
Editorial

Lynda Hyland* and Anita Shrivastava Kashi

School of Science and Technology,
Middlesex University Dubai,
Knowledge Park, Dubai,
P.O. Box 500697, United Arab Emirates
Email: l.hyland@mdx.ac.ae
Email: a.kashi@mdx.ac.ae
*Corresponding author

Biographical notes: Lynda Hyland is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology and is the Research Committee Chair at Middlesex University Dubai. She teaches undergraduate and postgraduate students across a range of courses, including research methods, data analysis, and health psychology. Her research interests span a range of diverse areas including intervention evaluations, educational sustainability, and social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties in children. She has over ten years of research and teaching experience in the UK, Ireland, and the UAE.

Anita Shrivastava Kashi is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology and is a Campus Programme Coordinator for Psychology undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at Middlesex University Dubai. A clinical psychologist with more than 25 years of international teaching experience in India, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the UAE, her research interests focus on personality and individual differences, sustainability in education and employment, and positive psychology.

We are delighted to present this special issue of the *International Journal of Sustainable Society*. All papers in this special issue were presented at the Third Emerging Research Paradigms in Business and Social Science (ERPBS) international conference in Dubai, UAE, in November 2015. This conference, hosted by Middlesex University Dubai, built upon the success of the previous ERPBS Conferences in 2011 and 2013. It focused on the theme ‘What’s next?’ a question of considerable importance in relation to issues of sustainability. Two excellent keynote presentations were given by Dr. Ayoub Kazim, Managing Director of Dubai International Academic City (DIAC), and Professor Dimitrios Buhalis (Director of the eTourism lab at Bournemouth University, UK). Professor Buhalis noted that “Smartness is fostered by open innovation, supported by investments in human and social capital, and sustained by participatory governance...All suppliers and intermediaries, the public sector, as well as consumers and various interested parties are networked, dynamically co-producing value for everybody interconnected in the ecosystem”.

This conference provided a platform for the sharing of research findings and knowledge that transcended traditional disciplinary and geographic boundaries. This is evident from the papers published in this special issue. Sustainability is neither a static nor a discrete construct; our views of it can, and should, change. Its applications are wider than ever, and are all the more relevant in a world increasingly characterised by

instability. This issue highlights a number of interconnected topics, and provides an opportunity to view sustainability under a holistic lens. From training and education, to employment, entrepreneurship, and innovation, this issue addresses key questions in the sustainability aspects of career development. The six papers focus on a range of industries including tourism, marketing, and education.

Nzozzo, in her paper on vocational education training and graduate employability, discusses how a paradigm shift in labour market structures in South Africa has necessitated a changed focus on further education. She discusses vocational education training (VET) in the context of a market-based approach to further education, and notes that both VET and resultant graduate employability have been shaped by educational, financial, material, and geographical inequities. Nzozzo goes on to identify strategies put in place by the South African Government to enhance and support both students and graduates of VET courses. Additionally, she expands upon the link between VET and subsequent employability of graduates, and identifies the need to develop not only technical skills, but also generic ones. She presents a compelling argument, suggesting recommendations to enhance the long-term sustainability of VET. These include the need for continued monitoring of student performance/employment outcomes, and tailored interventions by individual institutions in order to increase VET graduate employability.

In a similar vein, Miller, Kyriazi, and Morris Paris examine the employment-related issues reported by a sample of Arab women in the UAE. Within the Middle East, the UAE boasts one of the highest rates of female workforce participation. The UAE Government, committed to promoting female leadership, has made substantial progress in terms of policies and strategies to enhance labour participation and career advancement of women. Miller et al. present findings from a qualitative study involving women in senior decision-making positions in the UAE, in particular the opportunities perceived, and the motivations and challenges in seeking and sustaining employment. Barriers in the form of family-work conflict, societal expectations, and policies (notably maternity leave) were identified. However, these can be juxtaposed against a clear drive towards active participation, in the form of entrepreneurial desire. This paper provides clear recommendations for enhancing female workforce participation, at legislative, institutional, and societal levels.

The issue of entrepreneurship is further expanded upon in a paper by Abdo and Morris Paris, who specifically focus upon the growing field of social entrepreneurship in the UAE. In this paper, they report findings from their qualitative study in which aspiring and established social entrepreneurs were interviewed about the perceived challenges they face, and the wider societal and cultural awareness of this career path. Based upon the findings of their study and the literature on international best practice, the authors make several recommendations regarding how those interested in pursuing this as a career can be supported.

Tukamushaba, Xiao, and Ladkin take a psychological approach to the often-contentious concept of voluntourism. They suggest an alternative motivation for those who engage in voluntourism in 'risky' destinations – that of self-transcendence. In particular, Tukamushaba et al. proposed that it is the intrinsic psychological 'push' factors that encourage voluntourists, rather than the 'pull' factors of the destination itself. They argue that engagement in volunteering activities can benefit developing economies and that the provision of affordable travel options for younger adults would further enhance this aspect of tourism.

Sustainable tourism is an issue also addressed by Slak Valek. She highlights the case of Abu Dhabi, an emirate in one of few countries where expatriates represent the largest percentage of the population. In this paper, sustainable brand development of the destination is studied from the perspectives of Emirati and expat residents, and international tourists visiting Abu Dhabi. Slak Valek found brand awareness to be higher among residents than tourists, suggesting a potential growth area in attracting international visitors to the emirate. Moreover, she reports that the three populations sampled in this research differ in their views of Abu Dhabi as a destination, and proposes how this opportunity can be seized by those involved in marketing this emirate.

In their paper on Indian expatriate perspectives of celebrity endorsement in social marketing, Mashood, Framroze, Verhoeven, and Hopkinson argue that celebrities are key figures in bringing about socially-responsible societal developments. Such endorsers of social messages can simultaneously be instrumental in effecting real behaviour change, whilst improving their own public image. However, the authors caution that congruence between the celebrity and the message is vital. They discuss several implications of their findings, for managers and celebrities alike.

All of the published papers have been blind peer-reviewed. The guest editors wish to acknowledge the work of the reviewers which have made this special issue possible.