

## ADVENTIST EDUCATORS: ARE THEY PREPARING GLOBAL CITIZENS?

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### Abstract

The Adventist philosophy of education offers an excellent opportunity to prepare global citizens: a fairly uniform human resource who can serve the church and the world regardless of their country of origin. This is only true to the extent the Adventist philosophy of education is implemented in Adventist institutions of learning. The purpose of the study on which this paper is based was to find out the perception of implementation of the Adventist philosophy of education by student and educators (teachers and administrators). It was conducted in secondary schools of Central Kenya Conference (CKC). A survey design was used and data was collected using questionnaires from a purposively selected sample of 282 form four students, 46 teachers and 6 school administrators. The findings revealed that there was inconsistency in the implementation of the Adventist philosophy of education. There was no established formal induction or seminars to acquaint the teachers and administrators on the Adventist philosophy of education. The stakeholders differed significantly in their perceptions of implementation of learner-centered methods, effective administration and the mental aspect of the holistic curriculum. Therefore, there is need to ensure the Adventist philosophy of education is implemented as per the policy in order to truly prepare global citizens, ready for this world and the world to come. There is need for induction and training on the philosophy for both teachers and administrators.

**Key Words:** Adventist Education, Implementation, Global citizens, Teachers, Administrators

### Introduction

According to the official website of the Seventh-day Church ([www.adventist.org/world-church](http://www.adventist.org/world-church)), Adventists are globally connected. This is made possible through the administrative units established, which include thirteen (13) world divisions and two attached fields. This globalization is not just made possible as a result of increased advancement in communication technology but most importantly because of the shared beliefs and policies. This means that Adventists from all parts of the world have some unique identity which makes them identify with other Adventists regardless of their geographical location in the globe.

One such uniting factor is the Seventh-day philosophy of education, which is referred to as the Adventist philosophy of education (APE). It is clearly spelt out in the Working Policy of the SDA Church. The aim and mission of APE is to prepare people for useful and joy-filled lives, fostering friendships with God, whole person development, Bible-based values and selfless service in accordance with the Seventh-day Adventist mission to the world. APE is built on eight (8) key components: the student, the teacher,

knowledge, curriculum, instruction, discipline, school life and assessment. If followed as stipulated, it is supposed to give the following responsibilities and outcomes amongst several others: the learners should demonstrate competence in communication, quantitative skills and creative thinking, along with other academic areas that are foundation to excellence in tertiary education and/or the world of work (General Conference of SDA, 2008-2009).

Such graduates are thus global citizens, because they have gone through the same philosophy of education despite their geographical locations in the world. This is true because globalization is defined as the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas and other aspects of culture (Wikipedia.org) Moreover, such graduates will help address an increasing challenge in the labour market: ill-prepared work force. Many graduates today do not fit in the market for lack of requisite skills, training and capacity (Amimo, 2012).

Indeed, the greatest want of the world, which is a global issue, would also be addressed through APE. This is the want of men of integrity (White,



1903). Integrity is slowly becoming a rhetoric, if not a vocabulary whose definition is to be found in the dictionary but with diminishing everyday real-life examples. All forms of corruption have invaded humanity so much so that it no longer feels wrong to be corrupt. Indeed, we are facing global ethical crisis (Vyhmeister, 2015) but there is hope in Adventist education. Nevertheless, for this hope to be made a reality, the medicine (APE), must be administered accordingly.

This paper, thus, seeks to address the issue of educators' preparedness in implementation of the Adventist philosophy of education, which is meant to prepare global citizens. We will begin by looking at the literature that guided the study, followed by the research methodology employed. Thereafter, findings and their analysis will be discussed thus leading to the conclusions drawn and recommendation.

Five variables were considered in this study. They were borrowed from Byrne (1996), from the model *a new approach to Christian education*. The five variables include: principle of integration of the Bible, content (holistic curriculum), learner centered methods of teaching, effective administration and Christ-centered relations.

### **Principle of Integration of the Bible**

The concept of integration sounds easy and obvious. However, a critical thought about it leads to several important questions: does it entail praying at the beginning of every lesson? Or is it having several worship programs, unlike the case in public schools, including guaranteed freedom of Sabbath rest? Is it limited to the diet and dressing code in Adventist institutions? Indeed, integration may not be what it seems in the mind of many an Adventist educator. It entails making the Bible the first and the last in all matters. In the curriculum aspect of education, White (1903) advocates for the Bible not just as a lesson to be taught but as a principle that guides all the other things that are taught.

In a knowledge of God all true knowledge and development have their source... In order to understand what is comprehended in the work of education, we need to consider both the nature of man and the purpose of God in creating him. (p. 14)

Christians subscribe to a Bibliocentric approach to life, which means a philosophy of life governed by the Bible. That further means that everything in their life, including education, should be governed by the

same philosophy, which has God as the truth and the source of all knowledge. This revelation comes to man in three ways: in person through Christ the son, through the written word in the Bible and through creation as seen in nature (Byrne, 1996).

Therefore, integrating faith and learning will remain rhetoric unless Adventist educators are first brought to the understanding and conviction of what it really entails. It is then that they will acknowledge and recognize that the knowledge of God provides the foundation and source for all true knowledge and development (Coupland, 1999; Badley, 1994). Consequently, they can then convincingly show the learners the place of the knowledge of God in the whole education business: the source, which in essence is thus the center.

The Adventist philosophy of education, thus, explains the basis for integration of the Bible in learning. Its understanding and appreciation are critical if its objectives are to be attained. Taneja (1984) states:

Philosophy, it may be concluded, is indispensable for every aspect of life and much more for education, which prepares the man for complete living. All educational questions are ultimately questions of philosophy. It is the basis of education. All educational efforts and achievements become purposeful by philosophy. It is essential if we want to evolve a required type of the child after education. Those who neglect philosophy pay the penalty for ... they lack coordinating principle. (p.57)

### **Holistic Curriculum**

One of the defining hallmarks of Adventist education institutions is a mission or vision statement, as seen on their buses, books or buildings, which implies that they offer holistic education that caters for the physical, mental, social and spiritual spheres of the learners. Indeed, it sounds attractive enough to any would-be parent, guardian, teacher or student. However, what, in reality, is different about Adventist schools as compared to other private or public schools? Can their graduates indeed pass the test of well-rounded learners?

A holistic curriculum entails the mental, social, spiritual and physical aspect of the learner. This leads us to some critical questions. To start with, do

the Adventist educators really understand what the holistic curriculum entails? If they do, to what extent do they fulfill it? Several educational initiatives have been embraced by Adventist educators and they seem to have merit and even to fit in the APE. However, they may not be addressing the primary and foundational ideas of the desired holistic curriculum (Coupland, 1999).

The curriculum is the means of achieving the mission of an institution (Vaughan, 1984). Therefore, APE is supposed to foster “harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual powers” (White, 1903, p. 13). However, because of rising pressure for academic (mental excellence) by society, many Adventist educators find themselves between a rock and a hard place. The balance between living up to the expectation of a grade-demanding society on one hand (Kochanek & Bulach, as cited in Claver, 2008) and implementing of the APE to the letter on the other is a delicate, if not mind-boggling, affair. Consequently, benchmarking with an aim of improving the schools has become a common phenomenon. Therefore, what can or can we not borrow from other schools, even some other Adventist schools? For instance, is it alright to ask some students to register elsewhere for national examinations so that they will not lower the school mean? What would be the reason for such an action? Are the educators at the school level to blame for it? What is the role of the different levels of church management (conference, union, division) in this matter? As White cautions, how are educators to guard against emulation, which leads to dishonesty and foster ambition and discontent? These are only a few of the many sets of dilemma that face the Adventist educators in the 21st century.

There is no question on whether APE should produce excellence. White (1903) “Higher than the highest human thought is God’s ideal for His children...He will advance as fast and as far as possible in every branch of true knowledge” (p. 18). In fact, it should be its hallmark. However, the means and the methods for the same should not be as those of the world (White, 1948b).

It will be known that the harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual powers has been realized when students will be able to know abstract mental things, do concrete physical things and develop a faith commitment to worthy spiritual values (Coupland, 1999).

## Learner-centered Methods

Many educators today have succumbed to the pressure of using any methods that will bring forth the much needed grades. Therefore, the motivation or reason for a choice of whatever teaching method today is mostly one: what will yield higher grades in the final exam? For instance, the teacher will use the teacher-centered method by working more than the student, thus finding and summarizing notes in order to increase the learners’ chances of passing in exams, through easier cramming or assimilation of the prepared topics. However, if there is a learner who may foil the mean grade of the class, the teacher will then change to a learner-centered method, not because of the learner’s welfare per se, but in order to avoid such a catastrophe. Consequently, the results (grades), not the learner, determine the method of teaching an educator will choose. In a nutshell, the method is determined by desired end results.

APE is ideally learner-centered, indicating that the focus of teaching should be the learner. According to Wikipedia, student-centered learning, also known as learner-centered education, broadly encompasses methods of teaching that shift the focus of instruction from the teacher to the student.

It is therefore important for the educator first to understand how the APE views the learner, so that they can educate him/her to that end. To begin with, the student is viewed as unique, with power to think and to do. “The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise and who influence character.” (White, 1903, p. 17). This means that educators need to realize that every learner is a unique individual with specific needs. Most importantly, for learners to become good productive citizens, educators have to develop their (learners) powers through the education process. White (1923) further urges educators to “vary the manner of instruction as to call forth the high and noble powers of the mind” (p. 15).

So, how different are learner-centered methods compared to the mostly convenient and thus preferred teacher-centered methods? Weimer (2012) describes five characteristics of learner-centered teaching: it engages student in the hard, messy work of learning; it includes explicit skill instruction- teachers teach students how to think, solve problems, evaluate evidence, analyze arguments, generate hypotheses—all those learning skills essential to mastering material in



the discipline; it encourages students to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning it; it motivates students by giving them some control over learning processes; it encourages collaboration. This sounds good for the student but it can prove very demanding and time-consuming for the teachers. It comes with a price that many teachers may not be willing to pay.

For an educator to embrace learner-centered methods, which will ultimately produce a well-rounded citizen, they themselves ought to be "well developed and sensitive, knowledgeable and creative in helping the students realize their true natures" (Clarcken, 2009, p. 417). The Adventist educator will train the children to think and to have application or practical method. They will care for individual learners, train them to exercise their ingenuity and skills and also show patience and kindness (White, 1903). This is not an easy choice in this century of shifting ends and means. However, though this is a difficult job, it is possible to do it when the teachers relinquish the God-like role of superiority and control and then they become willing to die to self (Smith, 1997).

### Effective Leadership

For APE to be effective there must be deliberate mechanism to attain its goals. Rottery (2004) noted that "aims are unlikely to be achieved by chance and that any society serious about them will have to create systems and institutions to achieve them" (p. 5). Effective leadership is one such mechanism. According to Mbiti (1974) "leadership has to do with the execution of those policies and decisions which help direct the activities of an organization towards the attainment of specified aims" (p. 15). That means that leaders in Adventist education should help direct activities that will see to the attainment of the aims of Adventist education. He further defines effectiveness as the "timely achievement of desired results as measured against set goals" (p. 11).

Effective leadership is not just about knowledge and qualification; it takes the heart. It concerns itself with other people; it begins inwardly before it can work outwardly; it does not point to popularity, fame and money as evidence of success but it is concerned about setting the right example; and lastly, it finds great reward through interacting with other people (D'Souza, 1994). That means that leaders first need to understand the goal of APE and then communicate it to all the

other stakeholders. It is then that they can lead, by example, towards the desired goals.

Effective communication, thus, goes hand in hand with effective leadership. In a study carried out to survey the influence of personal characteristics and communication techniques on the headmaster's leadership effectiveness in four Adventist secondary schools in North Eastern Tanzania Conference, it was concluded that the headmaster's leadership effectiveness could improve if they would increase their communication techniques (Miyayo, 2007). In another study on the mission statement and management of private religious institutions in Eastern and Southern Africa, Kibuuka (1998) observed that though private religious institutions had unique missions, they were sometimes not expressed in the form of mission statements and therefore some of the stakeholders (including some in the management) did not know what their institutions' missions were. That indeed shows that there is need for training for the managers in order for them to lead from the front.

Effective communication will not only help administrators to deal with the immediate stakeholders in the school compound (students and staff) but it will also help to enlist the much needed widespread support from stakeholders outside the school compound, in order to help support the school (Anderson, 2009). These could be donors, well-wishers or even members of the constituency. Indeed, in view of the state of many Adventist schools, this could go a long way in boosting the infrastructure and consequently the entire school climate for more effective learning.

### Christ-centered Relations

Listening to a new member of staff, one who has left service elsewhere in order to come and work in a mission school, will clearly tell you their expectation: a better working environment, in which practical Christianity is the norm. Similar sentiments are expressed by new parents or those seeking admission to a church school; they desire to have their children in a school free from discrimination, harassment and drugs, amongst other ailments that plague many schools today. Indeed, these expectations are justified in view of what the Adventist schools have as their mission and vision statements as well as their statement of values. But is this what they really get in the long run? Do Adventist schools live up to their professed values?

The interactions between students, staff and administrators should be the unspoken sermon, first to themselves and then to all who come to their home: the school compound, where the students spend a good part of the year and for the staff, a significant part of their life. Since the educators are responsible for shaping the learners, they thus have to lead by example, a Christian example. White (1923) emphasized that “school teachers are certainly disqualified to properly educate children, if they have not first learned the lesson of self-control, patience, forbearance, gentleness and love” (p. 15). Teachers are further called upon to “teach them by precept and example” (White, 1923, p. 269). They need to have a deeper consecration by being acquainted with God through an experimental knowledge; by obeying all His commands (White, 1923).

Indeed, being an educator in a church school is not like having taking up any other teaching job. It calls for a higher and nobler goal than the temporal attainments of either the teacher or the student. In today’s wayward society, parents expect teachers to give their children both grades and character, in spite of the parent’s contribution, or lack of it. Some parents only care about fees payment and do not bother with the student’s progress, be it academic or discipline-wise. Others pet their children and even side with them against teachers who point out their unacceptable behavior. However, despite these and the many other challenges that the educator faces, they ought to remember that they have a noble obligation of training children who will make a difference in the world. As is observed, “the teachers will feel that they have a duty devolving upon them to present their pupils before the world and before God with symmetrical characters and well-balanced minds” (White, 1923, p. 54). Indeed, sermons on God’s love are important but learners need to see, not just to hear. “They may not need sermons and long censorious lectures... Let them know by your works that you love them and have a care for their souls” (White, 1923, p. 55)

### Research Methodology

This was a cross-sectional survey design aimed at finding out the perceptions of implementation of the Adventist philosophy of education in secondary schools of Central Kenya Conference. The population under study constituted all the eight SDA secondary schools in the Central Kenya Conference as at that time. These schools were found within the five stations.

For the pilot study, Nairobi station was purposively selected. Consequently, one out of the two schools in Nairobi station was randomly selected. This left a total of seven (7) schools, all of which were involved in the actual study in order to ensure a better representation of all the schools in Central Kenya Conference, especially in view of the wide and diverse geographical background.

For the actual study, purposive sampling was used to pick only the form fours of all the schools under the study. This was because most, if not all, were considered to have been in the school for the longest period of time compared to the other students. Besides, it was hoped that they were in a better position to understand and respond appropriately to the questions asked, having been in the school longer than all the other classes. For a more representative sample, all the 282 form fours present in the schools at the time were involved. All the 67 teachers were also involved in the study, but only 46 filled and returned the questionnaires, thus representing 68% of the population of teachers. The teachers are key players in the implementation process of the APE. Lastly, all the seven principals were also involved in the study. Their input was very crucial in this research since they were the managers charged with the responsibility of the implementation of the APE in their schools. However, only six (6) responded to the questionnaire, thus representing 85.7% of their population.

The instruments (questionnaires) were constructed by the researcher. As Punch (2009) explains, already existing instrument many not have the same definition of operational variables as those in the current research. They contained closed ended questions and additional semi-closed and open ended ones for the teachers and administrators, since they were expected to give more information as a result of their maturity and understanding. This was to ensure that no important information was left by the respondent and the researcher did not become overburdened with information that needed to be coded (Creswell, 2008).

Validity was considered by constructing the items based on the variables under the study and by giving the instrument to experts in research and statistics at the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, who ascertained its content and face validity. The findings from the pilot study were analyzed to test for Cronbach’s alpha, whose acceptable level was set at 0.6. The student questionnaire had 40 items and



its coefficient of alpha was 0.877. This was considered high enough thus no items were changed or deleted. For the teachers' questionnaire, which also had 40 items, the coefficient of alpha was 0.928 and similarly, it was retained without any alterations. The administrator questionnaire could not be subjected to this test since it was of one administrator only. However, since it had 40 items similar to those of the teachers, it was also accepted and used without alteration.

Data was gathered after the established procedures were followed. It was then coded, tabulated and analyzed using SPSS. Both descriptive and inferential statistics methods were used for analysis.

### Findings

The demographic profiles of the stakeholders were as follows: for students, 53.2% were male while 46.8% were female; on religion, 73.2% were Adventists while 26.8% belonged to other denominations. For teachers, 55.6% were male while 44.4% were female; on religion, 88.4% were baptized Adventists while 11.6% were either non-Adventists or not baptized Adventists; on years of service, 62.8% had 1-5 years, 14% had 6-10 years, 11.6% had 11-15 years, 7% had 16-20 years and 4.7% had over 20 years; on highest academic qualification attained, 4.5% were pursuing a diploma, 13.6% had a diploma, 4.5% were pursuing a bachelor's degree, 63.6% had a bachelor's degree, 4.5% were pursuing a master's degree, 2.3% had a masters degree and 6.8% had other qualifications such as A or O level. For the administrators, 83.3% were male while 16.7% were female, on religion, all were baptized Adventists, on years of service, 16.7% had 1-5 years, 33.3% had 6-10 years, 16.7% had 11-15 years while 33.3% had 16-20 years; on highest academic qualification attained, 33.3% were pursuing a bachelor's degree, 50% had a bachelor's degree while 16.7% were pursuing a master's degree.

It was also noted that 65.2% of teachers had received neither induction nor seminar/training on APE. As for administrators, only 33.3% had received formal induction on APE while only 66.7% had received some courses on administration. In addition, 66.7% of the administrators confirmed that teachers did not receive formal induction on the APE.

On the perception of implementation of the SDA philosophy of education, the three groups tended to agree with the implementation of all the variables except for effective administration and Christ-controlled

relations where only the administrators agreed.

There was no significant difference between the perception of the students and educators for the following variables: principle of integration, Christ-centered relations, and the holistic curriculum (physical, social and spiritual). However, there was a significant difference in the perceptions of implementation of learner-centered methods, effective administration and holistic curriculum (mental).

The challenges facing the implementation of the Adventist philosophy of education as perceived by teachers and administrators were as follows:

#### Teachers

Poor working terms and conditions	51.43%
The nature of the enrolled students	20.0%
Issues of policy and programs	7.62%
Lack of Christian principle in practice	7.62%
Issues of management and administration	7.62%
Relations among stakeholders	5.71%

#### Administrators

Poor working terms and conditions	54.17%
Issues of management	45.83%

The following were the suggested solutions to the perceived challenges to the implementation of the APE as given by teachers and administrators:

#### Teachers

Improved working terms and conditions	59.78%
Clear and balanced policy and programs	13.04%
Set entry behavior for students	8.7%
Living what we preach	3.26%
Improved relations among stakeholders	2.17%

#### Administrators

Sensitive management	64.71%
Improved working terms and conditions	35.29%

### Conclusions

The following conclusions were made based of the above findings. To start with, from the demographic profiles, it was concluded that among students, there was almost a fair balance between boys and girls. However, the non-Adventists had exceeded the recommended 20-25% of the enrolled students as required by the SDA working policy, thus posing a challenge to the implementation of the APE. Among

teachers, there was also a fair gender balance. However, not all of them were Adventists, graduates or educationists, factors that could pose a challenge to the implementation of the APE. It was also evident that there was a high turnover, based on the few years of experience for the majority of teachers. Among administrators, there was a gender bias since all except one were male. Besides, their varied years of service suggested that the criterion for choosing administrators was not based on years of service or experience in Adventist schools. Not all the administrators had a bachelor's degree, something which could pose a challenge when leading and dealing with graduate teachers.

On the perception of implementation of the APE by students, teachers and administrators, it was generally rated at "tend to agree", which was interpreted as average implementation. It also appeared that there were no clearly defined procedures for induction or seminars on APE for both teachers and administrators, something that may have greatly accounted for the average implementation.

Since students and educators differed significantly in their perceptions of the implementation of learner-centered methods, effective administration and the mental aspect of the holistic curriculum, it meant that these were the areas that faced the greatest challenge in the implementation of the APE.

Poor working terms and conditions accounted for more than half of the challenges perceived by both teachers and administrators. It could also be tied to the high turnover depicted in the same study.

Lastly, while teachers had more than half of the suggested solutions being attributed to improved working terms and conditions, the administrators had more than half of the suggested solutions being attributed to having sensitive management.

### Recommendations

First, there is need to follow the set criteria for admission of students and hiring of teachers according to the church policy. There is also need to have established and uniform criteria to be used when choosing administrators. Okumbe (1999) notes that many developing countries have not been able to use the recruitment process as it should be used despite its critical role in making a profession competitive. Furthermore, Armstrong (2003) notes that it is important to match people to the particular requirements of the organization.

Secondly, there is need for formal induction and

seminars on the APE for teachers and administrators. According to Armstrong (2003), induction is very important since it clarifies the psychological contract (norms, values and attitudes of the organization). It is then that the employees should be given the employee handbook which should inform and explain the terms of service. It is then that they should be informed about the mission and values of the organization among many other important issues.

Moreover, there is need for the management (church) to ensure regular evaluation of the schools by the Accrediting Association in order to evaluate the quality of the programs and the implementation of the APE so that to foster the unity and mission of the church (GC Working Policy 2008-2009, p. 260). Even if that is done, it may still not be sufficient thus there is need to come up with policies for each lower level of the church administration so that to avoid reliance on the highest level for evaluation, which might only come after a long period of time, for instance five years.

Another crucial area which is worthy of consideration is employment of workers. There is need to follow the SDA working policy in employment of workers so that to address the issue of poor working terms and conditions, which is perceived by both teachers and administrators as a great challenge (GC Working Policy 2008-2009, p. 276).

Last but most important, it is important for the management (church) to become more actively involved in all matters pertaining to its schools, offering necessary guidance and support. There is also need to involve stakeholders such as teachers and administrator in finding out the challenges that face their institutions and considering their suggestions. Okumbe (1999) advises that teachers are "supposed to be effectively involved in decision making in their schools due to their specialized training" (p. 9). Similarly, Musaaazi (2008) states that "lack of ability to perceive properly, and manage organizations skillfully, produces negative attitudes in teachers, students and administrative personnel that can adversely affect the instructional as well as the administrative processes" (p. 2).

In conclusion, whereas Adventist education had made many significant strides, the above study shows that a lot more should be done in order to prepare students, not only as global citizens but also as citizens fit for the next world. The extent to which the APE is implemented answers the question on



whether we are preparing such citizens.

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