Educational Leadership in the 21st Century: Great Challenges and Expectations

The school principal should "be a strong advocate and role model for teachers" in teaching and learning, clinical supervision, shared decision-making, research, vision, and strategic planning.

With the 21st century nearly here, education literature is replete with predictions about school leadership in the new millennium. This article summarizes the major issues: modeling leadership, tapping information technology, intercultural education, assessment of education outcomes, financial leadership, community involvement, and integration of values into education. Gaining a clearer picture of these issues should enable Adventist educational administrators and teachers to more adequately prepare for the future.

Modeling Leadership

Leadership, according to Bailey and Jenkins, is the "shot in the arm" needed by the learning community to launch education into the 21st century.[1] Chalker says the school principal should "be a strong advocate and role model for teachers" in teaching and learning, clinical supervision, shared decision-making, research, vision, and strategic planning.[2] To prepare for cultural diversity of schools of the 21st century, leaders must help the faculties to acquire the necessary skills to provide culturally competent services.[3]

Penney identifies five specific challenges that college and university presidents will face: "[T]he necessity to: manage and enhance change; reassert academic leadership; balance an institution's many and varied constituencies; raise increasing amount of funds; and respond to increasing demands for strict accountability."[4]

Penney maintains that educational leaders should model academic leadership through "curricular re-

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form and technologically advanced teaching methods."[5] Their leadership should involve faculty, staff, and students in creating and implementing organizational vision.[6] Davis advises educators to monitor economic trends and prepare students to be critical, creative thinkers who are also versatile, punctual, and dependable, so they will be able to find gainful employment in the 21st century.[7]

The preceding quotes make it obvious that leadership will be a major educational challenge in the 21st century. However, for the Adventist educator, this issue goes far beyond managing academics, finance, and constituencies. It begins with modeling the techniques of the Master Teacher, who exemplified spiritual leadership through humility, obedience, selfless service, patience, and total commitment to duty (Philippians 2:5-11; John 4:34; 13:1-15). The success of our educational administrators will depend on how well they follow Christ's example.

Tapping Information Technology

Although some futurists predict that books will become obsolete, few educational administrators are tapping into possibilities of telecommunications, which will enable leaders to communicate more effectively with staff and other administrators nationally and internationally, thus facilitating better understanding and relationships.[8] Douglas warns educators that the schools of the 21st century will be so different that their institutions "may not survive huge leaps in information technology [which] will overtake today's teaching and learning patterns."[9]

Undoubtedly, the educational leader of the 21st century will face serious challenges in effectively utilizing information technology—particularly in developing nations. Adventist education should take advantage of its worldwide system to en-

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sure that all its leaders and institutions are adequately prepared and equipped to make appropriate use of telephone, fax, and E-mail facilities for both on-site and distance learning. This will help the church proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole world.

Intercultural Education

As modern technology shrinks the globe, the most important challenge facing education is to help students address issues from a global perspective,[10] according to Ramler. This means: *Learning about those issues that cut across national boundaries and about the interconnectedness of systems, ecological, cultural, economic, political, and technological . . . . seeing things through the eyes, minds, and hearts of others; and it means the realization that while individuals and groups may view life differently, they also have common needs and wants.*[11]

To implement global education, schools should create opportunities for teachers and students to study and work with people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.[12] Teachers and administrators can achieve this goal by using multicultural examples in presenting various course topics, and making the school environment multicultural in terms of both human and material resources.[13] The culturally competent educator and administrator should be multilingual and have the skills to understand people from different cultures.[14]

The Lord calls His church to unity, oneness, and love (John 17:21; Ephesians 4:3). To achieve this, the educational arm of the church must purposefully and systematically offer programs that foster intercultural understanding, appreciation, and respect both on school campuses and in every unit of the church organization. Such programs should begin with the necessary professional development activities for administrators and teachers.

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Assessment of Educational Outcomes

Redding argues that in order to enable students to be productive citizens during the next century, they need to be assessed in five nontraditional areas:[15]

• *A Self-Directed Learner: (1) sets priorities and achievable goals; (2) monitors and evaluates progress; (3) creates options for self; (4) assumes responsibility for actions; and (5) creates a positive vision for self and future.*

• *A Collaborative Worker: (6) monitors own behavior as a group member; (7) assesses and manages group functioning; (8) demonstrates interactive communication; (9) demonstrates consideration for individual differences.*

• *A Complex Thinker: (10) uses a wide variety of strategies for managing complex issues; (11) elects strategies appropriate to the resolution of complex issues and applies the strategies with accuracy and thoroughness; (12) accesses and uses topic-relevant knowledge.*

• *A Quality Producer: (13) creates products that achieve their purpose; (14) creates products appropriate to the intended audience; (15) creates products that reflect craftsmanship; (16) uses appropriate resources/technology;*

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• *A Community Contributor: (17) demonstrates knowledge about his or her diverse communities; (18) takes action; and (19) reflects on role as a community contributor.*

Redding stresses that students should know the assessment criteria so they can become responsible for preparing for them, using their teacher as a resource person.[16] Buckner says that diverse student cultures require correspondingly diverse curricula, instructional methods, and educational goals, as well as evaluation of students and programs.[17]

Because Adventist education is wholistic—dealing with spiritual, mental, physical, and social development—its assessment should also be wholistic. This assessment will include discovering the extent to which faith in God gives the student peace, strength, a sense of commitment, and hope for the future. Sensitive and subjective as this may seem, the Adventist educator must attempt through the grace of God to measure the extent to

which his or her teaching is leading students to Christ.

Financial Leadership

Educational leaders of the 21st century must become excellent fund raisers, while transparently accounting for all monies spent by their institutions.[18]

In Breneman's view, it is no longer possible to solve financial problems simply by raising more money from traditional sources. Costs must be reduced and hard choices made about educational priorities. For private colleges and universities grappling with the issue of affordability, tuition for students and their families is a critical issue.[19]

Educational finance is an issue that educational leaders will continue to wrestle with for the foreseeable future. This challenge is much more serious in developing nations. In the Adventist system, public support is at best minimal, and at worst completely lacking. To address this issue, leaders should look for cost-effective ways to plan and offer programs. This will include merging some programs, using technology to reduce labor, and reducing overhead costs. Also, church members should be encouraged to increase their commitment to education because the "Church is so dependent upon its educational institutions that it is doubtful it would long exist as a significant force without them."[20]

Community Involvement

In his America 2000 strategy, former U.S. President George Bush sought to promote excellence in education by involving every sector of the society, including the home, community, and business.[21] Bryan proposes a community-based leadership model of moving people to action that deeply and practically involves the community in setting and achieving its own educational objectives.[22]

Certainly, educational leaders are already involving the community in some areas. For Adventist education, the church constitutes the primary community, both in terms of funding and enrollment. Accordingly, the church (local, national, and international) must ensure that its institutions strictly adhere to its educational philosophy and focus on the ultimate goal of redemption through Jesus Christ. Advent-

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ist educational leaders must work with the church and parents to ensure that institutions are truly Adventist, even in the midst of opposing social factors.

Integration of Values

Johnson et al. say that the common goals and values of a community help to define appropriate behavior for that community's survival. Their value list includes integrity, respect, responsibility, compassion, commitment, courage, and appreciation for diversity.[23] A society's political, social, economical, educational, and moral behaviors are shaped by its values. In view of this, Adventist education should incorporate desirable societal values into every level of the curricula.

Children are not born with morals, judgment, or remorse—they must learn them. According to Jennings, Nelson, and Parens, colleges and universities need to incorporate values into their curriculum in order to avoid producing "a new generation of leaders who are ethically illiterate at best or dangerously adrift and morally misguided at worst."[24]

Major challenges for educational leaders of the 21st century will be to design and implement curricula that will enable students to acquire the values that will not only sustain their societies, but also to help them succeed now and in the future.

While some societal values (such as honesty, respect, responsibility, and punctuality) are biblical, others (divide and rule, survival of the fittest, doing evil when one can get away with it, glorifying of violence and the use of alcohol and tobacco, for example) are not. The Adventist educational leader must be able to differentiate between biblical and non-biblical values, affirming positive values while leading teachers to do the same and to effectively integrate them in their teaching.

Summary and Conclusion

From the information presented above, it is evident that leadership, information technology, intercultural education, assessment of educational outcomes, finance, community involvement, and integration of values will continue to be major issues for educational leaders.

The dynamic Adventist educational administrator must remain sensitive to events in his or her environment that shape education and be ready to adapt whenever the need arises. Moreover, the administrator should see these challenges in the light of the church's mission and ultimate goals. He or she should address them not just to survive the wind of social change, but more importantly, in order to help to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and save souls for His kingdom.

It is important, therefore, for the Adventist educational leader to model Christ's humility, obedience to God's Word, selfless service, patience, and commitment to duty as he or she pursues academic excellence. Leaders should use information technology to satisfy the academic as well as spiritual needs of teachers and students. The educational plan should integrate intercultural programs, personnel, and environment in order to foster intercultural understanding and respect.

In assessing educational outcomes, Adventist educational administrators should work with their teachers to extend the accountability for academic growth to spiritual development. Administrators need to make schools more cost-effective. They should also better educate church members on the need to increase their financial commitment to education, realizing that the church cannot afford the cost of ignorance. And finally, they must help teachers integrate Adventist values in their teaching. ✐

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