Continuing Education Issue on the Philosophy of Adventist Education by George R. Knight

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Introducing the New Team and Game Plan
By Lisa M. Beardsley

While many teachers were enjoying a well-deserved break from school, a new General Conference (GC) education team was voted in this summer. Every five years, the global Seventh-day Adventist family convenes (this time in Atlanta) to elect the president of the church and other leaders who will serve around the world. Education is well represented in the final line-up. The newly voted president, Dr. Ted Wilson, earned a doctorate in religious education. Three general vice presidents have spent significant parts of their careers in education: Drs. Ella Smith Simmons, Deibert Baker, and Benjamin Schouen. For the first time in the history of the church, a woman was elected to head the General Conference Department of Education (me!). This is evidence indeed of the empowering and equalizing force of education that should encourage girls and women to study well, in preparation for service wherever the Lord may lead.

We salute and say good-bye to Dr. C. Garland Dulan, who dedicated 35 years of uninterrupted service to the cause of education in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that culminated in leading the global work of education as director of education. Dr. John Fowler has not yet retired but plans to, having worked for the church for over half a century. His past 15 years have been here in the Department of Education. Long-time readers of the Journal will recognize his name as author and consultant, if not having met him or heard him speak somewhere in the world.

Along with fond farewells, we also welcome new associate directors who join the GC Education Team: Drs. John Wesley Taylor (editor of Dialogue and chair of the Journal Advisory Board), Mike Lekic (executive secretary of the Adventist Accrediting Association), and Hudson E. Kibuuka (our expert
in math/science education and board training). But not everyone is new. Continuing on the team are Associate Director Dr. Luis A. Schulz (editor of the international edition of the Journal), Beverly J. Robinson-Rumble (editor of the English edition of the Journal), and Susana Schulz, editorial assistant for our “other journal,” Dialogue. This journal equips university/college students and young professionals to successfully deal with the intellectual, spiritual, and lifestyle issues that challenge them as they study on secular campuses.

Our team works with 13 world division directors of education (see sidebar on page 61). They oversee accreditation of K-12 education in their region, along with many other aspects of the educational work. We work together with them on accreditation of higher education, as well as supporting teachers and administrators through publication of the Journal and presentation of conferences, workshops, and meetings.

Our GC team was selected on the basis of their capacity to serve a global church. Among them, nine languages are spoken (English, Finnish, French, German, Kiswahili, Luganda, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, and Spanish), and eight passports are in constant use (Argentina, Canada, Finland, Germany, Switzerland, Uganda, the U.K., and the U.S.A.).

Those are the players—a very international team of dedicated and well-qualified Adventist educators. We also have a four-point game plan for the new quinquennium. Foremost is to reinforce Adventist identity and mission, characterized by:

a. Meaningful integration of faith and learning in the various disciplines and a biblical worldview overall;

b. Balanced, whole-person, redemptive education that develops the ability “to think and to do” and restores in students the image of God (Education, p. 17);

c. Adventist essentials in graduate and professional programs;

d. Adventist philosophy of education in distance education, delivery of intensives for non-residential cohorts, and urban campuses;

e. Academic quality;

f. Spiritual master plans appropriate for the level and type of student; and

g. Use of the Bible and Adventist textbooks.

The second goal is to strengthen leadership and administration, and demonstrate accountability and effective governance through robust institutional decision-making processes and structures, supported by journal articles, handbooks, and board training workshops.

Third, we seek to expand the capacity of all teachers to achieve the redemptive purposes of Adventist education and to model Adventist values and lifestyle; and to increase, where needed, the

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percentage of Seventh-day Adventist teachers who work in the system. We plan to:

a. Encourage induction and development of all teachers in the area of faith and learning;

b. Increase access to the Journal;

c. Strengthen the role of religion and theology teachers;

d. Add to the Handbook series for teachers;

e. Offer regional conferences about faith and learning, assessment of spiritual master plans, Adventist philosophy of education, etc.

f. Promote education as a calling, and the practice of credentialing and commissioning of teachers.

The fourth goal is to nurture Seventh-day Adventist students in non-Adventist higher education and partner with other GC departments (Chaplaincy, Children’s Ministries, Youth, Family Ministries) to strengthen, through the divisions, the ministry of churches to all Seventh-day Adventist students. To accomplish this, we plan to:

a. Increase access to Dialogue;

b. Monitor the preparation of future teachers and recruit teachers and other personnel needed for Adventist higher education (in line with our third goal); and


d. Address access barriers so as to increase the percentage of Seventh-day Adventist students in denominational schools.

There you have it: the Team and Game Plan. What are your thoughts on how to strengthen Adventist mission and identity? What are some practical ways the Journal might support school leadership and effective decision-making by school boards? How can we be better partners with teachers to achieve the redemptive purposes of Adventist education? And how should we extend Adventist education outside of its formal educational structures to have an impact where the majority of Adventist students are? We’re not in this alone—we want to hear from you. It’s more than a game—we aim to score for eternity.

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