

Guest editorial: Sustaining school improvement through school-university partnerships during the post-pandemic era

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573

How do we sustain school improvement? This is an important question for those involved in school reform across many countries. Despite the existence of some research knowledge about how schools strengthen school improvement (e.g. [Chapman et al., 2016](#); [Fullan, 2009](#); [Lee and Louis, 2019](#); [Sahlberg, 2011](#)), less is known about why some schools continuously improve student learning outcomes while others do not. The question is especially timely since the COVID-19 pandemic has further impacted and complicated the process of school improvement (e.g. disruptions due to prolonged school closures). Sustaining school improvement has become a more critical goal of school reform around the world. To recover from the ramifications of the pandemic, school leaders and teachers in different parts of the world have been under significant pressure to maintain the daily operations of teaching and learning while simultaneously being tasked with sustaining school improvement ([Brown et al., 2023](#)). In this process, individual schools have had to rely on staff collaboration practices. However, while collaborations within a school are important, on their own, they cannot sufficiently deliver sustainable school improvement, given the limited organizational capacity, expertise and resources within each school. Rather, relying heavily on within-school collaborations can paradoxically become a barrier to sustainable school improvement ([Stoll and Louis, 2007](#)). That is, without access to a range of other external collaborative supports and resources, sustaining school improvement becomes an overwhelming task. Within this context, the role of school-university partnerships has been emphasized internationally as a policy solution across many jurisdictions in recent years. It is within this international context that the current special issue pays attention to the role of a school-university partnership in sustaining school improvement during the post-pandemic era. That is, the special issue aims to advance research knowledge of the role of a school-university partnership in sustainable school improvement. Specifically, nine research studies conducted in Chile, China, Hong Kong and the United States of America in the special issue are expected to empower schools by providing research findings that illuminate how and why certain characteristics and practices of school-university partnerships contribute to the sustainability of school improvement during the post-pandemic era.

Moosung Lee

Department of Education, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea

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