Humanistic Education: Philosophical Crossroads

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**Abstract**

The educational philosophies of John Dewey, Paulo Freire and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi were born at different times and in different cultures but the themes they propound resonate with the ordinary people. Although there are ideas that are unique to each philosophy, this paper tries to uncover the themes that are similar in them. The purpose to uncovering these themes is to try in some way to form a unifying force that opens a path to making the ideas rather than the person resonate among people. The three philosophers were not interested in recognition but rather sought the welfare of their fellow human beings as their purpose. As such, their hope was that their ideas would be turned to action by people rather than adoration of their philosophies.

Increasingly, educators are seeking ways to harmonize their ideas and ideals with other educators in order to build a strong counterbalance to the historically prevalent divisive and prejudicial societal structures that inhibit human development. Paolo Freire points out that such a counterbalance would ultimately benefit the oppressed and the oppressor. In order to accomplish this, educators will need to put aside small philosophical differences and focus on the more meaningful themes that unite them.

The interconnectedness of humanity and nature is becoming increasingly apparent in all realms of human activity. Future research and educational work must begin to turn away from its divisive nature and look for themes of harmony within and between disciplines. Instead of looking for ways to reject each other we need to research ways of uniting each other, not only for our own sake but for the sake are future generations.

**Introduction**

This paper seeks to open a new dialog among the adherents of three of the world’s educational philosophies originating in the 20th century: John Dewey, revered educational philosopher from the United States; Paulo Freire,  Brazilian [educator](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educator)/[philosopher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher) whose ideas lead to the development of critical pedagogy and  Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Japanese educational theorist and  author of  [The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy](http://www.tmakiguchi.org/educator/educationalreformer). All sought to refocus the efforts of educators to promote an educational practice that puts the welfare of students as the primary purpose of education. Although this paper focuses on the work of these three men, it should be noted that their ideas are not exclusive to their work. Many have come before them and with them disseminating these ideals for the benefit of society. Researchers and educators should keep an open ear for those who espouse similar ideas and call out to them in friendship and cooperation.

Three powerful themes inform the work of the three men, faith, hope and courage. Although their spiritual foundations are rooted in different religious philosophies, their personal spiritual journey and underlying spiritual foundation is strikingly similar. In addition, their belief and understanding of hope are also similar, each identifying a need for hope based on action and discipline rather than on wishing. Lastly, each man faced significant persecution for their beliefs which required for each a deep emergence of personal courage.

The framework for this paper and its presentation is grounded in participatory action research.  Participation in the CIES conference would represent an integral part of the research process rather than serving as the culmination of the process. Participation and observations for the conference presentation would be included in the research project. It is the hope of the author that meaningful change will emerge from the entirety of the process. In that sense, participants in the CIES presentation become co-authors of the work.

The primary analytical methods used are an extensive review of the literature of the three philosophies.  The review process will include works of the three philosophers along with the work of their adherents particularly with regards to the concrete efforts to put the philosophies into practice.

Included in the research is an examination of schools and school systems founded on the three philosophies and the outcomes of students of each. The CIES presentation will include a dialog session that seeks to engage participants in an act of creating a point of synergy that might serve to create future value.  Qualitative data collected on the participants of each of the school systems will be presented in order to assess the nature and value of the practice of each of the philosophies.

The literature and outcomes of schools and school systems developed from the three philosophies reveal a new hope for our children and our world.  Each philosophy brings to light an ideal of creating educational systems that serve to affirm the dignity of each and every child (person). The literature also reveals the important synergies of the three philosophies.  More important is the distinctive elements of each teaching that are revealed that might serve to enhance the ideologies of the others. For example, John Dewey’s educational philosophy provides a means to a practice of hope revealed by his statement that, “Every act is already possessed of infinite import… That small effort which we can put forth is in turn connected with an infinity of events that sustain and support it.” (The Collected Works of John Dewey, 14:180)

Since the philosophical origins of the philosophies studied include east, west and south, it is clear from the synergies of the ideas that the benefits of such research might serve to unite educators of like mind in different cultures around the globe. In addition, it is the hope of the author that adherents of other educational traditions with similar aims are able to share their hopes and ideals creating an even broader based movement towards humanistic education. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi pointed out the irony that, “Driven by their instinct for self-preservation, evil-minded people band together, increasing the force with which they persecute the good. In contrast, people of goodwill always seem to be isolated and weak . . . There is no alternative but for people of goodwill to unite.” (Ikeda, 2010)

**Philosophies of hope**

One of the common themes of the educational philosophies of Dewey, Friere and Makiguchi is their belief in the need for the cultivation of hope. The starting point of each originates from a firmly held belief that ordinary people could change the conditions in which we live for the better. Fishman and McCarthy (2007), point out Dewey’s unyielding practice of hope in his belief that those ideas that keep us from hopeful living stem from dwelling too much on past failures and worrying too much about failing in the future. Dewey tells us, “Only when the past ceases to trouble and anticipation of the future are not perturbing is a being wholly united with his environment and therefore fully alive.” (LW 10:24). Dewey’s view of hope goes beyond wishful thinking towards a more engaged worldview were people recognize failure as an opportunity to strengthen ourselves in order to achieve benefit and at the same time recognizing that our successes cannot go on forever. (Fishman & McCarthy, 2007).

Dewey’s philosophy of hope begins with his sense of gratitude towards nature and those who came before us. Dewey believed that we live where we are today as a result of the actions and sacrifices made by our ancestors. To honor our predecessors, we must not only preserve what they left us, we must also enhance and improve it (Fishman & McCarthy, 2007). As Dewey says in *A Common Faith:*

The things in civilization we most prize are not of ourselves. They exist by grace of the doings and sufferings of the continuous human community in which we are a link. Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values we have received that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have receive it. Here all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class, or race. Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind. It remains to make it explicit and militant. (Fishman & McCarthy, 2007. p. 7)

Freire’s ideals too were predicated on a hope founded on practice rather than wish fullness. For Freire, overcoming injustice and creating societies based on democracy and dialog requires people to think deeply and act purposefully (Freire, 1992). Freire believed that proclamations of democracy and equality often translated to nothing more than an acknowledgement that people are free to be oppressed, homeless and neglected. The path to social justice for Freire lay in the hands of the oppressed themselves and their ability to think and act in a fashion that freed them from the oppressive structures of society (Freire, 1992). Freire believed that hope was an inherent part of being human inextricably linked to our very existence. Freire’s idea of hope was not centered on reaching some fixed utopia. Instead, Freire suggested a hope that was directed at sustaining people on their journey to a future that was eternally in the process of becoming (Webb, 2010).

In Freire’s educational philosophy we find hope at the center. In fact, for Freire, the very root of education itself is hope (Webb, 2010). Like Dewey, Freire’s idea of hope was deeper than a simplistic, naïve type of hope that often leads to thinking without doing. Freire urges us to consider a hope that goes beyond dreaming and hoping for the sake of hoping. Human beings recognition that their lives are incomplete leads them to move in the direction of some goal or ideal. Freire believes that it is this incompleteness that forms the very foundation of true human hope (Webb, 2010). Education is not only founded in hope but is inextricably linked to a true education experience that goes beyond mere cognitive functions to include all that makes us human… thought, intuition, emotion, dreams, passion and yearning (Freire, 1993).

Fishman and McCarthy (2007), characterize Freire’s belief in hope as a process of “leaving the realm of having for the realm of being… we participate in true being and ultimate hope when we enter into the perpetual struggle for democratic liberation.”(p. 68). In order to do this we must enter into a pure dialog, one in which our words inspire action with the purpose of changing our world (Fishman & McCarthy, 2007). Authentic words become a blueprint for action that transforms and as Freire puts it “humanizes” the world. Such dialog for Freire does not lead to acts of accommodation or resignation. Hope then becomes a tangible reality that emerges from our individual awareness that change is possible through our own behavior.

Like Freire and Dewey, Makiguchi too believed that the expression of hope must not be a kind of false hope akin to wishing. Ikeda (2008) points out that true hope for Makiguchi found its expression in the behavior of the individual. His own life served as an example of his personal beliefs. Imprisoned in 1943 as a thought criminal in militaristic Japan, Makiguchi never gave in to despair. Even in the midst of starvation and imminent death, Makiguchi’s letters to his family reveal a hope that permeated his entire being. In one letter he writes,

For the present, aged as I am, this is where I will cultivate my mind. I can read books, which is a pleasure. I want for nothing. Please watch over the home in my absence and don’t concern yourselves about me. Being in solitary confinement, I can ponder things in peace, which I prefer. (Ikeda 2008, p. 414)

Makiguchi would later die in prison from malnutrition while in solitary confinement. In the midst of a hellish suffering he continued his struggle against the forces of authority that rejected human dignity. His recognition of his hellish surroundings and his unbridled optimism can be seen in one letter where he writes, “Even hell has its enjoyments, depending on one’s outlook. (Ikeda, 2010, p. 248)” . Two generations later, Makiguchi’s hope would take concrete expression in the form of a a worldwide Soka School System.

**Foundations of Faith**

Dewey, Freire and Makiguchi were each grounded in a personal spiritual belief. Their faith beliefs, however, go beyond the traditional institutionalized faith communities. John Dewey’s faith or spirituality can be found throughout his works but more specifically in his book *A Common Faith* (Buarain, 2011). For Dewey, faith finds its expression in the dynamic human search for knowledge and experiential understanding derived from trying to improve the human condition. Dewey did not believe in a supernatural being, instead he posited that individuals could uncover the essence of “God” through serving others, leading them to become a part of meaningful and positive social growth. (Buarain, 2011).

Dewey’s rejection of a supernatural being is not based on some rebellious spirit to undermine religion. In fact in his work *A Common Faith* he freely concedes the value of religious belief, and more specifically a belief in the a supernatural being, relative to the cultures and times in which they emerged (Dewey, 2013). Dewey (2013) makes two important points concerning belief in a supernatural being,

* there is nothing left worth preserving in the notions of unseen powers, controlling human destiny to which obedience, reverence and worship are due, if we glide silently over the nature that has been attributed to the powers, the radically diverse ways in which they have been supposed to control human destiny, and in which submission and awe have been manifested…
* when we begin to choose, and say that some present ways of thinking about the unseen powers are better than others; that the reverence shown by a free and self- respecting human being is better than the servile obedience rendered to an arbitrary power by frightened men; that we should believe that control of human destiny is exercised by a wise and loving spirit rather than by madcap ghosts or sheer force—when I say, we begin to choose, we have entered upon a road that has not yet come to an end. We have reached a point that invites us to proceed farther.

In other words, there is no human advancement if we merely accept blindly the notion of external force or forces that guide human activity. By choosing to freely attempt to discern the nature of the spiritual we open an infinite road to discovery. We find in Dewey’s approach one similar to Makiguchi’s spiritual belief that “faith is to fear nothing.”(???) For both men, to believe based on fear ends up stifling human growth.

By contrast, Paulo Freire’s faith belief is often traced to his Catholic upbringing. But like Dewey, Freire questioned the institutionalization of faith that he often found in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. In fact Freire stressed the importance of dialogue as a foundation of true faith. Freire believed that a powerful faith in humankind that individuals can “make and remake” themselves through a process of spiritual re-birth would enable people to become more thoroughly human (Neumann, 2011)

Neumann (2011) points out that Freire’s religious influences are frequently overlooked or dismissed by fellow critical pedagogists. This is often true of Marxists and many left leaning academics that sometimes reject any form of spirituality, especially with regards to education (Neumann, 2011). We can see in Freire’s own writings his acknowledgement of the influence that his Christian upbringing had on his thoughts and advocacy for the poor. Horton & Freire (1990), illustrates this connection,

I remember that when I was 6 years old, one day I was talking with my father an my mother, and I protested strongly against the way my grandmother had treated a black woman at home – not with physical violence, but with undoubtedly racial prejudice. I said to my mother and to my father that I couldn’t understand that, not maybe with formal speech I am using now, but I was underlining for me the impossibility of being a Christian and at the same time discriminating against another person for any reason.” (p. 243)

Unlike some of his contemporary Marxists and leftists, Freire did not believe that Marxism and Christianity were in compatible. Giroux (1988) tells us that Freire was able to engage in a dialogue of equals with Christ and Marx which reveals a more open faith unbound by institutionalized structures of religion or philosophy. Freire’s courage to put together two historically contradictory philosophies and merge them in his life brings to light a faith that emerged from within. In fact Freire boldly claims little distinction between the Christian religion and Marx’s philosophy of revolution:

Being a Christian, a revolutionary; these are very close. It assumes a totality of humility of telling me that I am a man trying to become a Christian; I am a Christian trying to become a revolutionary. I am a Christian revolutionary or a revolutionary Christian because I know what I want to become. (Costigan, 1983, p. 37)

Freire’s Christian faith differed from many Christians in that he often spoke out against what he viewed as the church’s “anesthetic or aspirin practices” (Feire, 1985, p. 22). Instead, Freire regarded liberation theology as a more hopeful Christian theology offering the most disadvantaged in society the encouragement to reform their societies towards a more just and equitable state (Webb, 2010). In fact, the principal ideal of liberation theology to liberate humanity from “every form of servitude” is at the core of Freire’s work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, founder of the Soka philosophy, although not well known outside of Japan and parts of Asia, formed his spiritual center in ways very similar to Dewey and Freire. Central to his spiritual journey is his unbending resolve to continuously question authority; a stance that would later lead to his imprisonment and death. Prior to his conversion to Buddhism in 1928, Makiguchi developed a spiritual philosophy that focused on enabling people to cultivate the values of beauty, individual gain and social good (Goulah, 2010).

Makiguchi’s spiritual development begins with his insistence that the primary purpose of education should be centered on the children and their right to live happy, fulfilling lives. Makiguchi lamented at the state of Japanese education that during his time was geared towards inculcating in the citizenry an unquestioning allegiance to the state and the emperor. On two occasions Makiguchi was dismissed from his teaching position for refusing to give preference to children of influential families.

In 1928, Makiguchi met Sokei Mitani, principal of Mejiro Commercial School . Mitani introduced Makiguchi to the reform Buddhist philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin who concluded that the Lotus Sutra represented the essence of Shakyamuni’s teaching. Nichiren was a 13th century Buddhist monk exiled numerous times for speaking out against the authorities of then feudal Japan. For 10 days, Mitani and Makiguchi discussed at length many of Nichiren’s writings (Makiguchi web page, 2014). Makiguchi recounts his affinity for the Lotus Sutra in a pamphlet published in 1935.

As my research into *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy* advanced and I was preparing to publish the first volume, I was moved by chance to research the Lotus Sutra, and my attitude to religion underwent a profound transformation. ... I was astonished to discover that [the Lotus Sutra] in no way contradicted the scientific and philosophical principles which form the basis for our daily lives, and that it differed fundamentally from all religious and moral practices which I had studied to date. And just as I found myself moved by this discovery, I experienced a number of inexplicable phenomena in my daily life, which accorded precisely with the teachings of the Lotus Sutra... With a joy that is beyond the power of words to express, I completely renewed the basis of the life I had led for almost sixty years.

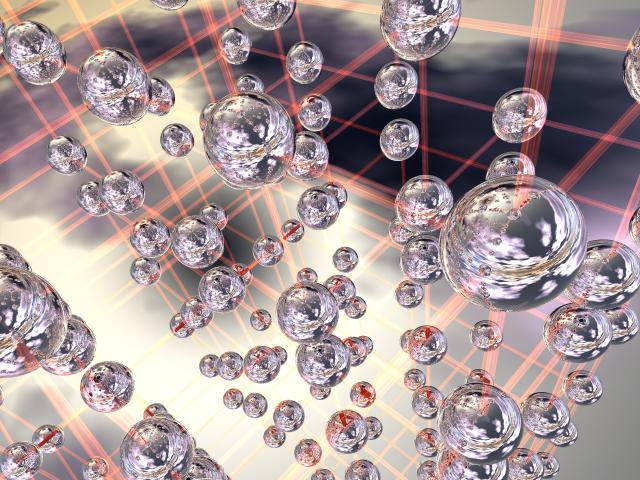
In 1930, Makiguchi along with his disciple Josei Toda set out to publish all of Makiguchi’s ideas in his four volume work Value Creating Pedagogy. They would later form an educator’s society, Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Society for Value Creating Education) (Goulah & Gebert, 2009). The purpose of the society was geared towards improving the educational systems of Japan with the Lotus Sutra as a guide point for their work.

As Makiguchi’s faith in Buddhism deepened, he began to realize that the true source of value creation lay in the lives of ordinary people and their agency to affect change (Goulah & Gebert, 2009). The essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra that led to Makiguchi’s conviction was the idea that enlightenment was universally accessible to anyone.

Common to all three views of faith is the idea of people moving in the direction of an “essential faith” as opposed to formalized faith. Faith for these three men could not be imposed from without but rather must be cultivated from within. Freire’s affinity with liberation theology, Dewey’s idea of a common faith and Makiguchi’s philosophy of value creation put the individual at the center of faith formation. Both Freire and Makiguchi spoke out clearly against their respective formal faith communities. Dewey too was often at odds with the formal faith communities of his day. (More….)

**Interconnectedness**

An integral part of each of these men’s faith is the idea that nothing exists in isolation. All things exist in an intricate web of relatedness that serves to unite all life, a concept known in eastern philosophies as “dependent origination”. This idea goes beyond the connections of living beings and extends to what Buddhism terms “insentient beings”. In other words, even rocks, water, oil, planets, comets and all forms of objective reality participate and have profound meaning in this web of existence. The concept of dependent origination is beautifully depicted in the metaphor of Indra’s Net, an infinite web of precious jewels, each jewel reflecting the brilliance of every other jewel expressing the unending interrelationships among all the participants of the cosmos (Loy, 1993)



From http://awakeningtoreality.blogspot.com/2009/04/net-of-indra.html

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s conversion to Buddhism at age 58 helped to confirm his own internal beliefs that were expressed in his work Geography of Human Life. Namely, that human beings are inextricably linked to the environment in which they live. The Buddhism of the Lotus Sutra offered Makiguchi a concrete expression of his own thoughts in the form of the Buddhist concept of dependent origination. Simply stated, dependent origination is the idea that no living being exists in isolation. Our lives are meaningful because of our interactions with others and nature (SGI, 2014).

Fishman & McCarthy (2005) reveal the expression of interconnectedness in both Dewey and Freire’s work. Both men express the idea that capitalism is harmful to both the powerless and the powerful. In its simplest form, capitalist competition leads to a two tiered society where the disadvantaged population grows ever larger; as discontent with the disparity of resource allocation grows so does the propensity of the working class to respond in kind to the upper class. In its most virulent form, the many forms of violence perpetuated by the elite inevitably lead to a violent response from the working class in which both classes suffer.

Freire points out the need for, “the invention of unity in diversity. The very quest for this oneness in difference, the struggle for it as a process, in and of itself is the beginning of a creation of multi-culturality.” (Freire, 1992, p 137).

**Substantive outcomes**

The true worth of any philosophy is exhibited by the meaning created for human beings as a result of the application of that philosophy. For Makiguchi, the principle of actual proof was paramount. Makiguchi’s pedagogy of value creation, also known as “Soka” in Japanese, can be found in numerous cultures around the world. The practice of value creation education can be found in 18 schools of the Soka school system. The schools are currently located in 7 countries around the world: Brazil, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and the United States (Ikeda Center, 2014)

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| **Schools and Institutions** | | | |
| **Tsunesaburo Makiguchi – Soka Education** | | | |
| Name | Type | Location | Sponsor |
| Soka University of Japan | University | Hachioji, Japan | Soka Gakkai International |
| Soka University of America | University | Aliso Viejo, CA | Soka Gakkai International |
| Soka Women’s College | College | Tokyo, Japan | Soka Gakkai International |
| Kansai Soka High School | High School | Kansai, Japan | Soka Gakkai International |
| Tokyo Soka High School | High School | Tokyo, Japan | Soka Gakkai International |
| Kansai Soka Elementary School | Elementary School | Kansai, Japan | Soka Gakkai International |
| Tokyo Soka Elementary School | Elementary School | Tokyo, Japan | Soka Gakkai International |
| Brazil Soka School | K-2nd | Sao Paolo, Brazil | Soka Gakkai International |
| Hong Kong Soka Kindergarten | Kindergarten | Hong Kong, China | Soka Gakkai International |
| Singapore Soka Kindergarten | Kindergarten | Singapore | Soka Gakkai International |
| Soka Kindergarten South Korea | Kindergarten | South Korea | Soka Gakkai International |
| Sapporo Soka Kindergarten | Kindergarten | Sapporo, Japan | Soka Gakkai International |
| Malaysia Soka Kindergarten | Kindergarten | Malaysia | Soka Gakkai International |
| Makiguchi Foundation for Education | Education Institute |  | Soka Gakkai International |
| Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue | Research Institute | Boston, MA | Soka Gakkai International |
| Institute of Oriental Philosophy UK | Research Institute | United Kingdom | Soka Gakkai International |
| Institute of Oriental Philosophy Japan | Research Institute | Japan | Soka Gakkai International |
| The Pacific Basin Research Center (PBRC) | Research Institute | Aliso Viejo, CA | Soka Gakkai International |
| Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research | Research Institute | Hawaii, US | Soka Gakkai International |
| Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education | Research Institute | Chicago, IL | DePaul University |

In addition to the Soka schools, numerous adherents of Makiguchi’s philosophy have initiated academic institutions based on the theories of value creation. In April of 1991, a group of like-minded educators submitted a proposal to open a K-12 school in New York City based on Makiguchi’s philosophy of value creation (Joffee, Goulah & Gebert, 2009). Joffee recounts, “Over time, a number of core values emerged… (1) pragmatism; (2) incorporating the voice of the parents; (3) a more complex understanding of collaboration and democracy; (4) the importance of human engagement and kindness; and (5) respect for diversity.” (p. 185). Based on five core values, The Renaissance School of New York, struggled to through numerous challenges to put Makiguchi’s ideas into practice.

Joffee et al. (2009) point out that one of the keys to the success of the Renaissance school was to learning to understand that each child had a unique way of learning. Although complex, finding the best way to teach each individual led to every child being victorious in their learning. The Renaissance School was able to advance to college nearly 100% of their graduating classes in 2007 and 2008 including special needs students (Joffee et. al. 2009). In order to achieve such success, a collaborative environment was essential. The chancellor of the New York Department of Education helped set the tone of a collaborative environment by living a philosophy of building “a system of great schools” instead of building a “great school system.”

Disciples of Freire have developed a number of loosely associated institutes and schools around the world in 11 different countries including the U.S, Canada, Brazil, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Germany, Finland, Britain, Austria and South Africa. Like disciples of Makiguchi, Freire’s adherents develop their institutions in a non-prescription fashion owing to the flexible nature of the philosophical pedagogy on which they are based. At times this can create a question of cohesion to the original ideals.

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| **Schools and Institutions** | | | |
| **Paulo Freire** | | | |
| Name | Type | Location | Sponsor |
| [Paulo Freire Institute](http://www.ukzn.ac.za/cae/pfi/) | Research Institute | South Africa |  |
| [Paulo Freire Zentrum](http://www.pfz.at/) | Research Institute | Austria | University of Salzburg |
| [Freire Institute](http://www.freire.org/) | Research and Education Institute | Britain | University of Central Lancashire |
| [Paulo Freire Research Centre](http://paulofreirefinland.org/) | Research Center | Finland |  |
| Partners Training For Transformation | Education Center | Ireland | Partners Training For Transformation |
| Instituto Paulo Freire de Portuga | Research Institute | Portugal |  |
| [Institut Paulo Freire](http://www.institutpaulofreire.org/) | Research Institute | Spain |  |
| [Instituto Paulo Freire](http://www.paulofreire.org/) | Research Institute | Brazil |  |
| The Freire Project | Research Institute | Canada |  |
| The Paulo Freire Democratic Project | Research Center | U.S. | Chapman University |
| The Paulo Freire Institute | Research Center | U.S. | University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) |
| The Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School | High School | Holyoke, MA | Holyoke Public Schools |
| Freire Charter School | Middle School and High School | Philadephia, PA | Private and non-profit entities |
| Paolo Freire Freedom Schools | Middle School | Tuscon, AZ | Arizona Public Schools |
| The Paulo Freire Charter School | High School | Newark, NJ | Newark Public Schools |

One example of the success of Freire’s philosophy in practice is the Freire Charters School in Philadelphia, PA. Over a span of fifteen years the Freire Charter School built a respected curriculum to serve minority students in the Philadelphia area. The school reported a 100% minority enrollment in 2012. According to US News, the Freire School achieved a 62% in reading proficiency, 82% in math proficiency. A similar Philadelphia city high school, Benjamin Franklin, which had 99% minority enrollment, had a 21% reading proficiency rating and a 16% math proficiency rating (US News, 2012).

In 2014, 90% of the graduating class planned to enroll in college the following fall. In the same year graduates from the Freire Charter school exceeded state and national averages for college persistence rates. More than 90% of Freire graduates return to college for their 2nd year (Retrieved from http://freirecharterschool.org/?page\_id=39)

Institutions named for or based on the philosophy of John Dewey are predominantly found in the 13 different counties around the world. Dewey centers can be found in the United States, China, Japan, Germany, Italy, Spain, France (Paris), Switzerland, Poland, Hungary, Turkey, Brazil and Argentina***.*** Each of these centers attempts to work in relation to the cultures in which they exist.

Like Freire, public schools in different parts of the U.S. operate in some context consistent with Dewey’s educational philosophy. The John Dewey High School in New York is reported to have a minority enrollment of 90% in 2014. Proficiency rating in reading and math were 89% and 88% respectively.

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| **Schools and Institutions** | | | |
| **John Dewey** | | | |
| Name | Type | Location | Sponsor |
| John Dewey High School | High School | Brooklyn, New York | New York Public Schools |
| [John Dewey Academy of Learning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dewey_Academy_of_Learning) | Charter School | Green Bay, Wisconsin | Green Bay Public Schools |
| The [John Dewey Academy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dewey_Academy) | College Preparatory | Barrington, MA | University of Central Lancashire |
| John Dewey Middle School | Middle School | Denver, CO | Colorado Public Schools |
| Laboratory School |  | Chicago, IL | No longer in operation |
| John Dewey Elementary School | Elementary School | Cleveland, OH | Cleveland Public Schools |
| Center for Dewey Studies | Research Institute | Carbondale, IL | Southern Illinois University |
| Urban Education Institute | Research Institute | Chicago, IL | University of Chicago |
| The John Dewey Society | Research Institute | East Lansing, MI | Michigan State University |
| Dewey Center | Research Institute | China |  |
| Dewey Center | Research Institute | Japan |  |
| Dewey Center | Research Institute | Germany |  |
| Dewey Center | Research Institute | Italy |  |
| Dewey Center | Research Institute | Spain |  |
| Dewey Center | Research Institute | France |  |
| Dewey Center | Research Institute | Switzerland |  |
| Dewey Center | Research Institute | Poland |  |
| Dewey Center | Research Institute | Hungary |  |
| Dewey Center | Research Institute | Turkey |  |
| Dewey Center | Research Institute | Brazil |  |
| Dewey Center | Research Institute | Argentina |  |

**Courage and inner transformation**

The process of self-transformation is a key element of each of these philosophies. Freire recognized that for oppressed people to change their reality for the better it is necessary to transform their fear of the oppressor into the courage to stand up and speak out. Such inner transformation is less of an intellectual process. Individuals with the aid of education must tap their inner spiritual strength integrating knowledge with wisdom in order to bring about personal change that ultimately extends to the broader society.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi along with his closest associate Josei Toda were arrested on July 6th, 1943 and charged with showing disrespect for Japan’s emperor and violating the Peace Preservation Law. Makiguchi would spent the next 1 ½ years in solitary confinement and ultimately succumb to death from severe malnutrition on November 18th, 1944 (Ito, 2009). His associate, Josie Toda would remain in prison until the following July not even aware of his mentors death until many months later. Makiguchi’s courage was a direct manifestation of his faith and hopes.

Unlike many who were imprisoned as thought criminals, Makiguchi refused to alter his stance for statements for which he was arrested. In fact, Makiguchi used his interrogations to further clarify his positions. During one interrogation Makiguchi stated, “The emperor is a common mortal. When he was crown prince, he attended Gakushuin University, where he studied in order to be emperor. Nor is the emperor without error” (CW, 10:202-03). In the years leading up to World War II, most Japanese believed that the emperor was a god. To refute this idea in Japan at the time must have required enormous courage (Ito, 2009)

Like Makiguchi, Paulo Freire was arrested in 1964. He like Makiguchi was considered a threat to social order by a militaristic state. He was forced into exile without his wife and five children. They would join him later in Chile where he continued his work for 15 years. In 1979 he was invited to return to Brazil where he became secretary of education in Sao Paulo. For both men their imprisonment and persecution served to strengthen their resolve to work on behalf of ordinary people attempting to give them the hope and courage needed to transform their individual lives for the better.

Although John Dewey never faced imprisonment or exile, he was often portrayed as a “dangerous radical” others called him a “soviet apologist”. Dewey’s courage is probably most important to us since very few of us will be imprisoned or exiled. Dewey’s example of courage assures us that being courageous doesn’t always require overt persecution. In fact, the type of persecution faced by Dewey may in some ways be more insidious that the overt persecutions of Freire and Makiguchi. It is more common for ordinary people to face the psychological and systemic persecution that Dewey faced which is why he presents us with a meaningful example of how to speak in the face of everyday oppression.

**Conclusion**

The educational philosophies presented in this paper are admired and practiced by many educators around the world. Each of these men has contributed greatly to the cause of education for the sake of people. It is important for the followers of these philosophies to continue to work to bring these ideas to life in practical, meaningful ways to help transform the societies in which we live for the better. At the same time, those who share and communicate these ideas should guard against idolization. Adoration of the mentor is a natural human tendency. However, each of these men was more interested in their students enacting their ideas than being showered with accolades.

Coupled with an activist spirit, educators who espouse these ideas should recognize the difference between ally and detractor. Too often, adherents to one philosophy or another place an overemphasis on difference in an attempt to one up the other even when the predominance of their thought and work is substantially similar. Each of these educators stressed the importance of dialog as the strongest method for battling our own individual biases. Daisaku Ikeda pointed out in his speech at Harvard University that, “The conquest of our own prejudicial thinking, our own attachment to difference, it the necessary precondition for open dialog.” (Ikeda 1993 p. 340)

Finally, educators are positioned in a unique role where they are able to instill in young people the ideals of hope, faith and courage. In our formative years, humans find themselves in contact with educators almost as much as with our parents. But it is educators that teach parents and as such it is educators that bear much of the responsibility to educate the youth to the reality of our interconnectedness and the need for each person to embark on their own inner revolution in order to ensure that our piece of the network is alive and strong.

Read (2015) cites Daisaku Ikeda’s speech at Moscow M.V. Lomonosov State University in May of 1994 where he said,

According to Buddhist thought, universality is a symbiotic order in which humanity, nature, and the cosmos coexist, and microcosm and macrocosm are fused in a single living entity. In Buddhism, the idea of symbiosis is conveyed by the idea of ‘dependent origination.’ Whether in human society or in the realm of nature, nothing exists in isolation; all phenomena are mutually supportive and related, forming a living cosmos. Once this is understood, then we can establish the proper role of reason.

With this understanding our traditional view of the world as specific entities that collide with each other transferring our characteristics in a unidirectional fashion evolves into a reality where all that is our being interacts dynamically with every other entity in a “multi-causal process” of creation. Read (2015) concludes, “All of what we are made of, all that is around us, and even the abstractions of the mind, subsist in a web of living interaction, with no element or essence held to be immutable or autonomous.”

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Addendum

I wasn’t sure entirely what I meant by participatory action research when I started this project. I had many questions in my own mind about how it might unfold particularly with regards to my participation in the CIES conference. I arrived late on Wednesday evening and slept very little that night. I was forced awake by the rising sun. With my lower back hurting as it often does after sleeping in a hotel bed or any bed for that matter, I dragged myself out of bed and to the lobby for coffee and breakfast. I had put my coffee at one of the tables and went back for some food. When I returned to my table and African woman was putting her coffee at my table. Inside I thought, “doesn’t she see my cup full of coffee?” I immediately caught myself and asked if her and her friends were going to sit there. She politely responded, “Please, we can share the table together.”

We exchanged greetings and sat together getting to know each other a little. She shared with me that she was from Zimbabwe and worked with a non-profit organization that worked to help expand access to education for women in Zimbabwe. As we talked, I remembered that my map of dots (Explain more) had only one dot in Africa. I asked her who was the most prominent educational theorist in Africa? She looked at me with a blank stare and thought for a moment and responded “Theorist?” Again a pause ensued. I began to realize maybe my question had embarrassed her. I attempted to re-word my question asking who’s work did she consider to have the greatest impact regarding education in Africa. She then said that probably Nelson Mandela’s work on education comes to mind the most. After parting I began to ponder my own ignorance about Africa. Westerners often make the mistake of thinking that Africa is a nation, maybe not overtly but in essence. In fact the African continent comprises 20% of the land mass on earth. It’s countries and cultures are probably more diverse than both of the American continents combined.