



Ella Smith Simmons



Davenia J. Lea

Urban Education A Living

HOPE

*“The work in
the cities is the essential
work for this time.”*

Ellen G. White
(*Ministry to the Cities*, p. 28)

Populations around the world are now predominantly urban, as migration into metropolitan areas continues to rise dramatically. Up to 54 percent of all human beings, or nearly four billion people, now live in cities—a figure that is projected to increase 1.84 percent per year between 2015 and 2020.¹ This population shift creates unique and perplexing challenges for improving lives and communities in urban settings and preparing their populaces to receive the gospel. While issues and processes vary from one part of the world and from one metropolitan area to another, typical urban centers urgently need sustainable systems for providing a range of basic human needs.²

Many of the world’s nations have committed to improving education as a first-line approach to addressing these needs. They believe access to and positive outcomes from high-quality education for all will ameliorate an array of life’s inequities. Gains are evident, yet this ideal remains a dream.³ Studies reveal educational disparities across socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, and religion worldwide.⁴ Complicated issues frustrate any attempt to improve outcomes for students in many urban schools.

Indeed, methods for addressing educational disparities remain some of the most contentious public policy issues throughout the world.⁵ Yet, change is possible. Most agree that success in urban-education efforts must be tailored to include components that transform the social, structural, and cultural aspects of city life. The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s response to God’s call of “mission to the cities” is to give top priority for wholistic ministry in the world’s large urban centers.⁶ Adventist education, along with the church’s health ministries, must be central to that effort; and to that end, must adjust to meet the challenging pressures and dynamics of urban life that mitigate against educational success. While this will demand changes to our perspectives on and processes of education, such change must not lead to a deconstruction of our identity. Our approach to education must adjust to meet the full range of needs that exist in urban centers while still modeling Adventist beliefs, values, and standards.

This special theme issue of the JOURNAL is dedicated to encouraging awareness of education as central to the Adventist Church’s mission in urban settings, and inspir-

ing action from stakeholders to help achieve this goal. The article by Simmons introduces the topic and provides a context for the issue. The article by Lea summarizes the ideas and issues a call for action. The following areas are also addressed:

- *School success factors for urban settings:* Ensuring that all children receive an adequate education is paramount to the future of any country, society, or community—including the church.

To positively impact the educational experiences of children and youth in urban settings, our schools must become more culturally responsive and must provide early childhood learning opportunities that include educating parents about how to take care of their children’s needs. School success factors for urban settings will be addressed in the articles by Hernández, and Colon and Nagy.

- *Partnerships between parents, schools, churches, and communities:* Too often, schools and teachers are inadequately prepared to deal with the social, political, and economic conditions that affect the lives of urban students, families, and communities. Collaboration among key stakeholders for school reform is imperative to ensure the success of urban schools. Change is always difficult and largely dependent upon the success of critical community alliances. Partnerships between parents, schools, churches, and communities will be addressed in the article by Cummings and Cummings.

- *Spiritual principles for leadership:* Studies show that educators can learn much from methods of spiritual development, and that the spiritual perspective of educational leaders is crucial for shaping school ethos and direction. Like schools in other settings, schools in urban locales need spiritual values and principles for education and life. Spiritual principles for leadership will be addressed in the article by Pollard.

The articles selected for this issue address some of the critical points of discussion on this topic, and will enhance awareness and spark conversation; however, much more could be shared. This is just a start. Today, education remains inaccessible for millions, worldwide. Societal inequality and marginalization are persistent across time and place for many groups. Many of the barriers that undermine educational access and outcomes relate to gender, social class, economic status, health, race, eth-

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nicity, cultural identity, and religious discrimination in both developing and developed countries. We invite you to respond to the “Call for Papers” at the bottom of this page to report successes and lessons learned from initiatives that schools (pre-kindergarten through postgraduate) in your conference, union, or division have implemented in urban centers. Ultimately, our goal is to inspire action through education that takes seriously Adventism’s mission to the cities.

The authors of this guest editorial served as co-coordinators for this special issue on urban education and Adventist schools. Dr. Ella Smith Simmons serves as a General Vice President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland. Dr. Davenia J. Lea serves as an Associate Director of Education for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland. The JAE editorial staff express heartfelt appreciation for the many hours Drs. Simmons and Lea devoted to selecting topics, obtaining peer reviewers, providing input on article content, as well as their prompt response to the editor’s questions during the planning and production of the issue.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. United Nations; <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/population/world-urbanization-prospects-2014.html>; World Health Organization Global Health Observatory http://www.who.int/gho/urban_health/situation_trends/urban_population_growth_text/en/. Websites in this guest editorial were accessed on June 8, 2015.
2. Ben Levin, “Urban Education Challenges Around the Globe,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 94:7 (April 2013):74, 75.
3. UNESCO Position Paper on Education Post 2015, <http://en.unesco.org/post2015/sites/post2015/files/UNESCO%20Position%20Paper%20ED%202015.pdf>.
4. Nicole Fulgham, *Schools in Crisis: They Need Your Help (Whether You Have Kids or Not)*, FRAMES Barna Group (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2013); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (30th Anniversary Edition), Myra Bergman Ramos, trans. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000).
5. Jennifer L. Hochschild and Francis X. Shen, “Race, Ethnicity, and Education Policy.” In *Oxford Handbook of Racial and Ethnic Politics in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
6. “Mission to the Cities” is the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s holistic approach to sharing the gospel among the growing populations the world’s large cities. Initiatives include the establishment of Life Hope Centers, neighborhood events, seminars, small groups, and evangelistic meetings. Inaugurated in 2012 with support from the worldwide church leadership, the initiative was launched in 2013 in New York City followed in 2014 with each of the church’s 13 world divisions focusing on at least one large city in its territory. For 2015, each union will focus on a city in its region: <http://missiontothecities.org/>. See also Ellen G. White’s *Ministry to the Cities* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 2012).

C A L L F O R P A P E R S

Population growth among the world’s largest cities continues to expand, and with this expansion comes unique opportunities for Adventist education. The *Mission to the Cities** initiative of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has propelled the establishment of centers of influence, community events, seminars, and small group and evangelistic meetings. *This special edition is designed to showcase how Adventist schools, from early childhood through post-graduate levels, are making an impact in urban classrooms and communities through school-based programs and research.*

We invite papers that describe how schools and communities are working together to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of students through research, training, and service. Each paper should clearly delineate the purpose of the initiative, the process of implementation, as well as challenges and successes, provide data to support impact on the school and community (qualitative and/or quantitative), and recommendations for good practice. Ultimately, each paper should address how Adventist Christian elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions are successfully creating learning environments in under-resourced urban settings.

The Journal of Adventist Education Special Issue Guest Editors: Ella Smith Simmons and Davenia J. Lea Topic: Urban Education, Part II

Deadline for Submission: December 15, 2015

To further explore ways that Adventist education is making an impact in urban centers in the 21st century, the special issue of the JOURNAL will focus on the following topics:

- Professional development models, collaborative endeavors with church organizations and community partnerships;
- Workshops/conferences that train teachers and educational administrators;
- Outreach or mission programs (i.e., school-based domestic and international service-learning projects; “centers of influence, life, hope”);
- Curriculum and instruction resources designed to engage students and their families, and enhance the learning environment in under-resourced urban schools;

- Research specifically studying Adventist urban school populations.

THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION is the professional publication for Seventh-day Adventist teachers and educational administrators worldwide. Theoretical or practical articles submitted for publication should address topics of interest to that group. The English edition of the JOURNAL is published five times yearly, with approximately eight articles appearing in each issue.

Review Process

Format: Articles, including references, charts, figures, and tables, generally should not exceed 10 pages. Papers should be double-spaced, using 12-point type, and standard margin and paragraph indentation. For additional information, visit <http://jae.adventist.org/authors.htm#form>.

Notification of receipt will take place upon submission; notification of acceptance will take place after the submission deadline. All papers will undergo double-blind peer review.

*To read more about the goals and accomplishments of the *Mission to the Cities* initiative, visit <http://missiontothecities-org.lifehopecenters.org/>.