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Integrating Buddhist / Soka Perspectives within Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship

The UNESCO led initiatives of education for sustainable development and global citizenship are gaining popularity worldwide. At the same time there is a dearth of literature that explores values-based approaches, especially from non-Western perspectives, that can contribute to the intercultural dimension of education. This paper shares the example of Soka (or value creation) as a concept that emerged in Japan in the early 20th century. The aim of Soka or value-creating education is the happiness of the learner, which is described as the ability to lead a contributively life, for the welfare of self and others. This view of education informs various Soka schools and universities worldwide, which are secular institutions founded by the Buddhist leader and educator, Daisaku Ikeda.

In this paper I share outcomes from my recent book that develop strategies for the practice of value-creating global citizenship education as a pedagogical approach that can be applied across formal and non-formal education settings. This approach has been advanced by taking Soka studies in education as a focal point of inquiry. Six themes are offered for the practice of value-creating global citizenship education for sustainable development that engage with topics, such as climate change, human rights, peace, and dialogue. Overall, the strategies offered for the practice of a value-creating approach expand beyond the current emphasis on education for individual empowerment to foster contributively citizens who can take collective actions for local-global issues. The focus within a value-creating approach is to build relationships – between learners and their natural-social-educational environment.

Keywords: Buddhism, Soka (value creation), global citizenship, pedagogy, sustainable development.