12. An Analysis of the Responses to Open-ended Questions in the Solomon Islands' Survey

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This chapter reports the results of a survey conducted to determine how workers in Seventh-day Adventist educational institutions in the Solomon Islands perceive the mission of the church and how they believe their educational institution is different from other similar educational institutions. The study was conducted in the same manner as described in chapter 6 for the Australian survey and utilised the same methodology and analysis of data.

Three hundred and thirteen participants provided responses to this survey. As part of this study it was important to allow participants to express their own views in their own words and this was achieved by using open-ended questions. This has allowed the researchers to focus on the choice and use of the words given by the participants and to identify themes using the participants' words. This has been particularly helpful in understanding what it is to which participants are referring and exactly what they are meaning. In this chapter direct quotes from the participants' responses to the surveys are indicated by italics.

In order to enable the investigators to build a picture of the participants' understanding, a thematic approach (Creswell, 2015) was used to analyse the rich text data from two of the questions on the survey. The researchers used NVivo to manage the coding and recoding of the responses. There were three phases in this process: (1) the recognition of certain words or word patterns that were used in the responses; (2) encoding the words; (3) interpreting these to generate themes expressed in words and/or strings of words used by the participants. The resulting themes are taken directly from

the participants' responses and include their choice of words and/or strings of words. In some instances participants mentioned more than one theme in their open-ended response. The reported results reported from the two open-ended survey questions administered in educational institutions in the Solomon Islands are given below.

The mission of my school should be (A1)

The two questions will be addressed separately.

The first open-ended question (A1) stated and asked:

I work at a Church-connected organization. If I were asked what the mission of my organisation should be, I would say: . . . . .

Ten themes emerged from the 313 responses gathered across the Solomon Islands. These are listed in Table 10.1 (below) together with the number and percentage of participants whose responses included the respective themes.

Table 10.1: Solomon Islands survey: themes emerging from question A(1)

Theme	Number of Participants	Percent of Participants
Preparation for eternity	86	28
Teach the good news	75	24
Work e.g. educate, help, etc.	67	21
Lead people to Jesus	65	21
Opportunity to represent Jesus	46	15
Seventh-day Adventist	43	14
Misunderstood the question	33	11
Values and difference	23	7
Provide a Christian environment	22	7
Serve others	17	5
No response	7	2

The ten themes were: *preparation for eternity* (28%), *teach the good news* (24%), *lead people to Jesus* (21%), *work e.g. educate, help, etc.* (21%), *opportunity to represent Jesus* (15%), *Seventh-day Adventist* (14%), *provide a Christian environment* (7%), *values and difference* (7%), *serve others* (5%), *misunderstood the question* (11%) and no response (2%). Of the 313 participants, seven did not respond to this question on their survey. The ten themes are discussed

individually below.

Misunderstood the question

Thirty-three of the responses provided for question A1 in the survey in the Solomon Islands did not address the question. Among these, there were four broad categories of response. First, the responses given were often of a personal nature regarding the participant's commitment to their job—for example, *Yes and would be willing and happy to do or respond to the organization*.[1] The second type of misunderstanding was related to what the respondent is doing in regard to their commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church—for example, *I am waiting to take up the challenge*; and *We must spend [time] reading the word of God and prayer every day in our life*. The third type of misunderstanding prevalent in responses consisted of isolated thoughts unrelated to the question—for example, *the mission of my organization should pay their teachers to avoid any strike that may arise with government teachers*. The fourth reason for the misunderstanding of this question for some participants was the use of the word "mission". In the Solomon Islands the organisational structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church operating across the Pacific Islands has been referred to as the Island Missions abbreviated as "the Mission". This misunderstanding is shown in the following example: *Yes if the mission ask me what to do, I will more positively accept the call and do the work required for the mission*.

This result shows that when implementing a survey care needs to be taken to ensure that questions are not misunderstood. Opportunity needs to be provided for participants to ask questions and clarify terms prior to the instrument's being implemented. This result has also highlighted the necessity for researchers to ensure that the use of certain words—*mission* for example—does not influence the results and suggests that when implementing this survey in other countries a pilot of the survey will need to be conducted. A pilot survey in each country will help to refine questions for the context and ensure that the responses address the intended question.

Four themes identified in the responses to question A(1) were common to at least 21% of the participants, i.e. 65 or more participants, indicating that these themes are perceived by many in the Solomon Islands as significant to the mission of their institution, or to what it should be. The four themes are: *preparation for eternity* (86 participants or 28%), *teaching the good news* (75 participants or 24%), *leading people to Jesus* (65 participants or 21%) and *doing the*

1 Wording placed in italics in the text are direct verbatum responses from a participant.

work expected e.g. education, helping, etc. (67 participants or 21%). Each of these themes is discussed below.

Preparation for eternity

This theme was identified by the most participants (86) and therefore presents as the most significant theme in response to question A(1). Clearly these institutional workers believe that this theme should be the mission of their Seventh-day Adventist educational institution. The most common phrase used for this theme was *education for eternity*. Many of these participants identified with *training pupils, to educate and prepare students not only for a life of service here on earth but for eternity*.

The participants used a variety of words within this theme to describe their work in equipping their students for the future: *prepare* (108 times), *train* (11 times), *shape and mould* (3 times), and *help* (2 times). A commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church was particularly evident in the answers provided: for example, *I as an Adventist dedicated teacher know the mission of my organization is to train and develop each child to be a better citizen in the coming future and to focus their mind towards the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Teaching the gospel

This theme linked directly with the first one above in proclaiming the gospel and sharing the message of Christ as Saviour. This theme links directly with the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Seventy-five participants felt that this theme should be the mission of their institution. One participant stated that they could have a *Bible study with the pupils in the school both Adventist and non-Adventist*, which was part of the mission of their institution. Other responses built on this theme with statements such as, *In class we share the good news to students and reflect upon His example through the knowledge and skills we teach in class as our mission to share the love of Jesus to others*. In addition, some participants added that their institution should prepare their students to share what they learn at school with others outside of the school: *also spreading of gospel through teachings and sharing what they [the student] learn from our school.*

Participants referred to teaching the *gospel* 108 times and sharing the *good news* 29 times. One participant stated, *the mission of the*

organization says that the gospel should be proclaimed for eternity. Share it, spread it till He comes. As well as proclaiming the gospel, some participants stated that the mission should be *to preach the three angels message*.

This theme of teaching the gospel links directly to another theme that the participants identified—leading people to Jesus.

Leading people to Jesus

Sixty-five participants identified leading people to Jesus as an important part of the mission of their Church-connected organisation. Responses included, for example: *I would say that the difference is my organization leads children to know and accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour*. The aspect of *teaching pupils to know Jesus in their life* was stated as relevant to their work, together with *leading them to know God*. A thought repeated in the data was that *I educate young people to know Jesus better and to build a strong personal relationship with God*. One participant linked the aspect of leading people to Jesus to include the wider community: *The mission of my organization should help young people, church member, youths, to really think deep in their spiritual life to know how is Jesus in their life and to help them have a close relationship with him*.

It is interesting to note that three of the four most-significant themes, identified by these participants, are discipleship-related and centred on God. It is fascinating to note that the aspect of *doing the work expected* of the participants in the educational institutions is not in the top two themes identified from the Solomon Island data.

Doing the work expected, e.g. education, helping, etc.

Only 67 participants identified doing the work expected of them as part of the mission of their organisation. All the participants work in educational institutions and so the focus was on *educating* and *meeting the needs of the local community*. It is of interest that the way the participants worded their responses linked this theme with the three of the themes described above— for example, *Educate students to prepare themselves for the world today and also for the world to come (heaven)* and t*o deliver better education to the children and share God's love in doing His work*.

The participants used pronouns such as *our, my* and *we* that connected them tightly with their work. In addition, these participants used verbs to emphasise their own personal action as part of the

mission of their organisation: *provide, help, educate* and *impart*. Many participants qualified their responses by stating that there was an expectation that the work should be of a high standard in order to provide *quality education in our school so that people see Jesus in us*. In addition, participants perceived the mission of their institution to be to *educate and impart trainings that can transform the life of young people*. This aspect of transforming a life directly connects with providing *opportunity to represent Jesus*.

Opportunity to represent Jesus

In conjunction with *doing the work that is expected* of them, participants also drew attention to the fact that their work provided, in addition, opportunities for them to represent Jesus in their educational institution. Forty-six respondents highlighted this theme in response to A(1). For example, one should *be a Christ-like teacher daily in class and outside of class for students to see and follow*. Words such as *reflecting* and *following* in the data identify this theme of *opportunity to represent Jesus*.

In addition to the *opportunities to represent Jesus,* participants also added that their institution should *promote a Christ-like character and lifestyle to others*. Some participants used particular biblical and Christian terminology to express their action in following Jesus' example, as well a, being a shining example to others as part of the mission: *to feed the lambs* and *to be a lighthouse*.

Participants stated that *showing love* is another part of the mission of the organisation *as God is love*. Together with these *opportunities to represent Jesus* participants said that the mission of their institute should include *providing a Christian environment* for learning.

Provide a Christian environment

Providing a Christian environment was a theme that twenty-two of the participants identified as being part of the mission of their educational institution. Participants wrote of creating and promoting a Christian-centred learning area based and focused on the Bible. Responses included, for example, *Create and provide a Christian environment for this life and that is to come*. Other participants stated that *the organization that I work in creates a Christ-centred learning. All curricula are integrated to the Bible*. These comments show that all aspects within the learning environment are intentional and Bible-focused, thus creating a Christian environment.

In addition, participants stated that the mission was *to provide Christian education to every student*, thus promoting and providing a Christian environment for learning. Therefore, following a Christian worldview and understanding would involve an attitude of service as that is what Christ promoted, as evidenced in the Bible.

Serve others

Seventeen participants stated that within their institution they were able to *serve others*, which made this theme a point of the mission of their institutions. Service to others is part of a Christian approach and is clearly one that is promoted within these educational institutions. Evidence of this resonates across the survey data in statements such as: *The workers of God's church should come together as one serving and preparing people for the 2nd coming of Jesus;* and, *I am a servant of God working as a teacher*.

Serving others requires that as educational institutions they are caring, supporting, loving, meet the needs of and share within the community. Participants shared statements that support this. One participant stated, *the mission of my organization is loving, caring and sharing*. Another said, *the mission of my organization is to reach out, reach up and reach across for the people and myself*. These statements confirm that these participants perceive serving others to be an aspect of the mission of their particular faith-based institutions. Many participants did not separate their educational institution from the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, *The work of the Adventist church is to help others and to help children in our organization church*. This statement links the work of the educational institution to that of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Seventh-day Adventist

Reflecting the fact that the educational institutions are known to be run by Seventh-day Adventists, this theme was noted by forty-three participants as part of the mission: *It is a church – organized organization*. Participants highlighted the Christian aspect of the Adventist teachings—*the Seventh-day Adventist church always uplifts Jesus as their first before beginning to work*; *the mission of my organization is living up to the standard which God wants us to be*.

Aspects that make the institution distinctive and are related directly to the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were identified: for example, *Promote and uphold the Seventh-Day Adventist Christian policy and church doctrine in line with the Bible*.

Values and difference

As a Seventh-day Adventist educational institution that is following Christian principles and practices it is no surprise that participants stated *values* and a particular nature as a theme for the mission of the organisation for which they work. Twenty-three participants identified *values and difference* as a theme from the survey for question A(1). The data showed that participants perceived *values and difference* to be part of the mission of their educational institutions. *It is different because the values we have to teach and uphold*. Participants stated that they taught values intentionally. They also stated that in their institution they prepared students for life by *training young people to have good virtues in life. To train young people to be better citizens of this world*.

The Seventh-day Adventist institutions were seen to be different because, as part of their mission, they promote the values of hope and wellbeing: the *Mission of hope* and where *We run a more wholesome education program that includes all aspects of the human life*. Most of the quotes from the data are so embedded with an Adventist focus or Christian understanding that it is noteworthy and highlights additionally the theme of *values and difference* within the participants themselves from these educational institutions.

Summary

It is clear that in the responses to question A(1) in the survey conducted in the Solomon Islands responses for A1, most of the themes identified relate to Christianity and the mission of promoting Jesus. The participants clearly see the mission of their Church-connected organization as that of teaching their students about Jesus and preparing them to meet Him.

What makes an Adventist School different from similar organizations that are NOT part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (A3)

Participants were asked:

> My organization is owned by or connected to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. If I were asked what makes it different from similar organizations that are NOT part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I would say (A3)…

This question required the participants to identify what makes their work area different from that in other similar institutions. Again, the 313 participants provided their own feedback and the table below summarises their responses into themes.

Table 10.2: Solomon Islands survey: themes emerging from question (A3)

Theme	**Participants**	**%**
Biblically based organisation	172	55
Seventh-day Adventist focus	118	38
Future focused	47	15
Lifestyle and way of living	32	10
Nurturing environment	31	10
Staff commitment to the organisation and mission	28	9
Private independent organisation non-government	23	7
Additional Christian focused activities	13	4
No response	12	4
Nothing really	5	2

When asked what makes their organisation different from other similar organisations two significant themes emerged from the data. The most-supported theme was because their organisation is *Biblically based*, with one hundred and seventy two participants (55%) nominating it. The second theme, raised by one hundred and eighteen participants (38%), was that being *Seventh-day Adventist* is what made it different. This means that most of the participants (93%) acknowledged that the difference was because of the Christian basis. Other themes of difference emerged from the data, including *future*

focus (15%), *lifestyle and way of living* (10%), *nurturing environment* (10%), *private independent organisation non-government* (7%), *staff commitment to the organisation and mission* (7%), *additional Christian focused activities* (4%), *work environment choice for worker* (2%) and nothing really (2%). Overall, only twelve participants (4%) did not respond to this question. It is of interest there did not appear to be any responses that were not relevant to the question. There appear to be no misunderstandings of this question, unlike question (A1). The following discussion presents the themes emerging from the data for question A3, arranged in descending order according to the number of participants whose responses were identified with the theme.

Biblically based organisation

The factor that made their institution different from others that was identified by 172 (55%) of the participants was that their church-connected educational institution was Biblically based. One participant stated that their *Seventh-day Adventist church organization is different because the organization is based on a Biblical perspective and not working by its own understanding*. This same thought was echoed by so many other participants who consistently used the words *based* and *founded*.

Some participants stated that their educational organisation *uplifts Jesus*. Others specified, *we live and teach what the Bible teaches*, thereby linking directly to the Biblical base undergirding their institution. One participant summed up this theme well:

The difference is that the other organization that is not Seventh-day Adventist does not look at the Bible as important in education, but the Seventh-day [Adventist] *organization looks at the Bible as a good book for a "role model of life". They make sure that children must know God first before their other subjects*.

Another important point of difference raised by the participants in the theme of their educational organisation being *Biblically based* was the fact that Bible is taught intentionally as a subject. One participant raised this point of teaching the Bible intentionally but in a different way: *The other organization are all corporate and individual, as well as unfaithful because no Christ is found in that organization*. One participant also stated that the other institutions *did not focus much on the Bible teachings.* While another participant said, *What makes my organization different is that we taught bible every day throughout*

the week, unlike other non-Adventist schools, they taught bible one period per week. In addition, according to these participants the Bible is incorporated into all areas of the curriculum.

Participants also raised the fact that the SDA Church has Bible based beliefs as the difference, for example, *Seventh-day Adventist church organization is different because the organization is based on a Biblical perspective and not working by its own understanding*. The fact that the Seventh-day Adventist doctrines and beliefs are based on the Bible and that this is the biggest difference raised by the participants, links directly with their next theme: *Seventh-day Adventist focus*.

Seventh-day Adventist focus

This theme was identified by 118 (38%) of the participants as a significant factor in the difference between their educational institution and a similar educational institution. One participant stated it plainly, saying, what makes the difference is simply the fact that my school is a SDA owned school with SDA teachers. Another participant stated that the SDA church operates differently from other denominations because it believes in the three Angels' message, Jesus as our mediator and believes that Ellen G White is a prophet of the church.

The fact that the SDA Church has plans and policies was also important within this theme. These plans and policies are adhered to and impact on the way that these institutions function, for example, we are Seventh-day Adventist in many things or ways: clean campus, well organized programs and also the reflective church or organization that is outstanding.

Participants stated that an aspect of difference was the fact that their institution was owned and run by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In addition, participants added that the difference is my organization is complementing the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist [Church], meaning that they felt the difference was because they worked together with the Church entity. Another difference in the Seventh-day Adventist focus was that at the Seventh-day Adventist school they usually have morning worship or other spiritual activities, but different organizations or schools don't involve spiritual activities. Some participants highlighted the fact that we are unique because we have a universal message. Participants acknowledged that being owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church gave their institution global connections and focus. The participants are aware of their link to the world-wide Church entity and support. As one participant stated: The things that make the similar organization

different are because we are organized by the Seventh-day Adventist [Church] that is supported by the world-wide church. This connection shows the standard of the world church, vision, mission and values. A number of participants stated the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific Division again demonstrating their connection to the wider Church community and also the focus on the future. One participant articulated it as follows: The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist is to reach up, reach across and reach out to all people to the soon returning hope. This focus on hope connects with the looking ahead to the future.

Future-focused

Forty-seven (15%) participants stated that their institutions were different from other educational institutions because they *focused on the future* and *hope*. This future-focus was on *preparing students for Jesus' soon return* and the *hope of eternal life*. *Seventh-day Adventists believe and preach about the second coming … and nurturing them for the heavenly kingdom*.

Participants' responses emphasised that this focus on the future was not limited to eternal life but also to being good citizens in their country: *My organization aims to help children to be a strong citizen for Solomon Islands* and *gives impact to the life of children preparing them for the coming challenges.* One participant summed up this theme well, stating that t*hey (other schools) are only preparing the children academically. No future aims.*

The aspect of having hope and focusing on a future is a point of difference with other institutions.

Lifestyle and way of living

For thirty-two participants (10%) *lifestyle and the way they lived* their lives was a distinct difference from other institutions. Lifestyle differences included *health* and *approach to living*. Specific living differences included *the environment, clean and well-kept campus*, the way in which staff *work together and the way students dress. We are different because of the way we look*. Relationships are an important aspect of lifestyle and promoting health, as one participant stated: *Good healthy positive relationships are accepting and welcoming for others, for example, Similar organization that are not part of the Seventh-day Adventist church, they might not have the kindness of welcoming people, the students and staff don't look healthy and they are not learning to grow their spiritual life. The difference is that the church, schools and community are working together to support the schools*.

Linked with the development of healthy relationships is behaviour, which forms part of lifestyle and way of living. A participant stated, *I would say that the difference of my school from other similar organization is that the behaviour of our students is far better than those non –Adventist schools. E.g. no swearing, students are very clean, the school is managed well and it is the best place, next to home. I feel like I belonged to the environment the first day I entered the place*. This sense of belonging and having an environment you are part of and where you feel safe, supported and cared for was another theme of difference highlighted across the surveys.

Nurturing environment

A nurturing environment was identified by thirty-one participants (10%) as a distinctive feature of their institution. The participants spoke of nurturing their students and helping them to feel like they belong. *Shape and nurture children to experience environment of team work and belonging*. The value of providing a *clean and welcoming environment* was echoed across the surveys. In addition, a nurturing environment for these participants involves focusing on a *balanced life and caring for others*.

This educational environment also nurtures each person involved, for example teachers, students and the community foster a climate where *teachers and students love each other and unite to uplift each other*. Included in the theme of a nurturing environment is the value placed on service to others and especially to the community; for example, *provides good services to the nearby communities, perhaps through visitation*.

A nurturing environment that reaches out to the community and provides good services encourages support and belonging. This sense of support and belonging, according to the Solomon Islands survey results, fosters a staff who are committed to the organisation and its mission.

Staff commitment to the organisation and mission

Twenty-eight participants (8%) wrote in their response that being committed to their educational institution was a point of difference. Some participants stated that they were *committed to their teaching and the teachings of the SDA Church*, where *Bible-based workers are committed members of the church*.

Participants spoke of their virtues and work ethic that contributed to the difference found in their educational institution: *We work as*

team sharing of ideas, working together and co-operating well with our work. An additional point raised by the participants in this theme was the fact that they had *purpose and a goal,* which made them different as *we work co-operatively with our common goals and our objectives*. In addition, staff *choose to be in this work environment* as it links with *My belief, aims and goals in life, my knowledge and understanding of God, who God is and for his plan for my life*.

Clearly these participants support and are fully committed to their organisation.

Private independent organisation non-government

The fact that *it was owned by the church and not government* was expressed by twenty-three participants (7%). One participant stated that *simply the fact that my school is a SDA-owned school with SDA teachers* made it different. This observation was repeated over and over. Sometimes participants worded it differently, stating, for example, *the Seventh-day Adventist is different from the rest of the other organizations because of the system and regulations used by the church in order to improve the smooth running of the church*.

In addition, the fact that their institution is private allows for *competitive, reliable*, as well as additional resources including *teachers or workers*. Participants felt the way that the church manages and invests in the work was a difference, particularly the fact that *my organization need to pay their own teachers* and in *the way we look after our organization.* It is of interest that this last respondent mentioned that the way that the organization looks after their workers is something that is different from the other institutions. As part of their commitment to the organisation, survey participants encouraged and participated in additional Christian-focused activities that made them different from other educational institutions.

Additional Christian-focused activities

Being involved in evangelism and worship programs was a theme of difference pointed out by thirteen (4%) of the participants. In the survey they wrote about spiritual activities that were included by their educational institution: for example, *out-reaching programs, training/doing bible studies with the students*, *morning worship or other spiritual activities, teaching the Bible, how to pray and also singing Christian songs*. After raising so many of the differences between their educational institution and other similar institutions it was interesting to note that only a very few participants felt there was no difference.

Nothing really

Out of the 313 participants only five (2%) considered that there was no difference. One participant was unwilling to be involved while the others just stated there was *nothing different*. This is such a small percentage that it does not warrant more investigation.

Summary

According to these participants clearly there are notable differences between their educational institution and another similar educational institution. It is of interest that the differences are all related to the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and in line with its mission. The Adventist teachers in both Australia (chapter 6) and the Solomon Islands identified the same themes in their open-ended type responses, albeit with a slightly different emphasis. This is reassuring to note for the administrators of these institutions where across cultures the Adventist education system is still Christ-centred and focused on presenting Jesus to students. The participants from both countries agreed on the top-ranked two themes that make their institution different from other similar institutions, namely, they are Bible-based and they have a Seventh-day Adventist character.

References

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