Chapter 18
How Solomon Islands Adventist Teachers Understand Their Role in Relation to the Overall Church Mission

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This chapter provides an analysis of the responses of SIM (Solomon Islands Mission) teachers to a number of questions asked in the Solomon Islands Teachers' Survey. The questions explore the teachers' understanding of the school's mission, their personal role in that mission, and how both relate to the mission of the corporate Church in its community. The questions also explored the teachers' perceptions about whether their school is successful in fulfilling its mission.

Participating teachers' responses to the closed Questions 31, 32, 33, and 35, as well as themes derived from responses to the open-ended Questions 34, 57, 58, 71, and 72 are presented and discussed in this chapter. As discussed in Chapter 4, this survey had a number of branches. Consequently, responses relate to the specific branch of the survey the respondent received. In reporting the responses to the open-ended questions, the researcher has used the participants' words wherever possible to reflect their responses as accurately as possible. Consistent with all analysis of the teachers' responses in this book, NVivo software was used to code the responses to identify emerging themes. Direct quotes from participants are given in italics for easy identification.

Mission of the School

In response to Question 31, "How well do you know the Mission Statement of the organisation for which you work?" three in four

respondents to Branch One of the survey reported knowing the mission statement of their school. However, only one-sixth of these respondents claimed they knew the statement very well, while only two in five reported they knew the statement well. At first glance, this seems a positive response. However, it highlights the need for mission statements to be more than just a framed piece of paper on the wall of the office. Mission statements need to be explicit and embedded into the cultural knowledge of the school.

One way to validate this reported result would be to ask respondents to write the mission statement of their school. Typically, the mission statement is often understood in a general big-picture concept, rather than being a concise, memorable statement which can be measured.

Table 18.1

How Well SIM Teachers Know Mission Statement

Question	Response	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
Q31: How well do you know the Mission Statement of the organisation for which you work?	*Not at all 0*	4	4.6%
	1	8	9.2%
	2	9	10.3%
	3	17	19.5%
	4	36	41.5%
	Very well 5	13	14.9%
Total		87	

Question 32 asked respondents about the alignment of the mission of the school with the overall mission of the Adventist Church. Only 81 respondents for Branch One of the survey, the lowest number of responses in this group, answered this question. Of those who responded, more than four in five asserted that the missions of both the school and the Church were aligned. Almost half of the respondents reported a good link between the two organisations. Considering that education has been a significant contributor to establishing and growing the Church in the Solomon Islands (Sister Jones writing from Gizo, 1914), it is encouraging to see that more than one hundred years since the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Solomon Islands, teachers still recognise the contribution the schools make to the mission of the Church.

Table 18.2
How Well SIM Teachers Think Mission Statement of School Contributes to Mission of Church

Question	Response	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
Q32: How well do you think the Mission Statement of your organisation contributes to the Overall Mission of the Adventist Church?	*Not at all 0*	0	0.0%
	1	3	3.7%
	2	8	9.9%
	3	12	14.8%
	4	40	49.4%
	Very well 5	18	22.2%
Total		81	

Personal Contribution to the School's Mission

In responding to Question 33 of Branch One of the survey, teachers reported their own contribution to the mission of the school. Overall, the vast majority of these teachers believed they personally contributed to the mission of the school. However, it is interesting to note that only one in ten respondents thought they contributed a great deal to the mission of the school, the lowest result for these three closed questions. Future research could explore the reasons for this qualified response. Is it just the modest humility of these teachers, or are there other things that could be done to reinforce their perception of the value of their personal contribution to the mission of the school?

Table 18.3
SIM Teachers' Personal Contribution to Mission of School

Question	**Response**	**Number of participants**	**Percentage of participants**
Q33: How much do you think you personally contribute to the overall mission of your organisation in the work that you do for it?	*Not at all 0*	1	1.2%
	1	6	7.0%
	2	4	4.7%
	3	26	30.2%
	4	40	46.5%
	A great deal 5	9	10.5%
Total		86	

The responses to the open-ended Question 34 continue to demonstrate the commitment and contribution of the teachers through a range of specific activities. As part of Branch One of the survey participants were asked, "In what ways do you personally contribute to the overall mission of your organisation?" Eighty-one participants had the opportunity to answer this question. Twenty (25%) of the 81 teachers did not answer this question, while one teacher's response did not match the question and one participant stated, *It does not happen*. The remaining 59 responses (73%) revealed the following themes, represented in Table 18.4 as their contribution to the overall mission of their school.

Table 18.4

Themes From the SIM Teachers' Responses to Question 34: "In what ways do you personally contribute to the overall mission of your organisation?"

Theme	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
1. Teaching the children to know God	28	35%
2. Participation in organisational activities	23	28%
3. Through service	12	15%
4. Teaching	10	12%

Note: The responses given by participants to Questions 34 (Table 18.4), 57 (Table 18.5), 58 (Table 18.6), 71 (Table 18.7), and 72 (Table 18.8) may include wording that fits more than one of the themes. Such responses are counted for each theme they mention, which means that the apparent number of respondents is greater than the total number of respondents in Tables 18.4 to 18.8.

Teaching the Children to Know God

Twenty-eight participants (35%) highlighted this theme as their personal contribution to the mission of their school through their work. Teachers are actively engaged in *teaching the children to know God*[1] (12 participants) and *teaching the children about Jesus* (five participants). Three teachers stated that they were *teaching Adventist education in the lessons*. *Training the children for the future and the world to come*

1 Note: Italics in the text is used to indicate a verbatim citation from a participant response.

was identified by two teachers. Five other teachers identified that they were involved in the *ministry of education* and *working on their students' spiritual life*. All of these participants' comments clearly show that they are personally involved in intentionally teaching their students about God and encouraging their students to build a relationship with Him. The next theme also identified the teachers' personal contribution through their participation.

Participation in Organisation Activities

Actively engaging in organisational activities and programs was identified by 23 participants (28%). Church-related programs and activities were also highlighted. These included *leading out in Sabbath School* (three participants), *personal ministries* (one participant), *Youth* (three participants), *Church clerk* (one participant), *deacon* (one participant), and as *assistant treasurer* (one participant). Other teachers contributed through *giving tithes and offerings* (four participants), while five other participants *preached*, *prayed*, *conducted Bible studies,* and *visited others*. These activities meant that the teachers were personally attending and engaging in what was happening. This theme links directly with the next theme that emerged.

Through Service

Twelve teachers (15%) identified their contribution as service acts. Four participants ensured that they were *loving, caring and sharing with those around them*. Two participants identified that their *students see and do* what they are doing. Intentionally *sacrificing their time* and *serving others* was the personal contribution of four teachers to the overall mission of their organisation. Two other participants stated that they have *contact with others* and are aware that they are a *role model*. By engaging in these acts the teachers are showing their personal awareness and contribution to the overall mission. The final theme to emerge from this data was not surprising as these participants are educators.

Teaching

Ten participants (12%) identified *teaching* as their personal contribution. One participant stated, *using my God given skills to teach students*. Assisting and working with their students is something that these teachers are engaged in on a daily basis. This theme links directly with the first one identified in this question, namely that of *teaching the children to know God*.

Contribution to the overall mission of the church is supported by 73% of the participating teachers. Their participation was clearly identified in their role as teachers and active participants for their Church-connected workplace. As such, working in a Church-affiliated institution can be experienced in different ways by different people, so it was important to understand the perception of these teachers in regard to their workplace.

Working for the Church

Questions 57 and 58 on Branch Two of the survey asked participants about their likes and frustrations in working in a Church-connected organisation. Seventy-six participants had the opportunity to answer these questions. Each of these questions are addressed individually, beginning with Question 57: "My School/Organisation is connected with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. If I were asked what I liked about working for a Church organisation, I would say: …" Of the 76 participants, 13 (17%) chose to leave this answer blank. No reason was required for leaving the question blank so, as part of this analysis, this fact is only noted. Themes derived from the remaining 63 responses (83%) are presented below.

Table 18.5

Themes From the SIM Teachers' Comments on What They Liked About Working for a Church School

Theme	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
1. Strengthens my relationship with God	32	42%
2. To be part of …	30	39%
3. Sharing God's word with others	12	16%

Strengthens my Relationship with God

Clearly the most supported theme concerned teachers' relationship with God. Thirty-two participants (42%) stated that working for their organisation *strengthened* and *maintained their personal relationship with God*. Five participants liked the fact that they *shared the same beliefs as their workplace,* and four others felt that *God blessed them*

more because they worked at their Church-connected organisation. Two participants liked the fact that their workplace was *more spiritual,* and three other participants enjoyed the aspect of *sharing and reading the Bible* in their workplace. Further to this, these teachers liked the fact that in their work they are part of something.

To Be Part Of …

Thirty participants (39%) highlighted this as something they valued and enjoyed. Eighteen specifically stated that they *are part of* and *belong* at their work. Eleven of these participants liked *being part of the mission work* that is taking place. Four participants expressed that they were *part of the blessings* that were being received by working in their organisation. Clearly these teachers are delighted to be part of this work and feel like they belong. Another positive for teachers was the fact that in this organisation they can share the Bible with other people.

Sharing God's Word with Others

Twelve participants (16%) identified sharing God's word with others as a significant positive to their work. *Sharing God*'s word (three participants), *spreading the good news* (four participants) and *learning more about God* (five participants) were all expressed as reasons why these teachers liked working in their organisation.

All three identified themes highlight the participants' personal connection and involvement in their work. These themes identified from Question 57 link with Question 34, and show the strong personal involvement in working in a Church-connected organisation. This question has highlighted the positive aspects.

Question 58 turns the focus to the negative aspects of working for a Church connected organisation. "If I were asked what frustrates me about the fact that my organisation is a Church organisation, I would say: …" As with Question 57, 76 participants had the opportunity to address this question. Twenty-two participants (29%) chose to leave the answer blank, with a further five participants appearing to misunderstand the question and an additional six participants who stated that they have *no frustrations*. This means that the themes identified below emerged from the remaining 43 participants (57%).

Table 18.6
Themes From the SIM Teachers' Comments on What They Find Frustrating About Working for a Church School

Theme	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
1. Issues with leadership	24	32%
2. Challenges	20	26%

Issues with Leadership

The most-highlighted frustration for these teachers centres around leadership. Twenty-four participants (32%) expressed their dissatisfaction with a number of issues with leadership. Thirteen participants included *lack of support for teachers.* One of these said, *as teachers we were somewhat being neglected by our mission in terms of privileges and benefits compared to ministers and pastors*. This perception was also expressed as *leaders showing favouritism towards ministers but neglecting the teachers* by five participants. These teachers were frustrated by this and felt they were *treated unfairly* or simply *ignored*. Another issue with leadership, as identified by five participants, is that the leadership is focused on their own selfish interests. One participant expressed it as, *the church organisational leaders were motivated by personal interest and are not committed leaders by example*. Another participant mentioned *leaders who do not show Jesus in their lives*. These identified issues with leadership are clearly articulated by the teachers and are aspects that frustrate them in their work for their Church organisation.

Challenges

The second significant theme that emerged from responses to Question 58 was that of challenges. Twenty participants (26%) expressed frustration with various challenges that they experience. These included personal commitment challenges (11 participants), where one of these teachers stated that, *I get frustrated when I neglect what God requires in the church*. Some teachers expressed their personal challenges as *feeling discouraged, weak*, *not being committed* or having *shallow beliefs and faith*. Further frustrations highlighted by these teachers included: feeling that their *needs are not met* (two participants) or *when people don't co-operate together*

or *share* (five participants). The final challenge that frustrated two participants was mockery and criticism from others: as one of these teachers said, *mockery from people who do not understand the truth*.

Although only two significant themes emerged from the data as frustrations for these teachers, they were clear and substantial hindrances. These frustrations are aspects that discourage and impact on the work of these teachers and ultimately on their contribution to the mission of their organisation.

Personal Contribution to the Mission of the Church Within and Beyond the School

Forty-one participants had Branch Four of the survey to answer. Branch Four contains Questions 71 and 72, relating to the participants' personal contribution to the mission of the SDA Church through work duties and outside of work duties. Each of these questions are addressed below, together with the data and themes that emerged.

Question 71 asked, "In what ways do you think the work you do as an employee of your school/organisation contributes to the wider mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?" Of the 41 possible responses, three participants (7%) left this answer blank, leaving 38 responses for analysis. Interestingly, two themes emerged with one clear strong theme: namely, that of spreading the Gospel.

Table 18.7

Themes From the SIM Teachers' Reports of How They Contribute to the Mission of the SDA Church as Teachers in School Setting

Theme	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
1. Spread the Gospel	33	80%
2. Teaching	10	24%

Spread the Gospel

Thirty-three participants shared this theme as their personal work contribution to the overall mission of the SDA Church. This theme links directly with the mission of Adventist education and is clearly the ministry of the church school where they are employed. *Sharing the Gospel* (five participants) and to *spread the Gospel* (15 participants) were expressions used by these teachers. A further nine participants

stated that they *serve and help prepare their students for the second coming*. Three participants shared that they are *missionaries* in their schools. Spreading the Gospel is certainly part of the overall SDA Church mission.

Teaching

Ten participants identified teaching as their personal work contribution to the overall mission of the SDA Church. Expressions used in the data included: *working with the children I teach in class* (eight participants) and *teach about Jesus* (two participants). This theme was not a surprise as this is the role of a teacher, and the fact that this is their contribution to the overall mission of the SDA Church shows that these teachers see their employment as part of this.

Question 72 asked about teachers' personal contribution outside of their work duties: "In what ways do you contribute to the wider mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church outside of your work duties?" As with Question 71, 41 participants had the option to answer this question. Five participants (12%) chose to leave this question blank, leaving 36 responses (88%) for the researchers to analyse.

Table 18.8

Themes From the SIM Teachers' Reports of How They Contribute to the Mission of the SDA Church as Teachers in School Setting

Theme	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
1. Roles within the Church	18	44%
2. Sharing the good news with all	14	34%
3. Helping others	11	27%

Roles Within the Church

Eighteen of these participants indicated that their personal contribution to the overall SDA Church mission outside of their work duties was the fact that they had roles within the Church. These roles include: *work in Church departments* (six participants), *being involved in the Church outreach* (eight participants), *leading prayer* (two participants), *taking Bible studies* (two participants), *participating in Youth activities* (three participants), *leading in worship and singing* (three participants), *giving tithes and offerings* (three participants) and

greeting and welcoming strangers (one participant). These are active roles, showing that these teachers are regularly engaged members of their local church, taking responsibility and contributing to the mission of their Church.

Sharing the Good News with All

Fourteen participants highlighted their personal contribution as sharing the good news with all. Eleven participants stated that they *share the good vews*. Two participants shared that their impact was as *role models,* where they could *show a good example to other people in the community and the country as a whole*. Two other participants *conducted Bible studies* outside of their work duties.

Helping Others

Eleven participants identified helping others as their contribution to the overall SDA mission outside of their work. These participants explained they were helping others by *meeting their needs* (eight participants), *mending clothes* (one participant), *giving out clothes* (one participant), *feeding others* (one participant), *providing security* (one participant), and *caring for others* (one participant). All of these aspects are focused on giving and assisting others where needed.

The themes that emerged from Questions 34, 71, and 72 all indicated that the Solomon Islands teachers are actively involved in their communities, both in and outside of their work environment. They personally contribute to the mission of their organisation and also to the overall mission of the SDA Church.

Conclusion

When asked about the perceived success of the school in fulfilling its mission in Question 35, four in five respondents were positive, with more than half of these very positive. It could be very interesting in future research to explore the evidence these teachers would report as indicators of this success. Significantly, one in five teachers did not consider the school successful in its mission.

Table 18.9
How Successful Do Solomon Islands Teachers Think Their School Is in Fulfilling Its Mission?

Question	Response	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
Q35: How successful do you think your organisation is in fulfilling its mission?	*Very successful*	36	41.4%
	Somewhat successful	34	39.1%
	Not very successful	17	19.5%
	Not successful at all	0	0.0%
Total		87	

It is evident that the majority of teachers in Adventist schools in the Solomon Islands continue to understand the important role education plays in the mission of the Church. They are also willing to contribute personally to this mission through their work at school, and the activities in their church and community. They are focused on strengthening their relationship with God, teaching the children to know God, serving in church and school activities, and sharing God's word with others.

Reference

Sister Jones writing from Gizo, Solomon Islands. (1914, September 7). *Australasian Record*, p. 8.