

HUMANISTIC LEADERS IN EDUCATION: LEARNING FROM THE LEADERSHIPS OF GANDHI, KING, AND IKEDA

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ABSTRACT

Today, our world is being attacked by the coronavirus and brutal wars as well as associated issues like inequality in access to education and racial discrimination. School leaders must make every effort a cause for the future and transform school environments for the better. Refreshing perspectives grounded in humanity will help school leaders tackle the root of problems that cause people to suffer and help students lead fulfilled lives. In this article, we explore three exemplary leaders who have created lasting and profound impacts on education and society: Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968), and Daisaku Ikeda (1928-). Our theoretical research study addresses two research questions: 1) What humanistic values are demonstrated by Gandhi, King, and Ikeda? 2) What are the implications of these humanistic values in education? The humanistic values demonstrated by Gandhi, King, and Ikeda include compassion, social justice, nonviolence, fostering successors, and appreciation toward women. The implications are twofold. First, school leaders must develop genuine character by confronting challenges in daily life. Second, when striving to build a society for the creation of life values, school leaders will find a profound mission in their roles as leaders and make their leadership more refined and effective.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Daisaku Ikeda, Humanistic leaders, Leadership in education

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the roles of school leaders are to ensure that students perform well on achievement assessments and develop independent living skills. Most resources and time are thus invested in teaching subject matters and professional knowledge. Community leaders extend schools' efforts by encouraging students to enter the workforce after graduation and providing work experience through apprenticeships. Over time, funding has influenced the school curriculum. One example of this was in response to the Soviet Union's launch of the "Sputnik" missile during World War I in the 1950s, which led to the development of the National Defense Education Act. This act provided an extraordinary federal investment in education to encourage students to explore the possibilities of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and choose jobs and careers in defense of the nation (Urban, 2010). This shift in schooling set new expectations for curricula and instruction, including evaluating student success based on their scores and a set of criteria on major content areas. Consequently, school leaders' roles shifted from process-oriented to outcome-oriented. Such a situation happened not only in western

countries but also in eastern countries. Ikeda (2021) pointed out that postwar Japan called on education to serve nationalistic aims for greater military and economic power, overlooking youth growth and development. For years, the pressure of meeting funding stakeholders' expectations has altered school curricula, such as focusing on particular courses to keep up with the trend. The demands for high performance often diminish the importance of developing students' genuine character and cultivating them to become global citizens beyond pursuing personal goals.

Through the critical analysis of literature concerning what is essential in today's school leaders, a common theme is the idea of *humanity* that promotes respecting and upholding the dignity of each student. Ikeda (2004) wrote, "To be effective, education for sustainability must be rooted in a deep faith in humanity — the determination to awaken human agency through the interlocking processes of learning, reflection, and empowerment" (para. 11). Humanity creates an intersection for different disciplines, cultural diversity, and individual uniqueness to exchange, develop, and sustain. In further evaluating educational partnerships, Cox-Petersen (2011) argued that although school systems, families, and communities may play different roles, they are interconnected due to shared responsibility and humanity.

Tucker's (2019) review of high-performing school systems found that good school leaders not only focus on the curriculum or work skills but also encourage value creation and character development. He criticized that school leaders once had "sorting" students into boxes based on their disabilities rather than each student's unique interests and goals, which hindered the development of students' well-being and teacher-student relationships. Improving relationships with students requires teachers to see their students as human beings and reach their hearts through authentic caring (Valenzuela, 1999). Darling-Hammond and Rothman's (2011) study of effective school systems indicates that it is essential to model or provide concrete examples to help school leaders raise their awareness of humanity and guide them to turn awareness into action.

In this theoretical research, we explore three exemplary leaders who have created lasting and profound impacts on education and society: Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968), and Daisaku Ikeda (1928-). The three icons are chosen for the following reasons. First, their leaderships are well-known in the world. However, there is little research comparing the similarities of the humanistic values they created for education and society. Second, they are born in different countries facing turmoil such as violence and discrimination in the 19th and 20th centuries. Yet, their act of transforming human history demonstrates a sense of shared humanity across physical boundaries and religious practices. The primary purpose of a theoretical research study is to gather and synthesize information on a topic and increase readers' understanding of it. Theoretical research does not aim to innovate or solve a complex issue but seeks to address fundamental questions and build the basis that guides subsequent work on the topic and research endeavors.

Our research study addresses two research questions: 1) What humanistic values are demonstrated by Gandhi, King, and Ikeda? 2) What are the implications of these humanistic values in leadership education? To achieve the goals, we select two primary texts that discuss the leaderships of Gandhi, King, and Ikeda in-depth. These texts are:

Walking with the Mahatma: Gandhi for Modern Times (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015) and *America Will Be: Conversations on Hope, Freedom, and Democracy* (Harding & Ikeda, 2013). We reviewed the texts and utilized content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) to code the major themes of the leaderships of these three international leaders. We then synthesized and refined the themes to address the research questions. In addition, three official websites that document the histories and philosophies of Gandhi, King, and Ikeda, their original writings, and contributions to education and society are included to deepen the understanding of their leaderships and the humanistic values they have created. The websites are *The Mahatma* (<https://gandhi.gov.in/>), *The King Center* (<https://thekingcenter.org/>), and *Daisaku Ikeda* (<https://www.daisakuikeda.org/>). In the following sections, we briefly introduce Gandhi, King, and Ikeda.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

Mahatma Gandhi was a prominent leader in liberation efforts during the period of British rule on the Indian subcontinent. Born in India and practicing Hinduism, Gandhi believed that the mind was more powerful than any physical force. He traveled throughout London and South Africa as a lawyer and eventually returned to his home country in New Delhi, India's capital. Upon returning to India, he discovered how citizens were affected by government corruption. Gandhi led civilian protests against abusive authority, encouraging Indians to engage in non-cooperation with government rules. As a result of Gandhi's influence, Indian citizens demonstrated nonviolent resistance by participating in worker strikes and boycotting the purchase of British goods. During the Salt Satyagraha (also known as the "Salt March"), Gandhi and about 80 of his followers endured a 240-mile march across India, in which thousands of citizens gradually joined the march in mass protest. Amidst the movement in India, Gandhi's ideas of nonviolence and political reformation spread globally, inspiring social activism amongst individuals experiencing injustice.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Baptist minister and one of the prime leaders of the American civil rights movement during the 1960s. King's notable achievements began in his youth. He graduated high school at the age of fifteen and shortly earned his B.A. degree from Morehouse College, a distinguished black college. He earned his doctorate at Boston University and moved to Alabama shortly after to serve as pastor for Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery. While in Montgomery, King became a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) executive committee. He helped organize the Montgomery bus boycott in protest of one of many segregation laws. The boycott was successful and led to the revision of bus segregation laws. Shortly after, King led a massive protest in Birmingham that attracted thousands of supporters. For over a decade, King traveled to areas facing racial injustice and lectured about hope and resilience through these challenging times. King was once under government surveillance as a threat and was arrested. While in jail, he wrote the infamous "Letter from Birmingham Jail" to describe the ongoing injustice while upholding his conviction in faith. King addressed government leaders in his speech – I Have a Dream. He continued to advocate for civil rights and incite changes until his assassination in 1968

(National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, n.d.).

Daisaku Ikeda (1928-)

Daisaku Ikeda is a Japanese philosopher and global peace advocate. Ikeda, who grew up experiencing the impacts of war on his family during World War II, was determined to spend his life learning about transforming suffering and advocating for peace. Through seeking the mentorship of Josei Toda (1900-1958), a Japanese teacher and activist, Ikeda learned the principles of Nichiren Buddhism. He was inspired by Toda's devout conviction for humanity. He shared Toda's views on how inner transformation could reframe learned ideas of conflict and create a ripple effect on one's immediate environment. Ikeda succeeds Makiguchi and Toda as the third president of Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist organization that promotes peace, culture, and education. Ikeda has received almost 400 honorary doctorates globally and is deemed a significant leader in peace education. He has engaged with numerous scholars and leaders across fields to promote humanistic values.

“There are all sorts of revolutions: political, economic, scientific, and artistic. Each has its own significance and, often, necessity. But no matter what one changes, the world will never get any better as long as people themselves—the guiding force and impetus behind all endeavors—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.”

~Daisaku Ikeda

HUMANISTIC VALUES DEMONSTRATED BY GANDHI, KING, AND IKEDA

According to Ikeda, humanism is “not just a philosophy, but also a way of being in the world. On the one hand, it is founded upon a belief in the infinite potential of each human being, and, on the other, in a desire to contribute to global well-being” (Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue, n.d.). It is to value each person's life and extend to the betterment of all lives. The humanistic values demonstrated in the respective lives of Gandhi, King, and Ikeda can be categorized into five themes: compassion, social justice, nonviolence, fostering successors, and appreciation toward women.

Compassion

Ikeda firmly believed that “a person's greatness is determined, not by academic credentials, social position or titles but by the extent to which the individual in question strives for the happiness of others.” (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015, p. 132). Leaders exist to serve people. . Leaders who aim to help people become happy will tackle challenges joyfully and view difficulties positively. Out of compassion for others, leaders attend to detail and put themselves in another person's shoes. For example, to understand the experience of being poor, Gandhi advocated for voluntary poverty and always led a simple lifestyle. He took the initiative and suffered to awaken social consciousness. King said, “An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his

individualistic concern to the broader concerns of all humanity” (Harding & Ikeda, 2013, p. 2). Ikeda argued that leaders should possess compassion and have the wisdom to protect it. Compassionate leaders offer heart-warming and considerate guidance to enlighten and inspire people. They possess hope and optimism to stay positive during difficult times. Ikeda observed, “People are naturally drawn to cheerfulness and joy. No matter how noble a movement’s ideals and philosophy, if its leaders become negative and uninspiring, or if the movement becomes inflexible and bureaucratic, it will fail to thrive” (Harding & Ikeda, 2013, p. 56). Despite facing challenges, Gandhi, King, and Ikeda never lost hope, and their optimism turned divisions into unity. Their compassionate actions resonated with people, connected the shared humanity, and created a friendship network.

Compassion helps people know that their lives are interconnected. Each person’s behavior affects their immediate families, the community environment, and eventually the entire society. King explained, “we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny,” and thus, “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (Harding & Ikeda, 2013, p. 124). To achieve environmental justice, the awareness of interconnectedness and the sense of global citizens are essential. Ikeda proposed three qualities of global citizens: 1) “the wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all lives and living beings,” 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,” and 3) “the compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one’s immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places” (Harding & Ikeda, 2013, p. 221). As a result of embracing their identity as global citizens, Gandhi, King, and Ikeda were aware of the dignity of all lives. They constantly engaged themselves in inner transformation and devoted themselves to peace. Taking King’s civil rights movement as an example, his movement “was not to establish legal rights for black people simply but to go beyond that to create what he termed *the beloved community*, in which all people could rediscover a sense of our fundamental connectedness as human beings” (Harding & Ikeda, 2013, p. 54). No matter how advanced science and industry are, lacking humanity will lead society in the wrong direction. Selfishness brings no true happiness and fulfillment. Therefore, compassionate school leaders are not ego-centered, and they always keep the welfare of others in mind. They know that any actions derived from anger, greed, and foolishness only create a chain of retributions and intensify hatred and violence (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015).

Social Justice

All human beings are equal and deserve respect. Each person is capable of making their lives noble and victorious, and thus there is no need to feel subservient to anyone else (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015). Ikeda stated, “the spirit of fighting for justice based on respect for human dignity transcends time and national boundaries and resonates with struggles for justice everywhere” (Harding & Ikeda, 2013, p. 101). Gandhi, King, and Ikeda were courageous fighters of social justice, and they took ownership of their responsibility. Gandhi said, “Be the agent of the change you wish to see...If we do not forsake our ideal, the ideal will never forsake us” (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015, p. 10-16). The rough times of hardships and struggles cultivate the human spirit. King argued, “the ultimate test of a

man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and moments of convenience, but where he stands in moments of challenge and moments of controversy” (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015, p. 142). Ikeda further stated, “there is no justice without a struggle against evil. Remaining passive and indifferent in the face of evil makes one complicit in it. This is why the *just* must be resolute and strong. Justice is courage” (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015, p. 21). Gandhi, King, and Ikeda did not surrender to authority. They stood up to fight for social justice and protect the dignity of human beings.

Courage is contagious as one acts against the status quo of unjust practices in society, thus inspiring others to engage in breaking the norms of prejudice. Ikeda restated that it is impossible to struggle against social injustice and reform the times without courage. “A coward is incapable of reforming himself and manifesting the limitless possibilities that exist within us all,” Ikeda said (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015, p. 23). King distinguished conscience from cowardice, expediency, and vanity. He said that “cowardice asks the question: Is it safe? Expediency asks the question: Is it politic? Vanity comes along and asks the question: Is it popular? But conscience asks the question: Is it right?” (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015, pp. 142-143). Gandhi, King, and Ikeda demonstrated that social transformation could not happen without courageous action. Courage, coming from one’s indomitable will, manifests limitless capacity. Leaders who are not afraid of persecution or defamation ignite courage in people’s hearts and lead society to true freedom and equality. They are willing to speak directly to people and engage them in dialogue to solve problems. When they constantly model and teach human rights, they foster people’s sensibilities and help them associate themselves with others.

Nonviolence

Nonviolence offers a way for conflict resolution through education and open discussion rather than any form of harm. Gandhi, King, and Ikeda never accepted wars or violence as a means to resolve problems. King advocated for dialogue and human rights. He inspired others to uphold the faith of not using violence against oppressors and avoiding the historical cycle of recurring wars. He and his colleagues protested against unjust and historical segregation that prevented minority students from school. During a time of unjust lynchings, international warfare, and unequal civil opportunity, nonviolence was seen as a challenge, but King still took inspiration from Gandhi and embraced nonviolence (Harding & Ikeda, 2013). Gandhi, King, and Ikeda believed that “the philosophy of nonviolence serves as an indispensable ethical and intellectual basis not only for human relations but also for harmonious coexistence among all living things” (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015, p. 186). Nonviolence is courage. It challenges historical ideas of violence always being the answer. According to Radhakrishnan and Ikeda (2015), Gandhi refused to accept the necessity of sacrificing minorities or resorting to violence for social reform. Although many resources were limited due to scarcity and high taxation from India’s government, Gandhi utilized knowledge and inspiration in courageous efforts to oppose government violence. He expressed, “I am trying to work from the bottom upward...stirring a groundswell for change, not from the top-down, but from the bottom upward- this is the formula for nonviolent revolution” (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015, p. 84). Gandhi led hunger strikes and marches in revolt against unlawful practices. King followed Gandhi’s footsteps in implementing the values of such courage in the civil rights

movement by inspiring youth to rise above the violent actions against them, such as racism and prejudice. King highly praised the courage of the youth and their efforts in building community strength.

Ikeda supported peace and the courage of nonviolence, and he was opposed to any forces that would cause human misery and threaten the dignity of life. Ikeda (2010) suggested that “to be of real and lasting value, change must be gradual and inspired from within” (p. 202). Using power or authority to force people only causes conflicts, mistrust, and hatred. Gandhi, King, and Ikeda value gradualism in social reform and create harmony for all people. Radicalism often leads to self-righteousness and confusion, both of which are precedents of violence. Dialogue, in contrast, promotes mutual understanding and helps people reexamine their beliefs. It enhances one’s existence by reflecting on values amongst people and leading them to make ethical judgments. Through dialogue, Gandhi strove to create a society where people could cultivate their critical thinking and moral spirit, living their lives with simplicity and value (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015).

Fostering Successors

Gandhi, King, and Ikeda viewed youths as the catalysts of change. Youths’ pure hearts allow them to confront their learned beliefs and form new perspectives to enable change. They are sensitive to historical oppression and deceptive values. Unlike the older generation, which may possess complacency of long-standing prejudice, youths have the energy and creativity to transform this injustice. When youths encounter someone, who instills inspiration in their lives, they will develop the capacity to achieve their goals. Ikeda stated, “A momentary encounter can sometimes decide the shape of one’s entire future” (Harding & Ikeda, 2013, pp. 53). Gandhi urged adults to have open dialogues with youths and trust them. He mentioned that all his hope lies with youths and thus wanted to leave a legacy to youths with a nonviolent spirit (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015). King’s movement is an example of Gandhi’s legacy for inspiring change in his efforts to eradicate institutional segregation. Through the 1950s and 1960s, many youths joined King’s movement to protest discriminatory practices. Together, they made a noble cause in human development through the civil rights movement (Harding & Ikeda, 2013).

When youths know that adults trust them and develop a mentor-disciple relationship, youths will become even more capable and influential (Harding & Ikeda, 2013). The mentor-disciple relationship creates a path of self-discovery, awakening youths to their greatest potential. For example, King’s former president of Morehouse College, Benjamin Mays, played an important role in King’s civil rights movement. He infused inspiration into King, so he could stand up with an unyielding spirit. Similarly, Ikeda was profoundly affected by his mentor, Josei Toda, who helped him develop genuine character. Ikeda wrote, “no matter how great the philosophy or principle is, if there is no one to carry on and implement the philosophy, the movement will be broken” (Harding & Ikeda, 2013, p. 170). Bacha Khan (Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan) (1890-1988), known as the Frontier Gandhi, was an exemplary successor of Mahatma Gandhi. He believed that patience and righteousness were the most potent weapon to abolish the British Raj’s control in India. Despite the pressure of political violence, Bacha Khan upheld Mahatma Gandhi’s beliefs and continued using nonviolent ways, the acts of civil disobedience, to pursue the independence of India (Korejo, 1994). Bacha Khan demonstrated that the successors’

victory (the disciples) is the leaders' victory (the mentors). Fostering successors and persevering in the battle against injustice will realize a sustainable society for tomorrow.

Education is to awaken and foster youths' humanity. Knowledge, rooted in philosophical considerations of ethical, spiritual, and moral dimensions, helps people form meaningful reflection and awareness. Isolation or fragmentation of knowledge cannot solve the fundamental issues facing society. Ikeda called education "the light that pierces the darkness of ignorance and despair and radiates human dignity" (Harding & Ikeda, 2013, p. 159). When education aims to cultivate the whole human, it serves as a beacon of hope for the future. Gandhi stressed that education should focus on students' hearts (spirit), heads (mind), and hands (body) to cultivate their human nature. As King perceived, education would be able to shift an object-oriented society (materialism) to a person-oriented society (revolution of values). Gandhi, King, and Ikeda all valued whole-person cultivation that embraces one's curiosity, creativity, courage, commitment, and compassion. Because human beings' spirit precedes their action, the awareness of humanistic values will encourage people to take up challenges for a better future.

Human education holds respect for individuals' histories. Ikeda said, "every human being lives out a story that gives meaning to his or her existence. When we listen with an open heart to someone's story, we can learn from his or her rich store of experiences and wisdom" (Harding & Ikeda, 2013, p. 176). Listening is the first step to understanding people's experiences that are unique and specific to themselves. Even in the darkest despair and injustices, Gandhi, King, and Ikeda listened to people and understood their stories, so they could inspire people by offering them personal guidance, maintaining a sense of hope, and bravely walking on the path toward a wholesome society together (Harding & Ikeda, 2013).

Appreciation toward Women

Ikeda described women as the sum of peace because they "possess the profound compassion and courage to foster and protect life" (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015, p. 184). Respecting women fosters a society of harmony, cooperation, and vibrance because women possess innate abilities to nurture lives and the resistance against violence. As Ikeda said, "a society in which women play an active role is a vibrant society endowed with harmony and hope" (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015, p. 196). Gandhi, King, and Ikeda were aware that women are often marginalized in a male-dominated society, and thus they were committed to respecting women and valuing their voice. Ikeda believed that empowering women and supporting them to lead independent lives would be a critical issue in the 21st century. King honored and appreciated his mother and grandmother for the eternal impact in many of his speeches. Gandhi also expressed that the nonviolence movement would not be successful without women's courage and empathy, and thus he was grateful for women's support and urged society to empower women (Radhakrishnan & Ikeda, 2015).

IMPLICATIONS OF HUMANISTIC VALUES IN LEADERSHIP EDUCATION

The implications of Gandhi, King, and Ikeda's leaderships inform school leaders in two aspects: 1) developing one's genuine character and 2) building a society for the creation

of value. In experiencing difficulties and striving to overcome them, school leaders develop their genuine character to embrace compassion and nonviolence and help others do the same. Moreover, awakening to the interconnectedness of all lives guides school leaders to form new perspectives and take actions that will build a society for the creation of value, such as realizing social justice, fostering successors, and appreciating women.

Developing Genuine Character

When students know their teachers truly try to understand where they are coming from and why they may perceive things differently, they feel connected to the school. Compassion allows school leaders to communicate with students effectively, which will improve their collaboration with families, communities, and other stakeholders. Compassionate leaders will exert critical and creative thinking, challenge their own beliefs, and make every effort to avoid stereotypes. They become more cautious about every policy they make as these policies will impact educational equity and human development.

School leaders should never use violence to respond to it regardless of how harsh or unfair the situation is. They reframe their approaches to conflict in a nonviolent way and inspire others to take compassionate actions. On the one hand, the philosophy of nonviolence helps school leaders regulate their emotions and behavior. On the other hand, it helps them convey the meaning of nonviolence by showing that nonviolent actions are far more successful in effecting change. Consistent with Gandhi, King, and Ikeda's beliefs and actions, gradualism, a steadily transactional and transformational period, has proven effective in developing social and educational change (Ferri & Connor, 2005). This change process is often interpreted as "linear," where each growth is built upon the success of the previous step. However, the process for change is evolving. Introducing new ideas is an intricate, slower-paced journey as individuals relearn the necessary values. The purpose of nonviolence aligns with the nature of gradualism as both promote understanding and acceptance on personal and institutional levels. In implementing gradualism in educational leadership, the aim is for school leaders to honor natural, non-disruptive innovation when attempting to bring about positive change. School leaders who embrace compassion and nonviolence pay attention to detail and thoroughness. They carefully monitor the implementation process and are resilient to adapt themselves in the face of adversity.

Building a Society for the Creation of Value

Social justice is vital for spreading awareness of unjust practices in schooling. For example, many minority students still lack participation in education and safe spaces to express themselves. School leaders are responsible for breaking down school barriers for students and their families and ensuring equity and fairness in students' learning opportunities. To create an inclusive and welcoming school environment, school leaders must advocate for students, find and allocate resources, and encourage culturally responsive teaching. It takes courageous, strategic, and persistent efforts to address entrenched social inequity and injustice issues existing in the educational system.

Empowering youths requires school leaders to constantly reflect on their lives and make a determination to make schools a better place for many generations to come. They set

the model for successors, gain trust in them, and inspire them to continue great movements that will advance social welfare and benefit human beings. The development of positive student-teacher relationships will further foster understanding of generational differences and enhance communication. School leaders who keep their students' best interests at heart will never cease advocating for students and going the extra mile for them. Their action gives students hope, orientates their hearts toward good, and ignites the spark of enthusiasm for learning. Although social and economic problems, global conflicts, and life struggle inevitably bring challenges to schools, teachers, students, and parents, having conversations with students on these issues is necessary. When school leaders acknowledge these issues, offer guidance, and demonstrate perseverance in taking steps to overcome these challenges, they will open up the way and create a new reality that encourages youths to continue engaging in their human revolution to keep the torch of hope blazing.

Educating gender equality to prevent violence against women and girls is an essential task for school leaders. Historically, women often do not have full and equal participation in all facets of society. To this day, patriarchal ideas of dominance continue to be upheld, as evident by wage gaps and other means of subtle discrimination toward women (also known as sexism). In educational leadership, it is important to encourage women to take on authoritative positions of power, often given to men. There should be an awareness of this issue among those in positions of power in education. Women deserve to be treated with respect alongside their male counterparts. School leaders can further support female students' interests in traditionally male-dominated subjects like science, technology, engineering, and math. They can utilize community speakers of women in these fields to inspire young girls not to give up hope on their dreams of fulfilling these roles. In addressing Ikeda's call for empowering women, school leaders can support and enable women to become leaders and change-makers in schools and their local communities.

DISCUSSION

Little research engages with the humanistic values that Gandhi, King, and Ikeda have created in common. A comparative study of Gandhi and Ikeda conducted by Sharma (2018) addresses how Gandhi and Ikeda (as well as Tsunesaburo Makiguchi) took bold collective efforts, combined with their profound love for humanity, to promote a positive change in their respective communities. It has the potential to further the development of global citizenship education. Adding King's contribution to the knowledge base helps reform education for the sake of humanity and leads students to a life of happiness. Educational leaders *can* teach the full creative potential of humanity from compassion, social justice, nonviolence, fostering successors, and appreciation toward women, as demonstrated by Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Daisaku Ikeda, to enhance the effectiveness of educational leadership and improve student learning. Effective leadership relies on a trustful relationship. The humanistic values demonstrated by Gandhi, Ikeda, and King illustrate how school leaders can trust in people, which may help establish new directions in leadership education.

One role that school leaders play is to encourage diverse voices. We, as school leaders, want students to speak as much as possible and feel that their stories about their families

are valuable. We want to show that even a few words of wisdom or thoughtful gestures can positively impact our students' lives. However, this cannot be achieved if we do not embrace humanity deeper in our hearts. Humanistic values can make sense of what we do and reassert our identities as we develop genuine character and strive to build a society for the creation of value.

The present study elaborates on how humanistic values can better inform leadership education. Some of the critical questions in this study were: How can education help students better understand themselves and the world around them? How can educators simplify the concepts of humanity for young children to understand while still maintaining its complexities? Finding answers to these questions is challenging but rewarding. If education is to help students learn and recognize their humanity, school leaders must first embrace humanistic values and then instill these values in students as they navigate the world. Often, what students need is not a formula that gets them from point A to point B but rather a process by which they could infuse their strengths to solve problems thrown their way. The attributes that help students overcome challenges in life are not necessarily a black or white, right or wrong answer, but lie in their compassion, courage, and wisdom to find creative solutions.

Humanistic values become even more important in educational leadership in the midst of a global pandemic. These values are seen through the widespread appreciation of educators in schools, who push all of their teaching knowledge and utilize multiple ways to ensure that students receive a proper education. Many begin to see the associated impacts of the pandemic on students' lives, such as parents losing jobs and changes in family dynamics (e.g., deaths due to COVID-19). More people have become aware that students do not have equal access to educational resources or coping mechanisms for the challenges the pandemic brought. Many students, especially those who live in rural areas, cannot readily access software or have reliable internet connections to engage in courses that have moved online. Additionally, the combined stress of the pandemic and turbulent changes has affected many individuals' mental and emotional health. Compassion becomes a driving force for school leaders to seek improvement. They collaborate with the government and communities to ensure students have the proper equipment and technology to access virtual courses. They reach out to families, provide them with resources to cope with the stress, and offer them food, clothes, electricity, and other necessities. In response to the increasing number of physical and sexual violence against women and girls during the pandemic, school leaders continue raising people's awareness of this issue, providing access to essential services, and facilitating the implementation of health and safety policies.

The oppression that minority groups have faced for generations also resurfaces during the pandemic. For example, the rise in Asian-related hate crimes as a response to COVID-19 makes educators realize the importance of cultural competency and youth engagement. Social justice and compassion are integral to raising awareness of racial injustices surrounding institutionalized discrimination. School leaders utilize the growing power of virtual interactions to initiate dialogue about how the pandemic and racism significantly affect marginalized students. Initiating dialogue on these issues helps to gradually inspire change on systemic levels, such as government and community responses to these barriers. These actions are not isolated within the U.S but worldwide,

as people connect through technology, which helps social justice and advocacy prevail.

Access to education is a human right and should be treated as such by school leaders. Therefore, leaders should ensure that students have equal and fair access to educational resources and the tools they need to succeed. In taking lessons from humanistic values demonstrated by Gandhi, King, and Ikeda, our hope is for school leaders to better advocate for changes in the classroom. Barriers to access to resources can greatly affect student learning. Changes to address these barriers cannot be done without the voices of students and their families. To reframe the idea of 'power' in education that families and students have autonomy in sharing their unique experiences, school leaders need to see their humanity and the humanity in the people whom they serve. Their behavior, such as encouraging ground-breaking conversation, will manifest their genuine character to create values out of any situation.

CONCLUSION

Today, our world is being attacked by the coronavirus and brutal wars as well as associated issues like inequality in access to education and racial discrimination. School leaders must make every effort a cause for the future and transform school environments for the better. Refreshing perspectives grounded in humanity will help school leaders tackle the root of problems that cause people to suffer and help students lead fulfilled lives. School is not a place for students to learn; it is a place for *all* to learn. School leaders who embrace humanistic values view each student as a whole person and accept them for who they are rather than what adults want them to be. Ikeda states, "instead of one person advancing a hundred steps, a hundred people would advance one step forward" (World Tribune, n.d.). Although each educator brings a unique contribution to the school and is entitled to individual liberty, school leaders help establish a sense of shared humanity and unite stakeholders in solidarity to teach all students regardless of their dis/abilities and cultural backgrounds. Humanity allows school leaders to communicate complex ideas effectively, collaborate across cultures, and create a positive learning environment. It equips leaders with the tools to create opportunities in their pursuits. When school leaders apply these values to their work and mentor others to value humanity, they will find a profound mission in their leadership roles. Their educational leadership will be more refined and effective by developing their genuine character and building society to create value. Uniting with the youth, humanistic leaders in education will help people realize their potential and foster growth and success in future generations.

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