Introduction to the Special Issue on Education and Sustainability

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Sustainability as an international issue has grown to prominence over the last 30–40 years, and has now penetrated the language of many areas of activity, including that of education. Its most famous definition was given by the United Nations in the Brundtland report, which defined "sustainable development" as a sustainability which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (World Commission On Environment and Development, 1987, "From One Earth to One World," para. 27). Brundtland only mentioned schools briefly, but its focus on both inter-generational and intra-generational equity raises large questions for schools which include whether schools should address the relationships of environmental sustainability and economic growth, the impact of rising population growth on the environment, and the distribution of global resources between this and future generations. Yet because

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Brundtland addressed the issue of sustainability from a macro perspective, it understandably failed to address issues at the organizational and the personal level, as well as issues of a specifically educational nature. This special issue of *Educational Research Journal* (ERJ) and the selection of articles hope to address this omission by exploring sustainable education from a variety of international perspectives. The articles include conceptual pieces, research studies, and application-based papers.

To lead off the discussion, scholars Bottery and Williams, respectively, provide insight into the sustainable education landscape, centering their articles on the role of educational leadership to enhance schooling. The former author considers the topic from the macro lens of systems thinking. Specifically, the systems he uses to elucidate the discussion are the educational, the environmental, and the financial; he contends that the stressors (excessive exploitation of resources and the pollutive substances, practices or ideas) lead to crisis points in each of these interrelated systems. In closing, Bottery applies this argument to educational leadership practices. Relatedly, Williams speaks to sustainable educational leadership, recommending that schools be run using a distributed leadership model. She presents interesting findings from a qualitative study using interviews with school leaders in distributed sites. Williams explored the changes required to establish distributed leadership strategies to meet school improvement goals. A sustainable model of distributed teacher leadership is also provided.

Moving from a more distal to a proximal view of sustainable education, six articles addressing various aspects of sustainable educational practices are included. Preciado, Chaparro, Smith, and Fien maintain that early reading intervention is required for lifelong literacy proficiency of Latino students. They provide research evidence for a promising school-wide reading model that is tied to the Response to Intervention (U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, n.d.) framework. Application to classroom assessment instruction is included. Another approach to enhance student literacy and other germane academic skills is the effective use of school library services. Strong, with her many years of experience

working in public school and university libraries and her understanding of the empirical literature, argues convincingly that if education is to be fully sustainable, quality collaborative partnerships must be established among the teaching staff and school librarians. Examples of such collaborative relationships are presented.

Other articles address sustainable education on the practical level. Articles by Sink and Moore and Calvery and Hyun consider serious issues related to school-based counseling. The former piece insists that for counselor, support for student personal-social, career, and academic concerns must be tied to results-based interventions and services. Counseling support personnel need to implement accountability practices, specifically documenting their value to the schooling process and to important educational outcomes. One effective tactic to enhance the school counselor accountability is to establish meaningful educator-school counselor collaboration practices. Calvery and Hyun's article stresses the importance of these partnerships. They illustrate on how these connections can be advanced through an exemplary cross-disciplinary in-service training program model for educators of school counselors and teachers.

In the final section of this special issue, two articles by Latsone and Stern, respectively, address sustainable education in part through caring for the personal-social development of students. Latsone speaks to the importance of understanding and promoting social intelligence in college-age students and nascent practitioners. Specifically, she presents and discusses the impactful results of an international qualitative research study conducted with a sample of first-year pre-service teachers and master's level in-service students (teachers and social workers). The study's primary goal was to estimate students' understanding of social intelligence and its applicability for lessening ethnic tensions and forming positive relationships in a multicultural environment. Implications for practice are incorporated into the discussion. Stern focuses his article on value of providing emotional and physical space for primary and secondary students to be themselves. Students' need for solitude, he suggests, is overlooked, or worse, completely ignored in the

hustle and bustle of daily public school life. Stern provides real-world examples to bolster his argument. In short, these articles imply that if schools are to be places that pupils desire to attend and do their best, educators must provide opportunities for learners to express themselves, support individual differences, and build on their personal and social strengths.

In closing, we want to express our sincere gratitude to the editorial staff of the ERJ and Dr. Kwok-keung Ho for supporting this scholarly endeavor. We look forward to receiving readers' comments. Please contact Christopher Sink (csink@spu.edu) to share your thoughts.

References

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