help educational authorities provide a balanced and holistic educational experience to learners.

Keywords: Balai, Chankpana, Education, Environment, Guan, Kiliji, Nawuri, Okule.

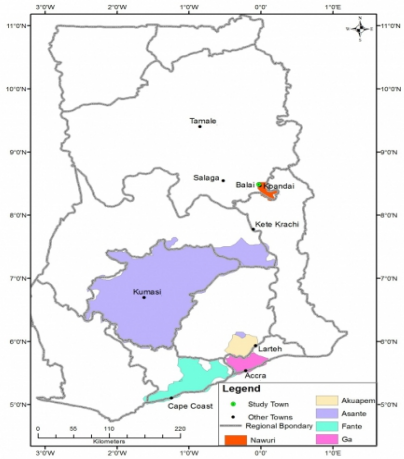
INTRODUCTION

Ross (2004), in her paper on indigenous art and knowledge systems, points out the tensions between pre-colonial and post-colonial forms of education in Ghana. She indicates that the so-called post-colonial forms of education emphasize reading, mathematics, and other subjects, contributing to an excessive focus on completion and examination results. Unlike the 'modern' forms of education, the indigenous system of education developed as a system of teaching and learning that served the needs of a non-literate people. Communities designed it to impart their accumulated wisdom, knowledge, values, beliefs, and attitudes to the younger generation. Boutte, Johnson, and Muki (2019) point out that intergenerational, local, indigenous knowledge still resides in cultural memories. Through time, African knowledge systems whiles transformed have not been abandoned and are readily apparent- particularly in rural communities in Africa. Such knowledge systems have adapted to the times and continue to help societies solve pressing social issues and challenges.

In this paper, we carry the discussion further by using the *Okule* cult as a case study. Our analysis demonstrates that despite the importance attached to western forms of education in Ghana, the *Okule* education system, as an indigenous educational system, is equally relevant and has contributed to the enhancement of society, especially among Guans of Northern Ghana. We conclude by highlighting some of the cult's challenges.

THE STUDY AREA AND METHODS

We conducted the study in several communities in the Northern and Volta Regions of Ghana, West Africa. The notable towns and villages that served as the research site include Kpandai, Balai, Nkanchina, Katiejeli, Kete Krachi, Keri, Shiare, Lesenai, and Nkwanta. Ethnic profiles of these communities composed mainly of Guans, particularly Nawuri, Achode, Krachi, Ntrubo, Chala, and Adele. It is essential to indicate, however, that our work in the Nawuri area, particularly in Balai Village, was more extensive than other towns. A substantial portion of the analysis in this paper reflects insights and perspectives from Balai. The reason for settling on Balai is that they have maintained much of their traditions compared to other communities.



Study area: Map adapted from Emmanuel Akyeampong and Samuel A. Ntewusu ‘‘Rum, Gin and Maize: Deities and Ritual Change in the Gold Coast during the Atlantic Era (16th century to 1850)” *Afriques*, vol. 5, 2014, p. 2.

As non-members of the cult, the elders perform elaborate rites and rituals each time we visit before answering our question. These rituals involved water, a calabash full of herbs harvested from the bush, a local alcoholic beer called *pito, a*nd other metal objects. The leaders mix the materials and use the mixture to offer traditional prayers in the form of libation before giving us the calabash and water to wash our head, face, and feet (Ntewusu & Ntewusu, 2020). Rather than a detailed questionnaire prepared on a piece of paper, we chose to ask questions based on our previous observations of activities in the cult. With this unstructured format, the research had a natural flow that yielded very detailed results. We were aware that *Okule*, as a group, holds onto many cultural and traditional practices; therefore, carrying a piece of paper with questions could interfere with the process and protocols regarding information delivery. It would have created a barrier between authors and the research community.

Although the Okule cult has a long history, at the moment we were unable to locate any document on them in Ghana’s national archives. However, there were files regarding some traditional religious practices and practitioners including the history of deities that provided insights into traditional religion in Ghana. For example, there was detailed information on shrines, such as *Kankpe*, *Brukum*, and *Dente*. Those files gave us insights into the religious landscape in the study area. The Roman Catholic Church had an organization called Tamale Institute for Cross-Cultural Studies (TICCS), which had some records on the cult. A Roman Catholic priest, in the 1980s,

commissioned about five parishioners to research into the phenomenon of the *Okule* cult in the area. The research report, which was about five pages, had more to do with the origin and membership of the cult. The information from TICCS was useful in understanding the history and geographical spread of the *Okule* cult.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE *OKULE* CULT

Okule is a corruption of *Okuoku,* which is a form of greeting among members of the *Okule* cult (TICCS, *Okule* papers, 1980). Historically, the cult is said to have originated from Atakpame in Togo. It spread from there to Anyagna and other parts of Togo and Ghana. But recent research reveals that the *Okule* cult has its roots from Nigeria. Among devotees in Ghana, they call their deity *Chankpana,* a corruption of *Shankpana,* the name of a deity among the Yoruba of Nigeria. There are linguistic similarities between the cult language and Yoruba. Kropp-Dakubu refers to the *Okule* language as one that has been 'Yoruboid' (Kropp-Dakubu, 2013).

Our field observations and insights gained from various discussions lead us to the conclusion that several factors, marriage, migration, and trade, can explain the presence of the cult in Ghana. Trade and migration of the Yoruba could have played a vital role in the spread of the Okule Cult. Regarding trade, there had been an extended network of trade systems that connected many communities and trade centers in West Africa. For example, the trans-Saharan trade was a major mode through which trade articles, such as gold, cowries, hides, salt, kola nuts, and ironware, circulated within the sub-region. The circulation of trade articles also came along with migration and the foundation of communities. In Ghana, such trades led to the establishment of migrant residential communities called *zongos* (Ntewusu, 2012).

The composition of *zongos* in Ghana in the pre-colonial period had ethnicities such as Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Zambrama, Mande, just to mention but few. In the Nawuri area, for example, there was such a thriving community in Balai called *Sabon Gyida,* which in Hausa means 'New House' or 'New Settlement.' Residents of these communities were mostly Yoruba and Hausa traders from Nigeria. The community was abandoned in 1969 following the Aliens Compliance Order, which was then introduced by then Prime Minister Kofi Abrefa Busia, which saw the repatriation of a number of people from the Sahel and Nigeria to their countries of origin (Pel, 1971). The Yoruba, both at the time that they were in Balai and after departure, did not have so much ritual or linguistic connection to influence the cult. In the same manner, the *Okule* language does not appear to be based on known language matrix of the area like Nawuri, Konkomba, or Gonja, that is, no other

languages were found in the women's linguistic repertoire (Brindle et al., 2015).

Even though *Okule* members dispute the influence of Yoruba on their language, they admit that the most important legacy that *Sabon Gyda* had in Balai and many other areas in the Nawuri area is its influence on their 'pass out' ritual; they use materials that can be traced to the Sabon Gyda culture.[1] These material, include cowries, maria Theresa coins, British pence, and Yoruba beads. These objects were generally called *ewo* in Kiliji or *afule* in Nawuri, which means money. The argument is that even though the Yoruba community may not have been directly involved in the recruitment and training process, they provided the material essential to the cult's functioning. As Birgit Meyer and Houtman points out, there can be no religion without material objects (Meyer and Houtman, 2012).

DISCUSSION

Recruitment

Before becoming a member, an individual goes through recruitment and training. Recruitment is open to all females. There are about two key means through which people join the cult. The first is through voluntary or free will; the next has to do with possession. If any female wants to be a member voluntarily, she will first place her hands on the head and start shouting the words *jei, jei, jei,* while running to the residence of the cult leader - that is the *Olami*. On arrival the *Olami* will send for other senior members of the cult, libation is poured to *Chankpana* to accept the newcomer. This kind of recruitment is common in households where mothers, aunts, and sisters are already part of the cult. The recruit would have had enough time to study and observe actions of the cult members in their household and reflect on the issue over time before deciding to join. With recruitment through possession, the spirit of the *Chankpana* deity enters or takes over the individual who runs to the *Olami*'s house. The individual will also utter the words *jei, jei, jei*, but it would be involuntary. What marks the difference between voluntary and involuntary has to do with place and behavior. With involuntary, the individual could be possessed from anywhere. It could be in the market or on the farm or any other place. In the case of the voluntary, the individual would usually be in the house and start shouting. Behavior wise, with the voluntary, it becomes easier for the recruit to calm down after libation. Whereas

[1] 'Pass out or passing out' is a term used in Ghana for any graduation ceremony held for apprentices who have gone through a period of training.

involuntary, the recruit is usually restless and could run around the community and throw herself on the ground with the least available chance. The *Olami* will have to continuously recite incantations to calm down the restlessness and keep the person in place.

There are two minor sources of recruitment that we also need to be aware of. If a person got possessed during pregnancy, once the baby is born and she is a female, the baby automatically becomes a member of the cult. But to be fully accepted, she needs to learn the language as well. Also, after the passing away of one of the cult leaders, the cult chooses a member of her family to take over her leadership position.

Recruitment usually begins in June at the start of the rainy season. Training starts in July and ends around September or October. The reason for this period is that from July, the 'lean' season, usually characterized by insufficient food, would have been over. From July till December, most of the crops would have been ready for harvesting, especially the staple food yam. The availability of food makes the training more accessible. If not, the *Olami,* as well as members, will have to find ways and means to feed them. Also, there is a yearly visit by *Chankpana* around September or October, which is celebrated as a festival. Such visits allow the new devotees to experience and participate in activities during the festivities. Finally, as part of their training, the newcomers are supposed to understand the ecological profile of their respective areas. During this period, the vegetation is green thereby allowing them to know more about flora and fauna in those areas.

Training

The formal acceptance process begins after recruiting a number of young women, which usually ranges from a minimum of four to a maximum of two hundred. The initial process starts when the leaders take away all the cloths that the recruits wore to the *Olami*'s house. The fabrics are considered unclean henceforth. The recruits now wear only cowries around their waist, ankles, wrists, and necks. Those who could afford smaller bells could buy and tie them on their ankles. The bells signal their presence as they walk around the community. They do not cover their top and have breasts exposed. They, however, wear a tiny 'G-String-like' cloth called *Lolo,* which is just enough to cover their private parts. The *Olami* officially perform rites to begin the training. She gives the group a collective name- *Aleri,* which means newcomers or novices. They abandon their ancestral or day names and are also supposed to distinguish themselves in the way they walk. For example, they are not supposed to walk too fast and are not supposed to raise their heads when walking. They always have to look down when walking. They are not

supposed to look back, left, or right, and their palms have to face forward as they walk. They are not supposed to respond to any call from any member of the society except members of the cult and are equally not to participate in any social activities in the community. If they want to greet the elderly in the community, they do so while kneeling. Such respectable gesticulations usually attract some monetary compensation from the elders.

Even though they are regarded as newcomers and collectively referred to as *Aleri,* the first to arrive for training is given the name *Onimgbo,* and the last person is also called *Nkianyi.* These two names have interesting implications for training and discipline in the cult.

As already noted, an essential aspect of the training process is language education. The recruits are supposed to speak the cult language called *Kiliji.* All activities are done in that language - daily communication, singing, ritual performances, and divination. Since the training period is an essential rite of passage for recruits, all the senior leadership of the cult participates in the various activities. The leaders, include *Orlami*, the overall head; *Onuagyimgyi*, senior cult members or council of elders; *Omaseibo,* the diviner; *Olami Akpakya*, the disciplinarian or commander in the cult - she is highly respected and feared by all members; *Olikukuami,* the lead singer; *Alagbe,* the drummer; and *Ola Gongong,* the gong beater or public announcer. Sometimes old members and recently graduated ones also come around to help with the training. They start off with names of objects, colors, and verbs, such as come, go, eat, take, and so on. Much later, they go into complex issues, such as the construction of sentences, among others. Each week, they test the competence of the recruits as to whether they are having a better grasp of the language or not.

Informants indicate that learning the language sometimes is not too difficult because it is an immersion program. As soon as the training starts, all the people are not supposed to speak their native languages again. They speak *kiliji* or *kitaba,* as they sometimes referred to the language, until they complete their training. Being inundated with words daily facilitates the process of learning and appreciation of words and construction of sentences. At times funny names are introduced to facilitate learning. For instance, they could give funny names, such as *Agyanakuli,* which means elephant, *Tugulu* - the short one or *Gugu* - the tall one, to the recruits.

At the time of training, they are supposed to stay in the house of the *Olami*. Family members could visit and present gifts, mainly foodstuff and money. Such offertories went into a shared pool and used to prepare meals for the entire group and their instructors or mentors. When family visit, they can speak any indigenous language to their relative who is under training, but

she cannot respond in her native language. This usually creates some interesting drama during visits. Family members, especially those who do not understand the new language, often become confused, causing misunderstanding between locals and members of the cult. Recruits, at times, resort to gestures and sign language to facilitate understanding. If a recruit in the process mistakenly speaks any other language, the person needs to recant and go to the *Olami* for confession and 'cleansing of the mouth.' This usually involves libation to *Chankpana* to have mercy and forgive the new devotee. Aside from words and sentences, they are also taught how to sing in *kiliji*. Most of the songs usually refer to the environment, the spirit world, and other social issues. Trainers focus on language education and music initially because verbal communication and songs are critical to the functioning of the cult.

Aside from language, other forms of training include home science, especially cooking and how to keep a home, farm work, brewing of local beer, local geography, and the environment. Indeed the last point is very important to their physical and spiritual life. After acquiring the basic vocabulary, they send them to the bush, where they learn local flora and fauna. The bush experience could last for several hours daily or at times two or more consecutive days. This is done almost frequently for over a month. The experience in the bush enables them to know how the spirit world interacts with humans. They also are taught the various uses of animals and plants. This bush experience culminates in a series of taboos, including a ban on killing or harming reptiles, especially the python, which is considered very sacred. According to their oral tradition, since *Chankpana* is not always available, its power has been delegated to the python to protect all *Okule* members.

During training, recruits observe other taboos. For example, they do not receive gifts from male members of the community, apart from their biological father or foster father. They can receive gifts from any woman. As an all-female cult, they consider gifts from men as a form of pollution - *enesi*. They also ban sex during the period of training for the same reason. The only fluids that should go into their body at the time of training are water and beverages, not semen. Members of the society are also not supposed to touch the head of new devotees during the period of training. It is the belief that *Chankpana* inhabits the head during this entire period of training, so touching the head has serious spiritual implications for the trainee. Those who touch the head are given a fine of drinks and a sheep. At a practical level, since much of the things taught must be committed to memory, it is assumed that touching the head could have a distractive effect on the trainees.

After about three or four months of training, the trainees would have completed the rituals required and would have to 'graduate'/pass out. Usually, a specific date is chosen. In Nawuri, is the day is called *Kikpaa.*[2] In Akan, it is called *Akwasidae. Kikpaa* is a forty to forty-two-day circle. From the time of recruitment until graduation, trainees go through about three to four *Akpaa* (pl). The graduate takes place at the end of the forty-two-day circle. It is usually a day of merrymaking. The graduates start their day by bathing in the river or streams with herbs harvested from the bush and adorn their bodies. They wear white cloth that covers the breast till the knees. They also decorate their ankles, necks, wrists, waist, and head with cowries, beads, and coins. The number of objects tied or hanged around an individual's body conveys their status in the community; people who are respected and admired wear adorn themselves with more objects. Commentaries and phraseologies such as '*Ei* this person is very rich, look at the number of cowries and coins adorning their outfit' are common as the recruits walk majestically in a single file from the river or stream. As they walk, they sing ritual songs while raising their hands in the air and touch their shoulders. They move till they get to a designated area in the town, usually around a *ficus* tree – *kilampo,* where they form a circle and begin dancing. After a while, they kneel, and the *Olami* with a scepter comes around and 'literally sits' on each recruit - it is one of the critical stages through which the *olami* pass or transfer the divinity to them. After that rite, sacrifices are made to accept them as members of the cult finally. On the day of graduation, they abandon the name *Aleri* and take new cult names. Members will from hence only call them by the cult names and not the name given to them at birth.

The new members are allowed to show appreciation to family members through dance and by mimicking their family's occupation, such as farming, hunting, blacksmithing, driving, and teaching. The drummer assigns drum tunes to each member. During public performances, the drummer would use those tunes to pass messages to such individuals. After everything is over, they go back to their homes and revert to their native language, only speaking *kiliji* when they are with members or want to pass on a piece of important information meant for members in public settings. Through the language, they are able to code off some categories of people in the community, particularly male members. But any time *Chankpana* visits them, they speak *kiliji* irrespective of their location. Such visits could last a week or one month. They

[2] *Kikpaa* is singular and *Akpaa* is plural.

consider such visits important as that enables them to keep the language and rituals alive.

Putting knowledge to practice: the *okule* and society

Every society has its cultural knowledge system which is drawn upon to serve society or solve societal problems. The *Okule* cult is an avenue where members accumulate techniques and skills that are used for their survival and the smooth functioning of the communities where they live. In this section, we discuss how the *Okule* cult members utilize the knowledge they gain from their training to contribute to the advancement of their communities. Their cult education helps them develop a sense of purpose and moral value, manage their homes, health, environment, and participate in festivals and war.

One key element in *Okule* membership is the issue of unity and togetherness. Synergic existence or communalism is very central to their activities and life. The close relationship that binds them together promotes the ethos that whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group. They are the most united and organized group so far in all the communities. To promote this unity, they are not supposed to quarrel or harbor any ill-feeling against each other. In the same way, they are supposed to come to the aid of any member. There is evidence of group members coming together to discipline men whose behavior is considered unacceptable in society. Examples include abuse of all kinds, including rape and unguarded hunting, especially the killing of endangered animal species, particularly reptiles. Usually, their actions cannot be reported to the police or sent outside of the community.

In the pre-colonial period, they run a kind of traditional lending scheme called *katubakatuba,* where during farming season, those who have high yielding seeds gave out to members to plant. Upon harvesting, a portion is given to the member that gave out the seeds. When local economies got monetized, they still operated their own lending scheme through what is popularly referred to as *susu*. The *susu* system is a traditional savings system, which is thought to have originated in Nigeria and came to Ghana in the early twentieth century. The *susu* system covers a range of activities known as *susu*, including individual savings collectors, rotating savings and credit associations, and savings and credit "clubs" run by an operator (Awunyo-Vitor, 2015). By this system, they have become less dependent on society. Indeed, there are testimonies of members of communities, particularly men going to them to borrow money to meet their pressing needs. At the death of a member, they all come together to perform the funeral of the dead according to the protocols of the cult. Since funerals are a great deal in Ghana, members

are assured that if they die, even if they do not have any siblings, their funeral would be performed. In Ghana, there is the belief in life after death. Therefore, funerals are not just events that mark the end of an individual's life but also the beginning of another life. If one lived a good life and rendered service to society as in the case of the *Okule* cult, one would become an ancestor. Such a position allows her to be able to intervene in the affairs of the living, especially those in her community.

Also, *Okule* members share the view that going through training makes them very pure and morally upright. According to them, several rules and regulations govern the operations of cult members. These rules keep members from doing evil and causing mischief in society. As we have previously noted, the training offered by the cult was the only mode of education, so they had no competitors when it came to traditional literacy. Members of their society considered them to be an elite group that caught the envy of several people in the community. As a result, many looked up to them as role models. Even today, some members of their communities continues to rely on them for the moral training of children. People turn to them for their children's moral education because they want their children to learn how to respect the elderly and develop clear ethical rules regarding sex.

Furthermore, their home science education help them succeed in their marital life. The *Olami* and several senior members of the cult shared the view that usually in every community until cult members are married off, the rest of the non-Okule women had no chances of getting husbands. For them, it is not only about morality; it is also a question of security. The men feel more secured when they are married to cult members. "There is an added spiritual force in the house that can fight against malevolent spirits, and this is what the men look out for," says the *Olami*'s assistant. One of the informant also noted that "We have an antidote to several spiritual attacks. When I or any family member is under attack, I will take any stick and chant words in it and shout *jaaalo* and hit the ground or any object with it, and definitely, there will be an intervention from *Chankpana*."

Closely related to the issue of morality and intervention in crises is the issue of divination and healing. From interactions with members, it became obvious that almost all the members are introduced into spiritual life during training. The *Omaseibo*, as already pointed, is a diviner herself. She is part of the team that accompanies the trainees into the bush. Their time in the bush allows them to interact with other spirit beings, collectively referred to as *Ayayu*. They are taught to decipher activities of these *Ayayu* using different approaches such as the direction and flow of the wind, the sound from particular animals, and birds. With an understanding of the way the sacred

world operates, they are able to intervene in the spiritual affairs of individuals and community members, especially on issues related to sickness, misfortune, and death, which are usually referred to them for solution or interpretation.

On the issue of sickness and healing informants, indicate that at a point in history, chickenpox had plagued many communities in the area and beyond. *Chankpana* emerged and performed a miracle that healed several people that were afflicted. From the narrative, it is evident that healing and seeking remedies for numerous problems is one of the reasons why people choose to join the cult. Indeed,[several practical elements within the training process support our conclusion. As already noted, in the course of the training, members spend some time in the bush. This period allows them to learn more about how to use herbs and other plants to treat various ailments. Indeed on the day of passing out, usually a calabash full of herbs and water is brought to the community for non-*Okule* members to fetch home for their use. It is believed that the herbs provide healing and solution to numerous problems. Almost every time that the spirit visits the community what they usually call '*Chankpana Kibaa*' on the final day of celebration of the presence of *Chankpana* the same calabash full of herbs is carried about town, and people with all manner of problems come to fetch the water for purposes of healing or resolving their problems.

Usually, community members place a premium on medicinal products from *Okule* members since the cult has diviners as part of their operational and healing system. In most communities in Ghana, the belief is that most sicknesses have spiritual or non-physical elements to them. Various scholars have drawn attention to this fact in their works. For example, Twumasi (2005), in his study on medical systems in Ghana, posits that spirituality plays a major role as far as the concept of healing is concerned. He admits that even though traditional medicine practitioners have a stock of remedies for treating illnesses at various levels, the emphasis is also laid on magico-religious aspects to ensure holistic healing; this is due to religious beliefs that are intricately entwined to social life. In a similar vein, Dove (2010), in his work on traditional health care in Ghana draws attention to the practice where, in addition to herbal remedies, pregnant women in some Ghanaian communities are taught some taboos to help protect the pregnancy from evil spirits. Also, Mohr (2009) reports that among the Akan, illness and misfortune are not perceived just as physical problems. They carry spiritual connotations and cannot be resolved without recourse to the supernatural. As such, whether at an individual or community level, illness or misfortune is believed to come about as a result of an imbalance between the spirit world,

especially ancestors and deities, and the physical world. It is in that context that people prefer the treatment from the *Okule* members.

Still on the issue of healing, the *Okules* define environment degradation as a form of sickness. Each year, they provide, what they term, 'environmental healing' by going into the bush and coming up with new rules and regulations that protect the environment. As already pointed out, in most cases, cult members spend some time in the bush to acquaint themselves with plant and animal life. A yearly return to the forest allows them to take inventory of plants, animals, and insects that are facing extinction. They then devise strategies, such as taboos, to deal with that problem. Indeed one of their songs clearly defines this role:

Song: *Agneniwa ndoye agnenanawanoye agnawakyiluordor*
Ogyeyorwakyikola agna agnawanoye

Translation: The day you come, and you don't meet us, we are at work. The day you come, and you don't meet us. We are behind the bush in the mountain.

As explained by informants, the word at work in the song refers to the recruitment and initiation process. Behind the mountains is used to denote the activities that take place in the sacred forest for the stipulated period in the bush (Awubomu, 2014). Their yearly activities in the bush, leading to the imposition of new environmental rules, have helped maintain a balance between human activities and flora and fauna. In addition to taboos, they have physically intervened to prevent over-cultivation of lands through the ritual of 'basket placement,' which is a form of ban on farming on areas where the basket is placed till the area becomes fertile again. As indicated above, their action is to ensure that people use the land responsibly. If the ecosystem is thrown out of balance, it can affect the communities they inhabit. The role of the environment in providing the community with medicines to curb sicknesses has already been pointed out. Additionally, most of the reptiles that are *Okule* totems inhabit forests and water bodies, which makes members enforce rules that prevent overexploitation as that will have adverse effects on their totems. In this context, the killing of particular reptiles, such as crocodiles and pythons, is considered desecration by the members, and offenders are immediately sanctioned.

Regulating the interaction between humans and the environment by cult members is borne out of observation that there is a link between agriculture and the environment. Imbalance in the environment can affect time tested agricultural practices, much of which is dependent on rainfall. Since most of the communities rely on rain-fed agriculture, such taboos that regulate the environment to ensure sustained agricultural practices is key.

Within Nawuri communities, one also can appreciate the role of *Okule* members in the celebration of festivals and life cycle events. Nawuris have about two key festivals, namely the yam festival and the guinea corn/sorghum festival. These two festivals are harvest festivals. But aside from these two festivals, some communities also have other festivals that they celebrate. Nawuri festivals are important occasions when members of the community show appreciation to their ancestors as well as deities for protecting them throughout the year and providing them with food. Festivals are also an occasion where people affirm their values and belief systems.

Among the festivals, it is in the guinea corn festival that one feels the presence and energy of *Okule* members. There are several reasons for this, but our explanation will focus on the history of traditional religion and entrepreneurship. Like all religions in the world, the *Okule* cult does not exist in isolation. It operates within a social and religious structure. The Guans are very much attached to their deities. Popular ones include *Akonedi* shrine at Larte, *Brukum* at Shiari, *Dente* at Kete Krachi*, Kankpe* at Balai, among others. Incidentally, some of the members of the *Okule* cult are also priestesses called *asiepu chisa* in those shrines. It is this link, in addition to the skills in entrepreneurship, which they develop as a result of their cult education that makes them an integral part of festivities in every area that they are found in Nawuriland.

Another reason for their active engagement in the festival is that it helps them preserve the purity of their god, *Chankpana*, The brewing of the local alcoholic beverage called *pito* is an important economic activity of women in the Nawuri area. It is an industry entirely operated by women. Until the guinea corn festival is celebrated, women are not allowed to brew *pito* with the newly harvested crop. They can do so with the old stock that they have. The reason for not preparing the *pito* with the new crop until the festival is celebrated is that it would lead to contamination of the land and the deities, including *Chankpana.* There is a symbiotic relationship between the festival and the brewery industry. *Okule* members and women in the brewery industry participate actively in the festival because it facilitates the lifting of the ban on the use of new guinea corn, which will enable them to engage in their brewery as it is an important source of employment for the women (Zimon, 1990).

It must be emphasized that without *pito* a number of social, religious, and economic activities would grind to a halt. *Pito* plays an important role in the lives of Nawuris. Almost all members of the Nawuri society drink it. It plays an important leisure role. When farmers return from the farm, they normally retire under trees and drink *pito* (Ntewusu, 2016). *Pito* is most often

used to pour libation at every occasion- marriage, naming ceremonies, funerals and festivals. Indeed clan and family heads must perform sacrifices of animals to clan and family deities, but that must be preceded with libation using pito. Certainly, there are other forms of alcoholic beverages, but the over-dependence on *pito* is what is of essence in this discussion. As religious people, several people believe that the *pito* that *Okule* members brew is sanctified. They are not just ordinary women; they have gone through various processes of spirit purification during their training that gives their products, including *pito*, some spiritual sanctity.

Finally, community members in the whole Northern Guan area have indicated the intervention of the *Okule* in a number of wars that they fought in the area. For example, in the latter part of the 1800s, a group of Akan slave raiders came to Kete Krachi and Kpandai to conduct raids. The *Olami* elites and male hunters and warriors met and fought them. In the end, Afreh Sarfo and his band of raiders were defeated. Also, during the ethnic conflicts in the North of Ghana in the 1990s, *Okule* members were involved. Chiefs in the area came to the *Olami* to intervene through libation to *Chankpana* for victory in war. Some members of the cult went to the battlefield with their sticks circling enemy communities and chanting *chankpana* songs and shouting *jaalo jaalo* (As we have already noted, this is a word in *kiliji* that is used in times of danger or trouble.). In war, its use is supposed to break down the power of the enemy. It appears that during training, the educators prepare members for war. As an informant indicates, "in the bush, we talk about war, and we are like warriors; we face anything that we encounter."

Indeed one of their songs bears testimony to this:

Song: *Gborna yie ankwaasa gborna, Agneniwakyiluordor Ormorkyorgna ankwaasa gborna*

Lalignele Oningborgna, ornorkyorgna ankwaasa gborna

Translation: War? we do not fear war; our presence as warriors urges the community to fight and become free as a happy people.

This song is reinforced by the observations of Michael Jordan, who points out that "Shankpana, plaque god, of the Yoruba, the son of Shango, he is credited with once been a God of war who invaded the country. His symbol is the sesame tree which takes the form of a taboo… a festival is held in September to propriate shankpana with sacrifices of animals and fruits" (Jordan, 2004, p. 283). A male informant indicated that because *Chankpana* is associated with *Ogun*, the women can decide who can go to war or not. Additionally, the Nawuris believe that, as far as issues of spirituality are concerned, women have a natural advantage. Nawuris are of the view that it is a woman who gives birth to all sexual categories; that is why during naming

ceremonies, the name of the male child is mentioned thrice into the ear, and that of the female child is mentioned four times (Ntewusu and Ntewusu).[3] Therefore, among Nawuris, in any fight, if a woman tells a man to fight or not to fight, he must obey. They possess an extra spirit that enables them to see beyond the physical. Being permitted to go to war is a sign of protection or blessing. There is the belief that if an *Okule* woman tells someone not to go to war and, he refuses, he might be killed. This belief gains vitality because the patron deity of *Okule* is *Ogun*. As Jordan hinted at in his quote above, *Ogun* is the god of iron and also a master tradesman. In the Nawuri area, almost all their weapons of human destruction, such as bows and arrows, spears, and guns, are locally produced. Incidentally, these war objects - spears, knives, and guns, are within ogun's operation domain and, by extension, *Okule* members. So obtaining some form of blessing from them is very necessary for war.

The challenges

Even though *Okule* plays an important role in their communities, there are a number of factors that inhibit the smooth operations and progression of the cult. The first has to do with changes in the geopolitical landscape of Ghana. Following partitioning of Africa, almost all the Nawuri, Krachi, Nchumburu, Adele, Ntrubo, and Achode areas fell under German rule. As part of the German administration of the area all manner of traditional worship was put under strict regulations. Two Dente shrine priests were executed, and a number of priests of various shrines fled their communities (Public Records and Archives Administration Department, hereafter PRAAD, Accra, ADM 11/1/782, History of the Kete-Kractchi People, 1920; ADM 11/1/751, Dente Fetish). *Okule* cult members could not perform freely. After the defeat of Germany during the World Wars, the area came under British colonialism. Just as the Germans, the British were already against traditional religion (PRAAD, Accra, ADM 11/884, Objectionable Native Customs, 1904). They either banned the worship of particular deities or interfered in their operations **(**PRAAD, Tamale, NRG 8/2/210, Nawuri and Nanjuro Under United Nations Trusteeship. 1951-1954)**.** The *Okule* cult was not spared from these regulations.

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[3] In war, Nawuri warriors are not supposed to kill women. They believe it is difficult to neutralize the spirit of a woman who has been killed in the war. If one kills a woman in war, that person cannot live his full life on earth, since her spirit will definitely take revenge on the culprit.

One would have felt that after colonialism, post-colonial governments would work towards the protection of cults, but instead, there were instances where actions of government directly or indirectly affected most cultural practices, including activities of cults. Starting from 1966 until 1993, Ghana did not have a smooth and continues democratic rule. There were several military interventions in Ghana's politics. Military regimes often impose curfews, and once curfews are imposed, there are no exception for individuals or groups. Such a lack of appreciation of unique groups, such as the *Okule* and their activities, certainly affected recruitment and training. For example, since the 1980s, some Nawuri communities have not had new recruits. This is a clear case of extinction of the cult in the future.

The second factor has to do with Islam and Christianity. Islam was introduced to the area around the fourteenth century and has co-existed with the cult until the introduction of mission-oriented Islam in the 1940s. Mission-oriented Islam has strict regulations regarding the practice of Islam. For example, worshipping any other deity aside from Allah is not acceptable. With such prohibitions, it becomes difficult for those who have converted to Islam to participate fully in activities of the cult.

Additionally, from the 1960s, the area of study has been experiencing activities of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. These two branches of Christianity are completely against the worship of deities and ancestors. Unlike the Catholic and Presbyterian churches that offer members the chance to reflect and convert, the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches launch direct attacks on the cult and their activities. Prayer sessions are organized to pray against the cult and its members. Those members that have converted to charismatic and Pentecostal churches are told to stop participating in the activities of the cult with immediate effect.

A third threat is Western Education. The curriculum of Western education makes it difficult for girls to be able to combine both systems. Getting enrolled in school means that one would have to spend a lot of time in the classroom. Since the time needed for training requires more time and could range from three to four months, it makes it difficult if not impossible for children of school-going age to be part of the *Okule* cult. Even if women have the intention of joining the cult after their education, they are hindered by the kind of jobs that comes along with the attainment of western education. Most educated people in the communities where *Okule* is popular prefer employment within the government sector. Such employments have strict rules involving work, such as reporting to work in the morning and closing in the evening. Also, apart from teaching, the area does not have other jobs available, so any other form of employment has the chance of one being

placed outside of her community. So, even if one becomes a member, practicing the cult would be problematic since they would be far removed from the daily realities and demands of the cult.

Finally, the introduction of modern technologies, such as electricity, sound systems with mega speakers, and other non-traditional illuminants, such as flashlights, seems to work against the smooth operation of the cult. The *Olami* noted that particular rituals need to be performed in the darkness. But with the introduction of electricity and flashlights, they are forced to relocate the arena of performance to the bush. *Chankpana*, at times, appears as a tall figure, usually with the head above all buildings in the community and wearing white robes. With these distinguishable features, one does not need light to recognize the presence of *Chankpana*. So once *Chankpana* appears for the night rituals, no one is supposed to use a flashlight to watch the face of *Chankpana* or the devotees. They indicate that at least once or twice, there were some attempts to use flashlights into the arena of performance, forcing them to relocate. They are worried because relocating the night rituals has the tendency to rob communities of blessings. A similar predicament exists when they try to receive messages from *Chankpana*. With the introduction of sound systems, noise levels have gone very high, making it difficult for them to get messages since some of the messages from *Chankpana* are sent through whispers.

CONCLUSION

This paper uses the educational practices of the *Okule* cult to make the case that traditional forms of education are relevant to society. The article argues that there was a direct relationship between *Okule* cult activities and the needs of society. These societal needs, such as morality, healing, protection, issues of the divine, festivals, the environment, warfare, and rites of passage, often brought communities closer to cult members. Despite the usefulness of the cult in communities where it exists, its activities have been affected by unstable political systems, Western education, Islam and Christianity, and modernity, specifically the introduction of sound systems, electricity, and flashlights. More than anything else, it was colonialism, Islam, and Christianity that succeeded in creating a kind of binary between cult members and non-cult members. By the activities of Islamic and Christian practitioners and colonial authorities, *Okule* was set aside and vilified. This has not only affected recruitment it has also discouraged existing members from actively participating in the rituals of the cult. Such actions have the tendency to affect community cohesion and progress since traditional systems

of education, such as *Okule*, contributes to society's development in several ways.

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The Intersection of Values and Social Reproduction: Lessons from Cuba

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ABSTRACT

This article will examine how various socialist values are promoted through the Cuban educational system. The voices represented vary generationally, racially, and in gender. This research is not meant to generalize about all educational experiences in Cuba; rather, it represents a variety of experiences in the educational system. The research represented in this article was gathered in June 2015 in Havana, Cuba. This article begins with a brief historical background on education in Cuba after the triumph of the revolution in 1959, followed by data collection methods, representation of the data through vignettes and poetry, and finally an analysis of the diverse experiences through the framework of intersectionality. The primary finding was that Cuban society taught socialist values overtly within the educational system through school-based activities, such as the Junior Pioneers from the primary level, and through its emphasis on values formation as part of teacher training. The inculcation of these revolutionary values through the education system kept the revolutionary ideology alive across generations.

Keywords: *Cuba, education, social reproduction, intersectionality*

INTRODUCTION

The revolution today confronts the offensive of imperialism and [its] reactionary forces... The battle against the Cuban revolution is today directed by imperialism itself; the battle against [us] is directed by the Yankee State Department… the Yankee C.I.A., and the Yankee warmongers

in the Pentagon – Fidel Castro in a speech on October 11, 1960 to First National Congress of Municipal Education Councils (paragraph 14, 22).

Cuba, a country who has not received a penny from the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund since the revolution began in 1959, is ranked close to number 1 in education in Latin America. According to the 2014 World Bank report, *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean:*

> No Latin American school system today, except possibly Cuba's, is very close to high standards, high academic talent, high or at least adequate compensation, and high professional autonomy that characterize the world's most effective education systems, such as those found in Finland, Singapore, Shanghai, China, Korea, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Canada. (p. 11)

This World Bank report is a quantitative measurement of academic success in Latin America. It references research published by Carnoy et al. (2007), *Cuba's Academic Advantage*. In his findings, Carnoy (2007) compares Cuban education to other high achieving countries and attributes Cuba's high-ranking education system to state investment in education, family expectations and education (social capital), emphasis on math and literacy, and teacher quality. While Carnoy et al. (2007), note that teacher quality is a key component in Cuba's successes, there has not been extensive research about what "formation of the teacher" means in Cuba.

For emerging socialist countries, Samoff (1991) addresses the objective of education as one that must not only prepare a knowledgeable workforce but a workforce diverse enough to meet the needs of the system. Samoff's (1991) emphasis is on labor and education that places value on labor production. One of the gaps in this thinking is that the workforce is not enough to continue social reproduction. Socialist nations need a citizenry that believes in and places value in the ideology of socialism. This citizenry must have these values so ingrained that they actively work to reproduce a labor force and cultural values that allow their system to continue (Samoff, 199; Bowles 1971).

Employing the theoretical framework of intersectionality, this study investigates how the Cuban education system promoted socialist values among the citizenry and how teaching these values sustained the revolutionary ideology of the country even through the most difficult times. After providing a literature review on the history of education in socialist Cuba, the study will present the theoretical framework and data collection methods. This will be followed by the findings and analysis on based on the

author's interactions with diverse respondents ranging from university professors to citizens she encountered on the streets of Havana.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the US Central Intelligence Agency website, Cuba is known to have a 99.8% literacy rate higher than most developed countries (cite). The central focus on education has led scholars to study Cuba's education system and the values it chooses to reproduce. Scholars have focused their research primarily on the metropolitan area and capital city of Havana. Denise Blum's (2011) research focused on the values inculcated in Cuban schools in order to create "the new socialist man." Rosi Smith (2016) builds on Blum's (2011) research in the 1990s by examining how the values inculcated are understood and practiced by youth in the early 2000s. Smith (2016) states, "What is notable about the Cuban case is the way in which education has been framed simultaneously as a tool for disseminating revolutionary ideology, a central component of the content of that ideology and a significant arena of knowledge production for its formation." (p. 12). Both Smith and Blum acknowledge the difficulty in researching in Cuba, where the Ministry of Education is known to be tight-lipped and closed off to foreigners.

Cuba's government constructed its modern education system after the revolution in 1959 in which communist forces overthrew Fulgencio Batista. The first thing Fidel Castro did for education after taking power was the Literacy Campaign – a nationwide literacy movement where schools were shut down and young volunteer teachers went to all communities throughout the country to ensure everyone could read and write. In the eyes of the Revolutionary government, the campaign was "a fundamental act of social justice" (Blum, 2011, p. 41). This movement represented a break with pre-revolutionary education where United States' imperialism imposed a class structure, the social relations of production, and a stalling of the Cuban economy which was reproduced by the school system (Bowles, 1971). Breidlid (2007) describes the literacy campaign as having "transcended mere educational objectives" (p. 621) and indeed Cuba was deemed a country "free of illiteracy" by UNESCO in 1964 (as cited in Breidlid, 2007, p. 621). The literacy campaign freed Cuba from a colonial, imperialist ideology that had been imposed decades earlier (Blum, 2011; Breidlid, 2007; Carnoy, 2007).

Castro called upon the Federation of Cuban Women to help in the nation-wide literacy campaign where the rhetoric was that literacy was as important to the Revolution as the insurrection that preceded it (Herman, 2012). In a speech on April 9, 1961, titled, "Education and Revolution," Castro further paints a picture of the importance of education to the revolution, "There can be no revolution without education because a

revolution means profound changes in the life of a country" (paragraph 1). The way Castro spoke about education put it as the highest priority of the revolution and in order to do so he gathered volunteer teachers and youth brigades.

In his "Literacy Campaign" speech on August 17, 1961 in Havana, Castro talked about how many people in the country were still illiterate and outlined his plan to educate the entire population through the university level. Literacy was the top priority for accomplishing the means of production necessary to provide for the people and sustain production for future generations. Immediately following the Revolution, Castro began his educational reform movement. In a speech to teachers, Castro gives a call to arms on October 11, 1960 to the First National Congress of Municipal Education Councils:

> [We] are defending… the humble peasant, the little child who does not have a school to go to, the worker, the person who has been discriminated against, the poor…I only want to know whether you think that we can win the great battle of culture in 1961… [for] you [the teachers] are the great army of education in our country (paragraph 50).

In this speech, Castro denotes the importance of the ideology that should be taken toward education and the Revolution. His words illustrate his dedication to Marxism in order to create a socialist society. He defends the poor and the peasants who will become his proletariat. Emphasizing that Cuba will defend those workers through education explains the morality behind the need for Castro to start a cultural revolution—educating the poor was a defense against imperialist and exploitative Yankees. There is an undertone that relies on education as an important savior for the future of Cuba.

The Cuban revolution, among other things, led to a new educational system. Leading the revolution, Castro intended to sever ties with the United States, which had been like an economic hand to Cuba (Britton, 2015). His first order of business after successfully overthrowing the previous government was to lead a cultural revolution centered on literacy for all on the premise of socialism. Samoff (1991) describes the view from a socialist's perspective in this way, "Socialists have regarded education-both the learning generated by participation in struggle and the more organized instructional efforts inside and outside schools-as a critical, and perhaps the principal, dynamic in reconstructing society" (p. 2).

As early as 1960, Castro wanted to cut ties with the United States. This has to do more with the United States' imperialistic tendencies than the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. Because of his adherence to Marxist ideals, Castro rejected capitalism as the basis of production relations in the economy and therefore Cuba's relationship to the US—the US being the embodiment

of capitalism. In his own words, Castro was very clear about the purpose of the Revolution and why Cuba was separating from the United States.

From the beginning days of the Revolution, Cuba was supported by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). This relationship allowed Cuba to stay afloat economically after cutting ties with the US. Its relationship with the USSR also allowed Cuba a "constant sugar market at prices above the world market norm, which had provided some capital for the development of industry and of very advanced social services" (Carnoy & Samoff, 1990, p. 102). This deal with the USSR would last twenty years and the revenue from the sugar export allowed a more equal distribution of goods among the citizenry, but there was still the issue of how to establish a new socialist ideology.

For this new ideology to take hold, Castro needed a newly educated populace. By establishing a system of education completely controlled by the government, the Revolutionary government could decide what and how students should learn. Starting with the literacy campaign, Revolutionary values were ingrained in the populace. These values included: honesty, solidarity, and patriotism, and as Blum (2011) puts it, "The Cuban educational system has been one of the main institutions held responsible for 'rescuing' revolutionary values" (p. 14). The inculcation of such values has allowed Cuba to maintain its identity even through the worst circumstances. The fall of the Soviet Union was a blow to Cuba's economy. All of a sudden, Cuba had no one to trade with. The relationship with the USSR was sustaining the Cuban economy through the US imposed embargo, which Cubans call "the blockade."

Theoretical Framework

The choice to use intersectionality as a frame for analysis of this research stem from the diverse articulations participants had with educational experiences in Cuba. The issue of narrative comes into question in Cuba, a country where *el teque* or the official story has the potential to blend with reality. Anders Breidlid (2007), during his organized, government sanctioned research in Cuba, discussed having encountered difficulty assessing whether the interviewees' responses were government rhetoric or the person's actual experience. Denise Blum (2011) describes *el teque* a rhetoric of the Revolution. Instead of deciding what is true for an individual or whether they are just regurgitating what the government has sanctioned for them to say, this research only attempts to examine people's stories as a means of examining their truth.

Intersectionality provides a framework for what Maxwell (2012) refers to as "epistemological constructivism," a means of making sense of reality as shaped by the construction of "assumptions and prior experiences as well as by the reality that they interact with" (p. 43). By viewing the lived

experience of the subject with this framework, as a researcher, I am able to understand my data as "a simplified and incomplete attempt to grasp something about a complex reality" (Maxwell, 2012, p. 43).

Reality is complex. Intersectionality was developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 "to capture the intricate interplay of social forces that produce particular men and women as members of particular races, classes, sexualities, ethnicities, and nationalities" (Hawkesworth, 2006, p. 209). Instead of trying to understand how each explanation of Cuban education leads to a singular social truth or experience, I am examining the individual statements as separate parts or realities. Then, "analyzing them concerning cultural and linguistic practices, historical traditions, and philosophical frameworks in order to provide an enhanced explanation consistent with the meaning of the experience to the agent" (Hawkesworth, 2006, p. 217). By examining the experiences of the individuals in this study according to their meaning and within the social, cultural, historical context, I can see how each person is experiencing a singular phenomenon – education in Cuba – as something different.

Patricia Hill Collins (2002) describes ideology as "the body of ideas reflecting the interests of a group of people" (p. 5). These ideas, however, do not exist in isolation or without influence from other aspects of society. "Within U.S. culture, racist and sexist ideologies permeate the social structure to such a degree that they become hegemonic, namely seen as natural, normal and inevitable" (Collins, 2002, p. 5). Bell hooks (2000) addresses the history of feminism as primarily a White one, that ignores class and racial difference by ignoring the colonial and imperialist roots of racism in the United States. If this is true for the United States, then the same or other hegemonic ideologies must exist in other cultures that construct reality. For example, the Cuban Revolution and its ideologies construct a reality where communism and socialism are seen as the best way to construct an ideal society.

Hawkesworth (2006) explains how "feminist scholars of color have demonstrated the grave intellectual and moral deficiencies that result from failure to comprehend and address the mutual constitution of identities and the social practices that produce and sustain hierarchies of difference (p. 209). Two of the participants in this study are Cubans of color (I will refer to them as Afro-Cuban), and their experiences/attitudes contrasted with the other participants – two White Cubans. The white Cuban women also held positions of power, whereas the Afro-Cubans did not. Differences in skin color may correlate to positions of power in Cuban society.

The purpose of choosing intersectionality is to understand that there are various identities and social practices that could lead to the contrast in how participants understood revolutionary values in Cuban education based on the experiences they shared with me. Looking through the lens of

intersectionality, I can make sense of how the race and social structures would lead to different experiences and how these structures, including race, articulate to create meaning from the diverse experiences.

Intersectionality encompasses a nexus of complex "relationships among biological classification, the social construction of race and gender as categories of analysis, the material conditions accompanying these changing social constructions, and Black women's consciousness about these themes" (Collins, 2000, p. 405). This framework can be applied when trying to understand someone and their reality who is different from one self. Applying Black Feminist Thought to my understanding and interpretation of findings means discarding my own dominant ideology as much as possible and trying to view others from what Collins (2002) describes as a "matrix of domination" (p. 227).

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

While in Cuba, I interviewed teacher educators from the Enrique José Varona University of the Pedagogical Sciences, a high school principal, a government educational researcher, and the director of the Center for the Studies of José Martí. In addition to these formal interviews, I draw extensively on my field notes for further explanation about how these revolutionary values appeared in spontaneous encounters and interviews.

Data Collection

I collected data over a three-week period in June 2015 in Havana, Cuba. With permission from The Center for the Studies of José Martí, I conducted semi-structured, formal interviews with three professors of teacher education, two which were center directors – one for The Center for the Studies of José Martí, and the other the director of an educational research center - and one high school principal. I used an informed consent form translated to Spanish for every recorded interview. The formal interviews I conducted in Cuba were ones that the director of the center, acting as a gate-keeper, set up for me.

Although I also conducted informal interviews through spontaneous encounters on the street, subjects were not willing to be recorded for fear of their government. In contrast, at the center all the interviews were arranged ahead of time. All were white Cuban women professors and one school principal, all were around the same age (mid to late fifties). For the informal interviews, I relied on my field notes for analysis.

Data Analysis

Patricia Hill Collins (2002) said, "Because elite White men control Western structures of knowledge validation, their interests pervade the themes, paradigms, and epistemologies of traditional scholarship" (p. 251). In order to avoid imposing my own Whiteness or my own Western thought

onto the subject or interpretation, I have tried to allow for the stories to speak for themselves. Hill Collins (2002) examined truth as an intersectionality of race, gender, power, and power structures. This intersectionality allows for multiple truths and at the same time addresses the nature of truth as something in between the political power structures and people's lived reality – where they connect and where they differ. Instead of examining the power structures determining the truth, I have taken the stories from my interviews as truth existing within the power structure and unique to the individual.

Ivor F. Goodson (1998) said, "…stories do social and political work as they are told. A story is never just a story – it is a statement of belief, of morality, it speaks about values. Stories carry loud messages both in what they say and what they don't say" (p. 12). My research views the story as a manifestation of the power structure as it intersects with the lived reality of the teller. Stories are the narrative of my research, and it is my view that as much as possible, the listener should try not to impose their own cultural structures of power into the meaning beyond the words.

Poetry as Analysis

The author used poetry to record notes from some of her interactions with people in Havana. Saldaña (2016) describes choosing his line of inquiry as pragmatic, it is "choosing the right tool for the job. Sometimes a poem says it best" (p. 3). This analytic exercise will apply poetic analysis to field notes taken on 21 June 2015 and 25 June 2015 in Havana, Cuba. Although poems typically come from interview transcripts (Miller, Humble, & Radina, 2019), Faulkner (2018) uses poetry as inquiry, and she represented her autoethnographic accounts of running with short poems and haikus. "Compared to normal prose, poetry is a special language. There is a refreshing authenticity and often confronting *vulnerable vibrancy* to it that uniquely reaches and resonates" (Miller, Humble, & Radina, 2019, p. 21).

Inspired by Sandra L. Faulkner's (2018) *Real women run: Running as feminist embodiment,* I decided to attempt poetic inquiry to breathe life into a chance encounter on Father's Day in Havana in 2015. Faulkner's (2018) use of poetic inquiry gives vitality to women's embodied experiences as runners. Through her poems, one understands the embodied and gendered experience of what it is to be a woman runner. "Research poetry is an experimental text form that challenges listeners, readers, and researchers" (Miller, Humble, & Radina, 2019, p. 22). Research poetry or poetic inquiry is a challenging process. It is a personal process. The challenge lies in creating an artistic expression of an encounter with someone else. Miller (2019), describes step one of poetic inquiry as "immersion" in the data – reading over and over again (p. 23). Faulkner (2018) describes her process of immersion, explaining how she listened to her interviews while going on

runs. Whether reading or listening, I found that looking back at my field notes and reading them over again, I was immediately transported back to Father's Day, June 2015.

FINDINGS

I found that Cuban education is comprised of three main values that promote a deep appreciation for education and future leadership. Interviews with professors from the Institute of the Science of Pedagogy, who teach teachers, revealed that in Cuban education, honesty, solidarity, and patriotism are the values cultivated in every child in order to raise a future generation of dedicated citizens and educated leaders. These three values cannot be quantified in an assessment that tests literacy, math, or science. Rather, they can be assessed through formal and informal interviews and in observing teacher-student relationships. In the case of my own research, although I was unable to observe classroom practices, these qualities were highlighted in formal interviews as well as observed in common people, through casual conversations on the street, in the store, or at a restaurant.

The Director of the Center for the Studies of José Martí said that imperial education, supported by the United States was directed towards the primary grades "because that's where values are introduced." She further described the efforts of the US, "Imperialism tried to erase the Cuban identity because the US already had control of the economy, now they need control of the ideology. They created a lot of schools that taught loyalty to the American flag" (Interviewed by author on June 14, 2015). The strong anti-imperialist sentiment is not without merit.

After the United States inserted itself into the Spanish American War fighting for Cuba, it inserted itself into Cuban education in a "paternalistic" way that tried to impose its own set of values (Blum, 2011, p. 42). In addition, the Platt Amendment allowed for extended occupation of Cuba including the lease of what is now the Guantánamo Naval base. This US occupation of Cuba's education system was resisted by teachers. According to the same director, "The teachers taught loyalty to the [Cuban] fatherland too and because of these Cuban identity was saved" (Interviewed by author on June 14, 2015). Within this story the importance of a national identity is expressed. This identity is meant to be a counter to the US imperialist and capitalist values. The fact that it was the teachers that "saved" the identity also illustrates the importance of education as a means to form and develop a certain identity in young people. This was the idea behind Castro developing a new educational system after the revolution, one that could further construct a new "socialist" citizen (Bowles, 1971; Blum, 2011; Samoff, 1991).

During my time in Cuba, I traveled outside the city where I witnessed a great deal of government propaganda. The sign that burns in my

memory read, “El bloqueo” (the blockade) with the O written as noose. Below that read, “the longest genocide in history.” I relate this story for the purpose of examining the Cuban government point of view. During the 1990s, people died because of lack of resources due to the blockade. Castro dubbed this time the “Special Period in Time of Peace” (Blum, 2011, p. 103). The director for the Center of the Studies of José Martí shared through tears the story of her mother, with a heart condition, dying due to the inability for Cuba to acquire pacemakers. There was no one willing to betray the United States to help out Cubans in their time of need and yet, the Cubans endured. The same director recounted her story about the gathering at Revolutionary Square when the USSR fell:

> We were all there. And Castro was there and he was telling us that the Soviet Union has fallen. We have lost our support. What should we do? Should we continue with socialism? We are going to have some difficult times. We are going to be hungry. We are going to have to do without. What should we do? And we all stood there in Revolutionary Square shouting ‘socialism, socialism, socialism!’ (Interviewed by author, June 17, 2015)

It seems to have been a decision of the people of Cuba to continue on the path of socialism. I had to ask myself why would people choose to suffer? My finding is that it has more to do with the formation of values, than anything else. My own background led me to think that people were forced to adopt socialism, so I was unaware that people felt it was a choice they made in unity. The education system provided Cubans with such a strong sense of identity that they were willing to go through what was the most difficult period in their history knowing that they could survive together. The director also shared her story of needing an operation. The problem was that there was no surgical thread. She counted on a friend to travel from Mexico with surgical supplies in her luggage, carrying them to Havana so she could have surgery. She told me about her time as Dean of the University’s Department of Education when they didn’t have paper for exams, how the government distributed bicycles for lack of gasoline and she road 18 miles to work every day. There are countless stories like hers. I met a young man who told me how he and his friends survived by taking the tags of their shirts to patch the cloth on their shoes and how they searched for cardboard when the soles came apart. The 1990s were an exceptionally difficult period for the Cubans and yet, they endured. If the formation of values was a way to form the new Revolutionary citizen, then a person with these values would not abandon the Revolution no matter the circumstance. The blockade was just another piece of the Revolution that was able to deepen a sense of national identity based on these Revolutionary values.

"The boundaries between school and society are never distinct: in revolutionary Cuba they are blurred beyond recognition" (Bowles, 1971, p. 473). This quote speaks not only to the relationship between school and society, but, also how in Cuba the values overtly taught in the educational system manifest in Cuban society. My research in 2015 echoed this finding by Samuel Bowles in 1969. Major events have occurred in Cuba between his research and my own, and yet, as best as I could see, the idea of education being used as a means of socially reproducing values hasn't changed. Bowles (1971) addressed the need for Cuba to establish values that would allow for a new economy. My own research led me to encounter honesty, solidarity, and patriotism as the focal values to be formed. Denise Blum (2011), also cites laboriousness, self-sacrifice, and loyalty to the revolution in her research. Based on my interviews and field notes where the values of honesty, solidarity, and patriotism were most often referenced as the values being formed in students, I will examine how these values appeared overtly and in the daily life of Cubans.

ANALYSIS

Starting with the professors of teacher education, the formation of honesty, solidarity, and patriotism were the values heard most often while interviewing the teacher educators in reference to the values they attempted to impart to students as well as the kind of people they hoped their students would be in the future. Patriotism was the value that dominated the discourse in every formal interview. It makes sense when English and Bolton (2016) explain Bourdieu, "The importance of schooling is that it transmits patterns of the dominant culture that are mirrored in school curricula and other routines…In this way, schools themselves play a focal role in imbuing their students with the prevailing culture and 'rules' of society" (p. 59). In terms of Cuban education, the inculcation of the aforementioned values plays an important role in helping young people learn about how they fit into society. By teaching students these values, teachers are teaching the dominant "habitus." These aren't just important values for Cuban youth to learn in becoming part of society, they also function for youth to carry on the revolutionary spirit.

Marta

Marta, a professor of educational psychology, elaborated on the Pioneer organization as an example of how students learn the Revolutionary values. Blum (2011) describes the organization as one that is, "overtly used by the Cuban government to socialize schoolchildren to be responsible citizens" (p. 151). The Pioneer organization starts in first grade. A contact in Havana described the Pioneer organization of José Martí as the first in a series of student organizations in Cuba. The Pioneers of José Martí is

preceded by the Moncadista Pioneers (the Moncadistas were heroes of the war of liberation in the 1950s against Batista) in the first and second grades and followed by the Federation of Middle-level Students. The university organization is called the Federation of University Students. According to a source in Havana and confirmed by Blum's (2011) research, all students are part of the organizations. A leader for every classroom is elected by his or her peers. As my contact described the activities, they could be compared to students saying the Pledge of Allegiance every day in school in the United States. The difference exists in the words and what they convey. In Cuba students say, "Pioneers for communism, we will be like Ché." Marta became emotional describing the first nation-wide meeting of the Pioneers:

> I remember the first congress of the Pioneers in Cuba that was in the 80s where the Pioneers decided things and demanded things. They discussed the uniform that high school students would wear. Another example is that the children asked how, because they always talk about Ché… and in the salute they say "We will be like Ché," and it was the reality, the Ché that they knew, the Ché who was in his 20s, the guerrilla. A ten year-old can't be like that Ché. So, they asked to learn about Ché as a boy and from there the decision was made to share Ché's personal history as a boy. There was a book written by Ché's father and others who collaborated. It's called *Ernestico* and has photos of him, for example, having an asthma attack playing soccer, and climbing mountains. (Interviewed by author, June 15, 2015)

The value of patriotism is not only relevant to the pledge made by the students to be "pioneers for communism," it is also an illustration of how students take pride in their founding leaders, such as Martí, and to not only know about the leaders but how they as young people can emulate the actions their leaders took at a young age. For example, wanting to not just be like Ché, but to be like Ché as he was as a child. To be encouraged to emulate a leader at such an early age is a way for them to take pride in their leaders and their country – to be patriotic.

Hanier

Hanier is one example of this patriotic spirit. Hanier grew up in Holguin, a province located on the eastern end of the island, far from Havana. Hanier and I met standing outside a small store outside a gas station. I was standing outside waiting for the store to open when he asked me why we were waiting. I described what was going on inside and he reminded me of the word, "inventory." I replied, "Yeah, that's it. That's why we are waiting." When he asked, I told him about my research and he invited me to have a beer. We got our groceries and went to a small outdoor drink place and had

a beer. He complained about how Cuba was poor and the government was collecting an 85-dollar visa fee for every person entering the country. He said they had millions of visitors that year and although it was a socialist country, he had yet to see any of that revenue. People were just barely getting by. In the next sentence he said, "But, Fidel, has a special place in my heart. That man had courage." We continued our discussion.

He was in town getting ready to go to Finland. He had never left Cuba before. I told him traveling would expand his thinking, and his reply was that he would never permanently move to another country. His heart resided in Cuba. After talking for some time, he stopped and asked about my analysis of him. I explained that I was only taking notes about what he was saying, but that he had indeed exhibited the same values I was learning about from my interviews. At first he looked shocked, but I reminded him that despite his criticisms, it seemed that Cuba and Castro were in his blood. He concurred, agreeing that Cubans are patriotic. Hanier, a thirty-four-year-old single father of two, had grown up in Holguin and owned his own jewelry business. Although he didn't spout *el teque* or the motto of the Pioneer organization, his sense of patriotism shone through his criticism. He was genuine and sincere and loved his country regardless of the difficult time he had endured as a Cuban.

Marilyn

In my desire to express a feeling for daily life of a teacher in Havana, I have decided to attempt an original poem as representation of my field notes from 21 June 2015 and a found poem from my final encounter with the teacher at her house on 25 June 2015. I wrote these field notes after spending a day with Marilyn, an elementary school physical education teacher in Havana on Father's Day, 21 June 2015. The second poem is taken from field notes after an afternoon with her on 25 June 2015.

We shared a profound sense of death on that day – neither of our fathers was living. It was Marilyn's uncle that grabbed my arm on the side of the street and immediately asked where I was from. When I said the United States, he wanted to know if President Obama would come to Havana. I admitted that I did not have direct communication or insight into that scenario, but I could imagine he would – they asked me to tell him to come to the island. I wrote this poem as I engaged with my field notes and remembered back to that sunny afternoon. Marilyn so touched me in sharing the loss of our fathers – that loss bonded us.

I crafted the first poem as a representation of how our relationship developed, however short, however instantaneous, over our shared sense of loss. Miller (2019) calls this type of poetry an "emotive poem" (p. 25). I chose to represent our initial encounter with an emotive poem because that experience was typical of the warmth, generosity, and cultural

understandings of Cubans and being a foreigner in Cuba. I felt embraced by the initial and continuous hospitality shown by Marilyn and her uncle as they invited me to hang with them after our adventure at the Rumba in Callejón Hamel.

The second poem is a found poem from my field notes after I visited Marilyn on my last day in Havana. I found that I wrote my notes in what Saldaña (2016) calls "organic poetry" (p. 109). My notes were staccato – short sentences punctuated by periods. I took the exact phrases (In Vivo) and re-arranged them to create a representation of the last few hours I spent with Marilyn. Through this exercise, I have found that representing my experience with Marilyn, as a participant, through poetry gave my field notes more vigor in their representation. My goal was for these poems to tell the story of my time with Marilyn in her reality.

Rumba with Marilyn and her *tío* (21 June 2015)
"Have you been to the Rumba?"
"That's where I am trying to go, but I am not sure of the way."
"We'll take you there" – Marilyn and her *tío*
It's Father's Day
We feel the loss
My father February 2015
Her father passed in California, his death unresolved from afar,
We walk side by side.
Callejón Hamel: Rumba
Rap-pa-pa, rap, rap-rap pa….
"Have you tried *bilongo*?"
I buy three drinks
Orishas in all their representations are dancing around us
The congas are singing
rap, pa, pa, pa
"Move your hips like this"
The Conga's Afro-Caribbean beats move our bodies
Cayo Hueso
At Marilyn's house we continue the celebration with her *tío* and daughters,
he brings rum, we mourn the loss of our fathers, and we dance.

Rocking Chairs (25 June 2015)
We watched some music videos in her rocking chairs.
She seemed stoned.
Then we watched some contraband cable show from Miami.
Marilyn explained that it wasn't her cable. The guy upstairs gets it legal - he pays for it and she connects to the cable for free.

She asked me if some of the infomercials were for real.
I told her it's a scam.
I asked her about Cuba getting Internet by 2020, she said yeah, but who will be able to afford it?
Internet is good but who will use it?
When it was time to leave she asked if I wanted to buy a video recorder.
I couldn't.
I had no use for it.
She said she needed the money, and she only bought because she thought she could sell it.
We said goodbye.

Orlando

Not all my findings were as Pro-Revolution as those I found with the professors of teacher education, in fact I managed to find one person who talked openly about his disdain for Cuba. We met on the Malecón, the long costal street in Havana. On one side, people walk along the coast and on the other side of the four-lane street there are various bars and restaurants and business as well as housing. I met this young man while enjoying the sunset on the Malecón.

The Cuban government forced Orlando to attend a behavior school in his elementary years, and he described his experience as different from those at the other schools. He began to notice in school when he and his classmates went to do their voluntary (required) work outdoors; he described having to do the more challenging jobs. For example, instead of painting a fence, he and his classmates would have to dig the post holes. He said it was not apparent right away, but soon everyone at the school realized they had something in common – they had one or more relatives who resisted the Revolution. Later, he recalled when he tried to cross the sea to Florida with his friends, and they got caught in a storm, stranded at sea and picked up by the Cuban government. He shared that he was no longer eligible for the free education promised to other Cubans and that many of his rights had been taken away because of this experience. He was critical of the government, of the Castro family, and especially of patriotism – calling it "fanaticism" instead.

On a subsequent visit a few nights later, Orlando told me more about his life. Eventually he opened up about his most painful experience with Revolutionary values explaining to me, with hurt in his voice and anger in his eyes, that patriotism had killed his unborn child. He told me about the May Day celebration, required by the government (by threat of a fine) when his partner lost their child. He described how although she was having complications with the pregnancy and in spite of the doctor's request for rest,

her mother encouraged her to march as a source of pride for the family – to demonstrate her patriotism. He begged her to stay home, but she felt compelled to march with the others and suffered a miscarriage, as a result. I was left speechless as he told me patriotism had ruined his only chance of being a father.

The May Day parade in Revolutionary Square is an annual celebration in Cuba, one where citizens gather to celebrate the working class. Ten days earlier, Marta had described the May Day Parade with tears of pride in her eyes describing how emotional she had been watching her daughter carrying the Cuban flag in a display of patriotism. It was as if everything she had dreamed for her daughter had been realized, that the values of the Revolution were alive in that moment. The difference in educational experiences can be interpreted as a difference in cultural capital. The young man didn't have the same cultural capital because of his family background and his refusal to adhere and honor the Revolutionary values. His educational experience reinforced his difference in society. When I left this young man the last time, I wished him luck. He was still dreaming of the day he would get to the United States.

Although his experience was distinct, it still represents the reproductive function of education. He was unable to break free from his family background through the educational system. This young man went to a school where other students had parents who were political dissidents. Admittedly, he was the first person I met who was so blatantly opposed to the Revolution, so I was taken aback by his initial response to my research. He was an outlier within my findings, and I examined his story with the same intersectional framework that I took in all others – this was this man's lived experience – his experience within the power structure of domination of his own culture. As his family history didn't fit the dominant structure, I had to reconcile that his educational experience would probably not fit within that same structure. I accepted his story as truth.

CONCLUSION

It wasn't just that people exhibited the revolutionary values of honesty, solidarity and patriotism, it was also that they wanted these values to be transmitted to others. During my time at the Center for the Studies of José Martí, two groups "graduated" from different programs given for foreigners. These two programs happened to be attended by people from the US – one was a group of students from a university in the US and another a group of professors from a community college in New York. At both ceremonies, I observed the Director asking for both parties to take back with them similar requests. The requests included sharing with their communities about the reality of their time in Cuba – that they spread the word in their country, that through this new and developing relationship, the US end the

blockade, give back Guantánamo, and respect the Cuban culture by not attempting to change it. My interpretation of this request goes back to my original research question about how schools are reproducing these values. I believe that the Director of the center was looking at this as another opportunity to inculcate what it means to be Cuban.

To acquire cultural capital in Cuba, means to adhere to Revolutionary values. Based on the interviews I conducted, one purpose of education in Cuba is to reproduce these values through the pioneer organization, the education of teachers and other methods that have not been described in this paper. The reproduction of these values is seen through the eyes of the interviewees as the means to sustain socialism and Cuban identity. English and Bolton (2016) describe the acquisition of cultural values as something desired and accepted by the dominant class – in this case those who uphold the Revolution. This explains why it was uncomfortable to talk about the normalization of relations with the United States and its imperialist agenda and there was also a strong determination to resist capitalism. There was a fear that something stronger than education could influence young people's belief about the Revolution. On the other hand, when I mentioned to Marilyn that I learned Cuba had a goal of the internet reaching all citizens by 2020. She didn't seem impressed, wondering how, if she only makes $17 a month, will she be able to afford internet too? It was only through the generosity of her neighbor that she had TV channels from Miami.

What does the reproduction of values mean for a society? In the case of Cuba, it means that through the most difficult times imaginable, a national identity was created and strengthened, which enabled them to endure some of the worst times imaginable. The idea of embedding values in the curriculum – with a purpose, stood in sharp contrast to the hidden curriculum of values I had become accustomed to in my own experience as a teacher the United States. By teaching values overtly within the educational system through activities, such as the Junior Pioneers, and with an emphasis on values formation as part of teacher education in the tertiary level, Cuba sustained communism and socialism through the Special Period after the fall of the Soviet Union. The inculcation of these Revolutionary values has kept the Revolutionary ideology alive.

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Creative and Critical Thinking, and Ways to Achieve It

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses creative and critical thinking across wide cultural and historical frameworks. It begins with an exploration of Socratic Dialectics in multiple contexts, highlighting the need for innovative views and investigative practices using Art and Culture. A major objective of this project is to use the Arts for finding the universal sources of culture through exploring diversity, with a particular focus on the role of Africa as the cradle of humanity and dynamic initiatives on the continent. Through collaborative advocacy and the interdisciplinary approach of Leonardo daVinci (1452-1519), relevant generalities for human rights education and humanitarian efforts, this paper contextualizes intercultural dialogue for universal equity in young people's development. The paper also explores how education influences the political development of learners. The paper then shows how humanistic and intercultural approaches to education are fostering creative and critical thinkers worldwide.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Binary, Intercultural Dialogue, Universal, Interdisciplinary, Socratic Dialectics, Civic Engagement

RAISING GENERATIONS OF INDEPENDENT THINKERS

The primary focus of the Socratic method, also known as Socratic Dialogue or Dialectic, was to allow interlocutors to think critically. But the usage of this method has to evolve to facilitate the development of critical and creative thinking in young adults. Going beyond the narrow conceptualization of the dialectic method, it has to occur within an engaged civic and intercultural setting that incorporates the Arts with their universal elements. The goal is to raise a new generation of independent thinkers and problem-solvers, who have reasoning skills to resist simplistic, binary thinking in all its forms, and who have interdisciplinary abilities to tackle serious and profoundly interconnected global problems. It goes without saying this implies the need for persons who can identify with humanity, above and beyond national interests.

This paper offers some ideas on how we can re-conceptualize the dialectic method. I start by examining the different ways scholars from diverse backgrounds operationalize the Socratic method in their work. I then propose an approach which mixes different elements from these scholars. In short, this paper is meant to propose an approach to dialogue, in education and other domains, based on the unique, and increasingly critical needs of our 21st century. The approach this paper advocates brings the wisdom gleaned from different fields that scholars for a long time considered as separate. It drew on information from intercultural studies, general education, Arts education, philosophy, and international communication.

EXPLORING DIALECTICS

Dialectic is a vehicle of philosophy for stimulating reflective thinking (John Dewey as cited in Rodgers, 2002). According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, dialectic comes from the Greek term *dialegesthai*, which means to converse or talk through (Meinwald, 1999). We learn that the principal aim of Socratic activity is to improve the soul of the interlocutors by freeing them from unrecognized errors and teaching them the spirit of inquiry. In other words, Socrates sought to nurture autonomous people of integrity who thought for themselves.

To deepen our understanding of this particular form of dialogue, it is helpful to place oneself in Socrates' linguistic context: The etymological roots of dialogue come from the Greek words *dia* and *logos*, with *Dia* signifying 'through,' and *Logos* translating as 'word' or 'meaning'

(Goulah, 2012). Therefore, dialogue is the process whereby the meaning of something is communicated through words or language. Stated another way, language is a tool born from intangibles like ideas, concepts, or feelings. Socrates understood words as being symbols.

In addition, the philosopher knew that the process of learning critical thinking could not happen in a vacuum. To aid students probe their thought processes, he believed they needed guided or rhetorical questions, engaging them in discussions in a cooperative atmosphere. These were not just debating for the sake of simply winning an argument or being 'right.' The focus was on authentic development of the student, and most importantly, that understanding would occur in stages, finally emerging from inside the students themselves.

The dialectical method also had the objective of helping Socrates' students in a metaphorical sense, 'give birth to their own soul' through profound exchanges and subsequent introspection. Birth here is a significant metaphor as it implies something difficult and painful, but which often produces profoundly gratifying results. (Collins Dictionary refers to the Socratic practice which Plato called *maieutic,* of bringing forth knowledge by a series of questions and answers. The dictionary entry explains the word's origin as the Greek word for midwifery, which comes from *maia,* meaning mother (maieutic, 2020, Collins Dictionary online).

Why is authentic Socratic dialogue painful? I suggest this is related to the difficulty of abandoning one's *à priori* or preconceived ideas. This paper suggests that precisely because of this, Socrates realized changes in perception must be gradual, and it must come from inside the individual and never imposed. Plato, Socrates' disciple, used a written form of dialogue in his famous Republic. Plato showed us how to bring readers gradually to seeing things from his perspective using the written word. As for examples of living philosopher-teachers, we could cite New York City philosophy professor Lou Marinoff who is notable for his use of dialectics in the manner he praises students' questions and his approach to a kind of directed dialogue in teaching, among other contexts. Marinoff insists that the art of posing pertinent questions for arriving at the heart of topics, is essential for becoming sincere listeners and moving dialogue in positive directions for learners(Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012, p. 26).

In other words, the kind of education model capable of nurturing autonomous, critical and creative thinkers is that which allows for authentic exchange: whether through face-to-face encounters, through literature,

poetry, music or other art forms. These educational models convey humanistic values and respect for life. Such approaches to education prioritize authentic dialogue with oneself and with others.

A good example of the kind of educational approach I am advocating is the approach taken by the members of the *Union des étudiants juifs de France* (UEJF, French Jewish Students' Union). UEJF members invited students of different faiths to join them for inter-religious exchanges. The objective for starting this forum was to help each participant find their hidden prejudices (UEJF, 2020). It is a project Socrates would have observed with great interest since it echoed the sometimes-painful process of *maieutic* giving birth to the soul or spirit, mentioned above.

MASTERS OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Masters of dialogue neither think nor communicate in a binary fashion. One example from 16th century France is the writer and former Bordeaux mayor Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592). He was respected for his capacity for nuanced thinking, and detested all absolutes and extremist perspectives of that period from both Protestants and Catholics, but always looked to bridge differences. As such he was sought after by kings including his friend from youth, Henry IV. Montaigne was a listener who kept things he heard in confidence, respected his interlocuters from both sides and was a master of listening. Incredibly, his small château was never attacked throughout this period, so Montaigne's integrity and dialogue skills seem to have been appreciated (Montaigne, 2016). Montaigne also fought for justice with his plume. In his epoch, he was already criticizing inhumane French colonialism in Brazil, saying it divided generations by forcing a foreign culture and language on local populations.

In modern history, Nelson Mandela used sports as a channel for intercultural dialogue, as we see movingly in the film *Invictus*. Mandela's efforts to harmonize divisions between black and white South Africans is historic. Some well-known quotes from this film demonstrate this. An example is the moment actor Morgan Freeman, playing President Mandela, uses strong words to encourage South Africans to look deeper inside themselves, "You criticize without understanding (…) You seek only to address your own personal feelings. That is selfish thinking (…) Times change, we need to change as well" (Eastwood, 2009).

Mahatma Gandhi was also a known master of dialogue, bridging religious conflict not only with moving speeches but in one-on-one dialogues

with ordinary people, similar to Montaigne's approach. His dignity and force of character in facing authoritarian colonial British authorities is legendary. In the epic film *Gandhi*, the scene before a British judge is unforgettable: After asking Gandhi why he was not afraid, reminding him that he could crush him with one word Gandhi responds fearlessly, reminding him that India was not his home (Gandhi, 1982).

Taking two examples from the African continent, two exceptional Kenyan women, writer Grace Ogot (1930–2015) and Nobel Peace Laureate Wangari Maathai (1940-2011), had similarities to the ancient Greek philosopher in their approaches to intercultural dialogue. Wangari Maathai built a successful movement for change through a multitude of interconnections. Like Socrates, Maathai demonstrated the courage to ask hard questions. The issues she dealt with had an impact on the world, receiving the Nobel prize after having resisted years of attacks from detractors. Maathai protected ancient forests that were being razed for agriculture, producing erosion and worsening economic conditions.

In the book, The Challenge for Africa, Maathai reflects: "…the world's interactions with Africa are not necessarily motivated by altruism, but by the self-interest of states seeking to maximize their opportunities and minimize their costs, often at the expense of those who are not in a position to do either" (Maathai, 2009, p. 88). The Western tradition of this trend was recently brought to light using extracts of a 1950 short film by Frenchman René Vautier. *Afrique 50* was the first French anti-colonialist film, and it was banned by the government for decades because it showed footage demonstrating Maathai's above statement : In the film we see Africans toiling under harsh conditions for 50 French francs per day, to open valves or sluice gates at the Barrage of *Martala Sansanding* on the Niger River, because it was less expensive than installing and maintaining a turbine, for example (Seumboy, n.d.). Maathai also demonstrated her creative problem-solving skills when she called on the world to work together to resolve environmental problems. She argues: "Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own - indeed to embrace the whole of creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. Recognizing that sustainable development, democracy and peace are indivisible is an idea whose time has come" (Maathai, 2004). In her poetic manner, it appears this humanistic scientist was asking us to consider that environmental, developmental and security problems are

dissociable, indicating the interconnectedness of Life in its diverse forms with all human activity.

This engaged, tree-planting pioneer did not give in to pressure from opponents. On the contrary, her focus was scientific evidence on the effects of deforestation. Yet she lost neither her creativity nor her humanity, as is seen in her slogan "Harambee" which is Swahili for let's all pull together. I believe this creative element, this "Soft Power" approach, could inspire some people in individualistic Western cultures, which have more difficulty creating solidarity.

In her own way, Grace Ogot used "intercultural" dialectics to educate her readers to the intricacies of tribal life. The Rain Came is a good example. In the introduction of a method book we discover why she decided to write. While attending a 1962 African literature conference at Makarere University in neighboring Uganda, Ogot realized that no East African work was on display, which inspired her to publish. Reportedly, at that conference Ogot read aloud her story, the Year of Sacrifice, which was subsequently published in Black Orpheus in 1963. Finally, this story was later reworked and retitled, the Rain Came (Ogot, 2012).

We could say the short story style she used here is a form of intercultural dialogue using literature. First of all, Ogot is recounting it in English, and not Swahili or another African language, and moreover she does this through the prism of her multiple influences, which included Western ones. She masterfully connects Occidental and Kenyan Luo cultural elements, through the tale of a young woman to be sacrificed by her tribal-chief father, under difficult conditions and according to millennia-old traditions. Ogot purposefully avoids pure logic or Western-style reason, even though she seems equally desirous of having the reader consider human-rights issues all the while experiencing empathy with the characters.

This is not easy and Ogot puts the reader in an uncomfortable position. We feel pain for the heroine Oganda and intense concern up to the moment she is delivered by the man she loves. But Ogot gives us the bigger picture so we understand the context, the agony of a grieving father conflicted with his responsibility to protect his people and his responsibility to his daughter. It is as if Ogot is asking us to not just judge him but to understand his standpoint, while simultaneously inviting us to reflect on an unjust predicament. This paper advances the idea such intercultural dialogue is needed for critical thinking, in literary and other contexts of our globalized and multicultural society. In her case, Ogot offers a critical-thinking approach

through short-story writing, while creating a creative bridge between vastly differing worldviews.

NORTON'S APPROACH TO DIALECTICS

As for the Socratic Method, among experts there exist different explanations of the Dialectics approach. I prefer that of the late philosopher Professor David L. Norton (1930-1995). Norton argued that 17th century Western philosophers diluted the original Greek approach to ethics, moral development and personal responsibility, which has led to the current decline of moral integrity in the West, particularly the United States. According to his writing and speeches, this is what has led to corruption in finance, business and government, the crises in business and industrial competitiveness, and most fundamentally, the crisis in education.

To explain this, Norton used the expression 'self-actualization' which was his translation of the Greek pagan word *daemon*, referring to the concept that everyone possesses their own innate, unique potential excellence. He believed that excellence is actualized through the process of discovering oneself and one's inherently 'right work,' used in the broadest sense to mean self-development in society (de Gastyne, 1990).

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY, PERRY'S SCHEME

In the world of North American educational philosophers on critical thinking, it might be interesting to note the work of two writers, even though they did not spend significant time on the use of the Arts, or the discussion of intercultural dialogue. These men would be William G. Perry (1913-1998), and Benjamin Bloom (1913-1999) and his team, who created Bloom's Taxonomy, whose ideas still provide an interesting backdrop to our discussion here. This is particularly true as pertains to what I noted above as 'binary thinking,' which is sometimes called 'dualism' and the importance of civic engagement.

To start with, in Perry's so-called Scheme of Intellectual Development, critical thinking was meant to anticipate various stages of students' intellectual development, to respond in helping them become critical thinkers. As well, it is intended to give perspective to teachers frustrated by students who resist nuanced ways of thinking.

His four basic stages were described as Dualism (black and white thinking) ; Multiplicity (everything is grey) ; Relativism (everything has a

context) ; and Commitment in Relativism (the acceptance that our knowledge has an impact on our "moral being") (Perry, 2008).

Regarding Benjamin Bloom and his educator's committee that devised what was subsequently known as Bloom's Taxonomy in 1956, they used 6 levels of activity : Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, and Create (or Synthesize). Subsequently he developed the following 6 corresponding steps : Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation.

An applied example follows :

Thesis Statement **-** *Why was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s, "I Have a Dream" speech so important to our nation?*

Evaluation – How would Martin Luther King react to our current state?

Synthesis - Construct an outline of what this country would look like without racism.

Analysis – What would Dr. King have accomplished if he were still alive?

Application – How can you help turn Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision into a reality?

Comprehension – Why did Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. make this great speech?

Knowledge - In what year did King make his great speech "I Have a Dream"? Name three things in the speech that stand out to you? (Bloom, 2001).

PERRY/DEWEY – CRITICAL THINKING GOES WITH ENGAGEMENT

Building on the above concepts, our paper suggests going farther with critical thinking approaches by adding the element of engagement and the use of the Arts. Vermont-born John Dewey, psychologist, philosopher and education reformer born in the mid-19th century did this, and he was one of the most prominent thinkers of his day. We believe Dewey's ideas on critical and creative thinking absolutely retain their importance.

According to Vucina Zoric (2015) at the University of Montenegro, here is what Dewey felt about active engagement in the world outside the classroom and civic engagement:

> The starting point of this paper is the fact that Dewey's concept of citizenship education was one of the most

> important in this period, as well as the fact that its influence on the development of educational theory and practice and beyond is still present. The study is aimed at examining the substance of Dewey's basic ideas of civic education and within it the attitudes towards national identity, society and state… We conclude that the role of civic education was indispensable and fundamental when it comes to the development of Dewey's view of the individual, society, state, democracy and education, and that impact of the two was reciprocal (Zoric, 2015).

As we have seen above, William Perry was not far from this line of thinking, and went as far as to put engagement as number 4 in his Scheme : Commitment in Relativism, insisting that our knowledge is not isolated, in that it has an impact on our moral being (Perry, 2020). For reasons demonstrated above, one of our objectives in this paper is to show how using the Arts and intercultural elements -- and what we define as humanistic education-- are also closely related to civic education. Some examples follow near the end of this paper.

OBSTACLES TO CRITICAL THINKING

As David Norton indicates in the earlier citation, a problem found in many modern societies is that individuals are limited instead of being empowered by education. In addition, this paper suggests limitations can be caused by traumatic life experiences, which educators need to perceive. Such traumas could be linked to political and social climates and passed throughout generations. Consequently, thinking patterns can result from inheriting conceptualizations and traumas.

A book by Franco-Algerian psychoanalyst Karima Lazali titled *La trauma colonial* (Lazali, 2018), demonstrates this. The author shows -- through multiple examples using Algerian and Franco-Algerian literary/historical sources – the difficulty of breaking generations of ingrained experiences, such as a violent colonial one. And once again we see the power of Art and Culture: the lack of published psychoanalytic research in the Franco-Algerian context pushed the author to use a literary context, which ended up adding depth to her work.

DANGERS OF BINARY THINKING

Digging deeper into the challenges of developing true critical thinking we discover its opposite: We would submit this to be "binary thinking," such as what we saw in Perry's Scheme as his lowest level of cognitive development. A "binary perception" is the tendency to perceive ideas and people in polarities: Right vs. Wrong, Us vs. Them, Black vs. White …without the myriad nuanced shades in-between. In comparison as we have seen, critical thinking is open to learning, flexible and courageous, and not the easier path.

Blind adoration of role models, past or present, is a major pitfall of binary thought. This is increasingly perilous because of what we now call Fake News. Common sense dictates no human being is foul-proof or 100 percent in the right (a result of binary thinking). Yet it is common to put personages on pedestals and loose critical thinking skills, perhaps from a human desire to believe someone will 'save' Humanity from crises, for example.

A modern example of binary logic and discourse on a large scale, is the now-well-known quote by former US President G.W. Bush, "you're either with us, or against us," when he launched his anti-terrorism campaign after the September 11, 2001 attacks and subsequent Iraq invasion. To underline the message Bush added at the time, "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (Bush, 2001).

After it was proven in 2007 that what Bush called 'Weapons of Mass Destruction' to justify this intervention was a lie created by the CIA, he publicly admitted it was an error. But the damage had been done to this land of ancient civilizations which is still now steeped in violence and insecurity, as is Afghanistan. Most tragically is the loss of many lives, most of whom were civilians.

This paper argues that such binary Western discourse and Hard Power approaches put Muslims on the defensive world-wide, as well as alienated those not in agreement with U.S. military interventionist approaches. Consequently, the resulting increase in antagonism fed the ranks of Islamist extremists, providing them efficient promotional tools for their recruiters. This paper posits that the 21st-century phenomenon of Daesh, the so-called Islamic State and such extremist groups, have real roots in Western errors related to binary thought and discourse.

Not limited to the U.S. of course, other examples abound and Media play a part in pitting communities against each other by insults, demonizing

and amalgamations. Exacerbated during high unemployment and when resources are scarce, such a scenario is also seen in Beatrice Uwambaje's book on the Rwandan civil war, *La silence des collines* (Uwambaje, 2019), as well as in writings by Harvard University Turkish cultural anthropologist Prof. Nur Yalman, when he speaks of carnage in the former Yugoslavia (Yalman & Ikeda, 2009). Other examples can be found in *Fear of Small Numbers*, by NY University's Arjun Appadurai, who was born in Bombay in 1949 (Appadurai, 2006).

An additional book regarding simplistic, binary-style definitions is *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong,* by Amin Maalouf (Maalouf, 2000), with a newer translation titled *On Identity*. A few years before the September 11 Twin Tower attacks, Maalouf writes he stopped smiling when people asked him if he felt more French, or more Lebanese. He had finally realized, he said, that this **either/or** question was dangerous because it creates division, is based on false logic, and too many people thought in this fashion. Consequently, the author who is a linguist, historian, and now member of the *Academie Française*, gives many examples in different historical and cultural contexts how people have multiple belongings. In his words:

> How many times, since I left Lebanon in 1976 to live in France, have people asked me, with the best intentions in the world, whether I felt 'more French' or 'more Lebanese ?' And I always give the same answer: "Both!" I say that not in the interests of fairness or balance, but because any other answer would be a lie. What makes me myself rather than anyone else is the very fact that I am poised between two countries, two or three languages and several cultural traditions. It is precisely this that defines my identity. Would I exist more authentically if I cut off a part of myself? (Maalouf, 2000, p.1)

A few sentences later he encapsulates his definition:

> Identity cannot be compartmentalized. You can't divide it up into halves or thirds or any other separate segments. I haven't got several identities: I've got just one, made up of many components in a mixture that is unique to me, just as other people's identity is unique to them as individuals (Maalouf, 2000, p.1).

Over-simplified, polarized thinking leads to extremism in all areas, including religion, ideology and politics. By its nature it is violent as it puts ideologies above human beings in importance. – One is given up for the other.

Under these conditions such a collective tendency translates into sacrifice of human beings and Life itself, all for the sake of ideas and ideology. Additionally, profit is often behind manipulation when communities are abandoned, especially if they do not recognize the deception because they have not developed critical thinking skills…

In our globalized world of social media - with huge populations displaced because of war, poverty and environmental crises - different cultures and religions are increasingly face-to-face. The need to create viable solutions against extremisms and binary thinking is imperative. And this argument is reinforced considering purposeful manipulation by governments, secret services, and other entities wishing to destabilize communities.

LIFELONG EDUCATION APPROACHES

Yet, with determined critical-thinking habits and *life-long education systems* that support this, populations, including youth, can resist such manipulation. Lifelong learning was one of the pillars of Japanese education reformer Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's (1871-1944) *Soka* education for value creation. A book recently published in France titled *L'ecole sans murs – Une école de la reliance* (tentative translation: *A school without walls (is) a school that connects),* includes a compilation of academic essays reflecting Makiguchi's approach.

In his contribution to this work, Rikio Kimata from Soka University Japan focuses precisely on this aspect of Makiguchi's thought. After attacking the constant rote-learning and over-focus on absorbing knowledge without application -- in order to explain the concept of half-day schooling and half-day working in the community Kimata describes Makiguchi's motivation: A seriously worsening social situation in the 1920s (Kimata, 2019).

At that epoch, Japanese youth had difficulty integrating school and finding work. So Makiguchi insisted the school system responded in no way to the needs of the population. The obvious solution, therefore, was having learning opportunities throughout one's lifetime, with the possibility of learning early on, what constitutes life (and work) outside school for half of each school day.

In the introduction of this book, Véronique Boy from University of Paris 8 evokes the importance of learning skills for self-teaching, for a future

seeing change at an ever-rapid pace and for which we have difficulty imaging (Boy, 2019). This brings to mind the TED.com conferences of Sir Ken Robinson, such as "Do schools kill creativity?" (Robinson, 2006).

Boy's comments on "self-teaching" also make an argument for universally-accessible and predominantly free MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) lessons. From 2019, it is encouraging to learn there are also London-based *Intellectus* video courses for all pre-university levels (Intellectus, 2020).

For my final reference from *L'ecole sans murs*, the essay touching on interculturality by Nicole Blondeau, who titles her paper "Literature as access to the world," is also pertinent to this discussion. Here is our translation of how she begins, which introduces the intercultural-dialogue element we believe critical for education's future: "Literature can be a window on the world, in other words a means of diversified social, cultural, historic, ecological and environmental knowledge of others and of their patrimonial anchors… All literary persons are convinced of this" (Blondeau, 2019).

As we finish this discussion on Makiguchi's contributions, Andrew Gebert and Monte Joffee summarized them this way in 2007, indicating a free and fearless spirit ready to challenge all social assumptions and paths of facility:

> His (Makiguchi's) "radicalist" vision of the way the world should be was always balanced with a keen pragmatic awareness of how it actually was. The dynamic tension between these two aspects of his thinking -- radicalist and pragmatic -- gave rise to an approach to educational reform that was at once visionary, gradualist, and doggedly determined (Gebert & Joffe, 2007, ch.4).

I find the above definition one of the most extraordinary things about Makiguchi's life and thought, because he was always courageous enough to challenge the status quo without compromising his convictions, but was convinced that immediate and radical change was not acceptable, nor sustainable. He sought gradual improvements, even though his ultimate goal was a total paradigm shift.

THE ARTS AS TRIGGERS AND CHANGE AGENTS: USING "FLOW"

Dewey(1934) in his paper on aesthetics and art, "*Art as Experience,*" spoke of the importance of "intuition," and Ikeda (1989) spoke of the

Universal which he intuits through the Arts (Ikeda, 1989), and which we find complements the former. With the predominantly logical, left-hemisphere brain and the right hemisphere, which is primarily intuitive according to neuroscientists, are we not discovering that real learning must engage both sides of our cognitive capacities? Dewey, among other education philosophers, seemed to imply that purely logical parts, our 'reasoning capacity' or so-called 'Cartesian' approach, is not enough for optimal learning. Dewey wrote :

> …ultimately there are but two philosophies. One of them accepts life and experience in all its uncertainty, mystery, doubt, and half knowledge and turns that experience upon itself to deepen and intensify its own qualities—to imagination and art. This is the philosophy of Shakespeare and Keats (Dewey, 1934, pg.34).

There exists a Left/Right Brain theory which, although greatly modified since the 1960s when first introduced by Roger W. Sperry(1913-1994), still interests neuroscientists. The general idea supposes that people who are largely dominated in their thinking by their left-brain hemispheres tend to be logical, analytical and objective, and those dominated by right-hemisphere thinking are mostly intuitive, creative, emotional, thoughtful and subjective. However, what is most important to this paper is that, according to new research, a person's abilities are strongest when both halves of the brain work together (Peak Performance, 2020).

Would it not be true, therefore, that Albert Einstein (1879-1955)'s love of playing violin, using just one example, was important for him not only for living a satisfying life, but also in his work in physics?

Not surprisingly, Yehudi Menuhin(1916-1999), possibly the greatest violinist who has ever lived and whom Einstein once met and covered with praise, once made a comment regarding how the inherent power in music functions as a harmonizer in dialogue, building virtual bridges above otherwise irreconcilable differences in cultures.

In a 1992 published dialogue, Menuhin said that music is the oldest form of human expression which began with the voice and the need 'to reach out to others.'… He stated then that music is one of the few fields in which there is little feuding or quarrels, apart from antagonism or competition between artists. His point was that an audience is united with musicians through empathy.… His interlocutor in this published dialogue evokes that Menuhin had previously written 'music creates order out of chaos,' and the

maestro agreed a "new order of peace could be produced through the solidarity of ordinary people who love music" (Menuhin & Ikeda, 1992).

As Menuhin was known to take concrete action based on his convictions, he created a project called *Multikulturelles Schulprojekt fur Europe* (MUS-E) in 1993. He said the concept was to bring song and dance to schools where there was violence and prejudice. And that the result was children of many backgrounds of race, color and religion would join in singing and dancing folklore of different cultures. According to his observation, the children came to trust each other, and became more interested in school work which improved in an atmosphere of harmony. -- Menuhin's dearest wish was that all children could start each day with song and dance in this way (Menuhin & Ikeda, 2003).

Besides social cohesion, yet another by-product of the inherent force of Music, Art and Culture is the therapeutic benefit, the popular example being the so-called "Mozart Effect" of certain music on unborn babies. But there is a growing number of other music and art therapies used in diverse situations. More examples are near the end of this paper.

We believe the importance of right-hemisphere learning could be further corroborated using the so-called "Zone" or Flow-State theory of former Chicago University professor, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi(b.1934 -). This pioneering thinker emphasizes the importance of cognitive capacity closely related to intuition, because 'flow' is the mental state in which someone performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of "energized focus, complete absorption, and a transformation in one's sense of time" (Csikszentmilhlyi & Nakamura, 2001). Flow can be found therefore in the application of many activities including sports, and musical improvisation has been shown to be one of the strongest examples of achieving this optimal state.

CREATIVE THINKING

Having already noted "out of the box" creative thinking is complimentary to critical thinking, it is worth evoking one of the most creative people in all of History, Leonardo da Vinci(1452-1519). France and Italy marked the 500th anniversary of his passing in 2019, as he died in the French town Amboise at Château Clos-Lucé as guest of King Francis I. - It seems suitable therefore to explore why Leonardo's creativity was so exceptional.

This universal genius was engaged in almost every field, although he is primarily known for painting the Mona Lisa and for the Last Supper fresco.

Yet Leonardo also invented and played musical instruments, even composing and organizing entire musical theater performances. Additionally, he invented armaments and hydraulic machines, and novelties such as a mechanical lion to entertain his patron King Francis I. In addition, daVinci brought medical and natural sciences centuries into the future and wrote on philosophy and every imaginable subject in his *Atlantico* journal. Totally interdisciplinary, the world for Leonardo was not fragmented into separate fields of study; for him, there were no borders between them. - He used medical studies to improve his painting, for example.

Interestingly, this genius was mostly self-taught. Born in conservative 15th century Italy as the illegitimate child of a rich Italian notary and a young servant, Leonardo rose from difficult beginnings to success by staying true to himself and working constantly, following his passion to understand everything and constantly improve.

There are some who believe Leonardo is a model needed today more than ever. According to Ikeda (1994), daVinci's universality is something we need in the 21st century. This paper also suggests that more than any other point in history, Humanity now needs to re-find Leonardo's interdisciplinary approach if we are to solve our complex, interconnected and international problems.

Fortunately, inspiring modern role models do exist. There is UNESCO's Goodwill Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue, American jazzman and technical wizard Herbie Hancock, who was awarded the Harvard University Norton Chair Prize in 2014 for creativity, for example. In the 5th 'set' of his 7 Harvard lectures, Hancock expresses a humanistic approach to music, life and creativity when he speaks of creating value every moment and staying aware of our mutual inter-relatedness (Hancock, 2014).

Additionally, when Hancock was named UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador in 2011 he created the International Jazz Day movement with this U.N. institution, now celebrated in nearly 195 countries every April 30. The year 2020 marked the first time the JazzDay All-Star concert and related workshops were to be held on the African continent, in Cape Town, South Africa. As an event promoting human dignity and intercultural dialogue -- using an art form (jazz) inspired by African cultures-- this was a milestone decision. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 confinements interfered and the result was a 'virtual JazzDay.' Nevertheless, the event was still marked by many African contributions (International Jazz Day, 2020).

ART AND CREATIVITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS CAUSES

International Jazz Day brings us back to a major point of this paper: the existence of 'engaged artists' for developing critical and creative thinking with precise objectives regarding social justice, which are often linked to therapeutic uses. There are numerous organizations which use artistic expression in their techniques for humanitarian or human-rights causes. We believe the more they are networked with each other, the stronger their impact will be.

To name just a few : Chime for Change is run by Managing Editor Marianne Pearl, widow of Daniel Pearl the former Wall Street Journal journalist assassinated 2001 in Afghanistan. Marianne encourages story-telling and journalism for women's empowerment in refugee camp-type environments. Marianne recounts one example : "I went to Iraq to deliver a storytelling workshop for young refugees, mostly Yazidi, who fled ISIS in Iraq. We met in Kurdistan." At first shocked and silent, she says, the girls opened like blooming flowers day after day. Editor Pearl recently said she has done this twice since that trip, in France and in Mexico. She adds proudly that her 'Women Bylines' has already produced 14 films. (Pearl, 2019).

Cité Rouge by Christiane Ben Barek and Anne Coudin was a project involving disadvantaged youth in housing projects outside Paris, set to be razed by the government (Ben Barek, 2006). Ben Barek wished to give a voice to residents and simultaneously, empower them through teaching the art of writing together with her journalist colleague from Radio France.

El Sistema was founded in the 1970s in Venezuela and is now international. This music-education program with social objectives uses peer learning that ends up impacting other school subjects like History, Art and Culture, Geography, and by its very nature, community-building. Tricia Tunstall in New Jersey, USA who works with El Sistema Global, has also published books on the movement, such as *Changing Lives* and *Playing for Their Lives* (Tunstall 2012, 2016).

iMOVE Foundation – Moving Matters was founded by Nikita Shahbazi and is a non-profit using dance, creative movement and yoga for refugees and disadvantaged women and children in Syria's neighboring countries, as well as the Netherlands. Dancing and creative movement help heal conflict-affected women and children, she believes, and enhance resilience and emotional well-being, facilitate connections within host societies and expand cultural horizons (iMOVE, 2015).

Loba / Ré-Création uses dance which leads to the healing of women raped and mutilated in a war context. These arts help victims 'reclaim' their bodies so they can eventually share and overcome trauma together in a supportive environment (Loba, 2020).
MUS-E – International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation was created in 1991 by Mr. Menuhin. The objective was "to remind political, cultural and educational institutions of the central place of art and creativity in any process of personal and societal development." Menuhin's vision was to "give a voice to the voiceless through artistic expression" (Yehudi, 2020).
Syria Music Lives, and *Global Week for Syria* were founded by Hannibal Saad, a musician and composer also involved in UNESCO's International Jazz Day. *Global Week for Syria* is an annual Live and online event, aimed at raising awareness, creating platforms and stimulating artistic co-creations between Syrian, Arab, and local/international musicians in their host communities. The event includes over 340 musicians in over 50 locations, with a music festival, conferences, and workshops in Lebanon and the Netherlands (Saad, 2020).
Taragalte Festival, (which partners with *Playing for Change*), as well as its own school for disadvantaged children from diverse cultures, is found in southern Morocco. It is intercultural, humanistic and artistic (Taragalte, 2020).

CREATIVE DIALOGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS CAUSES

To complement the above list of structures using Art and creativity for human rights-related causes, the following are four examples using creative dialogue in human rights, and/or intercultural-dialogue contexts. *Coexister,* based in Paris**,** was founded by Samuel Grzybowski(1992-) and proposes inter-religious activities, dialogues and voyages, by and for youth (Grzybowski, 2009). *Kindness Matters Youth Initiative* is a movement initiated by UNESCO with the Gandhi Institute, launched August (Kindness, 2019). *Soliya* appeared September 2019 in a Forbes.com article. It is an organization committed to helping individuals recognize the value of diversity and pluralism by exposing students to culturally immersive experiences, and forcing students to have 'tough' conversations. *Soliya* has worked with students from over 100 universities in 30 countries across the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, Europe, and North America (Janjuha-Jivraj, 2018). And finally, *Youth for Human Rights* based in Santa Monica,

CA, USA, raises awareness among youth on all human rights issues around the world (Youth, 2020).

SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUTH

Being conscious that the world of tomorrow depends on the young people of today, in light of the Latin expression of "*Laboramus*" (Let us work) often cited by the great English historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975), and similar expressions from Leonardo da Vinci and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe(1749-1832), the research results here suggest it is necessary to have constant projects and civic engagements for leading fulfilling and creative lives. In this regard we would like to share the following suggestions:

The first would be that youth engage in existing structures like those listed above, or make their own. The U.N. initiative called United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI), an integral part of the 17 SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals movement, is another promising example of how students can connect on the international level.

The second suggestion would be to take Massive Open Online Courses. These 'MOOCs' are increasingly available through platforms such as some from Harvard and Columbia universities. Because of such learning opportunities often free of cost, as long as there is internet connection, *learning throughout one's lifetime* becomes ever-more possible.

The third suggestion for youth would be watching TED or similar such conferences, debating and discussing with others or writing papers *pro* and *con*. Many subjects touching on innovative solutions for modern challenges, for example that of Sir Ken Robinson on "Changing Education Paradigms," lend themselves to practicing critiques (Robinson, 2010).

SEEKING THE UNIVERSAL

In the abstract of this paper, I note that "seeking the universal" should be an important element for creative and critical thinking, as well as a gauge for intercultural dialogue. Because this point is by nature abstract, to demonstrate it I propose a translation of an extract from *La maladie d'Islam*, a book written in response to the New York Sept 11, 2001 Twin Towers attack by the late Franco-Tunisian intellectual Abdelwahab Meddeb (1946-2014), who wrote at that time:

> (We need to have) an integration of Islamic heritage at the source of thought and creation (as much as we use the sources of Greek, Latin, Hebraic, Japanese, Chinese and Indian). It would be a supplementary gage for constituting the common

> stage, *which should be that of a world culture*, where the products would be works of the spirit, *situated above and beyond traditions, without interrupting the dialogues between them (…).* [emphasis added]

Mr Meddeb continues by explaining where this 'Universal Literature' is to be found, voicing his conviction that universal values in Art and human beings can be found in diversity itself. And what's more, in order to recognize the universal, one must first know well one's own traditions, languages and history. Meddeb explains:

> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was already persuaded at his epoch that a universal literature (*Weltliterateur*) was in the process of being born, and further, that it was necessary to hasten its arrival. Along this line, he reflected on the relationship between the particular and the universal. (He quotes Goethe): "It is in each particularity where the universal shines… It is necessary to learn to know the particularities of each language and each nation, because it is by these that the exchange operates and is realized in all its magnitude. In this way, we will arrive at a conciliation and at a reciprocal appreciation… (Meddeb, 2002, p.205).

Along similar lines, Ikeda notes that in an early scene of his *Faust*, Goethe (1749-1832) has his protagonist rapturously declare, 'into the whole how all things blend, each in the other working, living.' Ikeda says that if we accept this marvelous statement of the interconnection of all living things, then Art becomes the primary modality through which humans discover their bonds with humans, humanity with nature, and humanity with the universe (Ikeda, 2010).

CONCLUSION

Returning to Socrates and a number of persons cited in this paper, these are not dogmatic individuals but people who have seen themselves as living inside a community of human beings, rather than inside abstract truths. On the other hand, binary (black vs. white) thinking and discourse inevitably creates animosity and violence, and breaks communities.

Nevertheless, my solid conviction is that through humanistic value-creating education with a powerful focus on the arts, there is the possibility of nurturing individuals such as the critical thinkers mentioned here in this

paper. Moreover, we posit that Africa is a vastly untapped, infinite source of inspiration for the entire planet.

In a published dialogue between SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock titled *Reaching Beyond* in Africa on the Rise, Chapter 9, Dr. Ikeda says that Africa is the spiritual home of jazz and the cradle of humanity, declaring the 21st century as the Century of Africa and promoting increased exchanges with the continent. He goes as far as to say the 21st century cannot prosper if humanity's place of origin does not. Insisting that those who suffer the greatest deserve the greatest happiness (Ikeda et al., 2017).

Because of the existence of recent, powerful initiatives related to the continent, such as the Abidjan Principles for education, officially announced on the Ivory Coast in 2019, the new cycle of the U.N. Human Rights education initiatives (Human Rights Education HRE 2020) and SDG awareness activities with dynamic African youth leading the discussions, as well as this year's UNESCO's JazzDay initiatives in South Africa, this paper suggests African youth have a unique role to lead Humanity to a more just and peaceful world in the areas of education and critical thinking.

As for the role of artists and critical thinking everywhere, not long after the 2015 terrorist attacks in the Paris concert hall *BATACLAN*, Herbie Hancock and fellow musician Wayne Shorter penned *Open Letter to the Next Generation of Artists*. Their ten points exude a will that young artists stay confident and fiercely independent in their thinking. Their concluding point shares advice on how to be creative:

> …As we accumulate years, parts of our imagination tend to dull. Whether from sadness, prolonged struggle, or social conditioning, somewhere along the way people forget how to tap into the inherent magic that exists within our minds. Don't let that part of your imagination fade away.
>
> … All that exists is a product of someone's imagination; treasure and nurture yours and you'll always find yourself on the precipice of discovery… Be the leaders in the movie of your life. You are the director, producer, and actor. Be bold and tirelessly compassionate as you dance through the voyage that is this lifetime (Hancock & Shorter, 2016).

To conclude, the following extract from a poem written by Soka University founder Dr. Daisaku Ikeda after the 1990 Los Angeles race riots

of 1991, could provide inspiration for intercultural dialogue thanks to its universality. Ikeda (1993) notes:

> As each group seeks its separate roots and origins society fractures along a thousand fissure lines. When neighbors distance themselves from neighbors, continue your uncompromising quest for your truer roots in the deepest regions of your life. Seek out the primordial roots of humankind (Ikeda, 1993).

He uses the metaphor of roots as if to describe each human being as a kind of tree, which we can imagine with infinitely different shapes, colors and sizes. But Ikeda also sees profound roots at the source of these human trees which are invisible but connected, pushing up from the virtual 'Earth' of humankind. It is these roots he urges us to find.

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Critical thinking skill gap in the Kenyan educational curriculum: The 21st-Century skills for the Global Citizen.

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ABSTRACT

Across the globe, the learning goals of elementary, secondary, and higher education curricula emphasize the development of the critical thinking approach. In Kenya, the curriculum mentions developing critical thinking as one of its objectives, but a critical review reveals that the education system prioritizes competitive exams and rote memorization over critical thinking and other vital 21st-century skills. In this paper, I argue that educational authorities can achieve this objective if they critically evaluate the purpose of education regularly to ensure that there is an alignment between the stated goals and practice. They also need to make sure that the education they provide leaves no learner behind.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Community of Inquiry, Enlargement of Mind, Philosophy for Children and Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking (CT) can be defined as a skillful, reasonable thought which brings about good judgment through its use of criteria and because CT is sensitive to a given context and self-correcting. The criteria that are generalizable and important include reliability, relevance, consistency, strength, coherence, evidence, and validity. It involves self-correcting which is the focus on one's thought processes to discover and rectify weaknesses. Self-correction denotes critical, active and persistent thinking towards improvement. Sensitivity to context is the consideration of specific circumstances, for any special limitations, overall configurations and untranslatability of some meanings during thinking process (Ennis, 2016; Lai, 2011; Lipman, 1988).

Primary and secondary schools are important transition stages to higher education where overt critical thinking skills are demanded. Kantian 'critical judgment theory' posits that critical thinking approach is holistic and promotes inquisitive, critical, and active minds (Arendt, 1992). Naturally, all people have the ability to think right from birth. Thinking helps individuals make sense of the world, solve problems, and make decision (Nickerson, Perkins, & Smith, 1985). However, most of the time, our socialization makes it challenging for us to think clearly or introduce bias and prejudice that corrupts our thinking process (Paul & Elder, 2008). To think critically, individuals, both young and old, ought to develop capacities to improve their thinking skills and get rid of negative influences through training (Nickerson et al., 1985).

Advocates of quality basic education do not see schools as places where teachers merely transmit knowledge for students to swallow reflexively, schools ought to be places for questioning and discussing ideas (UNESCO, 2009). A Report to UNESCO (1996) on Education for the Twenty-first Century, by the International Commission, presided by Jacques Delors, states that attitudes towards learning forged in primary school last throughout one's lifetime (UNESCO, 1996). For several years, there has been growing curiosity and enthusiasm across the world for critical thinking, or more broadly, the idea of introducing principles of philosophizing to learners in primary and secondary schools (UNESCO, 2009). Indeed, the need to stimulate questioning and reflection at a young age within the framework of primary education is increasingly acknowledged globally (UNESCO, 2009).

Education systems in Kenya had undergone several reforms since 1963. For instances, the Ominde Report (1964) on educational goals, the Gachathi Report (1976) on educational objectives and policies, Mackay

Report (1982) on change of curriculum from the 7-4-2-3 to 8-4-4 school system, and Koech Report (1999) on review of national philosophy, policies, and objectives. The national educational and training conference (2003), whose recommendations led to the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005, outlined long, medium, and short-term targets for the education sector, which included Education for All (EFA) and the Attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015. However, despite those many reforms that the Kenya education system had undergone since independence, issues on critical thinking skills had not been adequately addressed, even in the newly introduced 'progressive' 2-6-6-3 competency-based curriculum, which consists of lower primary, upper primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary schooling.

The Task Force Report on re-alignment of the Education in Kenya 2012 and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) 2016 on national needs assessment observed that the education systems since 1963 had emphasized the acquisition of knowledge with no pedagogical emphasis on application. This situation has influenced assessment, which mainly tests memorization (Republic of Kenya, 2012; KICD 2016). KICD (2017) and sessional paper No.2 of 2015 report on the introduction of a new competency-based curriculum (CBC) and indict the old 8.4.4 curriculum for encouraging

> competition for exams; is more of content memorization and reproduction during exams. The teacher was the main source of knowledge and learners were passive participants; it was more rigid in content, learning time and strategies; had little parental engagement and support; focused more on cognitive development; emphasized on schooling and focused on summative assessment (KICD, 2017:12).

Going through these reports, it is clear that 8.4.4 curriculum did not infuse critical thinking skills into teaching and learning at the primary and secondary level.

Both a 2013 survey of organizations in Kenya and across the world by Pearson Foundation Study, Microsoft Partners in learning, and the Society for Human Resource Management and Crockett's (2016) study on the 21st-century skills for the global citizens reported that the critical thinking approach was the top skills gap for job applicants (Anisa, 2018; Crockett, 2016). According to Crockett (2016), Educational Curriculum Developers across the world should look for solutions and new ways to integrate critical thinking skills approaches, such as creativity, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, analytical thinking, action, ethics, and accountability, into secondary schools curriculum for learners to develop

global awareness and become world citizens with enlarged minds. This paper, therefore, intends to assess the role of critical thinking pedagogy in Kenyan schools' curriculum. Pedagogy refers to the process, method, theory, and practice of teaching. Similarly, critical thinking pedagogy alludes to educational philosophy, practice, and theory that helps learners develop their consciousness. Teachers are adept at practicing critical pedagogy within a community of inquiry, not when they parade themselves as all-knowing. A community of inquiry exists when individuals reflect and engage others in purposeful discourse that helps them construct individual meaning and mutual understanding.[1]

METHODS

This study used a critical analysis method to assess, analyze, and interpret various views on the importance of critical thinking in education. Critical analysis requires reflective thinking, which is thinking about one's thoughts. It is a process of questioning one's understanding of an issue. Rules of logical thinking (inductive or deductive reasoning) are used to evaluate the validity of results or arguments (Krishnananda,1992). Therefore it involves identifying arguments or parts of arguments and even stating them in one's own words while recognizing that there is no single right way to understand and evaluate the truth (Krishnananda, 1992).

The study identifies various weaknesses in Kenya's approach to teaching critical thinking and its impact on learners. Using the critical analytical approach, which involves breaking down philosophical issues through speculation and conceptual analysis, the study will establish the Kenyan education system's weaknesses. The study will critically illustrate, on the one hand, the need of train our learners on critical thinking skills at a young age, while on the other hand, calling for critical judgment in teaching and learning to bring about enlightened thought in learners. I used conceptual analysis to examine the role of critical thinking in our curriculum for school learners. In all, critical reflection shall inform the development of concepts in my paper to establish the goal of critical thinking in fostering open-minded and reflective thoughts in learners.

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[1] A class of persons who together reflect and engage themselves in critically purposeful discourse to construct individual meaning and confirm mutual understanding in what is generally referred as the principles of philosophizing.

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS: ANALYSIS OF THE KENYAN SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Critical thinking is among the seven core competencies in Kenya's new competency-based curriculum (CBC). KICD (2017) argue that critical thinking will assist learners to open their mind, be in a position to accept and listen to new information and points of view that may sometimes be different from their earlier held opinions and beliefs. Critical thinking skill is essential for all learners, in all disciplines and all subjects offered in the education curriculum. In science subjects, for example, the curriculum suggests that children should think critically about change in observable patterns to form ideas on how to deal with problems. Training learners to think critically, whether in science or arts without philosophizing, happens to be the main challenge of the CBC. The curriculum does not spell out clearly how learners can acquire these skills, given that in the Kenyan schools philosophizing with children is not in the syllabus. KICD (2017) recommends teaching learners at secondary school resourcefulness, resolving problems with limited resources such as water in the community and schools. But resourcefulness has to be grounded in some kind of philosophy and way of being.

Across the globe, the goals of learning in higher education, secondary and elementary curricula emphasize critical pedagogy; however, it is often unclear how educators will measure these learning outcomes. In Kenya's case, teaching critical thinking is challenging because there is no shared understanding of critical pedagogy and critical thinking skills to inform the development of metrics for measuring the learning outcomes (Kennedy, 1991). Thinking is a communal activity that helps learners recognize that they are in a community that shares common questions and concerns. Thus, the curriculum and assessment should emphasize the need to work together instead of competing, as witnessed in Kenya's pre-CBC curricula (Cam, 2014).

ASSESSMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Researchers from Durban University studied whether teaching children philosophy in primary school would enhance their ability to mathematics, writing, and reading (Nuffield Foundation, 2015). The study also examined the effect of philosophy on children's cognitive skills (Nuffield Foundation, 2015). The research focused on 50 schools, mainly at the primary level, across England with varied challenges and with the representation of students coming from disadvantaged environments. The assessment found

that philosophizing with children had a positive effect on learners at stages 1 and 2; Learners introduced to P4C made two months of improvement in mathematics, writing, and reading compared with learners not introduced to the principles of philosophizing. Teachers argued that critical thinking skills (or philosophizing) made learners confident, patient when listening to others, self-motivated, better, happy, and enlightened. Critical thinking skills enabled children to participate in class discussions and contribute to the construction of new knowledge confidently. P4C classes had high levels of student engagement, with many asking thoughtful questions. The evaluation also noted improved communication and peer relationships.

These findings resonate with the arguments of scholars such as Hamm (1989), (Vansieleghem, 2006), and Robert (2008), who emphasize that principles of philosophizing strengthened learners' reasoning (critical thinking) ability and allow them to fit in the global society as autonomous members. When moral principles, for instance, are fostered in children at a young age by a community of inquirers through interactivity and play that encourages autonomy, it helps children commit to a life dedicated to philosophical inquiry. Philosophizing, therefore, would become their way of life at later stages of life (Sharp, 1994). Enlargement of the mind in learners, according to Kant, plays a vital role in critical judgment. Critical thinking, whose criterion is *judgment,* is only possible when everyone's standpoint is open to examination. Through imagination, critical reasoning makes those in the community of inquiry embrace diverse opinion and the inquiry of others; ; this attitude towards life and others is what many describe as global citizenship (Arendt, 1992).

Our schools ought to dedicate themselves to enlarging the minds of all learners (Arendt, 1992; Robert, 2008; Burch, 2001), which would expand the community of inquiry in Kenya (Dewey, 1966).. Enlargement of mind means the capacity to think representatively from the standpoint of everyone else. Enlargement of mind through a community of inquirers requires individuals with similar mindsets but diverse opinions and common concern to figure out challenges and resolve issues that emanate from within their persons and society. A community of inquiry can be organized in the Kenyan school classrooms with specific philosophical and epistemological instructions and theories to create a meaningful learning experience and achieve higher-order learning (Akyol & Garrison, 2008). Vansieleghem (2006) argued that philosophizing offers the possibility to think as individuals while in a group by employing tools of thought which enable individuals to assess the reasoning of others and the self.

Kenyan classrooms bring various learners with different thoughts into contact, which can create a community of inquiry, leading to the enlargement of the mind. To show how it works, Kant said that the human mind needs a reasonable amount of relaxation to examine an issue from all perspectives (Arendt, 1992). It is through imagination that critical judgment is possible. However, solitary, critical thinking does not mean cutting oneself from all others. This thinking, as Arendt (1992) observed, does not depend on age. For our children in Kenya to think with an enlarged mentality, we ought to train them on how they can harness the power of their imagination to transform their lived experiences. "Enlarged thought" disregards self-thought or self-interest, which Kant explains is limited and unenlightened thought. It should be noted that Kant does not tell us how to combine our thoughts with others; he tells us how to take others into account to make a reasoned judgment (Arendt, 1992: 38-45).

The introduction and integration of critical thinking for children in Kenyan secondary schools to create a community of inquiry can develop in young citizens the disposition that will make them enlightened and independent as they proceed to higher learning and community responsibilities. Lipman (2003) argued that critical thinking involves mutual criticism, careful voicing of opinions, and judgment, which makes children enlightened and self-reliant (Lipman & Naji, 2003). The introduction of the principles of philosophizing, according to Lipman (2003), is the best way of making education relevant. Philosophizing would occur in schools when classrooms become communities of inquiry.

Schools in Kenya can teach critical thinking because learners are already stimulated and curious. However, the outcome of the process would be good if it is assessed well (Watson-Glaser, 2010). Valid critical thinking assessments should allow for the visibility of learner's reasoning. Hence, Socratic questioning would be the most appropriate means for assessing critical thinking compared to objective questions (Norris & Ennis, 1989). Socratic questioning is more sensitive to critical thinking dispositional factors (Ku, 2009). Koziol and Moss (2005) added that learners should be assessed based on their positionality and the nature of their arguments. For learners to assess con and pro arguments, they need to know the standards to use in critiquing an opposing piece of evidence so that they can avoid bias, closed-mindedness, thoughtless generalizations, and ethnocentrism (Case and Wright, 1997); Socratic questioning can help educators verify student understanding on this issue as well Schools can also use the Paul and Elder (2008) assessment tool of Critical Thinking to assess learners' critical

reasoning skills. The tool comprises of the elements of thoughts assessed using the intellectual standards with goals of developing the intellectual traits.

CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING CRITICAL THINKING PEDAGOGY IN KENYAN EDUCATION

Although contemporary and traditional theories provide a base for learning and teaching critical thinking skills in universities and colleges, many graduates from institutions of higher education in Kenya find it challenging to perform tasks that require critical thinking skills. A plausible explanation for this situation is that many learners in Kenya ask lower-order questions since teachers, who also did not learn how to think critically due to the same systemic challenges, failed to train them to ask higher-order questions (KICD, 2017). Teachers' interpretation of critical thinking and critical thinking pedagogy may be among the factors causing this problem (Kennedy, 1991; Jones, 2004). Another factor is how teachers support learners in developing problem-solving skills (Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Wheatley, 2002). The learners' own motivation regarding critical thinking abilities can also contribute to the problem (Bandura, 1993; Zimmerman, 2000; Caliskan 2010). Some learners also find it challenging to search for information (Laxman, 2010). Finally, teachers' preference and lack of training in constructivist teaching approaches could also explain this problem.

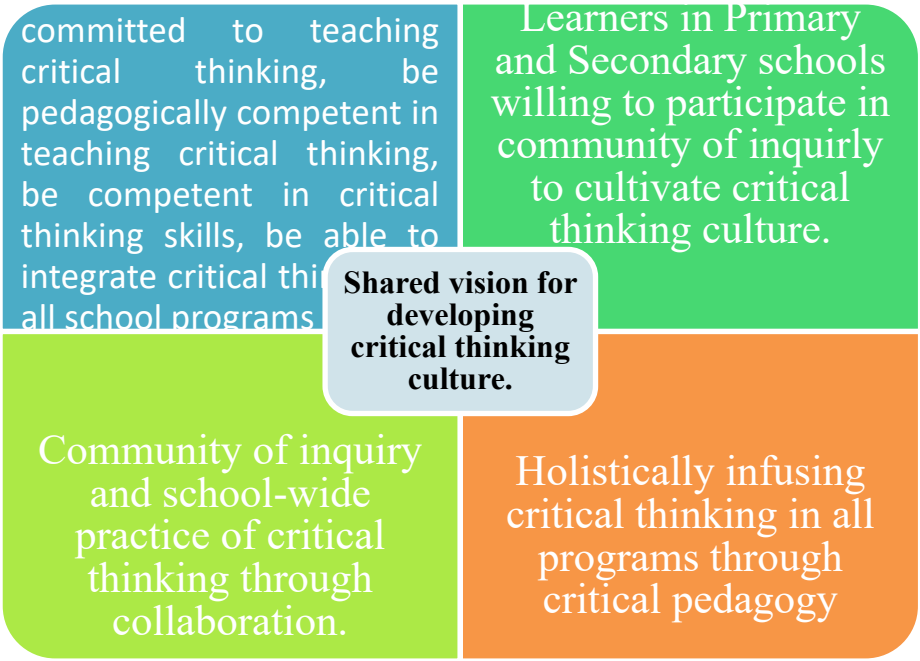
Education reforms in Kenya fail to address the critical thinking gap in the education systems adequately. The report of multiple education reform committees in the history of starting from the 1960s deemed education as the great equalizer that would reduce inequality and create the condition for Kenyans to solve the country's problems. The committees, including Ominde in 1964 and Koech in 1999, consider critical thinking skills as an essential skill. However, the Kenyan government has failed to implement the critical thinking provisions in the various reports fully. In other words, the education establishment has consistently failed to make critical thinking an essential component of education reforms since independence (Amutabi, 2003; Kivuva, 2005).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

To have a shared vision for developing critical thinking culture for the 21st century global citizens in our schools, teachers should be competent and committed to teaching and integrating critical thinking into all school programs. Secondary school learners, on the other hand, should be willing to participate in the community of inquiry to cultivate critical thinking culture in their classrooms. The schools should encourage the development of a community of inquiry and school-wide practice of critical thinking skills through collaboration in both teaching and learning. In summary, critical thinking pedagogy should be infused holistically in all programs through the community of inquiry, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Critical thinking approach in the Kenyan schools



As teachers shift the pendulum from learning to thinking, they should select both formal and informal assessment tasks that enable students to apply critical thinking processes. The assignments should incorporate real-world scenarios, such as devising a local way of treating water using available

materials like gravel, explore the feasibility of assisting parents in farming using new acquired agricultural skills, create artistic works for auction to support a local charity, manufacture an organic household product, write and perform a play based on a novel that was studied in class, devise ways to recycle plastics and wastewater, and take a virtual field trip to a region that is studied in geography or social studies. Undoubtedly, by completing these projects, students would learn how to plan around a time frame, gather information, collaborate, consider feasible alternatives or troubleshoot problems. In addition to projects and written papers, verbal techniques, such as argumentation, provides an excellent way for students to demonstrate their ability to think critically. According to Watson-Glaser (2010), argumentation is valued for facilitating conceptual change, particularly for less structured problems. That is, learners, alter their comprehension or "adjust their frames of reference to accommodate new perspectives" (Watson-Glaser, 2010: 42). Above all, a holistic approach to teaching for critical thinking should involve a set of appropriate goal-oriented assessment tasks that enable students to manipulate cognitive skills.

While not many Kenyan schools have adopted the practice of philosophizing with children on a broad scale, it is essential to assess the existing school curricula to determine where they are lacking; in this paper, I pursue this project. Future research could systematically investigate how critical thinking training within one domain could transfer to other areas. In addition, it would be useful to determine if there are approaches to critical thinking training that promotes high performance on standardized tests given teachers' concerns that focusing on critical thinking would take away time from standardized test preparation. Examining students' disposition and exposure to traditional knowledge and customs on their ability to think critically could advance our understanding of the role of African traditional education in schooling. The rationale for this is that children's prior educational experiences and their family beliefs about the value of critical thinking could play a role in the effectiveness of critical thinking education. Other studies could examine teachers' attitudes towards teaching critical thinking through focus group discussions. Such a study can investigate the impact of peer review mechanisms and peer-to-peer teaching on teachers' ability to mainstream critical thinking into their teaching. This could result in teachers building on one another's ideas in interesting ways.

In the long-term, Kenya would need to move away from teaching critical thinking as a stand-alone topic to the infusion of critical thinking across curricular domains. ntegrating thinking and disciplinary content to

develop disciplinary understanding is educationally sound and a step in the right direction. This research has indicated that even when some teachers are committed to infusing critical thinking across the curriculum, they may lack some necessary substantive background knowledge and the pedagogical skills to assess how well their students think critically. This research has proposed ways in which Kenya can harness educators' and students' energy to drive the change in policy. This energy arises from "doing something well that is important to you", which contributes to others as well as society as a whole. Critical thinking is something teachers must be passionate about and, it should be infused purposefully across the entire curriculum. The key to making critical thinking more pervasive in primary and secondary schools is to tap into the energy of teachers, who are passionate about nurturing students' critical thinking abilities and supporting them to influence other teachers through capacity building and collaborative group work (Paul & Elder, 2010). Only by equipping all teachers to mainstream critical thinking across the curriculum through systematic, ongoing professional development can all learners develop the required critical thinking skills.Restructuring the Kenyan curriculum in primary and secondary schools to focus on critical thinking will facilitate teaching that is geared towards fostering free and reflective minds capable of resisting various forms of propaganda, fanaticism, exclusion, and intolerance.

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Kenya's 2017 basic education curriculum framework: A comprehensive review

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ABSTRACT

Kenya's 2017 competency-based curriculum, the Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF), seeks to address the skills gap in the education system and make the curriculum relevant to learners. Using Soka education as the philosophical framework, we provide a comprehensive review of BECF. The analysis in this essay covers the noteworthy provisions, double-edge policies, inconsistencies, issues of concern, and potential hurdles to implementation. It argues that the curriculum is not likely to produce the intended outcome due to inherent contradictions in the framework and the lack of an effective implementation plan. While BECF provides a broad and ambitious roadmap for the transformation of the Kenyan education system, actualizing the bold vision of BECF will require an extensive overhaul of the education system, a herculean task.

Keywords: Basic Education**,** Curriculum Review, Quality Learning, Soka education, School Reform

INTRODUCTION

Kenya has gone through many changes over the last decade, starting with the adoption of a new constitution in 2010. These changes cut across different sectors, including education. Kenya's new competency-based curriculum, the Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF), adopted by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) in 2017, is another example. BECF seeks to cultivate every learner's potential for them to become engaged, empowered, and ethical citizens (KICD, 2017). It has been nearly three years since KICD launched BECF, but it has not lived up to the hype thus far. The implementation is mired in many controversies, which threatens to doom it. There are many debates over what the curriculum entails, its feasibility, lack of pedagogical prescription, unsuitability for Kenya, potential negative impact on teachers, and commitment to implementation (Kajilwa & Chepkwony, 2018). The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) had planned on commencing implementation in January 2019, but the Minister of Education announced on 10 December 2018 that she was suspending the implementation to allow for further consultations; in a dramatic twist, she reversed her earlier decision eleven days later, which paved the way for her staff to start implementing the new curriculum as initially scheduled (Kajilwa & Chepkwony, 2018). The action of the minister reflects the level of uncertainty and bewilderment among the population.

This article contributes to the ongoing discussion about the competency-based curriculum by comprehensively assessing the curriculum and evaluating its feasibility against the backdrop of prevailing conditions in the Kenyan education system. It argues that the curriculum is not likely to produce the intended outcome due to inherent contradictions in the framework and the lack of an effective implementation plan. The curriculum provides clear, farsighted vision for Kenya that is vastly different from the status quo, but framers offer little guidance on how other stakeholders can contribute to its successful implementation. This essay offers some ideas to help improve the implementation of the curriculum while advocating for substantive changes to the curriculum's content.

We divide the paper into five parts. Part I narrates the history of curriculum reform in Kenya, starting from post-independence reforms to the present. Part II introduces the philosophical framework that informs the analysis in this paper. The essay uses Soka education philosophical lens. Part III delves into the curriculum, highlighting its noteworthy provisions, double-edge policies, issues of concern, and internal inconsistencies. Part IV focuses on potential hurdles to implementation. Part V summarizes the discussion and offers suggestions for solving some of the problems highlighted in the paper.

HISTORY OF CURRICULUM REFORM IN KENYA

A curriculum is more than a collection of ideas about how to structure an education system and the sequencing of subjects. It is a document that reflects the current situation of a nation-state and embodies the collective aspirations of the people of that nation-state. It offers a clue into their hopes and vision for the future. A curriculum is a blueprint of how the architects understand the needs of their society and what they deem as sustainable, long-term solutions to fulfilling those needs. The history of curriculum development in Kenya in the post-colonial era tells a story of a nation that wants to become an industrialized nation, whose highly trained ethical or morally virtuous workforce would make it competitive internationally.

The reports from all the successive commissions, committees, working groups, and taskforces, since independence, bare testimony to this aspiration (Cheserek and Mugalavai, 2012). The Ominde committee, for example, came up with eight national goals on which independent Kenya should build its education system in 1964 (Cheserek and Mugalavai, 2012). The goals include fostering national unity, promoting socio-economic, and expanding technological and industrial innovations for the country's development (Cheserek and Mugalavai, 2012). The Mackay report of 1984 adopted all the eight goals (Cheserek and Mugalavai, 2012). Similarly, the Koech Report published in the year 2000, Sessional Paper number one written by the National Education Conference in 2005, Kenya Vision 2030 launched in 2007, the Kamunge Report published in 2008, and the new Kenyan constitution adopted in 2010 embraced most, if not all, of the eight original goals adopted by the Ominde Committee. Like any other curriculum before it, BECF embraces these goals; it seeks to educate students to compete in an industrialized nation and attain a high quality of life (KICD, 2017).

The question is: why has the Kenyan education system failed to achieve these goals despite the overwhelming support since 1964? What would be different this time? While there are many explanations for the failure, the two dominant positions either blame colonialism or post-colonial elites. According to Court and Ghai (1974), a possible reason for the failure is that the Kenyan authorities have not structurally reformed the colonial education system they inherited. Put differently, since independence, Kenyan educational authorities find it challenging to accomplish goals they set for themselves because colonial structures and practices continue to forestall ongoing efforts aimed at making the education system serve the needs of Kenyans.

Eshiwani (1990), however, disagrees. According to Eshiwani (1990), the Government of Kenya succeeded in expanding education dramatically between the 1970s and 1990s because the government extensively restructured the education system, and significantly revised the curriculum to place more emphasis on the technical and vocational skills that were in high demand. Kenyans have made significant changes to the education system; therefore, the education policymakers need to accept the blame for inadequacies of the system, he argues. The reason for the apparent failure of the system to achieve the eight goals outlined in the Ominde committee is due to several factors including the role examinations play within the system, poor internal efficiency, insufficient resources due to poor economic conditions, and continued problems with curriculum relevance (Eshiwani, 1990).

It appears the two dominant arguments are looking at the same issue from different dimensions. While an in-depth analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper, we think the two sides make sense. One need not be wrong for the other to be right. Eshiwani is correct for stating that the government restructured the overall education system and needs to accept responsibility for its failings. But it is also possible that the reforms did not change educational outcomes because what replaced the colonial system was not radical enough to change the deeply embedded aspects of the colonial system, people's attitudes and mindsets. That is, it did not lead to a socio-cultural change in the education system (Court and Ghai, 1974). In effect, there are problems within the current education systems that are hold-over from the colonial era, and there are problems that the post-colonial elites have created.

PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper adopts Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's approach to education, Soka education, as its philosophical framework. This philosophy inspires the three questions that guided the analysis in this essay. The three questions are: How will an idea, concept, or activity contribute to the lifelong happiness of a learner? How does it connect with other ideas, concepts, or activities in the curriculum, and how far does it alter the existing educational practices or status quo? What kind of education system would emerge should all these ideas work as intended and unintended?

Like John Dewey and other progressive educators of his days, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, a 20th-century Japanese educator, emphasized the importance of growth in his educational approach. He embodied the spirit of caring for each student's wellbeing (Makiguchi, 2002). Makiguchi developed his philosophy of value-creating (Soka) education by adopting a reflexive

approach to his work, a method of inquiry which is now known as action-based research. He advocated for a complete overhaul of the Japanese education system of his days because he wanted education systems to focus on learners' lifelong happiness, instead of national goals (Bethel, 1994; Heffron 2018). From Makiguchi's perspective, education needs to help learners develop and polish their lives for the sake of living happy and fulfilling lives, regardless of their material and physical circumstances. Based on his broad conceptualization of education, Makiguchi encouraged educators to awaken in learners the desire to become better human beings since it is only through cultivating their character that they will be able to attain inner fulfillment or absolute happiness (See Bethel, 1994). The role of education is to help learners cultivate their humanity and willingness to create value out of every circumstance.

The concept of value creation is different from the idea of extracting value or simply having values. Makiguchi is not advocating for students to develop particular values, like honesty, respect, and hard work.[1] By value-creation, he means making a conscious decision to find meaning and purpose in every situation and using the meaning to improve the living condition of oneself and others. Makiguchi wants everyone to develop the ability to transform whatever is going on in their life into hope-filled situations from which the elements of beauty, gain, and good will manifest. Beauty means turning the situation into an aesthetically pleasing sight; good means ensuring that one's action benefits all members of society and not just oneself. Gain refers to the benefit that the action taker derives from that action. The concept of value-creation depends on the effort that a decision-maker invests in making themselves and others happy. Put simply, a large part of the value-creating process hinges on understanding how the victory of others serves the ultimate interest of the decision-maker. However, it is not a naïve quest to ignore or subjugate the personal benefit of the decision-makers but rather an attempt to help learners transform themselves from the state of unconscious living, characterized by an egoistic pursuit of self-actualization, into people who are conscious of how others support and contribute to their existence and happiness.

ASSESSING BECF

BECF provides a unique and expansive interpretation of Kenya's Vision 2030 strategic plan and the 2010 constitution. In the BECF, stakeholders will find a document that tries to stay faithful to the guidelines

[1] We relied heavily on the work of Bethel (1994) in writing this paragraph.

in Kenya's 2015 Seasonal Papers and all other recommendations, like those in the Odhiambo Committee Report. By remaining loyal to the initial reports and other documents, like the 2010 Constitution and the EAC Harmonized Curriculum, the writers of BECF allow for some continuity within the education system, instead of completely overhauling it. Yet, BECF is groundbreaking in several ways. Despite its many transformative provisions, the curriculum has problems that are both endogenous and exogenous. This section provides examples of some of the noteworthy initiatives, double-edged policies, issues of concern, and contradictions in the curriculum.

Noteworthy Provisions in the BECF

The policies on special education make BECF unique. The new curriculum takes a comprehensive approach to issues of inclusion. It allows teachers to adapt the curriculum to make it easily accessible to learners with special needs. BECF calls for the integration of special needs students into the general school population. It expects teachers to create Individualized Educational Program (IEP) for every student with a disability. Tailoring the curriculum and lesson plan to individual learners' needs has proven to be one of the most effective means of educating people with disabilities (See Graham, Harris, and Larsen, 2001; Subban, 2006). BECF's special education requirements go beyond the classroom to specify that the national examination authorities must accommodate the needs of examinees with disabilities. Another vital provision that can quickly be forgotten or glossed over is the guideline that encourages schools and school districts to provide services that would lead to early identification and prompt intervention for students with special educational needs.

While these policies are not particularly groundbreaking since Kenya from 1984 has been implementing policies aimed at educating students with special needs at the primary level (Muli, 2015), they are noteworthy because they now extend to secondary schools. Special needs students, according to Muli (2015), face significant hurdles in either accessing secondary schools or completing the curriculum if they succeed in enrolling in one. BECF also stands out because it extends useful special needs educational practices, like differentiated learning to the general population. Differentiated learning is an approach to teaching where teachers develop an in-depth knowledge of each student's learning needs and plan their lessons accordingly. Although many educators understand the need for differentiated learning, it is not widely used in classrooms worldwide (Subban, 2006). By highlighting and encouraging teachers and administrators to adopt differentiated learning principles in their classes and schools, KICD has shown leadership by embracing the idea that

presenting information to students in multiple sensory modes support learning (Howard-Jones, 2014). With this simple yet courageous act, KICD has ushered in a new age of education on the African continent. Additionally, integrating the needs of students with special needs into the main structure of primary education instead of treating it as an afterthought, positions Kenya as the leader on issues related to equity and social justice for children with special needs on the African continent.

Another strength of the curriculum is that it intends to educate students on a broad range of topics that teachers would not assess directly. The curriculum commits to educating students on what it called "Pertinent and Contemporary Issues (PCI) facing societies" (KICD, 2017, p. 110). The issues are on a broad range of topics, including global citizenship, peace, human rights, environmental problems, sustainable development, community-service learning, morals, and security. Although KICD is yet to develop the matrices for teaching the PCI, BECF encourages teachers to mainstream the PCI into the various subjects. Furthermore, BECF asks educators to use the 'hidden curriculum' (lessons which students learn from schools but not taught directly) and unstructured activities to facilitate the acquisition of the core competencies and values.

Furthermore, the curriculum is distinct for openly acknowledging the need for Kenyans to adopt new sets of values. The values people choose to live by determines their life choices and allows them to express, through those choices, what is important to them (Chippendale and Colins, 1995). BECF indicates that the vital need for education in Kenya is to teach students the national values and foster in learners the desire to live by these values (we will discuss this issue further in later parts of the paper). KICD's willingness to be upfront about their attempt to create the space for students to learn the values enshrined in Kenya's constitution, openly and honestly, sends a positive signal that they are interested in using the curriculum to transform the way people live. According to KICD (2017), the new curriculum intends to achieve its goal by not relying solely on classroom instruction but also through changing the school culture, extra-curricular activities, and club activities. We agree that using the hidden curriculum would provide students with multiple opportunities to learn about the national values experientially, which would reinforce their theoretical understanding of these values.

Another important strength of the curriculum is that it clearly defines terms and provides many examples to guide readers. Essential parts of the curriculum are clearly outlined, and the authors did well to provide operational definitions for most of the technical terms and, in some cases, the rationale for adopting them. The operational definition of the terms and goals

would make it easier to monitor, evaluate, and measure the curriculum's impact.

Additionally, the curriculum introduces new support services to aid student learning and growth. For instance, BECF requires schools to provide learner support services or programs such as career counseling, guidance and counseling services, and mentorship programs. Making these services readily available to students would improve the quality of education significantly.

In summary, BECF has some groundbreaking provisions, like mandating differentiated learning across the whole curriculum and requiring IDP for all students with disabilities from preschool to secondary school. The next section will focus on policies that are simultaneously good and bad; these policies could be helpful to some students and produce catastrophic outcomes for others. The impact of these policies is contingent on many other factors, making it challenging to prejudge their effects.

Double-edged Policies

The title of the section, double-edged policies, implies that the policies could simultaneously produce positive and negative outcomes. Like swords with double edges, the authorities need to carefully implement these policies since they could simultaneously produce both positive and negative effects. BECF has many double-edged policies, like the course offerings, assessment, and emphasis on religious education. While these policies are clearly needed, and the rationale for including them in the new BECF cannot be easily dismissed, they can wreak serious havoc in their current form. In the case of assessment, the curriculum calls for the use of assessment for learning (formative assessment) and assessment of learning (summative assessment). Although it is a good idea that the architects of the BECF explicitly encouraged teachers to stop depending solely on summative assessment, the curriculum in its current form did not put in place any mechanisms or incentives to get examiners and teachers to shift their dependence on summative assessment to formative assessment. BECF prefers competency-based formative assessment. A competency-based assessment helps educators determine whether students can apply what they learn to real-world situations based on some pre-set criteria or benchmarks rather than comparing students to how well they did in relation to their peers. When implemented correctly, educators can get a good idea of what each student knows and what they need to work on to master particular skills. The downside of this policy is that if it is co-opted into the external examination council's existing structures, teachers would be burden with too much paperwork, which will distract them

from teaching, fostering a mentoring relationship with students, and doing the real work of getting to know each student individually.

After spending so many years perfecting their summative assessment tools, the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) might find it challenging to transition to a competency-based evaluation system quickly. For KNEC to reduce or eliminate their use of summative assessment techniques, they will need to overhaul their operation completely by developing new sets of services and competencies. The examination culture in the country will also need to change. Currently, examinations serve as a tool for identifying learners who are suitable for further studies, training, and the job market (EAC, 2014) and this will not change in the grand scheme of things; therefore, changing the way teachers assess students in the classroom alone might not reduce examination malpractices significantly. The educational authorities must commission a study into the relationship between the use of examination as a sorting mechanism and social problems, such as examination malpractices and low test scores.

The next double-edged policy that deserves further consideration is the new structure and orientation of basic educations. Although not as radical as some might want it, BECF presents a new understanding of basic education, and if implemented faithfully, it could challenge the current understanding of what secondary schools ought to be in many ways. The structure of education under BECF, especially at the senior secondary school level, mimics that of a college rather than a traditional understanding of grade school. The curriculum has gotten rid of core subjects like English, Kiswahili, Integrated Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies at the senior secondary school level. In their place, students will now take introductory-level career-oriented subjects. The implicit assumption is that students will be well equipped with basic knowledge in these core subjects and develop sufficient self-knowledge to choose a career path by the time they turn 14 or 15 years of age. Another assumption is that students will be highly skilled in their chosen profession if they start learning a trade at a young age (the problems with this reform will be discussed in the next section). These subtle changes are reasonable first steps, but their impact would depend on how they are implemented.

Another example of a double-edged policy enshrined in BECF is the emphasis on religious education. Basing their argument on the findings of Persell (1990), the architects of the new curriculum argued that there is a critical need for Religious and Moral Education. Apart from political and economic problems, KICD deems moral and ethical problems as the most critical issue facing Kenya today. According to KICD, many Kenyan youths

do not have the "desired values, positive attitudes and psychosocial competencies needed to function as responsible citizens" (KICD, 2017, p. 14). It further argues that "there is a noticeable values [sic] and behavioral crisis among the general population" (2017, p. 14). To address the moral and ethical crisis, BECF mandates the study of Christian, Islam, and Hindu religions from pre-school to lower secondary school, Grade nine.

KICD (2017) makes a compelling case for the need for new ethics and modes of living, but it is not clear if the proposed solution, religious education, is what Kenya needs. Available data indicate that the lack of religious education may not be the reason why a moral and ethical crisis exists in Kenya. Students in Kenya perform incredibly well on national tests in Religious and Moral Education than any other subjects. Analysis of Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination reports indicates that Kenyan students perform exceptionally well in religious education, compared to other subjects (MEST, 2015a). More than sixty percent of candidates pass the KCPE religious education examination annually; in 2012, 75.75 percent of candidates passed while the percentage pass for the second-best performing subject, science, was 62.76 percent (MEST, 2015a). The test score demonstrates that most students know more about religions and morals than other subjects. Hence, continuing to teach them religions and morals alone would not be enough. From every indication, Kenya's essential need is to imbibe in citizens the desire to live virtuous and trustworthy lives. Nonetheless, theoretical knowledge might not be enough. What appears to be needed is an inner transformation of each student. Schools must create the opportunity for students to train their instincts to become virtuous; adults, on the other hand, need to be good models. Other possible solutions exist, such as creating programs for both youths and adults to learn and dialogue about life and the national values. Schools can offer classes on different philosophies of life, civic values, and principles. The authorities ought to find ways to introduce interventions to ensure that the BECF would not reproduce the same social structures that support the purported morally bankrupt and value-less behaviors prevalent among the general population. In its current form, BECF may not be able to change the status quo.

Some Issues of Concern

Although BECF has many things to celebrate, some parts could potentially cause unintended severe harm. In this regard, the primary culprit is the non-traditional aspects of the curriculum; ironically, it is its most appealing aspect. BECF is non-traditional because it saddles the traditional and progressive/constructivist understanding of education. BECF is a

beautiful collage of ideas. It brings together great concepts and theories, but therein lies the danger. Unless the implementation team does an excellent job of taking the views and develop them into a coherent system, some stakeholders may discard some of the vital aspects of the curriculum. To illustrate, the curriculum aims to mainstream pertinent and contemporary issues (PCI) into non-classroom-based school activities but fell short in articulating a vision for how vital the six PCI is to the success of the curriculum. If the learner support programs, for instance, are not well implemented, the curriculum would not bring about the desired societal changes. Specifically, it's hard to envision how students would be able to develop the skills to know the kinds of careers that would suit them by the age of 14 and 15 without the support of school resource persons. Currently, many schools in Kenya do not have well-functioning student support services. The educational authorities need to develop the infrastructure for implementing learner support programs and hire well-trained resources persons for each school. Without these resources, children from less-resourced families would find it challenging to make informed career choices at secondary school.

Another issue of concern is the emphasis on the connection between education and the labor market. Although the stated purpose of education is to enable “every Kenyan to become an engaged, empowered, and ethical citizen” (KICD, 2017, p 10), there is a high possibility that BECF might not succeed in this regard. BECF may be unable to nurture "independent, confident, cooperative, and inspired learners who love learning and are keen, focused and able to apply their knowledge in order to make constructive contributions as productive responsible citizens” (KICD, 2017, p 10) because the framework places too much emphasis on the needs of the labor market to the detriment of other aspects of life. One clear manifestation of this thinking is the decision to have students choose career pathways at the age of 14 or 15. Without the necessary supporting systems, the education system might end up tracking students from low-income backgrounds into low earning careers and thereby continue to reproduce social inequalities. More so, at the age of 14 or 15, most students are too young to be sure of what they want to do.

Furthermore, it is doubtful that schools, in their current form, can help students acquire sufficient verbal and writing skills by the time they finish Junior Secondary. According to MEST (2015b), Kenya's performance on the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) III assessment indicates that

> Forty percent of Standard 6 students cannot interpret information included in various part of a given text in

> association with external information, while only 6.4% are proficient in critical reading, i.e. can read from various parts of a given text and evaluate and make inference about the author's message. And 70% of those students are not numeracy competent, i.e. cannot translate verbal, graphic, or tabular information into an arithmetic form in order to solve a problem (p. 14).

The SACMEQ-III report demonstrates that more than half of students in grade 6 do not have adequate literacy and numeracy skills. It shows that existing foundations are weak, meaning that there is a vast gap between students' current performance and expected performance. While it is good to have lofty expectations for students, it is vital to make sure those expectations do not impose new impediments on their growth. BECF, in its present form, will handicap students who are late bloomers academically. It would also hinder students' ability to develop an in-depth understanding of these core subjects since they would spend less time learning them.

Had the curriculum developers chosen not to 'place great emphasis' on skills and competencies related to the economy, their final product would have been more radical than the current version of the new BECF. The senior secondary school curriculum might look like the first year of college, just that it would be spread across three years instead of one year. Students would get liberal arts education that would require them to take multiple introductory-level courses, which would expose them to different fields of studies and career paths. For instance, after taking an introductory commercial farming course, a student could develop an appreciation for people in that profession even if they do not become farmers themselves. Just like college, students would have the free will to explore multiple fields that interest them. Such an alternative outcome for BCEF would help students expand their knowledge base and develop an appreciation for people from different ways of being. Through their studies, they would learn about multiple career paths without being pushed by parents, elders, teachers, and counselors into careers they might hate later. It would also break the circle of social reproduction since adults would no longer be able to unnecessarily track students from marginalized communities and low socio-economic backgrounds into low-wage industries.

Further, BECF does not adequately address issues related to school climate. Providing a vibrant, inclusive learning environment for students, in the case of Kenya, calls for educators to transform the existing education culture and climate that is rife with cheating, bullying, and other malpractices (Kirimi, 2016). It would require replacing a culture in which teachers do not

listen to students' needs (Gitome, Katola, and Nyabwari, 2013) with a culture of care where everybody, including students, would be actively involved in caring for one another. According to Gitome et al. (2013), disruptive indiscipline is one of the important causes of low performance on KCSE. The finding of Gitome et al. (2013) suggest that there is a need for a major transformation in the education culture; hence, BECF should have offered more guidance on how schools can transform their school's climate. BECF acknowledges the influence of Vygotsky's Social Cultural Development theory, which could help educators transform their school climate. But it fails to apply Vygotsky's theory rigorously. To illustrate, the curriculum does not provide a robust plan for improving the interaction between children and adults in the educational environment. Without creating the enabling school climate for the application of some of the concepts, the good ideas in the curriculum will remain just that – ideas.

Notable contradictions within BECF

BECF has some notable inconsistencies that deserve attention. One good example of this is the discourse on values and morals. The curriculum ascribes to the idea of a pluralistic and secular Kenya yet adopts a definition of religious education that legitimizes the hegemony of some religions over others. BECF mandates the study of Christian, Islam, and Hindu religions from pre-school to lower secondary school grade 9, meaning students will study, in a structured environment, three religions out of hundreds of religions for at least nine years of their life. There is no mention of African Traditional Religion nor other religions such as Sikhs, Parsees, Buddhism, Bahais, et cetera that are also practiced in Kenya. This situation raises some critical questions such as: are the students supposed to know what these religions teach, as is currently the case in most Kenyan classrooms, or are they expected to understand the national values from the perspective of different religious traditions and philosophies? What is the purpose of religious education activities in the curriculum? Is it to make students religious or help them understand and respect the wisdom in these various religions? Does a nation-state need religion to create a moral society?

The inconsistency between the curriculum's stated goal of building inclusive, multidisciplinary schools, and the decision to have schools offer only certain tracks or pathways is another example. For instance, only 25% of all senior schools will offer courses in the Career and Technology Studies pathway, while just 15% of secondary schools will offer the Technical and Engineering (KICD, 2017). This situation raises many concerns. How will the implementing committee decide the pathways that each school will offer? Are

there any provisions to ensure that secondary schools in rural and underserved communities can provide courses in a wide variety of career tracks? How easy will it be for children from a rural county to enroll in secondary schools that offer their desired pathway in another county if no secondary school close to that child offers that program? KICD needs to clarify some of these issues and develop a plan to ensure an equitable distribution of opportunities so that all children will have a fair chance of becoming whatever they seek to become. By aligning the curriculum's intent with the curriculum's specific provisions, the curriculum developers will increase the curriculum's odds of inspiring real change.

Potential Hurdles to Implementation

This essay started by acknowledging the challenges the Kenyan authorities are dealing with when it comes to implementing BECF. The ongoing implementation challenges bear testimony to the curriculum's ambitions, and it offers a glimpse into how difficult it is to translate sound visionary policies and curriculums into action (Ogar and Opoh, 2015). Since BECF is calling for major changes, educational leaders need to develop a multi-dimensional and multi-year implementation plan if they are going to succeed at implementing it. A study carried out by KICD in 2009 provides valuable insights into some of the reasons why previous curriculum reform efforts failed (MEST, 2015b). Some of the challenges identified include issues with the implementers' capacity, the assessment and management structures that do not support curriculum implementation, lack of resources, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, socioeconomic challenges, and the like (Ziganyu, 2010; MEST, 2015b). Most, if not all, the problems remain unresolved and would serve as a barrier to implementation.

Nonetheless, BECF will generate its own opposition and unique implementation challenges. One of the potential hurdles to implementation would be the gap between reality and the vision of BECF. The curriculum is ambitious and adopts a different understanding of education compared to the status quo. Transforming the education sector to conform to BECF's definition of education requires a complete transformation of the education system. To illustrate, BECF calls for differentiated learning. The discourse in many Kenyan classrooms leans toward teacher-centered teaching pedagogies that focus on recitation, rote memorization, and repetition instead of understanding (Pontefract and Hardman, 2005; Westbrook, 2013). Contrary to the dominant discourse in many Kenyan classrooms, which are teacher-led recitations, differentiated learning is a learner-centered approach to teaching, which requires teachers to be well versed in multiple dialogic pedagogies.

Educational authorities will need to retrain current teachers and retool all teacher training institutions in the country. Also, for teachers to differentiate their lesson plan so that all students can get something out of school, it would be ideal for them to have adequate space and resources, small class sizes, and autonomy. Unfortunately, Kenya does not currently have such ideal conditions (Nganga & Kambutu, 2017). The average national student to teacher ratio for grade 1 in 2015 was 44, which is a significant improvement from 2005 when it was 82 (Duflo, Dupas, & Kremer 2015). These examples illustrate why the BECF implementation committee need to be creative, proactive, and resourceful when implementing the curriculum.

Stakeholder buy-in is going to continue to be a big stumbling block. BECF, in its current state, can improve educational outcomes to some extent if all stakeholders support its implementation. Unlike a building that can be demolished and rebuild, it requires a lot of compromise and strategic efforts to transform an education system. Restructuring the education system will affect people and power relations. The successful implementation of the curriculum would require anticipating the impacts and developing a plan to prevent or resolve the concerns of stakeholders. Creating an implementation plan with its various matrices would be helpful in this case.

Furthermore, KICD might want to spend more time discussing with all stakeholders the vision enshrined in the new BECF for them to understand and develop a mental image of what they will be building together with KICD. Without a shared vision, some of these stakeholders may unintentionally do things to hamper the curriculum's smooth implementation. In this case, getting the most robust buy-in of all stakeholders could mean getting them to one, accept that they would need to develop a collective approach to sharing the pain that would result from BECF; two, change their way of thinking and way of doing things; and three, be willing to accept a high level of uncertainty.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper provides a comprehensive review of Kenya's 2017 basic education curriculum framework. It highlights some of its notable points, inconsistencies, potentially harmful policies, and some of the challenges to implementation. It concludes that while BECF has progressive policies that are visionary, it might not yield the intended outcomes unless the authorities change some of the policies and implementation strategies.

KICD can avoid some of the implementation challenges by being creative in their approach. To demonstrate, the implementation plan of KICD can focus on operationalizing other critical aspects of the curriculum, like scaffolding elements of competency-based assessment, mainstreaming

Pertinent and Contemporary Issues and the like, before switching to the new course and organizational structure. This approach will ensure that teachers, staff, administrators, and the implementation team will have adequate time to develop the physical, environmental, cultural, and sociopsychological conditions that can sustain the new system. Also, starting from the subtlest elements in the curriculum would ease people into the process. Implementing the most visible aspects of the curriculum, on the other hand, will likely trigger people's defense mechanism and their aversion to change; and thereby, causing them to become entrenched in their position or unintentionally sabotage the implementation process.

Although the Odhiambo Taskforce proposed multiple tracks as a way of aligning students' education with the human resources aspirations of Kenya's Vision 2030 plan (MEST, 2012), their solution does not sufficiently address all the problems of the old curriculum. For instance, creating multiple tracks will not be enough to address the Economic Survey's findings that students are dropping out because the secondary education curriculum is rigid (KICD, 2017). We operationalize 'rigid' to mean it does not offer options and the ability to change course midway. By linking secondary education to a future career, BECF creates a new system that would be more rigid than the curriculum it is replacing. BECF, with its pathway component in senior secondary school, has the potential to lead to a new kind of tracking, which would make it more challenging and costlier for a student to alter their career trajectory after they get tracked into one of the careers paths available. We want to suggest that the Curriculum Review Committee take their idea a little further by making the senior secondary school curriculum a liberal studies curriculum.

Additionally, the Odhiambo committee's recommendation to create multiple tracks might only help students who have resources, financial and human, which puts them in the position to make informed career decisions in their early teens (MEST, 2012). The authorities ought to ensure that concepts such as equity, quality, relevance, and efficiency are reflected in every decision to foster the kind of students the Odhiambo committee envisions. Hence, any policy option with a higher propensity to discriminate against vulnerable population deserves to be re-assessed. In this case, the pathway curriculum, in its current state, can hurt students from indigenous, minority, and low-income communities the most.

However, providing a multidisciplinary training to all students in Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and the Arts would make students more competitive in the job market and, most importantly, expose them to multiple ways of seeing and thinking about the world. A child who

wants to be a doctor but realized after enrolling in courses related to that career path that it does not suit their way of life would not need to switch their pathway, assuming KICD decides to adopt our recommendation. Such a student would not lose their credits and can easily take more courses in other subject areas even if their new interest is in the theater arts. Developing a broad range of knowledge will also uniquely prepare students to benefit from post-secondary education, be it at trade school or university.

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