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An Imperative for Effective School Leadership

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3 **Guest Editorial: The Nicest Work**
By James C. Davis, Jr.

4 **Building a Culture of Trust: An Imperative for Effective School Leadership**
By Rodney A. Palmer

9 **Data Matters: Health Statistics Can Empower Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice**
By Daniel Ganu, Susan M. Baker, and Josephine Ganu

16 **The Alf Model: A Case Study of the Role of Librarians as Mentors in Digital Literacy**
By Yvette Sparrow

22 **Perspectives: Secularization and the Disappearance of the Holy**
By Ginger-Ketting Weller

26 **Best Practices at Work: Authoritative Education: The Recommended Practice for Educators**
By Manuel Moral, Octavio Ramirez, Malcolm Cort, and George Ashley

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James C. Davis, Jr.

The Nicest Work

"Parents and teachers lie down in their last sleep, their lifework seeming to have been wrought in vain; they know not that their faithfulness has unsealed springs of blessing that can never cease to flow; only by faith they see the children they have trained become a benediction and an inspiration to their fellow men, and the influence repeat itself a thousandfold"

(*Education*, 305).

As an Adventist educator, I find myself frequently referring to the book *Education*. Written in 1903, by Ellen G. White, the book presents a model for Adventist education that is as revolutionary and relevant today as it was well more than 100 years ago.

Reading *Education* can elicit a lot of responses. At times, it is exciting, making us think of what can be and who we are partnering with. At other times, the seriousness of the educator's responsibility can elicit feelings of inadequacy. Sometimes it can be challenging, causing readers to reflect on their professional practices and how they might be adjusted to better serve students and families.

Some passages can lead to confusion. One such passage can be found on page 292. Describing teaching, we read that "this work is the nicest, the most difficult, ever committed to human beings."[1] I have spent quite a bit of time pondering this statement. It can seem contradictory and confusing.

It was less than nice, the time that I sat in an office for 20 minutes while a disgruntled parent yelled at me and accused me of not liking her son because she disagreed with some discipline that had been administered. It was certainly not nice the times that I have met with families to let them know that their child would not be able to return to school due to choices he or she had made. The hours spent in board meetings, staff meetings, and professional-development seminars were not always nice. It was far from nice, working with law enforcement and social workers when it was necessary to report abuse and neglect. Long weekends full of activities with little time to recuperate before returning to school on Monday morning did not seem nice, either.

Being insulted and harassed by parents because their child did not receive the grade they would have liked was not high on my list of pleasantness. Days of sickness from interacting with young people with poor hygiene habits, with coughs and runny noses were unpleasant. The list could go on and on.

In my 24 years serving in the roles of classroom teacher, vice-principal, principal, superintendent, in boarding school and day school, there have been many experiences that I would not classify as nice. This could be the reason that the previously quoted sentence includes the caveat, "the most difficult." We work with people, and people have issues. We bring our own issues with us.

This Is Challenging Work

If we focused solely on these negative, less-than-nice things, it might be hard to find a reason to continue. As easy as it is to be consumed by the negatives, the slights, and the insults, it is essential that we acknowledge the positives. Indeed, we *must* dwell on the positives so that we are enabled to endure the difficult. When you watch a student struggling with behavioral issues start to mature and gain control after hours of discipline, guidance, redirection, and love—that is nice. Steering a class through a difficult subject, watching the understanding dawn on their faces is nice. Teaching alongside a former student who has chosen teaching as a career is rewarding. Building genuine connections and relationships so that students feel safe coming to you with challenges and seeking advice is positive. Watching your students rise from the water in the baptismal tank, publicly giving their hearts to Christ is exhilarating. Being invited to graduations, weddings, and baby dedications of the students you have worked with is very exciting. Watching an entire family join the Adventist Church after enrolling their children in your school is nice. Seeing your students move through school to become successful in their ca-

Continued on page 33

Building a Culture of Trust

An Imperative for Effective School Leadership

Leading an academic institution through a crisis is stressful. In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed extraordinary demands on leaders of educational institutions. However, research has shown that education leaders who consistently place emphasis on a culture of trust find it much easier to garner the trust of their teams during crises.[1] Institutions with high levels of trust have more productive workforces, better employee morale, and lower employee turnover.[2] However, when trust is broken, there is toxicity in the workplace, stressed workers who operate in silos, low collaboration, and a steady decline in morale and productivity.[3]

Simply put, if faculty and staff don't trust the leaders of their institutions, neither group will achieve their full potential.[4] Trust is therefore "the glue which binds the leader to her/his followers and provides the capacity for organizational and leadership success."[5] Cognizant of the critical role that trust plays in school leadership, I will discuss the steps that educational leaders can employ in building a culture of trust, which will assist them in successfully leading their institutions, even during times of crisis.

Best Practices for Building a Culture of Trust

To build a culture of trust, leaders of academic institutions at all levels need to include some key principles in their leadership toolkit. The following best practices will help to foster a culture of trust between academic in-

BY RODNEY A. PALMER

stitutional leaders and their faculty and staff members.

Lead With Integrity

To build a culture of trust, school leaders must lead with integrity. Noting the intricate link that exists between integrity and trust, leadership expert John C. Maxwell explains that "You don't build trust by talking about it. You build it by achieving results, always with integrity and in a manner that shows real personal regard for the people with whom you work. When a leader's character is strong, people trust him [or her], and they trust in his [or her] ability to release their potential. That not only gives followers hope for the future, but it also promotes a strong belief in themselves and their organization."[6] Educational leaders who personify integrity are intentional in ensuring consistent congruence between their words and actions. They model sound moral and ethical principles regardless of the situation and do not have divided loyalties. For school leaders to have the authority to lead, they need more than a title on their office door. Only when they habitually demonstrate integrity—honesty, trustworthiness, and reliability—are school leaders perceived by those they lead as authentic, credible, and trustworthy.

Ongoing leadership research has produced two important assessment tools that school administrators can use to measure their integrity as leaders. One such tool is the Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS) developed by Craig and Gustafson, which measures the extent to which a leader behaves ethically.[7] Another is the Behavioral Integrity Scale (BIS) created by Simons, Friedman, Liu, and McLean-Parks, which measures the perceived consistency of leaders' actions and words and how well they keep their promises.[8] These tools will aid academic leaders in improving their levels of personal and professional integrity, which will in turn foster a spirit of trust throughout their institutions.

Create the Atmosphere for Effectively Engaging in Difficult Conversations

Engaging in difficult conversations in the workplace is inevitable. Because these conversations often emerge from tension or unhappiness and have the potential to create more of the same, they can easily destroy relationships if not handled effectively.[9] School leaders must be equipped to transform these potentially stressful interactions with teachers and staff into opportunities that build deeper levels of trust.[10] Developing the ability to handle these challenges will pay off in terms of reduced stress, increased confidence, improved relationships, increased trust, fewer problems, better teamwork, higher productivity, and better career opportunities.[11] A popular saying in leadership studies is that leaders should be *hard on the problems and soft on the people*[12] when approaching difficult topics. The individuals involved should be prepared beforehand to have these discussions, and a culture of openness and sensitivity needs to be cultivated.[13]

Through professional coaching, mentoring, and professional learning sessions that model how to speak and listen while having difficult conversations, educators learn how to build and cultivate environments of trust.

Academic leaders should encourage an atmosphere wherein faculty and staff can discuss with honesty, clarity, and directness "inflammatory issues such as equity of workload, teacher evaluation, the underperforming educator, racism, and compensation"[14] without fear of retaliation from their administrators.

Through professional coaching, mentoring, and professional learning sessions that model how to speak and listen while having difficult conversations, educators learn how to build and cultivate environments of trust. There are four types of planned conversations that professionals should learn how to engage in consistently, and these should be implemented into training sessions and modeled effectively and often:

1. *Reflective conversations* that are non-judgmental and simply provide an opportunity for a faculty or staff member to provide input on the various issues.
2. *Facilitative conversations* that are data-centered; guided by what conclusions could be made based on the data available on any given issue.
3. *Coaching conversations* where administrators work closely with an individual faculty or staff member to help him or her come to conclusions and discover personal answers to issues.
4. *Directive conversations* where the educational leader sets very clear and firm expectations and/or consequences.[15]

The successful handling of difficult conversations will result in mutual respect and trust among institutional leaders and teaching faculty and support staff.

Empower Your Team Through Shared Governance

An engaged educational team is essential to building trust. In building a foundation of trust, academic leaders should empower their faculty and staff and provide them with opportunities that will develop their leadership competencies. As Huntoon suggests, "empowerment creates a healthy, positive and ultimately suc-

cessful organization—one in which there is ownership of the vision and trust in the leadership."[16]

Larger schools might consider implementing leadership teams or teacher teams. Leadership teams typically consist of lead teachers from all levels and subject areas and may include administrators and staff such as special educators and counselors. Participants may volunteer to serve but are sometimes assigned. Also, goals are established based on the school's mission, vision, and needs. Part of being on these teams includes receiving professional-development training in how to offer support to peers within the school. Based on this training, these teams lead out in coaching, professional-development seminars, or community initiatives.[17]

Teacher teams are more focused on instructional approaches, either by grade level or subject area. In larger schools, these are typically assigned by the educational leader.[18] Whether a leadership team or a teacher team, these groups function based on shared goals and experiences, and with the intent of moving the school or institutions forward.[19]

A practical example of how trust was built through the process of shared governance occurred at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC).[20] Through an interactive, collaborative process that included university leadership, the faculty senate, staff senates, and student-government associations, the institution was able to transform its culture. UMBC's experience proves that empowerment builds trust, and that the best way for educational leaders to receive trust is for them to trust others, delegate, and to make room for their teams to develop their talents. As Freeman Hrabowski III, UMBC's president, highlights, "shared governance embodies a spirit of empowerment that develops allies, change agents, champions and innovators."[21]

While this example is of a large, public university, and Adventist schools and higher education institutions may not have all of the groups listed above, the essential point is that shared governance built through establishing interactive and collaborative processes is foundational to building trust. Small Adventist schools or institutions will need to adapt based on the number of administrators, teachers, or support staff available to serve on teams, but the outcome can still be beneficial to the process of collaboration and building trust.

Celebrate Your Team

In addition to empowering faculty and staff, academic leaders should also celebrate their successes and accomplishments through both tangible approaches (verbal affirmations; thank-you messages) and intangible gifts (bonuses; special awards) in real time. As Wong rightly points out, "Everyday appreciation builds a sense of community and helps employees feel emotionally secure, so when you recognize your team often, they'll be more likely to trust you. Approximately 90 percent of employees who receive thanks or recognition from their boss reported feeling high levels of trust in that individual. This figure went down to 48 percent for workers who did not receive recognition. So if

you want to foster trust in your workplace, lean into the direct relationship between trust and recognition."[22] Building relationships and a shared sense of community requires academic leaders, then, to intentionally lean in, to press forward deliberately and purposefully in creating environments that nurture trust and create an atmosphere of security.

Practice Consistent and Transparent Communication

Effective communication is fundamental to cultivating a culture of trust in any organization. Building trust involves effectively managing the different channels of communication, being truthful with faculty and staff members at all times, providing opportunities for feedback, and striving to communicate face to face as opposed to being over-reliant on e-mails.[23] When face-to-face communication takes place on a regular basis, leaders (1) ensure that proper communication occurs; (2) see firsthand what is happening in the institution; (3) learn new things; (4) seem more approachable and trustworthy; and (5) are perceived as part of the team.[24]

Integral to any communication process is effective listening, and school administrators should make this a priority. Admitting with humility that they do not have all the answers, leaders of academic institutions must convey that they value the input of those they serve. This can be done by intentionally taking time to seek out feedback, spend quality time listening to the ideas and thoughts of their faculty, staff, students, parents, and constituents, and then incorporating that information into the decisions and plans they make. Since trust is built when an individual feels listened to, leaders should seek to build trust by the way they listen during conversations.[25] School leaders improve their listening skills when they: (1) refrain from interrupting the person with whom they're conversing; (2) ask clarifying questions and paraphrase to ensure that they understand what the person is trying to communicate; (3) take time to understand the individual's story; and (4) stay engaged and resist distractions during the conversation.[26]

Other effective listening techniques include: (1) listening carefully in order to hear the intended message; (2) allowing the speaker to finish before formulating a response; (3) using paraphrase, restatements, and clarification questions to acknowledging that the speaker has been heard; (4) dealing with emotions—theirs and yours; and (5) building listening skills by participating in workshops or professional development sessions that model and teach how to listen well.[27] Dorn is correct in stating that "open, constructive communication is the basis of trusting relationships, and effective listening is at the heart of constructive communication."[28]

Lead With Compassion

Another powerful tool for building trust in an academic institution is compassion. Compassion is the ability to respond to others with genuine empathy and relate to others in a way that focuses on their potential. Three components of compassion that school leaders should model include: (1) understanding or empathizing with others and their problems; (2) loving and caring for others, and (3) selflessly helping others in need.[29] Leaders should express care and concern for each individual member of the educational team, for the interdependent work group or department at all levels, and for the organization. Employees must have faith that the people they trust are taking their best interests to heart.[30] Focusing on compassion at work promotes healthy interpersonal relationships. It acknowledges and appreciates others wholeheartedly, and builds trust, mutual connections, and reciprocation.[31]

Conclusion

Finally, trust is an essential factor in the success or failure of all schools. Leaders of Christian institutions of learning have the unique opportunity to influence the trust level in their institutions. As they place their trust in God, those they lead will also pattern their example. Leaders of Christian schools can improve their institutions through implementing daily opportunities to increase trust based on benevolence, openness, honesty, reliability, and competence. Each of these components are foundational to building trust, the key factor upon which the success of a Christian education institution can be built.[32]

Building a culture of trust must constantly be regarded as an imperative for school leaders. Trust has to be earned. Institutional cultures of trust are established when educational leaders intentionally lead with integrity, create atmospheres for difficult conversations, celebrate and empower their teams through shared governance, practice consistent and transparent communication, and lead with compassion.

This article has been peer reviewed.

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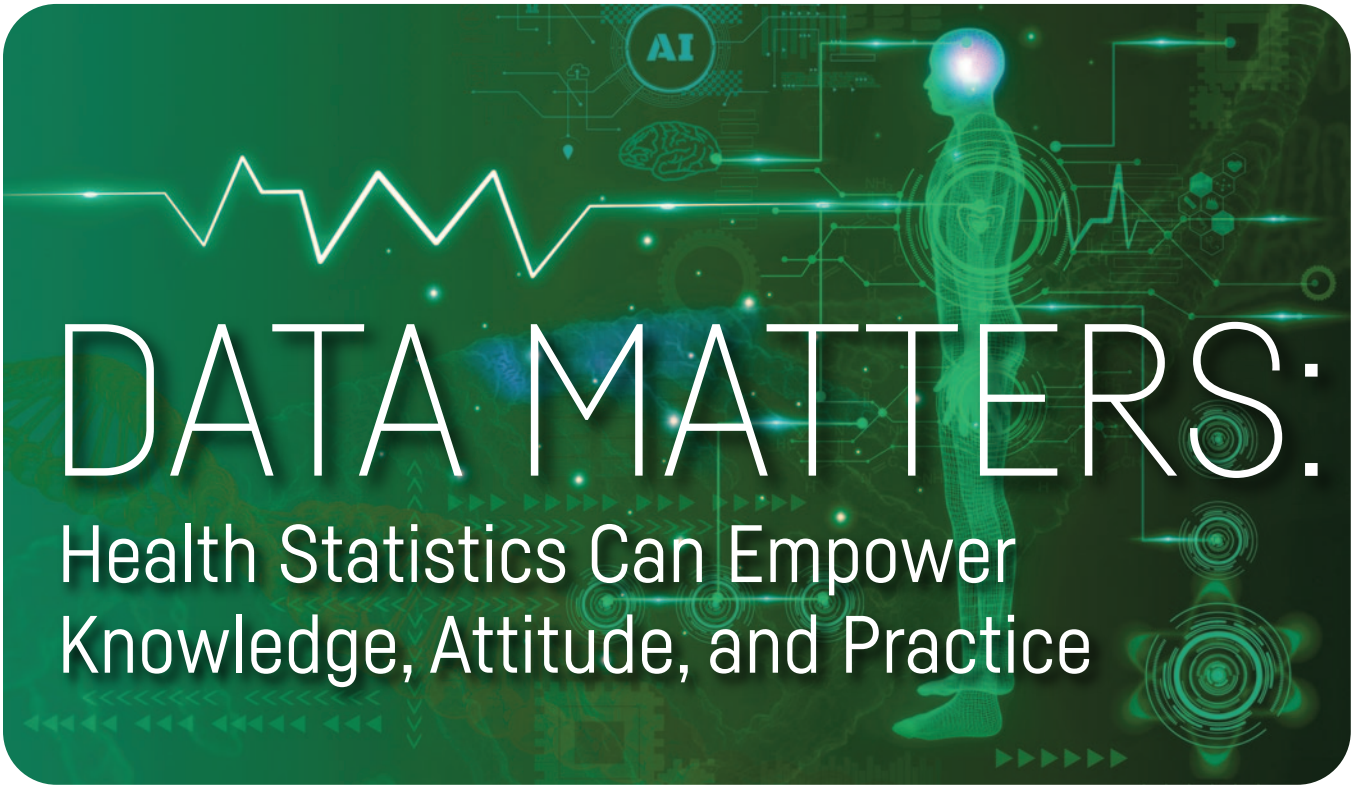


DATA MATTERS:

Health Statistics Can Empower Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice

Seventh-day Adventist educators worldwide get excited about pedagogies that increase students' knowledge skills and influence their attitudes and beliefs. Taylor asserts that one of the defining characteristics of Seventh-day Adventist education is commitment to excellence, which promotes whole-person development. This wholistic development is constructed when strong linkages are forged between knowledge and practice,[1] supported by positive attitudes and beliefs.

To make learning transformational, the developmental process connecting *knowledge, attitude,* and *practice* (KAP) must be intentional. We know that knowledge acquisition alone may not be powerful enough to change practice in a positive direction.[2] For example, the development of spirituality demands synchrony between these factors to be mature and authentic. Another critical area for the melding of KAP skills is in health education.

The objective of Adventist health education is to deliver knowledge in a manner that also shapes the student's attitudes regarding adopting good health habits and practicing a healthy lifestyle. This objective builds on the words of Ellen White: "In teaching health principles, keep before the mind the great object of reform—that its purpose is to secure the highest development of body and mind and soul."[3] The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a rich history of creating and promoting health and science education initiatives, textbooks, and curriculum resources that are used by educators at all levels to activate and accelerate learning. Examples of Adventist health education approaches are CELEBRATIONS®,[4] NEWSTART,[5] and CREATION.[6] (See Figure 1 on page 10.)

Research substantiates the benefits of Adventist health teachings but only when knowledge is translated into positive attitudes and practices by individuals. Findings from health research conducted among Seventh-day Adventists have indicated that Adventists who embrace healthy practices, as taught by the church, have increased life expectancy[7] and decreased risk for some types of cancer,[8] cardiovascular diseases,[9] and metabolic syndrome.[10]

In a 2016 study, Galvez et al. measured KAP variables among 1,442 Seventh-day Adventists in seven Adventist churches in metro Manila, Philippines. Of these respondents, more than half (55 percent) were between the ages of 18 and 35, with 70 percent having completed a college degree. The researchers found that knowledge of Adventist teachings about physical activity, as one example, was poor to average. Again, re-

BY DANIEL GANU, SUSAN M. BAKER, and JOSEPHINE GANU

lated to physical activity, attitudes were found to range between neutral and positive. Practice, in the area of physical activity, was poor to average.[11] This study is just one example that highlights the need for knowledge to be transformed into attitude and practice to gain benefits.

In 2019, researchers at the Adventist University of Africa, a General Conference postgraduate institution in Kenya, conducted a study within the geographical territories of the three Seventh-day Adventist divisions in Sub-Saharan Africa: East-Central Africa Division (ECD), Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID), and West-Central Africa Division (WAD). (See Figure 2.) The purpose of the study was to collect and analyze primary data from African Adventists related to their general health status and KAPs based on the CELEBRATIONS® health-education acronym. CELEBRATIONS® is a program created by the General Conference Health Ministries Department for health education in churches and schools (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Seventh-day Adventist Health Education Acronyms

CELEBRATIONS	CREATION	NEWSTART
• Choices	• Choice	• Nutrition
• Exercise	• Rest	• Exercise
• Liquids	• Environment	• Water
• Environment	• Activity	• Sunlight
• Belief	• Trust in Divine Power	• Temperance
• Rest	• Interpersonal Relationships	• Air
• Air	• Outlook	• Rest
• Temperance	• Nutrition	• Trust in Divine Power
• Integrity		
• Optimism		
• Nutrition		
• Social Support		

Note: CELEBRATIONS® was utilized in this study.

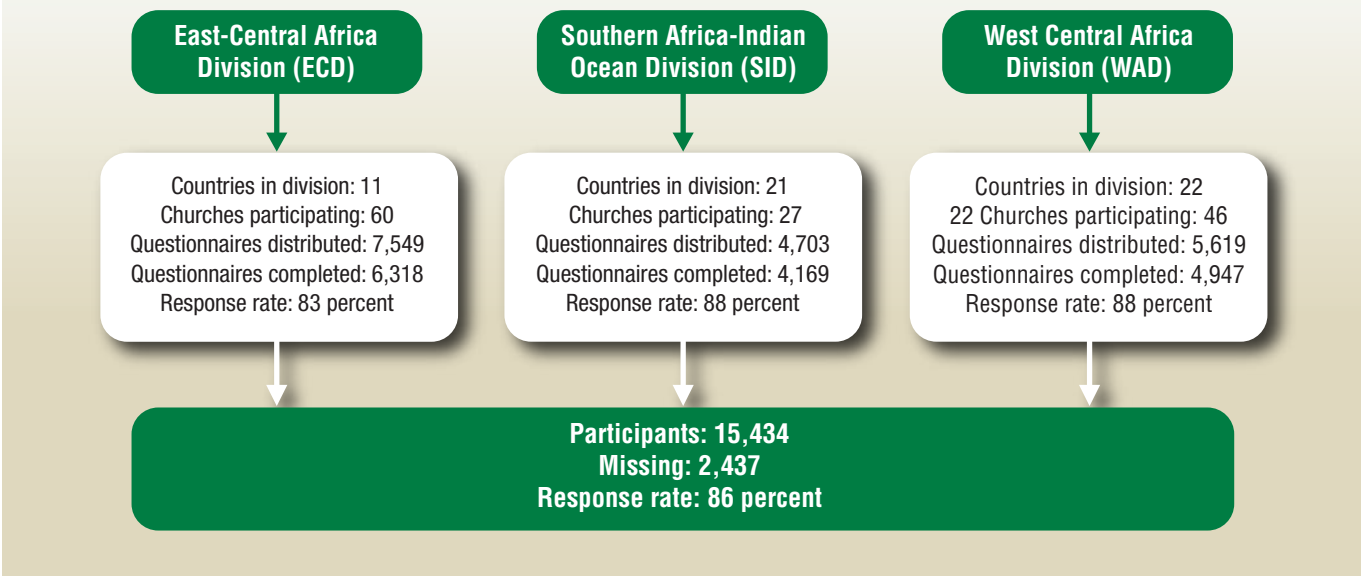
Methods

This descriptive study utilized a cross-sectional analytical design with data collected using a questionnaire and, thus, relied on self-reported data. The 213-item questionnaire contained closed- and open-ended items and was administered by trained research assistants.

Participants were randomly recruited from persons who met inclusion criteria at the various locations. Inclusion criteria were: (1) African ethnicity; (2) baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; (3) residence in one of the Seventh-day Adventist divisions in Africa; (4) 18 years of age or older; and (5) ability to commit approximately one hour to complete the questionnaire.

Recruitment of participants was based on grouping clusters of Adventist populations from the 34 African unions and church populations from rural and urban settings with small, medium, and large membership sizes. Proportional random sampling was used to recruit participants from each conference and resulted in collecting completed questionnaires from 15,434 participants (Figure 2). Incomplete or

Figure 2. Data Collection Distribution



damaged questionnaires (2,437) were not included in data analysis.

Permission for research with human participants was approved by the ethics committee of the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation in Nairobi, Kenya. Each participant signed an informed-consent form before being allowed to take part in the study, after which he or she completed the questionnaire, which was available in English, Portuguese, French, and Swahili to accommodate the diverse language groups. Statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS version 23.

Results

The African Seventh-day Adventist Health Study used the acronym CELEBRATIONS® to assess the level of KAP of the health principles among Adventists in Africa. As shown in Table 1, 50.6 percent of participants were male, and 41.4 percent were female (8.0 percent did not answer the question regarding gender). The largest group of respondents was between 18 and 30 years of age (46.2 percent) and single in regard to marital status (46.0 percent single; 44.5 percent married or separated; and 9.5 percent other or missing). Slightly more than half of the participants had either no formal education (3.0 percent) or a primary or secondary education (50.6 percent). Participants with bachelor's and professional degrees made up 30.4 percent of those surveyed, while 7.2 percent had a postgraduate degree, and 8.8 percent did not respond to this question. In regard to employment status, 48.4 percent were employed; 26.5 percent were students.

Table 2 on page 12 shows the level of participants' knowledge about health principles taught by the church. Overall, the participants showed an good level of knowledge, with a mean score of 3.94 on a 5-point Likert Scale (SD = 0.58). This indicates that the respondents had above-average knowledge of the health principles, with knowledge about certain CELEBRATIONS® principles being slightly higher than about others.

As depicted in Table 3 on page 12, the participants showed an overall positive attitude toward the health principles taught by the church (mean score = 3.99 on a 5-point Likert scale; SD = 0.72). Having a positive attitude toward a health principle plays a critical role in whether the

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants

	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	7,817	50.6
	Female	6,383	41.4
	Total	14,200	92.0
	Missing	1,234	8.0
	TOTAL	15,434	100.0
Age	18-30 years	7,130	46.2
	31-50 years	5,220	33.9
	51 and older	2,064	13.4
	Total	14,414	93.5
	Missing	1,020	6.5
	TOTAL	15,434	100.0
Marital status	Single	7,105	46.0
	Married	6,626	42.9
	Separated	252	1.6
	Divorced	142	0.9
	Widow/Widower	469	3.0
	Total	14,594	94.4
	Missing	840	5.6
	TOTAL	15,434	100.0
Educational attainment	No formal education	456	3.0
	Primary/Secondary	7,803	50.6
	Bachelor/Professional degree	4,679	30.4
	Postgraduate degree	1,112	7.2
	Total	14,161	91.2
System	Missing	1,384	8.8
	TOTAL	15,434	100.0
Employment status	Employed	7,460	48.4
	Unemployed	2,399	15.6
	Student	4,087	26.5
	Total	14,042	90.5
	Missing	1,488	9.5
	TOTAL	15,434	100.0

Table 2: Knowledge of the Health Principles of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Item	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Knowledge about Choices	15,304	4.1018	.63166	Good
Knowledge about Exercise	15,301	4.0143	.61482	Good
Knowledge about Liquids	15,372	4.3774	.61080	Excellent
Knowledge about Environment	15,299	3.9841	.59684	Good
Knowledge about Belief	15,335	4.0159	.54348	Good
Knowledge about Rest	15,237	3.8388	.58945	Good
Knowledge about Air	15,375	4.1910	.59459	Good
Knowledge about Temperance	15,258	3.4253	.40707	Good
Knowledge about Integrity	15,279	3,9426	.58741	Good
Knowledge about Optimism	15,138	3.6944	.63509	Good
Knowledge about Nutrition	15,335	3.9052	.58565	Good
Knowledge about Social Support	15,225	3.7956	.54589	Good
Average Mean		**3.9405**	**0.57856**	**Good**

Scale of Interpretation for the Mean of Knowledge
1.00-1.79 = Poor; 1.80-2.59 = Fair; 2.60-3.39 = Average; 3.40-4.19 = Good; 4.20-5.00 = Excellent

Table 3: Attitude Toward the Health Principles of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Item	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Attitude toward Choices	15,029	4.2710	.72273	Extremely Positive
Attitude toward Exercise	15,018	4.0472	.75942	Positive
Attitude toward Liquids	14,999	4.2235	.70863	Extremely Positive
Attitude toward Environment	14,982	4.1503	.70382	Positive
Attitude toward Belief	14,967	4.2862	.67912	Extremely Positive
Attitude toward Rest	14,968	4.2004	.70439	Extremely Positive
Attitude toward Air	14,936	4.1891	.69856	Positive
Attitude toward Temperance	14,903	4.1348	.72086	Positive
Attitude toward Integrity	14,878	3,0971	.73544	Neutral
Attitude toward Optimism	14,857	4.0573	.72038	Positive
Attitude toward Nutrition	14,856	3.0905	.74584	Neutral
Attitude toward Social Support	14,962	4.1640	.69841	Positive
Average Mean		**3.9926**	**0.7165**	**Positive**

Scale of Interpretation for the Mean of Attitude
1.00-1.79 = Extremely negative; 1.80-2.59 = Negative; 2.60-3.39 = Neutral; 3.40-4.19 = Positive; 4.20-5.00 = Extremely positive

health principle is practiced. From these results, it is reasonable to expect good translation of knowledge and attitudes into practice behavior, which is examined in the next section. Similar to results in the area of knowledge, variation existed among CELEBRATIONS® principles, with slightly larger differences in several areas. It is interesting to note that there were four extremely positive findings for attitude regarding choices, liquids, belief, and rest. Comparing this to the level of knowledge, attitudes toward liquids is the only finding on which the majority of respondents achieved a score of excellent. Also, temperance was rated lowest in the level of knowledge, although it was rated highest in practice. The attitude of the participants toward integrity and nutrition was neutral.

Table 4 on page 13 reveals that the practice of health principles received a lower rating (mean score of 3.61 on a 5-point Likert Scale, SD = 0.73) than knowledge and attitude. The score for practice of exercise, environment, and nutrition was average, although exercise and environment scored positive attitude.

The Knowledge, Attitude, Practice model is a common method for understanding and analyzing human responses to particular phenomena, especially in the field of health studies. The connection between people's attitudes and practices is well established in psychology and health-behavior theory.[12] The implication of the positive relationship between KAPs is that it will equip the individual to accept the challenge of educating, motivating, and adopting Adventist health principles in order to modify his or her lifestyle.

Discussion

This study revealed information regarding knowledge about, attitudes toward, and practice of Adventist health principles among Seventh-day Adventists in Africa. Although participants reported a good level of knowledge of general health principles and positive attitudes toward them, this

Table 4: Practice of the Health Principles of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Item	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Practice of Choices	15,087	3.4312	.61977	Good
Practice of Exercise	14,959	2.8852	1.00469	Average
Practice of Liquids	15,095	3.9046	.71323	Good
Practice of Environment	15,273	3.3998	.84903	Average
Practice of Belief	15,168	3.9073	.74820	Good
Practice of Rest	14,861	3.4499	.65141	Good
Practice of Air	14,602	3.7586	.99626	Good
Practice of Temperance	15,146	4,6846	.57444	Excellent
Practice of Integrity	15,236	3,7081	.65369	Good
Practice of Optimism	15,094	3.6056	.63820	Good
Practice of Nutrition	15,147	3.0207	.55238	Average
Practice of Social Support	15,056	3.5100	.76396	Good
Average Mean		**3.6055**	**0.73044**	**Good**

Scale of Interpretation for the Mean of Practice
1.00-1.79 = Poor; 1.80-2.59 = Fair; 2.60-3.39 = Average; 3.40-4.19 = Good; 4.20-5.00 = Excellent

was not fully reflected in their practice. Other studies have corroborated that differences exist between the levels of knowledge, attitude, and practice.[13]

Our findings demonstrated that respondents' overall attitudes toward CELEBRATIONS® were slightly higher than their overall knowledge. This shows an overlap between knowledge and attitudes. It is likely that even if respondents lacked complete or accurate knowledge about CELEBRATIONS®, they could still develop a positive attitude toward health principles because they believe in the health teachings of the church. In fact, our results showed that "liquids" was the only health principle about which the respondents had excellent knowledge. This clearly indicates a need to deliberately place greater emphasis on health education to improve the health literacy of church members in Africa. Lack of accurate or complete information can lead to misguided information, particularly in an infodemic[14] era.

A review of the age of participants shows that many were relatively young, which is reflective of the population throughout the continent of Africa. It is imperative, therefore, that educators use their opportunities with students to forge connections between health education and KAPs as part of formative wholistic education.

Furthermore, the success of health education depends on the extent to which educators use a variety of pedagogies to integrate health principles with academic learning at all levels. An example of this type of interdisciplinary instruction is found in the Ariel Trust, located in Liverpool, United Kingdom. The Trust is an educational charity that uses mathematics lessons to teach students about the misuse of alcohol.[15] Students learn about the dangers of alcohol (a health principle) by exploring alcohol consumption statistics (an evidence-based approach) and associated risks (a health practice) within math lessons (an interdisciplinary approach to a non-health subject). Similarly, Youth Alive, a Seventh-day Adventist program, is designed to build resilience among adolescents and young adults by inspiring and equipping them to make healthy choices.[16]

Targeting youth at all educational levels is practical, sustainable, and strategic. For educators in Africa, and elsewhere, this is relevant—Africa has the largest concentration of young people in the world, and the African Adventist membership is largely made up of youth.[17] However, Adventist educators in all parts of the world should commit to integrative health education as an intentional pedagogy. Historically, teachers have played a significant role in influencing students. They can generate enthusiasm, confidence, and joy in students in a way that will motivate them to adopt a consistently healthy lifestyle throughout their lifetime. Committed Adventist teachers who are passionate about God and health principles are a resource to Adventist education of inestimable worth.[18]

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the composite data generated in the study,[19] there is no doubt that education is a potential cornerstone for enhancing knowledge-attitude-practice regarding CELEBRATIONS®. We recommend that teachers at all levels use a variety of approaches to promote Adventist health teachings, including CELEBRATIONS®, in an attempt to build on positive attitudes, while reinforcing knowledge about the importance of various health principles and how they can be better translated into behavior. For example, educators need to explain to students that temperance is not only applicable to people who have a health crisis (whether obesity, addiction, or any other health challenge), but for everyone. Other specific areas that need to be underscored and clarified include proper knowledge regarding optimism, social support, rest, nutrition, integrity, and environment and how they influence health.

Following are three practical classroom recommendations designed to

be implemented relatively easily and not requiring additional courses or a new curriculum:

1. Use critical-thinking approaches to integrate health principles in your teaching. The classroom setting is a favorable ground to foster deep, substantive thinking about health. Critical thinking is a form of reflective thinking that can stimulate deep self-assessment about students' health choices and lifestyle. Asking questions that require synthetic, analytic thinking is a key characteristic of teaching critical thinking. Educators can facilitate strategic conversations in the classroom by asking questions and actively listening to students to understand their attitudes toward and understanding of Adventist health principles. Such approaches enable the instructor to connect with students and stimulate deep thinking and lasting learning. Best-practices use of critical-thinking methods demands that teachers cultivate sensitivity, alacrity, and emotional intelligence.[20]

2. Model healthy behavior. Role modeling is "teaching by example and learning by imitation."[21] Adopting a healthy lifestyle cannot be accomplished just by acquiring knowledge, although the value of factual and practical knowledge must not be ignored. Students also need to be inspired to do more than have a good attitude about health principles, although attitudes can pave the way for behavior change. Students are constantly evaluating their teachers to see if they are "walking the talk." As a teacher, practice the health principles that you teach. For instance, students should see educators drinking pure water habitually, regularly engaging in some form of exercise, demonstrating a positive outlook, having an abiding trust in God, etc. In this way, the teacher's behavioral commitment to health principles can show students how healthy living looks.

3. Integrate teaching of health principles into academic calendars/curricula. Educational institutions must endeavor to create opportunities for health promotion, health literacy, and awareness based on health-education acronyms such as CELEBRATIONS®. Thinking about effective pedagogy should include using multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches,[22] as well as collaboration with Health Ministries Departments, hospitals, clinics, and healthcare personnel.

Conclusion

The African Seventh-day Adventist Health Study identified the level of knowledge, attitude, and practice of health principles among Adventists in Africa, who reported a good knowledge of and a positive attitude toward health principles. It is easy to assume that all Adventists have the right knowledge about health teachings and practice accordingly. However, there is a need to deliberately place greater emphasis on health education to improve health literacy and further translate knowledge and attitudes into maximized practice. This need exists throughout Adventist education at all levels, where educators have an opportunity to introduce knowledge, cultivate its conversion to positive attitudes and encourage transformational practice that is vital for effective health education outcomes. Since educators play a critical role in moving change initiatives forward successfully, it is incumbent on Adventist educational institutions and educators to explore the recommendations suggested by this study and utilize evidence to integrate health principles and academic learning.

This article has been peer reviewed.

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The Alf Model

A Case Study of the Role of Librarians as Mentors in Digital Literacy

Alf,[1] a student from a disadvantaged background, began his tertiary education with very little knowledge of computers, so he did not have the technology skills required for his studies. He entered a one-year bridge program at Helderberg College of Higher Education in Cape Town, South Africa, which provided additional support to students who needed it. While a student in college, he was mentored by the librarians in the academic library of the institution. In this article, I share his story.

The Alf Case Study: Background

A case study is rarely significant without sketching the backdrop against which it unfolds to provide context. This allows the researcher to engage fully with a single participant to get a more intimate picture of his or her life and experiences and to focus on specific experiences and the phenomena surrounding them.

This account of Alf's experience is based on explanatory case-study methodology. According to De Vos, an explanatory study is also referred to as the *instrumental* study and "the purpose of this type of case study is both theory building and testing."[2] In Alf's case study, the library served as the bridge between the student and his access to education. Libraries can be a valuable resource for students and staff at all levels of education, but especially at higher education institutions, and can be an important link in the educational metamorphosis of students.

Default "Pipeline" Metaphor

Alf's case study, I believe, is an example of what Adelman referred to when he wrote, "The default 'pipeline' metaphor, used to describe presumably linear learning experiences and environmental sequences, is wholly inadequate to describe student behaviour. Pipelines are unidirectional closed spaces, and under the 'pipeline' metaphor students are passive creatures (as in 'retention') swept along or dropping out of the space completely through leaks at the joints. But student behaviour doesn't look like that at all: It moves in starts and stops, sideways, down one path to another and perhaps circling back. Liquids move in pipes; people don't."[3]

The Bantu Education Act

To understand Alf's case study, a brief history of education in South Africa is needed. In 1953, Hendrik Verwoerd, the prime minister of South Africa, introduced the Bantu Education Act in Parliament.[4] It was believed that black South

BY YVETTE SPARROW

Africans needed only enough education to perform menial tasks, and as a result, the black South African population received an inferior education compared with other groups. Segregation took place in universities in 1959. In 1963, a separate education department was created for people of mixed-race descent (referred to as "coloured" in South Africa). Further segregation took place in 1964 when people of Indian descent were also given a separate education department. During this period, there were four separate systems of education, with "glaring inequalities" among them.[5] In discussing these four systems, Thobejane in *New Learning* observed that these inequalities were found in "teacher qualifications, teacher-pupil ratios, per capita funding, buildings, equipment, facilities, books, stationery . . . and also to 'results' measured in terms of the proportions and levels of certificates awarded."[6]

After South Africa Became a Democratic Country

Twenty-seven years have passed since South Africa became a democratic country and since apartheid came to an end; however, even though large amounts of money have been directed towards education, unequal access to highly trained teachers and adequately funded schools still persists within the nation,[7] and the results can be seen in how students perform on national standardized tests.

For example, on December 5, 2017, results from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) Report, which is used internationally to test reading literacy, were released by South Africa's Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga. This report revealed that 78 percent of South African children in Grade 4 (which translates into 8 out of 10 children) were not able to read and comprehend what they were reading. Of the countries taking part in the PIRLS assessment, South Africa fared worst of all. The South African government divides schools into five Quintiles based on the affluence or poverty of the neighborhood in which the school exists. A school in a very poor, impoverished neighborhood is classified as a Quintile 1 school. These schools do not charge school fees and receive the most funding from the government. At the other end of the scale is the Quintile 5 school in the most affluent, wealthy neighborhoods; Quintile 5 schools receive minimal funding from the government and charge relatively high school fees. PIRLS 2016 mainly tested learners from Quintile 1 schools, with these being the schools attended by the majority of the country's learners.

South African educators were dissatisfied with the conclusions drawn about the nation's education system after the 2016 PIRLS assessments. Quintile 1 learners mainly speak African languages (e.g., isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, isiSwati, or Sesotho), yet the PIRLS assessment instrument was not adapted to provide accurate assessment of South Africa's unique learner population and its 11 official languages. It was felt that the statistical results were unreliable and not suitable for use in making informed decisions related to literacy policies. However, regardless of the PIRLS' shortcomings in the South African context, the reality is that most of South Africa's children are from poverty-stricken areas and primarily speak African languages. The PIRLS assessment results showed that children speaking English and Afrikaans from affluent areas had literacy results which were significantly higher than those from lower Quintile schools, where the assessments were not administered in languages spoken by the students.[8]

> I met Alf at registration when he enrolled as a student at Helderberg College of Higher Education. He informed me that he had never operated a computer before and thus did not know how to use one. He told me of his fear of entering a computer class and being scoffed at by those whom he thought would refer to him as being "stupid."

In February 2018, Cyril Ramaphosa became the president of the Republic of South Africa. In his first State of the Nation address, he addressed the country's long history of educational inequality and brought hope to many South Africans; he emphasized that much hard work would have to be done by all to bring about change.[9]

Educators and researchers have long looked for solutions, but McLoughlin and Dwolatzky[10] believe that not enough information is available to totally fill in the picture of what is happening in education in South Africa. The complete answer to "why" access continues to be unequal is not yet available. Insufficient data has been collected for enough analysts to produce helpful answers to the problems that are being faced. Kallaway says, "We did not take the trouble to understand with care what was wrong with apartheid education before we set about attempting to remedy the problems through grand plans which included the reform of governance and curriculum. We were in fact suffering from historical amnesia and we have had to pay a high price."[11] Education reform is a long-term process, and many countries must continue to seek solutions to how best to educate all citizens when social and economic disparities persist.

Seventh-day Adventist Schools in South Africa and Apartheid

Unfortunately, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa was very much affected by apartheid policies, with our schools being segregated along the same lines as state schools. The challenges faced by various categories of state schools in South Africa also impacted our schools, highlight-

ing the reality that apartheid policies were applied to church schools in South Africa.[12] Alf, the central subject of this study, attended one of these church schools. More study and attention need to be given to how best to address the disparities that persist despite apartheid having ended.

Mentoring Alf

I met Alf at registration when he enrolled as a student at Helderberg College of Higher Education. He informed me that he had never operated a computer before and thus did not know how to use one. He told me of his fear of entering a computer class and being scoffed at by those whom he thought would refer to him as being "stupid."

Librarians as Motivators and Facilitators

Alf sensed that I would be sympathetic to his plight and would help him to feel comfortable using a computer. In addition to computer skills, Alf also needed study skills. The education he had received up to that point had not prepared him for the demands of tertiary education. Yet because of his excitement at having an opportunity to study at a higher education institution and his determination to succeed, Alf spent many hours in the library. Arko-Cobbah noted that "Librarians become motivators and facilitators in the learning process."[13] While Alf received instruction in his computer classes, the librarians were able to help him apply those skills to conduct research and use the library databases—and they even offered help with study skills.

Classroom Situation at Alf's Learning Institution

Alf experienced additional challenges with the instructional methods used in his classes. In many of his classes, there were students, like Alf, who encountered the barrier of having the study material presented in a language that was not their first language. Many of those students also came from educational backgrounds where learners had not been taught study skills in secondary school or how to cope with the demands of college life; these students had mainly attended rural schools. And, in the same classroom were students from urban township schools, from schools previously known as "coloured" schools, from Indian schools, from Model C schools (now open to all races, but previously state-sponsored white schools), as well as those from less-privileged to very-privileged private schools—ranging from poor to modest church schools to very expensive elite institutions. The instructors found it challenging to present lectures that would satisfy the needs of students from such varied educational backgrounds, and many failed to adopt a variety of instructional approaches since the lecture format is a primary mode of instruction in higher education in South Africa.

Adapting Instructional Approaches to Meet Students' Needs

Teachers in today's classrooms not only need to present lessons that will appeal to the typical millennial who is "comfortable with technology . . . easily bored without it; enjoy(s) working as a team—product of their education; very self-aware,"[14] but also present the lessons in a way that empowers every student to engage in the learning process even if the coursework and teaching style are vastly different from what they have experienced in the past. Compared to the typical millennial, Alf came from a background of rote learning, where nothing is ever questioned or evaluated, where very little reading is assigned, and where the oral tradition dominates.[15] According to Arko-Cobbah, "A discriminatory education system that denied the majority of the country the right to proper education has been a major contributing factor to the problems faced by undergraduate students from disadvantaged communities when entering tertiary institutions."[16] Alf conceded that he had to start learning to think in a different way since he had previously never really interacted with learning materials with which he was presented. He had no self-esteem when it came to speaking up in the presence of the self-assured millennials who were enrolled in his courses, and thus resorted to not saying anything in a classroom situation.

Close Working Relationship Needed Between Lecturers and Librarians

The library plays an important role on the school campus, and lecturers and librarians must work as a team. Alf could have benefitted much more if there had already been a close working relationship between the school's lecturers and librarians. There are several theories as to what exact services the library should provide in conjunction with the classroom, yet I believe this is a matter that is unique to each institution and each subject taught. The crux is that librarian and lecturer need to consult and together design an extension of the classroom in the library.

Huwayah and Alazemi[17] speak of the lecturers promoting the library, of close partnership between lecturers and librarians to enrich the study experience of students, and of lecturers' need to introduce their students to the library. This enables the mentoring of students by librarians. Such collaboration "stimulates [students'] learning, accentuating the passion to garner knowledge. This strengthens their intellectual maturity to visit libraries and access online knowledge repositories; explore and interpret works of noted researchers; and define a problem and present a new solution."[18]

Connected Learning

Pinfield, Cox, and Rutter see connected learning as one of the pinnacles of the future of academic libraries.[19] And several others in the field of library studies observe that the library can be an essential link as pedagogies change, trends toward students as customers emerge, and as social media and virtual education continue to drive the need for learning analytics and assessment.[20] Learning is increasingly seen as social and more intensively technology-enabled; teaching has become more of a process of facilitation and involves blended delivery of content using traditional and digital tools. In this environment, developments in areas such as augmented and virtual reality (A/VR) and haptic interfaces (e.g., simple tools such as computer keyboards, mice, and trackballs; or more complex tools such as virtual gloves and

exoskeletons that track hand postures or joysticks) are likely to become more important in teaching and learning.[21] Pinfield, Cox, and Rutter note that "key parts of this nexus are students from a wide range of countries, as 'customers' of universities, having the expectation of gaining access to learning resources where and when they want, and pursuing the programmes of learning more flexibly."[22]

This calls for partnership between lecturers, librarians, and the Information Technology (IT) department. There is much debate as to how much information technology (IT) librarians should themselves be capable of performing. Raju[23] found in his research in South Africa that 75 percent of library jobs advertised require advanced IT skills. Institutions will need to make a point of training their librarians in these skills so that they can offer the services needed by lecturers and students in order to extend classroom learning into the library.

Friendly Librarians Needed

All librarians need to be open to mentoring students. Alf noted on various occasions that certain librarians were unapproachable and did not seem to want to help him. This, it seems, is the most common library-related problem worldwide, of librarians being seen by students as being unfriendly and unapproachable, the exception being in Middle Eastern and Asian countries.[24] Seifert quoted William B. Martin when referring to the librarian, "Customer relations is an integral part of your job—not an extension of it."[25]

Alf's Mentorship: More Than Just Studies

The spiritual master plan of my institution mentions that all of the staff are expected to be spiritual mentors to the students.[26] Wonderful opportunities for prayer arose where together Alf and library staff would thank the Lord for blessings and ask for His help in many different matters. Alf would ask for prayers and encouragement as he studied and dealt with various personal worries. Where possible, the staff referred Alf to someone who could provide him with a solution. Without a support system close by, he sometimes just needed to talk. In an Adventist university, faculty and staff can serve as mentors for students who need additional support, and this can be even more effective if there are formal programs in place to assist these students.[27]

Also, the library should be a place that is welcoming. It is important that librarians display friendly faces, that the library be a zone akin to home. In "Listening to Student Voices," a report on students' perceptions of library services, one respondent said that the "layout of the library should be more lifestyle based and user friendly. . . . From the instant you walk in the door, that this is the place you want to be in and have the comfort and ease. . . and feel at home and want to spend time there, quality and quantity."[28] Having a space that is welcoming is even more important because many students are not acquainted with the tools used to find resources. According to Arko-Cobbah: "The librarian's role becomes more crucial when one considers students from disadvantaged backgrounds for whom most of these learning resources may be entirely new."[29]

Conclusion

Apartheid produced unequal education systems for various populations in South Africa. However, even though apartheid ended, its legacy remains. Nearly 30 years later, South Africa as a nation is still striving to provide equitable education for its citizens regardless of socio-economic status or race. Adventist schools are a part of this system and face similar challenges. Alf, a student who was a product of the Adventist system, came to the library for help at the start of his tertiary education. Because of the mentoring he received throughout his tertiary education, he was able to successfully complete his four-year degree.

For mentoring to take place on a large scale, librarians should serve as motivators and facilitators of learning, working in partnership with teaching faculty and in collaboration with IT personnel to create a welcoming space for students to learn. Together, this team can make the library an extension of the classroom, a bridge for success for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This will increase the value of the academic library, as it will then be part of the learning experience for each student, an extension of the classroom.

This article has been peer reviewed.

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Ginger Ketting-Weller

SECULARIZATION and the Disappearance of the HOLY

Holiness is central to the life the Scripture calls its followers to live. The word *holy* occurs almost 600 times[1] in the Bible. The first time the word appears is in Exodus 3:5, when God commanded Moses, "'Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'" Exodus also includes the following applications of the word: a holy assembly, holy habitation, a holy nation, a holy day, a Holy Place with the Most Holy Place beyond that, and holy garments.

Jesus used the word *holy* often, primarily to speak of the Holy Spirit. He also spoke of the "'Holy Father'" and the "holy angels" once each (John 17:11; Matthew 25:31 [KJV]). The one other time He used the word is in Matthew 7:6: "'Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before pigs.'"

Bible characters were quite aware of the concept of holiness, accepting that there were consequences when holiness was breached. But these days we don't often hear the word *holy*, particularly in higher education settings. I have wondered: Have we as educators in Adventist higher education lost the value of places, times, and experiences that are holy?

God invites us to be a holy nation, a holy people. He doesn't browbeat us into it. We are invited, and we must in turn be invitational to others.

"'. . . [C]onsecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God'" (Leviticus 20:7, NASB).[2]

I think we have.

This has troubled me as I have thought of Seventh-day Adventist higher education. It seems to me that the biggest threat to Adventist higher education around the world is that of *secularization*.

But first, what is "secularization"? According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, it is the "disassociation or separation from religious or spiritual concerns."[3] In my experience, the term seems only marginally related to my life in Adventist higher education. But it became very real a few years ago when I heard an Adventist chaplain comment that he seemed to be the only pastor for a number of the teachers and staff in the university where he worked.

"What?" I thought, coming to full alert. "They have no other pastor?" But soon I understood him to mean that many employees in that institution were disconnected from any local church, pastor, or fellowship outside of their work culture.[4] How does one accomplish Adventist mission in such a community? How do we form disciples and prepare leaders with an awareness of the wider fellowship of Adventism? How do we seek to understand the character of our church as it operates outside of our institution? How do we build a shared understanding with fellow believers as to what is holy? How do we discover commonly held values between church and institution to which we can invite our students?

While keeping in mind that there could be other explanations for the comment made by the chaplain, his statement suddenly distilled a clear picture for me of the very real pull of Adventist society toward the secular and away from the recognition that

there are places, times, and experiences that should be considered holy.

Finding the Holy Amidst the Secular

Within any given nation, culture, or subculture, there are multiple societies. And, for many of these societies regardless of geographic location, there is a trend toward secularization.[5] Some have been secular for centuries while others have slowly, over time, embraced more secular ideology. For many living in secular countries or cultures, there is little that is holy in their current society. However, many of these societies *do* seem to promote nonreligious values that they consider "holy." Here are some that I've perceived as sacred within a secular worldview (some more related to certain cultures than others):

- *Being yourself;*
- *Being authentic;*
- *Saving face;*
- *Protecting your own priorities and desires;*
- *Achieving your own happiness and joy;*
- *Attaining educational and career success;*
- *Seeking economic comfort;*
- *Pursuing social justice (whether or not it is founded in religious belief;*
- *Preferring self over others.*

In a society that is deemed secular, moderated by a secular culture, each individual often becomes the final arbiter of what is considered holy. This is often accomplished without aforethought. So, let us deliberately wrestle with a few questions.

1. *Are there holy people in a secular society?* In a secular society, there are those, for example, who are deemed to be so because of their influence on the society in which they live. Many of these individuals have developed an increased sense of freedom (exacerbated by social media) to bitterly critique others—peers, leaders, public figures, people holding political beliefs other than their own—ignoring that God has placed a spark of His image in each person. When people lose the understanding that human beings have been created by God, who is holy, they tend to assume that the social destruction of another person is permissible. In the current social climate, it seems that many people show love to those whom they like, and objectify those whom they do not like, or with whom they disagree. While there is still some sense that leaders and public figures should be held to a higher standard of expression, the common person may be absolutely vicious toward those with whom he or she disagrees, refusing to listen, to understand, or to learn. When those who may not fit the profile of the "in" group are treated as if there is no spark of holiness in the very breath that God has lent them, then they can just be viewed as animated matter, barely more valuable than a sandstone rock.

Does God speak in a secular society in ways that can be heard by believers? Are there deeper meanings in the events of history and the circumstances of life?

2. *Are there holy times in a secular society*? The world is in constant state of unrest. The news is on a 24-hour cycle, the Internet never sleeps, electronic alerts continue to pop up on our phones, and the opportunities for entertainment and distraction are endless. In reflecting on an overly rule-oriented, joyless approach to Sabbath in the lives of some Adventist families, the tendency is to overcorrect and replace it with ceaseless activity that ignores the presence of God. In other words, the loss of a sense of holy time leaves a life that only becomes increasingly frenetic, anxious, and exhausting. There is no call to lift eyes and hearts heavenward, no call to a holy time that is made for humanity, but is God's. Is it possible to fully understand the concept of "holy time" anymore? If so, what would it look like?

3. *Are there holy experiences in a secular society?* Does God speak in a secular society in ways that can be heard by believers? Are there deeper meanings in the events of history and the circumstances of life? Does a community worship experience have any claim on the life of a follower of Christ, or is it up to the individual to decide in the mood of the moment whether to participate or not? What about "holy ground" kinds of experiences? Can individuals have an experience that includes the presence of the Divine—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, choosing to be in their presence while relinquishing control?

With regard to the increasing secularization and the disappearance of the holy, most noticeable in Western countries, some educators in Christian education, even Adventist higher education, are becoming very comfortable in keeping God at a safe distance, believing they can learn, achieve, and live without Him. The history of Christian higher education, however, tells a different story.[6]

My thoughts always bring me back to this point: I do not want to live in a secular wasteland. Yet I see too many Christians—including Adventists—accepting and participating in the increasing encroachment of secularism without stopping to notice, discuss, resist, or at least be intentional about what is happening.

Ponder this for a moment: Can you name three places, times, or experiences that are holy in your life?—

holy, as in a "take off your shoes as you stand in the presence of God" type of "holy"? If we lose sight of what is holy, then how can we prepare our characters for a heaven in which God's holiness is the atmosphere we will breathe? And to get practical: If we don't know how to define what "holy" looks like, how can we as educators wrestle with it and discuss it with our students?

In the midst of such negatives, the wave of secularism can sweep us right out of any heart-connection with our holy God, making religion into a rather quaint practice that is easy to discard at the slightest discomfort.

How do we address this serious problem?

First, we don't hold back a wave by reaching out and smacking the people who are overcome, and drown with them. In fact, we can't hold back a wave at all. All we can do is to paddle our little ark around as fast as we can and try to rescue people. And that means that our ark has to be seaworthy. Which brings me to my next thought.

The Invitation

God *invites* us to be holy, to be a holy people. He doesn't browbeat us into it. We are invited, and we must in turn be invitational to others. Can we paint an appealing picture of the beauty of holiness, and invite others into it? Can we ensure that our schools and institutions of higher learning, while striving always to develop credible, rigorous, academically capable people, also protect and develop them as humans who honor holy places, observe holy times, and acknowledge holy experiences? Can Adventist educators become the paddlers of little arks carrying people into committed discipleship?

I see some encouraging signs that a new generation is starting to feel a yearning to sense a call of the holy. A couple of years ago, I led an Asian study tour that included a European student who had been raised in a worldview of atheism. Studying to become a scientist, she reflected on what she had seen in Asian countries as we watched worshipers involved in their religious practices. She commented that she had never been able to make the "leap of faith" to seek comfort in Someone who might not even exist. As she shared her thoughts with me, she shared that her question had always been "Why?" Why should anyone believe in God when there was no proof of His existence? Watching devoted worshipers in the Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian traditions, she commented, "Instead of asking myself 'why' all the time, I have started asking myself 'why not?'" In countries only lightly touched by secularism, it was in observing the devotion of worshipers who believe in the "holy" that she found herself drawn to a sense of peace and joy that she saw in those worshipers.

There is no major conversion story here. The work of the Holy Spirit proceeds on its own timeline, and change can happen only with one's consent. As educators, we can be patient; we can listen; we can model and encourage. My student's story is not over yet. But I am encouraged by the pull of "the holy" on her heart. It was an invitation that could not be ignored, even as she heard it within the context of a lifetime lived without God. Holy spaces, holy times, and holy experiences spoke to this young woman.

The Call

The call of the Scriptures is a call to holiness. We, as believers in Christ, and as Adventist educators, have been called to reflect the light that is a gift from God: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9, NIV).[7] This call, in the context of the biblical narrative of good and evil, holiness and sin, invites all to place their faith in His righteousness for "Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his through our union with Christ, so that we would be holy and without fault before him. (Ephesians 1:4, GNT).[8] We belong to God, and as His children, our lives are to be a fulfilment of His purposes and promises (Ephesians 1:5). The time is right to have deep conversations in higher education circles about what is holy, about how that inherently places claims on our lives, and about how it implies promises. ✎

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1. The word *holy* appears in the *New American Standard Bible* 592 times.

2. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptural references in this essay are quoted from the *New American Standard Bible®*, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

3. Lexico Powered by the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021): https://www.lexico.com/definition/secularization.

4. There could be other explanations for the comment made by the chaplain; he could have been referring to both Adventist and non-Adventist faculty.

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AUTHORITATIVE EDUCATION

The Recommended Practice for Educators

Seventh-day Adventist educators believe that true education "is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come."[1] This is more than an aspirational aim. For this to occur, educators must be intentional in making decisions that will help cultivate an environment where growth takes place. The goal of this article is to inspire Christian teachers and administrators to view an authoritative style as the recommended practice in the complex process of educating and advising students to achieve the goals of true education.

The person best known for introducing the authoritative concept is Diana Baumrind.[2] A clinical and developmental psychologist, she proposed that parenting is structured around one or a combination of authoritarian, permissive, or authoritative parenting styles.[3] According to Baumrind, *authoritarian parents* are highly directive and highly demanding, but also provide limited support or responsiveness to the needs of their children. These parents demand absolute obedience and inflict harsh punishments. By contrast, *permissive parents* offer warmth and acceptance but provide limited levels of structure. These parents provide neither firm boundaries nor definitive behavioral controls.[4]

Baumrind described a third category: *authoritative parents*, as those who love and respect their children while identifying boundaries, maintaining demands, and seeking obedience.[5] A large body of research reveals that children raised by authoritative parents become independent and self-reliant, develop good social skills, exhibit emotional regulation and self-control, and explore new environments without fear. Based on decades of research, child-development experts have concluded that authoritative parenting produces the best outcomes in children.[6]

There are strong arguments for applying the tenets of the authoritative parenting style to the teacher-student relationship in the classroom.[7] There is an undeniable nexus that exists between the home and school. Home and school can be considered components of a singular institution because they fulfill a singular purpose. The book *Education* by Ellen G. White sums it up as follows: "It is in the early years in the home and in the formal schoolwork that the mind develops, a pattern of living is established, and character is formed."[8] The cooperative nature of the home, represented by parents—and the school,

represented by teachers and educational administrators— is adroitly expressed in this way: "God has given to parents and teachers the work of educating the children and youth in these lines, and from every act of their lives they may be taught spiritual lessons."[9]

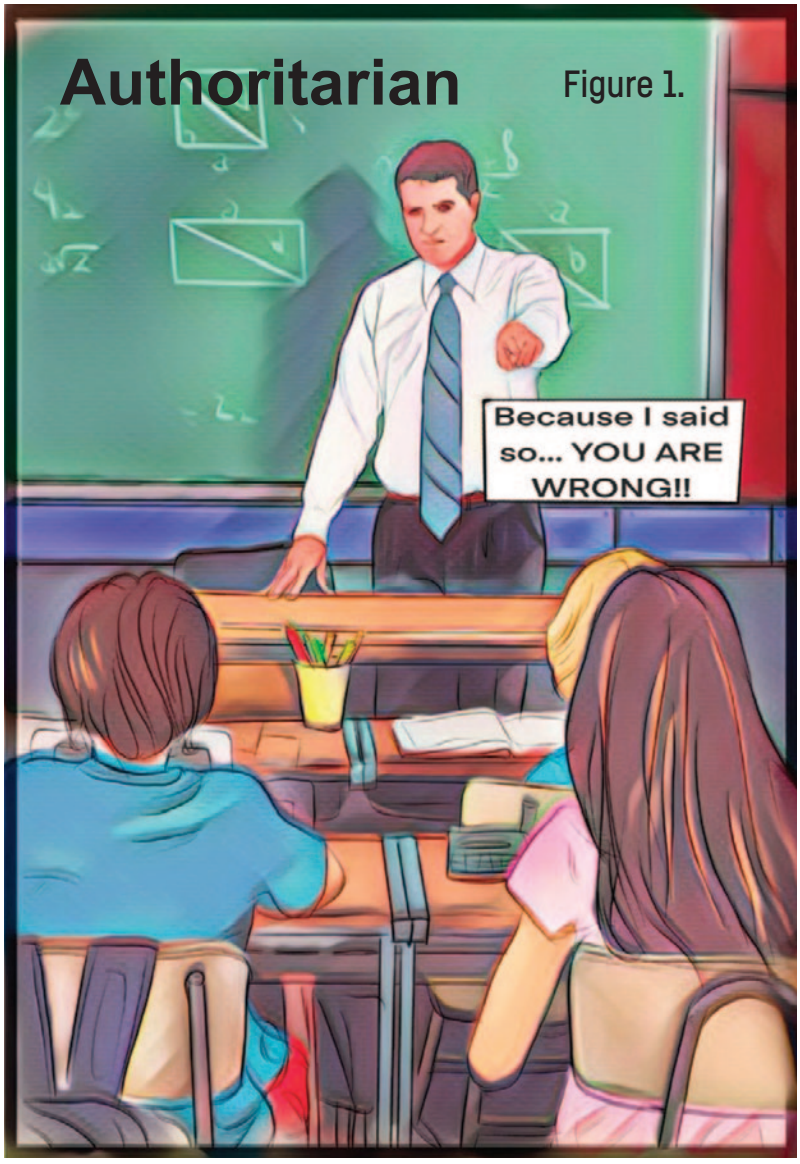
There are examples in the Bible that illustrate the effects of Baumrind's theory. For example, Aaron favored a permissive style when educating his two oldest sons. As a result, both Nadab and Abihu perished in front of the altar when, in their first performance as priests, they offered profane fire that was never ordained by God (Leviticus 10:1, 2).

Jephthah demonstrated an authoritarian style when he promised God, "'whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return . . . I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering'" (Judges 11:31).[10] To Jephthah's surprise, the person who received him was his only daughter. Because of his authoritarian style, Jephthah's daughter lost her life (Judges 11:39), and he later commenced a civil war with the tribe of Ephraim in which 42,000 men were killed without mercy (Judges 11:1-7). Abraham, on the other hand, exemplified an authoritative style. As recorded in Genesis 22, when God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac, Abraham did not force the young man to lay on the altar, he simply encouraged him to accept God's plan. By interacting with his son in this matter, Abraham demonstrated love while showing respect for his son's individuality and free will.

The Authoritative Style in the Classroom

In our modern lifestyle, most children spend a significant amount of time with teachers. During the time together, students acquire academic and non-academic skills. It is a combination of these skills that molds and shapes children's attitudes toward life and their moral behavior. Research confirms that just as a parent-child relationship can influence the attitudes and behaviors of children, so does the teacher-student relationship. In a recent meta-analysis of more than 1,400 published studies, Martin Pinquart found that harsh discipline and psychological control by parents were the biggest predictors of worsening behavior in children over time.[11]

When using an authoritarian teaching style, the teacher maintains strict control and discipline, and allows little to no room for flexibility and individuality (see Figure 1). This type of teaching style demonstrates little warmth.[12] For example, one study of middle-school students showed that authoritarian teachers had a stifling impact on the academic growth of the children in the study, causing them to become more defensive about their learning, rather than becoming engaged.[13] Permissive teachers, on the other hand, although they lack the oppressive impact of authoritarian teachers, generally fail to provide the boundaries and structure young people need for optimal growth and development (see Figure 2).[14]



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However, when teachers employ an authoritative teaching style, this blends the *best* attributes of the authoritarian and permissive styles because it provides students with high expectations, the directed discipline they need, and the independence to achieve these expectations, combined with warmth, flexibility, understanding, and openness within the classroom (see Figure 3 on page 28). A teacher who practices the authoritative style in the classroom understands his or her role in creating a healthy balance between demonstrating compassion, love, tolerance, and understanding while establishing boundaries and creating a structured environment.[15]

Perhaps the greatest examples of authoritative teaching were provided by Jesus, the Master Teacher. The following three approaches offer ideal models for teachers and administrators:

1. *Use illustrations*: Jesus knew what it would take to focus on learning, so He made consistent use of illustrations (i.e., the term *parable* comes from the Greek term *παραβολή,* (*parabolé*) whose basic meaning is "comparison, figure").[16] Parables enabled His listeners to visualize vital concepts (Mark 4:33, 34).[17] After all, many people think in pictures.[18] Illustrations were critical to the growth and nurture of Jesus' students. They demonstrated His love for His pupils as shown in His genuine compliments (Matthew 8:5-10; Matthew 15:22-28; Mark 14:3-9; John 1:47). *Application:* Use stories and object lessons to present both simple and complex topics (see Sidebar 1 on page 30).

2. *Create a nurturing learning environment*: Jesus established control over His environment without demonstrating authoritarian behaviors. He provided students with autonomy by allowing them the opportunity to make decisions, while admonishing and correcting poor behavior (Matthew 14:22-34; John 21:15-17). His approach created an inherent desire among His followers to willingly draw close to Him, to listen, and to follow. And in such an environment, His followers were nurtured as they grew in their understanding of His teachings over time and even after He ascended. *Application:* Stay updated on the literature on effective classroom-management skills and tools that can help create a learning environment where students can thrive and develop a love for learning (see Sidebar 1).

Figure 2.

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3. *Demonstrate love:* Jesus was personally interested in each of His students. He demonstrated warmth, flexibility, and openness. His love was so strong that He was willing to challenge His students to grow beyond their perceived capacities (Matthew 14:22). Jesus not only loved His students but also challenged them to love one another (John 13:34, 35). *Application:* Take every opportunity to model Jesus' love to students; take an interest in them, get to know their families, cultivate positive relationships, and challenge them to demonstrate kindness to one another.

The authoritative approach is the recommended practice for educators. The objective of education is "to train young people to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other people's thought."[19] To accomplish these objectives, educators need to take every opportunity to apply the authoritative approach displayed by Jesus Christ into their daily interactions with students.

Conclusion

An authoritative approach to education is critical to the development of children and youth. This approach yields the highest probability of children becoming independent and critical thinkers because this will enable them to regulate their emotions, make good decisions, and resist peer pressure. Additionally, children exposed to an authoritative style learn to respect adults, teachers, administrators, and other authority figures. They are more likely to demonstrate empathy, kindness, and warmth toward others, resulting in healthier relationships.

The authoritative approach can be reinforced in the classroom. The Bible makes it clear that teachers play a critical role in the development of children (Titus 2:7, 8). Teachers should encourage their students to be independent thinkers, while closely guiding them and modifying their expectations, depending on the situation and the students' needs. Teachers can

look at Jesus as the ultimate example of how to implement this style in the classroom. Identifying rules, limits, and consequences is very important while teaching, but so is being emotionally responsive, warm, and encouraging toward students. ✎

This article has been peer reviewed.

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Sidebar 1. Additional Readings for Educators

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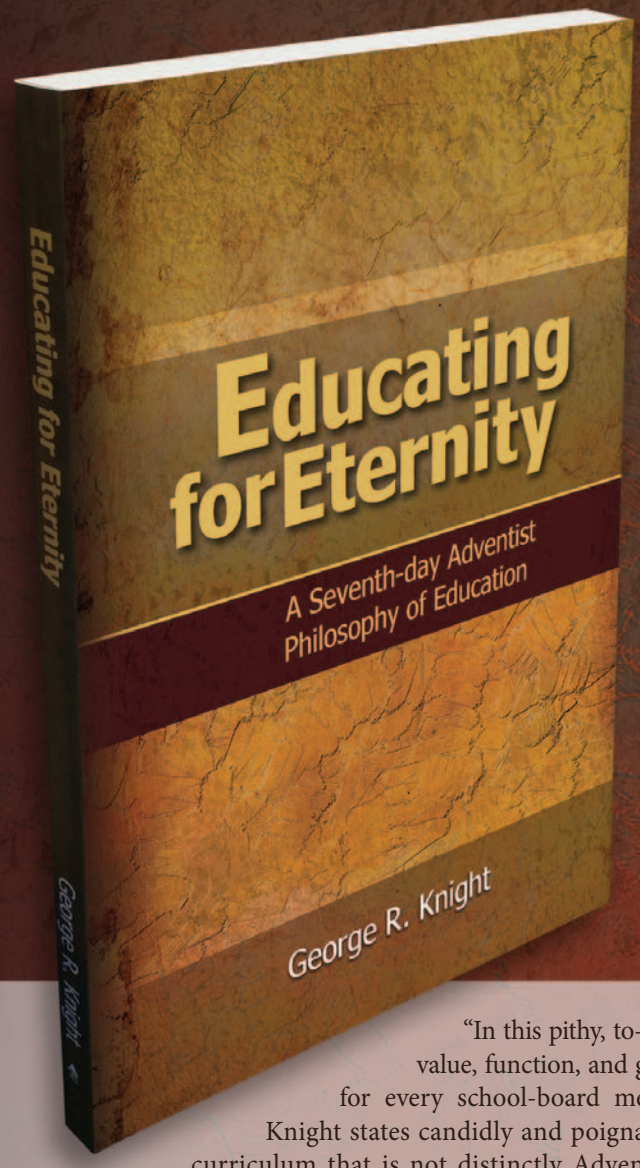

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reers is great. Having students take on leadership roles within the church is affirming. There are many more nice things that could be listed, and two stories have driven that home.

Two Examples

A few years back, I was working during an academy alumni weekend. It was late Saturday night, and most people had left campus. One former student was still on campus visiting with us. This student had graduated a few years before, and at that time, he had been more than ready to leave, frequently expressing frustration and complaints about the school and the staff.

As we visited, he reminisced about his time at the academy and was listing all the things that he liked, the fun times he had experienced, how great the school was. I asked him about how frustrated he had been when he graduated, and he acknowledged that was the case. He responded, "Sometimes you don't know how good you have it 'till it is gone." Despite how he treated his teachers, we were making an impact on him. Even though it did not seem apparent at the time, he would eventually appreciate what the staff had done for him and the opportunities he had received. That was nice.

Since then, I have looked at student complaints very differently. While still hearing them out and adjusting as warranted, I also consider how these things will be perceived after a period of time.

Some years after this experience, I heard from another student. He said that he would be in town and wanted to stop by for a bit. This was a student who had made more than a few poor decisions and had ultimately been asked to withdraw from the school. When I heard that he was leaving the school, I went to find him and visit with him for a bit. I wanted him to know that regardless of his mistakes, he was still important to us and we cared about him.

Years later, as he sat in my living room, he shared how much that had meant to him. My reaching out to him had convinced him that I was not judging him. As we continued to visit, he talked about the church he was attending and the roles he was serving. He shared how he had found his way back to Christ. That was extremely nice. It was very humbling, and I can only say "Praise God" that He worked through me that time.

As educators, it is essential that we cling to these instances where the curtain is drawn back, and we catch a glimpse of the difference that we are making. It doesn't happen often enough, and we frequently find ourselves questioning how effective we are. These fleeting moments where we see the impact can encourage us as we struggle through the difficult times. If we continue to read the full paragraph from which are initial quote was taken, we find: "This work is the nicest, the most difficult, ever committed to human beings. It requires the most delicate tact, the finest susceptibility, a knowledge of human nature, and a heaven-born faith and patience, willing to work and watch and wait. It is a work than which nothing can be more important."[2] I can assure you that the Adventist Church has many, many teachers who fit this description. It takes enormous amounts of tact and patience to hear out a venting parent, to avoid being defensive. Many times, just providing the opportunity for them to be heard is all that is needed to address the situation.

Teachers have to possess an understanding of "human nature" in order to help redirect students when they are exhibiting inappropriate behaviors. The knowledge of the workings of the human mind aid in providing instruction and guiding young minds. We have to exercise faith, to work, to watch, and to wait to see the fruits of our labors. I believe that in many instances we will not fully know how God has worked through us until we get to heaven.

What can be more important than the young people of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? It may be a bit self-serving, but I believe that Adventist education is one of the most important ministries of the church. Ellen White seemed to support that belief.

We should continue to put educators who possess tact, knowledge of human nature, faith, patience, and a willingness to work and watch and wait, into as many schools as we can. We should make an Adventist education available to every student in our churches. We should look beyond that and reach out to our communities, seeking families in need of the love of Christ. While education can be extremely difficult, it is also very rewarding. "It is a work than which nothing can be more important."[3] It is most surely the "nicest" work.

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