

Fostering a Sustainable Global Society Through Teacher Education: From Soka (Value-Creating) Perspectives

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Abstract

A sustainable future requires individuals to see their inherent humanity and to respect the dignity of all living beings. Since knowledge can be used for both positive and negative purposes, teacher educators must nurture the humanity of pre-service teachers. This study aims to provide concrete examples and resources that foster students' humanity during their teacher education programs. To achieve this, document analysis was conducted to examine the content and resources of five websites dedicated to Daisaku Ikeda's philosophy of Soka humanism, offering valuable inspiration and ideas for teacher educators to incorporate humanity into their curriculum and teaching practices. Furthermore, object-oriented interviews were conducted with two educators who have applied Soka humanism in their teaching practices; one was a department chair of science education at a Christian university, and the other served as a vice president of a public university. The findings suggest that Ikeda websites offer useful information for teacher educators to cultivate the humanity of pre-service teachers, transcending differences in gender, religion, ideology, social position, ethnicity, and nationality. The implications for practice and future research are discussed.

Keywords: Daisaku Ikeda, document analysis, object-oriented interviews, Soka humanism, sustainability, teacher education.

We must *not* consider the pursuit of sustainability simply a matter of adjusting policies to find a better balance between economic and ecological imperatives. Rather, sustainability must be understood as a challenge and undertaking requiring the commitment of all individuals. At its heart, sustainability is the work of constructing a society that accords the highest priority to the dignity of life.

– Daisaku Ikeda (2012)

2012 Peace Proposal to the United Nations

According to Ikeda (2012), sustainability refers to the efforts that benefit others and bring out one's most positive and creative aspects for a better future. He states, "Knowledge alone cannot give rise to value. It is only when knowledge is guided by wisdom that value 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" (Ikeda, 2006). In other words, education is not just about conveying knowledge but cultivating wisdom, compassion, and courage to use knowledge to improve human lives and society.

Although the importance of humanity is recognized, it is often overlooked in teacher education for several reasons. First, teacher education often focuses more on pragmatic knowledge and skills than character development (Muscatine, 2009). Second, many professionals are expected to abide by standardized procedures to do their work instead of being creative (Henriksen et al., 2016). Third, today's society often mistakenly regards social status, affluence, and fame as happiness (Kim, 2018) and generally believes that self-actualization can only be achieved when people's basic needs are met (e.g., Maslow's hierarchy of needs). Such a worldly pursuit often leads people to live in their lesser selves, lacking a sense of responsibility to create peace and prosperity for all. This highlights the importance of discovering practical methods to foster humanity in teacher education.

Ikeda's Philosophy of Soka Humanism

Soka is a Japanese term, *so* (創) means create, and *ka* (價) means value. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, a Japanese educator, elementary school principal, philosopher, and forward-thinking geographer, coined the term. Soka means creating value in life under any circumstances for the happiness of oneself and others. In 1930, Makiguchi and a group of reformist educators founded the Soka

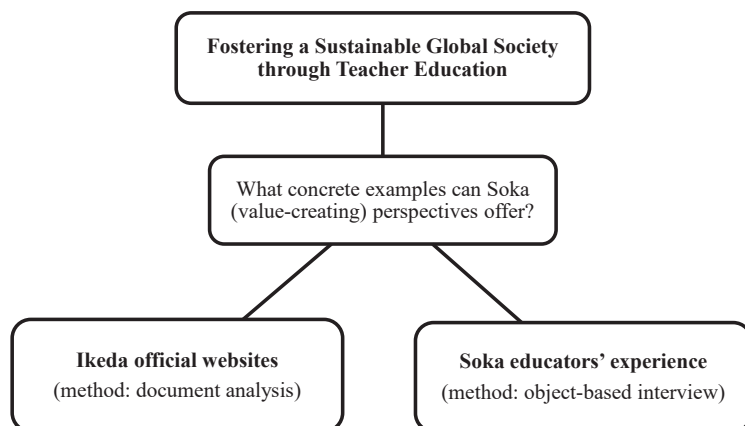
Gakkai (“Society for the Creation of Value”), and he served as the organization’s first president. Makiguchi’s disciple, Josei Toda, continued Makiguchi’s mission after his passing and served as the second preside of the organization. Toda coined the term “human revolution” and believed that compassionate actions and behavior could disrupt the cycle of human suffering and lead them to absolute happiness (Soka Gakkai International, 2024). Human revolution is grounded in the concept that “self-motivated, positive change within an individual’s inner life will bring about a change in one’s environment – a process that will ultimately effect a change in society” (Daisaku Ikeda Official Website, 2024b).

Daisaku Ikeda succeeded Makiguchi and Toda, and in 1975, he established the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), spreading Soka humanism to 192 countries. He further established ten institutions and thirteen schools and universities globally, in addition to publishing numerous books that have been translated into over 50 languages. Until 2024, Ikeda had received honorary citizenship from more than 800 cities worldwide and 409 honorary doctorates and professorships across countries (Daisaku Ikeda Official Website, 2024a). The acknowledgments reflected in these records underscore the significance of his contribution and global impacts on culture, education, and peace.

Ikeda’s philosophy of Soka humanism is a practical and enduring approach to nurturing humanity. It emphasizes that transforming the destiny of humankind begins with the inner changes within each individual. As Ikeda states: “There are all sorts of revolutions...but no matter what one changes, the world will never get any better as long as people themselves remain selfish and lacking in compassion. In that respect, human revolution is the most fundamental of all revolutions, and at the same time, the most necessary revolution for humankind” (Soka Gakkai, 2024b).

Figure 1

Building Arguments for the Present Study



To explore how teacher educators can foster pre-service teachers' sense of humanity, the author of the paper conducted a document analysis of five Ikeda websites to understand their design elements. Additionally, the author interviewed two Soka educators to gather their insights and experiences regarding Ikeda's philosophy of humanism and the websites. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework that underpins this study. The research question this study seeks to address is: What concrete examples can Soka (value-creating) perspectives provide for fostering a sustainable global society through teacher education?

Context of the Study

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research studies are not intended to prove if something is right or wrong, good or bad. They are also not intended for prediction or generalization. Instead, they focus on in-depth data – “the process, meaning, and understanding” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 294) – to help researchers see complex social phenomena and perceive holistic and meaningful life experiences.

Different types of qualitative designs include ethnographic, narrative inquiries, document analysis, and case studies, to name a few. Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that there are no best research methods, only suitable methods. He says, “Good social science is problem-driven and not methodology-driven in the sense that it employs those methods that, for a given problematic, best help answer the research questions at hand” (p. 242). Researchers should base their methods on the research questions. Research studies are intentional and contain subjectivity (e.g., the researcher's interest behind the choice of research sites and participants). Research methods that are rigorously implemented to address problems are valuable in social science.

Like other research methods, qualitative research also has limitations regarding time and feasibility. Because it is impractical for a qualitative research study to encompass every individual with all activities in all contexts, pre-established criteria are often used to define purposeful sampling, acknowledging the limitation in encompassing all but striving for a representative sample. Furthermore, research findings are always partial to a whole phenomenon, and thus, the impacts of the studies should not be overstated.

Document Analysis

Document analysis uses and analyzes permanent products like documents and artifacts. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define documents as: “a wide range of

written, visual, digital, and physical materials relevant to the study...[including] official records, organizational promotional materials, letters, newspaper accounts, poems, songs, corporate records, government documents, historical accounts, diaries, autobiographies, blogs, and so on" (pp. 162–163). They define artifacts as: "objects in the environment that represent some form of communication that is meaningful to participants and/or the setting...[including] art pieces, organizational or school symbols, trophies, award, or personal gifts to name a few" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 162). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that while using documentary material as data is not much different from using interview or observation data, researchers are responsible for determining if the documents are authentic and accurate. To achieve this, researchers need to ask questions like where the document is from, from whom, and how they gain access to the documents. Limitations, strengths, and ethical issues should be explained transparently.

Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge." (p 27). The advantages of document analysis include efficient collection, availability, cost-effectiveness, lack of obtrusiveness and reactivity, stability, exactness, and coverage. Furthermore, using existing documents as a form of data raises fewer ethical concerns than other qualitative methods (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Researchers should keep in mind that documents have functions, and their functions alter with context. Thus, documents need to be analyzed in context. Because documents are situated products, not fixed ones, the relationship between content, production, and utilization should be considered when analyzing documents (Prior, 2003).

Object-Oriented Interviews

Object-oriented interviews are grounded in French philosopher Deleuze's concept "to rethink objects and subjects as fibrous, connective, and folding entities in qualitative interviews" (Nordstrom, 2013, p. 237). In an object-oriented interview, the subject (i.e., Soka educators) and the object (i.e., Ikeda websites) are not two separate categories. They are relational and entangled. Researchers' role in an objective interview is to mediate the subject-object relationship. Through subjects talking about objects, the objects yield information about human life, which allows researchers to create an ensemble of life stories (Nordstrom, 2013). Object-oriented interviews help people understand not just the features and functions of permanent products but also the users of the

objects, which generates an in-depth understanding of who uses what in what context, when, why, and how. It also enhances the trustworthiness of the data internally (i.e., the object) and externally (i.e., the user of the object).

Conducting a research interview requires a thoughtful plan, whether the interview is structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. The plan tells the researcher and the participant what to expect before, during, and after the interview. It is more than just about meeting the human-subject research requirements (e.g., Institutional Review Board; IRB); it also involves having substantive procedures to ensure the integrity and quality of the interview. Such procedures include non-biased wording of the interview questions, appropriate interview settings, instruments for recording and translating, interview schedules, and follow-up emails. Because documents or artifacts are the primary sources for an object-oriented interview, a full and detailed description of the materials will improve readers' understanding of the objects and their connection to the object-oriented interviews. It also increases the transparency, trustworthiness, and accessibility for other researchers to reexamine the work.

Methods

Data Collection

Document Analysis. Ikeda/Soka studies in education are still a developing field in academic research (Soka University of America, 2024). With limited available literature, many researchers rely on information from Ikeda's official websites. To maximize the use of these websites and inform future practice and research, the author of the paper used document analysis to examine five existing websites. Three criteria were employed to select the Ikeda websites, ensuring the validity, reliability, and accessibility of the information. Firstly, the websites had to be officially published by SGI or academic organizations to guarantee the credibility of the information. Secondly, the websites had to contain content and resources related to education. Lastly, the websites had to be freely accessible to the public for examination. An overview of the five websites that met the selection criteria is shown in Table 1.

These five websites were arranged in a logical order to enhance readers' comprehension. The first website was the *Daisaku Ikeda Official Website*, which gives a broader perspective of Daisaku Ikeda and his contributions (<https://www.daisakuikeda.org/>), followed by *Daisaku Ikeda Children's Stories*, a YouTube channel of children's stories created by Ikeda (https://www.youtube.com/c/DaisakuIkedaOrg_ChildrensStories). Next, the author reviewed the *World Tribune* (<https://www.worldtribune.org/>) and the *Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and*

Dialogue (<https://www.ikedacenter.org/>), which provide up-to-date information and activities about Soka humanism. Finally, the author examined the *Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education* website, a graduate program dedicated to Ikeda/Soka studies in education (<https://ikedainstitute.com/>). As document analysis is contingent on the context, this sequence will help readers build a contextual understanding of the information, starting with a broad overview and then moving to specific topics. When reviewing the websites, focus was directed toward the following inquiries: 1) Who created the website? 2) What does the website feature? 3) What are the functions of the features? 4) How do the functions shape the worldview and human lives? 5) Who is the audience?

Table 1

An Overview of the Selected Ikeda Websites

Website Title	Link
Daisaku Ikeda Official Website	https://www.daisakuikeda.org/
Daisaku Ikeda Children's Stories	https://www.youtube.com/c/DaisakuIkedaOrg_ChildrensStories
World Tribune	https://www.worldtribune.org/
Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue	https://www.ikedacenter.org/
Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education	https://ikedainstitute.com/

Object-Oriented Interviews. To deepen the understanding of how teacher educators may use these websites to foster humanity in teacher education, the author of the study interviewed two Soka educators who recently retired from universities (IRB Approval #2101740). Three criteria were used to select the interviewees. First, participants had worked in teacher education for extended years (10 years+). Second, the participants practiced Soka humanism to cultivate humanity in their workplaces. These two criteria ensured that participants had the knowledge and experience to address the interview questions and discuss the topics in detail. Each interview was conducted via Zoom and lasted about thirty minutes. The recordings were transcribed for analysis. The interview questions included:

- Tell me about your occupation before retirement. What was your role, and what did you do?
- What stood out for you in your experiences in your occupation? What

aspects did you find most rewarding? What aspects of your work did you find most challenging?

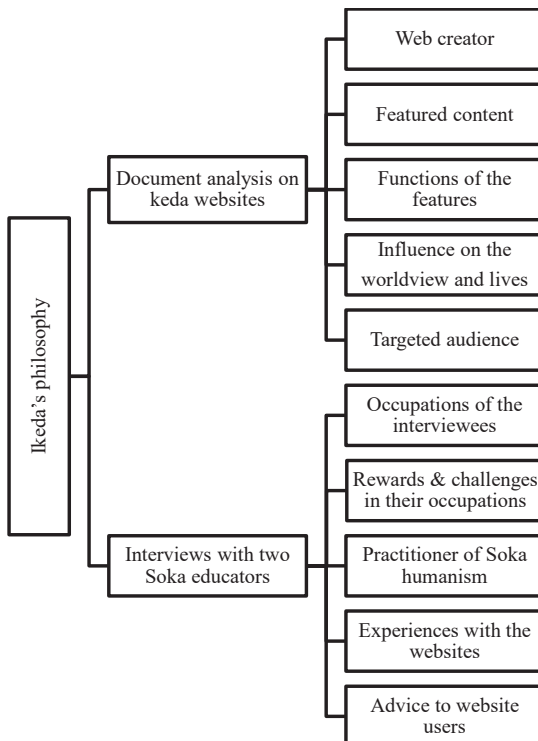
- What was it like to be a practitioner of Soka humanism in teacher education?
- Have you ever used any Ikeda website(s) for work or personal life? If you have, tell me your experience using the websites.
- What advice will you give college students and teacher educators about using these websites?
- What haven't I asked you that you would like to add? Is there anything you would like to share?

Data Analysis

I used thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2013) to analyze the document and interview data and developed themes based on my website inquiry and interview questions. I then used the setup of the themes-quotation-commentary (SQC) model to present the findings (Weaver-Hightower, 2019). Figure 2 shows the thematic map of the data analysis.

Figure 2

A Thematic Map of the Data Analysis



Findings

Document Analysis

Each Ikeda website features unique design elements, but a document analysis was conducted to uncover the interrelationships among these sites. The primary goal was to identify concrete examples these websites could offer to enhance their application in teaching practice and research, ultimately promoting humanity in teacher education. Based on the inquiries about these websites, the findings of the document analysis are grouped into the following categories: the website creator, featured content, functions of the features, influence on the worldview and lives, and targeted audience.

Website Creator. The *Daisaku Ikeda Official Website* and *Daisaku Ikeda Children’s Stories* websites are created by Soka Gakkai International (SGI), which is “a global community of individuals in 192 countries and territories who practice Nichiren Buddhism” (Soka Gakkai, 2024a). The three founding presidents of SGI are Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), Josei Toda (1900–1958), and Daisaku Ikeda (1928–2023). The *World Tribune* website is created by Soka Gakkai International in the United States of America (SGI-USA), which promotes Buddhism for daily life, human dignity, and global citizenship. The *Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue* website is created by the Ikeda Center, an institution funded by Daisaku Ikeda. The *Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education* website is created by the Value-Creating Education for Global Citizenship Programs at DePaul University. Table 2 summarizes the sponsorships of the selected websites.

Table 2
Who Created the Websites?

	<i>Daisaku Ikeda Official Website</i>	<i>Daisaku Ikeda Children’s Stories</i>	<i>World Tribune</i>	<i>Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue</i>	<i>Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education</i>
Soka Gakkai International (SGI)	V	V			
Soka Gakkai International in the United States of America (SGI-USA)			V		
Ikeda Center				V	
Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education at DePaul University					V

Featured Content. The *Daisaku Ikeda Official Website* provides information about Daisaku Ikeda’s profile (e.g., biography, timeline, photo album, curriculum vitae, and recollections), his Buddhism philosophy (e.g., Buddhism in action, essays on Buddhism, and funded philosophical institutes), peace movement (e.g., advancing peace, peace proposals, essays on peace, portraits of global citizens, and funded peace institutes), education contribution (e.g., creative education, education proposals, essays on education, and funded educational institutes), and the proponents of culture (e.g., cultivating humanity, essays on culture, and funded cultural institutions). The YouTube channel of the *Daisaku Ikeda Children’s Stories* website contains 85 videos created based on children’s stories written by Daisaku Ikeda and translated into Cantonese, Chinese, English, French, Korean, and Spanish. Ikeda states that he wrote these books “with the hope of imparting courage and hope to children, and thus contributing in some way to planting ‘seeds of the heart’ that teach the importance of cherishing friendship and trust” (Daisaku Ikeda Official Website, 2024c). The *World Tribune* website has encouragement from Daisaku Ikeda, SGI members’ experiences based on their practice of Nichiren Buddhism, and Biddability podcasts. The *Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue* website showcases various programs to promote peace, learning, and dialogues, including Ikeda forum, dialogue nights, indigo talks, global citizens seminar series, Ikeda Center youth committee, education fellows, the dialogue studio (podcasts), and books for teacher education. The *Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education* website shows the institute’s initiatives such as Ikeda/Soka studies conferences, Ikeda lectures, doctoral research dialogue series, international research forum on Ikeda/Soka studies, research presentations at national and international conferences, and translation of Ikeda’s books. Table 3 shows the features of the five websites.

Table 3

What Does the Website Feature?

	<i>Daisaku Ikeda Official Website</i>	<i>Daisaku Ikeda Children’s Stories</i>	<i>World Tribune</i>	<i>Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue</i>	<i>Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education</i>
Profile	V				
Buddhist Philosopher	V				
Peacebuilder	V				
Educator	V				
Proponent of Culture	V				

See next page for continuation of table

Continuation of Table 3

	<i>Daisaku Ikeda Official Website</i>	<i>Daisaku Ikeda Children's Stories</i>	<i>World Tribune</i>	<i>Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue</i>	<i>Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education</i>
Books	V				
Photography	V				
Audio-visual	V				
Quotations	V				
YouTube Channel		V			
Encouragement			V		
Experiences			V		
Buddhability (Podcast)			V		
Ikeda Forum				V	
Dialogue Nights				V	
Indigo Talks				V	
Global Citizens Seminar Series				V	
Ikeda Center Youth Committee				V	
Education Fellows				V	
The Dialogue Studio (Podcast)				V	
Ikeda Center Books for Teacher Education				V	
Ikeda/Soka Studies Conference					V
Ikeda Lecture					V
Doctoral Research Dialogue Series					V
International Research Forum on Ikeda/Soka Studies					V
Research Presentations at National and International Conferences					V
Translation					V
Master and Doctoral Programs					V

It is important to note that elements like “events,” “news,” “highlights,” “updates,” and “subscriptions” are not included in the analysis for two reasons. First, these elements are often typical website features, making their inclusion less informative for comparative purposes. Second, once the events are completed, the website design teams often integrate the information into appropriate sections of the websites, making the inclusion of these elements repetitive.

Functions of the Features. The *Daisaku Ikeda Official Website* offers an extensive chronological account of Daisaku Ikeda’s remarkable contributions to global education, culture, and peace. Regarding philosophical orientation, all five websites – *Daisaku Ikeda Official Website*, *Daisaku Ikeda Children’s Stories*, *World Tribune*, *the Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue*, and *the Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education* – offer information and real-world illustrations rooted in the philosophy of Ikeda and Soka, to transform human lives in individuals’ communities and collectively build a sustainable global society. For teaching and learning in the context of K-20 education, *Daisaku Ikeda Children’s Stories*, *the Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue*, and *the Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education* websites offer readily applicable classroom resources. Concerning curriculum studies and theoretical orientation, *the Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue* and *the Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education* websites are particularly suitable, as they house initiatives to involve university students and teacher educators and disseminate research studies nationally and internationally. Table 4 below delineates the functions of the features found on the five selected websites in terms of direction in time, philosophical orientation, teaching and learning, curriculum studies, theoretical orientation, as well as society and community.

Table 4

What Are the Functions of the Features?

	<i>Daisaku Ikeda Official Website</i>	<i>Daisaku Ikeda Children’s Stories</i>	<i>World Tribune</i>	<i>Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue</i>	<i>Institute for Daisaku Ikeda Studies in Education</i>
Direction in Time	V				
Philosophical Orientation	V	V	V	V	V
Teaching and Learning		V		V	V
Curriculum Studies				V	V
Initiatives				V	V
Society and Community	V	V	V	V	V

Influence on the Worldview and Lives. Although each of the Ikeda websites has distinct features and functions, they all have a shared vision, i.e., value creation, human revolution, human education, character development, global citizenship, dialogue for peace, and absolute happiness. The following summarizes definitions of each term from the Soka Gakkai (2024b): *Value Creation* refers to taking action to create life value and make a good cause for human happiness under any circumstances.

- *Human Revolution* is each individual's inner transformation process of breaking through the shackles of a "lesser self" and living for a "greater self." Such a person recognizes the limitless potential and possibilities and has a profound love for all humanity.
- *Human Education* focuses on raising the awareness of human rights and dignity and restoring humanity in each person's life for peaceful co-existence.
- *Character Development* refers to developing one's qualities and abilities to ease suffering and bring happiness to oneself and others. It is the process of being and becoming a human being, awakening one's inner strength to overcome problems.
- *Global Citizenship* upholds the belief that wisdom, courage, and compassion will contribute to solving global problems.
- *Dialogue for Peace* asserts that the path to peace lies in non-violence and mutual respect, which can only be achieved through constant and genuine dialogues.
- *Absolute Happiness* reflects one's inner strength of turning negativities into something positive. Such happiness is indestructible by any challenges and obstacles.

Targeted Audience. The Ikeda websites are useful to a wide range of individuals, including scholars and researchers in Ikeda/Soka studies, students, teachers, and the public. Their broad appeal arises from two main factors. First, while each Ikeda website has its own unique features and functions, they all share a unified vision centered on value creation, human revolution, education, character development, global citizenship, dialogue for peace, and the pursuit of absolute happiness. The core principles of Soka humanism cross disciplinary boundaries, making them relevant to universal human values and experiences. Second, the absence of repetitive content across the websites allows users to engage with information that is tailored to their specific needs and contexts. This variety enables educators to identify resources that resonate with their personal perspectives while also enriching the learning experiences of pre-service teachers.

Object-Oriented Interview

The findings of the interview data are categorized into the occupations of the interviewees, rewards and challenges in their occupations, practitioners of Soka humanism, experiences with Ikeda websites, and advice to other website users.

Occupations of the Interviewees. The author of the study interviewed John (pseudonym) and Tony (pseudonym); both have extended years of teaching and research experience in teacher education, from teacher educators to administration roles until their retirement. John was a former dean of the College of Education and vice president of a public university. Tony was a former department chair working at a Christian university. John specialized in multimedia and higher education administration, while Tony's expertise was in biology. Despite their distinct professional backgrounds, they shared a commitment as lifelong Soka humanism practitioners, actively promoting humanity through their professional endeavors and personal interactions.

Rewards and Challenges in Their Occupations. Through his position, John found fulfillment in offering robust statistical analyses to facilitate policy decision-making and problem-solving. However, he sometimes experienced frustration when seeing people misunderstand the purpose of statistics or try to manipulate data. In Tony's role, the positive aspects included the satisfaction of assisting colleagues in enhancing their lives through administrative support and mutual understanding. However, he sometimes felt overwhelmed by the emphasis on data collection, prioritizing evaluating instructors' teaching quality for accreditation purposes over focusing on course preparation and student care. Both John and Tony navigated the rewards and challenges inherent in their occupations, consistently prompting them to engage in human revolution and foster positive change through compassionate action and behavior.

Practitioners of Soka Humanism. Both John and Tony viewed themselves as practitioners of Soka humanism. John stated, "I would not have survived or built my career without basing my career on Ikeda's philosophy." Through Ikeda's philosophy, John realized that "education exists for the well-being and happiness of students. Teachers should be partners in discovery. They are the guide on the side rather than the sage on the stage. They do not inject knowledge into students but rather nurture wisdom and develop each student's potential, even teaching them the value of becoming global citizens." Keeping to the values and principles of Ikeda's philosophy, John always made decisions based on the side of the students. Meanwhile, he listened more and strived to find the creative and middle way that would work for everyone rather than being angry or confrontational. Initially, John's dream was to work for Soka University of America. He expressed gratitude for receiving guidance about what practitioners of Soka humanism mean from Dr. Lawrence Edward Carter Sr., a professor and founding dean of the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College. Dr. Carter told

him that he could spread the ideas of Ikeda's philosophy in any teacher education institution where he was, which was equally valuable.

When asked what it was like to be a practitioner of Soka humanism, Tony explained that there are different types of practitioners. He stated that Makiguchi's practice of value creation was grounded in Nichiren Buddhism. Makiguchi argued that religion exists to serve human needs. Thus, as a classroom teacher and school principal, Makiguchi put students' happiness at the center of everything he did. "Not all practitioners of Soka humanism practice Nichiren Buddhism," Tony said. Many people across religions and disciplines agree with the philosophy of Soka humanism and thus incorporate it into their teaching practice. To Tony, faith, practice, and study are essential for him to carry out the mission of spreading the ideas of Ikeda's philosophy. He prays daily to have wisdom, compassion, and courage to solve problems in a humanistic way that will create life value and bring happiness to oneself and others. He said there is no one way to practice Ikeda's philosophy. It all boils down to educators expanding their life status and leading students to happy and fulfilling lives. Tony recalled guidance from Dr. Maria Gujarato, a professor at Soka University of Japan, to treat every student as a future Nobel Peace Prize laureate and ignite their passion for learning.

Experiences with Ikeda Websites. Regarding using Ikeda websites, John expressed how much he appreciated Daisaku Ikeda as a lifelong mentor to him through his writings, lectures, and guidance. Growing up, John lacked direction and mentorship, which led him to make mistakes, such as repeating a grade and becoming antisocial. He shared that it was not until he was introduced to Ikeda's philosophy and explored information on official websites that he truly discovered the value and purpose of life. Ikeda's philosophy transformed his life, motivating him to grow positively and contribute to society. He found mentorship through Ikeda websites and other Soka materials, which led him to decide to pursue an education degree. Eventually, he became a distinguished scholar, working at the American Institutes for Research and later serving as the vice president of a public university. He stated, "I often used the insights from Ikeda websites to find a path forward, including developing educational programs grounded in Ikeda's philosophy to cultivate humanity of my students." As Ikeda websites continued to be developed and enhanced, he always found the strengths and foresight of the knowledge to apply at work and in his personal life.

Tony mentioned that he often began meetings with inspiring quotes from Ikeda websites at the department meeting. The faculty responded positively to these quotes, and many found Ikeda's messages encouraging when presented from an informational perspective. Furthermore, he utilized Ikeda's guidance to motivate colleagues and students to overcome challenges and incorporated resources from Ikeda websites into summer camps for youth.

Advice to Other Website Users. John suggested that people approach these

websites with an open mind and do not view them as religion. When people view information as religion, they often hesitate to look at it. “I encourage people to just look at the values and the content. Then, they will understand that this goes beyond any religion. It goes beyond any narrow way of thinking. The values and principles of Ikeda’s philosophy can be applied broadly.” John believes that when people explore the sites from a perspective of values and how the information on these websites can be useful for students, teacher educators, and administrators, they will find much insight into helping students and their personal growth. These websites will foster them to become global-thinking citizens. As a struggling student at a young age, John stated that “there are many struggling students just waiting to be influenced by the wonderful values of Ikeda’s philosophy” to fill their hearts with strength and life force and to become happy.

Tony also spoke highly about using these website resources. He said we first need to let people know that these websites exist. Seeing concrete examples of how the information can be used to foster students’ humanity is essential. He shared that when he first taught in teacher education, he struggled. Many students were underprepared before entering college. However, he found inspiration and ideas from Ikeda’s philosophy to become a good teacher and embrace every person in his surroundings. “It is the heart that matters,” he said. Students make teachers constantly reflect on how they teach and treat students. When teachers connect more deeply with students, heart to heart, they can help students change their lives.

Discussion

Numerous qualitative research studies have focused on Ikeda’s philosophy of Soka humanism, using research methods such as ethnography (Nagashima, 2020), phenomenology (Sharma & Alba, 2018), hermeneutics (Busacchi, 2016), feminism (Kurihara, 2005), and posthumanism (Goulah, 2019). However, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the use of document analysis to systematically examine official websites, as well as the incorporation of object-based interviews with Soka educators. This study aims to address this gap by exploring how Soka (value-creating) perspectives will contribute to fostering a sustainable global society through teacher education. Meanwhile, the methods – including document analysis and object-based interviews – can deepen the understanding of Ikeda’s philosophy of humanism and its potential applications in the context of teacher education.

Ikeda Websites for Fostering Humanity

The Ikeda websites cover topics across value creation, human revolution, human education, character development, global citizenship, dialogue for peace, and absolute happiness. The websites feature Ikeda's profile and his contributions as a philosopher, peacebuilder, educator, and proponent of culture. Other features include Ikeda's publications of books, photography, audio-visual resources, quotations, a YouTube channel, and encouragement. Various programs and initiatives also provide examples of people engaging in value creation to promote culture, education, and peace. Establishing genuine health requires not only knowledge but also perspectives toward life. Educators can access a wealth of information, inspiration, and resources for nurturing humanity in teacher education through the Ikeda websites, which are free and accessible to the public.

Soka Educators' Experiences

The interviews with John and Tony illustrate how teacher educators used these websites to foster humanity in teacher education. Despite working at different universities and fields, John and Tony actively promoted humanity through their professional and personal endeavors. They used Soka humanism to overcome challenges inherent in their occupations and constantly engaged in human revolution to create life value. Both reiterated that the purpose of education is to help students become happy and lead fulfilled lives. John described how he found mentorship through Ikeda's writings, lectures, and guidance, and Tony shared how he incorporated Ikeda's quotes to cultivate humanity in a Christian university. They believed that the messages conveyed on the Ikeda websites transcend differences in gender, religion, ideology, social position, ethnicity, and nationality to cultivate humanistic professionals and future leaders in teacher education. It is noteworthy that traditional object-based interviews have focused on physical objects rather than virtual ones, such as websites. Therefore, discussing websites in the context of object-based interviews represents an innovative approach.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

The present study is constrained by the limitations associated with document analysis and object-oriented interviews, primarily due to the restricted availability of information on a small scale. For example, this study is limited to the English language materials, thus omitting non-English Ikeda websites. Additionally, time constraints resulted in interviews with only two Soka educators. Future research

could explore whether the perspectives of these scholars align with those of individuals in different countries and utilizing resources in other languages.

Nevertheless, the websites used offer extensive information for both practice and research. Since the fundamental principles of Ikeda/Soka studies remain consistent, educators can find examples that suit their needs across various contexts. The document analysis provides new insight into the relationship between content, production, and consumption of these websites. The existing research in Ikeda/Soka studies often uses some but not all websites. Given that no features are repeated among the websites, and the information all shares the same principles of Ikeda's philosophy, using multiple official websites can broaden the scope of teaching and research to reach diverse readers.

The present study incorporates object-oriented interviews with the users of the objects. The public accessibility of these websites enhances the trustworthiness of the data and internal validity. The external validity is also reinforced through object-based interviews that provide in-depth perspectives from the users of these websites. It will be beneficial to complement these findings by interviewing the design teams behind the websites. Such interviews will offer valuable perspectives and recommendations on enhancing the practical implementation of Ikeda's philosophy. Also, it can give readers a richer understanding of how the design teams utilize information from other official websites while still maintaining their distinctive and impactful contributions to Ikeda/Soka studies.

Conclusion

"What we need most is to restore and revive our humanity. We must create a society where people can live with dignity, a society where people can live in peace and happiness...It may seem like a long and distant path, but I am convinced that the twenty-first century must see a movement to sow the seeds of peace, happiness, and trust in every person's heart. The seeds of a truly humane way of life. I am convinced this is the only path."

– Daisaku Ikeda

2024 Daisaku Ikeda Official Website

This year marks nine years since the United Nations adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. In his final peace proposal to the UN before his passing, Ikeda (2022) emphasized the importance of embodying the core spirit of the SDGs – "the determination to leave no one behind" (p. 5). Teacher education is essential for shaping the future by fostering capable and

compassionate teachers and leaders for young children. It plays a crucial role in ensuring that no one is left behind and laying the groundwork for sustainable development. Because the ultimate purpose of education is to build a lasting peace for humanity, teachers must awaken their humanity and see their limitless potential to actualize peace and happiness. The analysis of Ikeda websites and interviews with Soka educators in the present study offer teacher educators valuable resources and practical experiences for cultivating humanity in pre-service teachers. Everywhere around the world, teacher educators' tenacious engagement of future teachers and leaders in dialogue based on humanity will ensure an unshakable foundation for a sustainable global society.

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