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## NAD Teachers' Understanding of What Adventist Schools Should be Doing and How Adventist Schools are Different

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## **8. NAD Teachers' Understanding of What Adventist Schools Should be Doing and How Adventist Schools Are Different**

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This chapter reports the results of two open-ended questions on a survey to which education workers in Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) schools across the North American Division (NAD) of the General Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church responded. These two questions address how NAD teachers perceive the mission of the SDA Church within their school and how their school is different from similar education institutions. At the time of this analysis, one thousand and two (1,002) responses to these questions were available from the NAD survey. The survey was administered at the 2018 Teachers' Convention held from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> September in Chicago, Illinois. During this time both paper-based surveys and an online SurveyMonkey version were made available. Each survey was allocated a number to ensure anonymity.

The two questions from the survey were open-ended questions that asked participants to provide their own answers. These answers provide qualitative data in the form of each participant's responses expressed in their own words. These data were then analysed using thematic analysis in which the researcher reads and rereads the data to identify emerging themes (Rapley, 2016). The participants' words have generated key words and ultimately the theme titles for each question (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Codes were allocated to the themes in order to process all the raw data. The data analysis process was

conducted using the data-analysis software, NVivo. This software provided a set of tools for analysing the data through data management, linking, recording, sorting and matching as directed by the researcher (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

The responses for each of the two open-ended questions were coded in a three-phase process: (1) words or strings of words were identified; (2) words were encoded; (3) these were interpreted to generate themes expressed in the participants' words (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Open-ended questions were chosen to allow participants to write as much or as little as they wanted. In many instances participants' responses covered more than one theme. Direct quotes from the data are presented throughout the results and are indicated by italics. The two questions are addressed separately beginning below with question 1.

### **The mission of my school should be (Question 1)**

The first question asked on the survey was:

*I work at a Church-connected school. If I were asked what the mission of my school should be, I would say (Question 1):*

Eleven significant themes emerged from the responses to this question. These themes are presented in Table 8.1 below. The themes are listed in descending order according to the number of participants who mentioned them.

**Table 8.1: Themes from the NAD responses to question 1**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
1. Lead the children to Jesus	342	34
2. Education	265	26
3. Preparation for this world	209	21
4. Service learning	203	20
5. Eternity focus	203	20
6. Share the Good News	187	19
7. Christ-centered education	161	16
8. God's love	98	10
9. No response/don't know	88	9
10. Community focus	51	5
11. Distinctly Adventist	36	4

Eighty-eight participants (9%) did not respond to Question 1 (see highlighted theme 9 in the table above). Eleven of these 88 participants stated that they did not know the answer to this question while seventy-seven participants chose not to provide an answer, either because they could not or for some reason decided not to provide any answer to this question.

Each of the remaining ten themes together with evidence from the surveys are presented below.

### **Lead the children to Jesus**

This theme presents as the most significant theme for 342 (34%) of the NAD education workers. Clearly a majority of these education workers saw the mission of their school as being *to lead the children to Jesus*. For Christians this is the principal focus for a disciple of Christ. It is most encouraging to note that these educators in a Christian institution perceive this theme to be the main mission of their school. Across this theme the most common word used was *lead* (76 times). Other terms were also included in the string of words that replaced but implied 'lead'. These included words such as *help* (39 times), *bring* (39 times), *introduce* (28 times), *connect* (15 times), *guide* (8 times), *draw* (6 times) and *point* (5 times). The choice of these particular words indicates definite engagement and assistance through which the educators are actively involved in the process of personal relationship-building between their students and God. Seven participants stated that they *facilitate relationships with Jesus* while other participants stated that they *encouraged, developed, nurtured, enabled* or *promoted ... relationships with Jesus*. One participant stated that their mission is to *open the door for an experience with Jesus*. Other educators said that as part of the mission of their school they *acquaint students with Jesus* and *foster, encourage and support young people to follow Jesus*.

In addition to leading their students to Jesus, many of these participants perceived this mission to include *interest students in and maintain interest in Jesus*. It is encouraging to note that these education workers in Adventist institutions are actively engaged in their role as spiritual leaders and have a distinctive discipleship purpose and direction for *inviting, enticing* and *ensuring an enduring*

*relationship with Jesus*. This theme presents as an intentional move by these education workers to integrate their faith into their work. The next significant theme supported by 265 participants was that of education.

## **Education**

The fact that these participants identified their work as their mission is not surprising as education is the reason for their employment in the institution in which they are working. This theme shows that these education workers are aware of the product they are providing and perceive that the mission of their institution is in the product. The most common phrase used by 56 participants in this theme was that of *excellence*, whether for *academic excellence*, *education excellence* or *pursing excellence*. In addition, 29 education workers stated that it was *quality education* with others using other adjectives such as *best*, *first class*, *good*, *top-notch* and *exceptional*. These comments all reflect the intent of these participants who perceive their mission within their school to be to provide the best education possible to their students.

Also included in this theme was the expression by 35 NAD participants that their mission is *to encourage the development of the whole child – body, mind, and spirit, educate young people spiritually, academically and physically*; or as some participants expressed it – *wholistic education*. This point was repeated many times and it included a focus on the provision of a safe environment, for example, *provide a safe environment in which students are challenged to grow mentally, physically and spiritually*. Twenty-seven participants stated that providing a *safe* and/or *nurturing environment* was part of the institution's mission.

Another point raised by NAD education workers was that the theme of education covers teaching and learning. Twenty-six participants stated that the mission of their institution was to encourage and develop *life-long learners and/or critical thinkers*. It was important for these participants that their students could *think for themselves and not just reflect others' thoughts and ideas*. This is a key point in teaching and reflects the fact that these teachers want to provide the best kind of education for their students, equipping them for their future as

independent thinkers. As educators it is important to meet students' needs and in a study like this one would expect that this would be a focus for educators. Seven participants addressed this, saying that the mission of their institution is *to meet the needs of my kids*. In addition, five other participants stated that the focus was *academic success* for their students. Again, this links directly with meeting the needs of students to ensure that they achieve academically.

One final element in the theme of education as shared by two participants is that the mission of their institution is to provide *redemptive education* or education as *a second chance to succeed*. Again, this focus is on the students' needs and meeting them where they are in their academic development. As educators these teachers are focused on teaching and learning and addressing this with their students in preparation for their future which ties in with the next theme of preparation for this world.

### **Preparation for this world**

This theme highlights the fact that the NAD educators are not only focused on quality education for current purposes but are focused on preparing their students for their adult lives. Two hundred and nine participants clearly articulated this theme of preparation for this world. Various combinations of words were used by the participants, for example, *prepare them for life* (110 participants) and *prepare them for service in this world* (35 participants). This idea of benefitting society was echoed by 22 other participants who stated that the students are being prepared *to work on Earth*. In addition to this, 39 participants stated that the mission of their institution is to prepare their students to be *productive citizens in their life* and/or be of *benefit to society*. One participant expressed it so well saying, *help our kids develop into the most useful humans while we live on earth*. The aspect of being useful and assisting others links directly with the next theme of service learning where the focus is on others and not self.

### **Service learning**

Two hundred and three participants highlighted this theme as the mission of their institution. This is a Christian discipleship focus where the emphasis is not on self but others. The fact that students

need to be *of service to the community and/or others* was important for 66 participants. A further 58 participants stated that the mission of their school is to *train, guide, prepare and empower them* [the students] *for service*. One teacher stated, *I am training them for service in a culturally diverse community*, while another participant said that their objective is *to prepare students for a life of service to others*. The focus in this theme of service learning was to be able to serve within the community and to do it in a selfless and compassionate manner. Under this theme the aspect of service to God was also prevalent and was addressed by forty-nine NAD educators. The repeated expression was: *To train young people for service to God*. Several participants linked the two aspects of service learning saying their mission is *to educate them for service to Jesus in their family, church, community and world*. This links service to both God and man which is a Biblical principle that often distinguishes Christians from non-Christians and is perceived by these institutional workers as the mission of their schools within the NAD Division of the world-wide SDA Church. Interestingly, the next theme identified in the data is again a Christian aspect with a focus of hope for a future that extends into eternity.

### Eternity focus

The next theme identified from the data was an expression of hope for a future that extends into eternity. This theme was highlighted by 203 participants who stated that the mission of their institution is *educating for eternity*. This phrase was included in the responses of 96 participants. Other similar terms used by participant included *heaven, heavenly kingdom, the next world, the next life and life beyond*. A further 22 participants used the phrase *to prepare the students for the world to come*. One participant stated that the mission is *to get their students ready to go to heaven*. All these phrases indicate hope in a future and everlasting life. This focus on eternity was also expressed by 17 NAD education workers who are *preparing their students for Christ's soon return or the coming of Jesus*. All these statements focus on the belief that Jesus will return to this earth. One would expect this to be a focal point in Seventh-day Adventist institutions as the word 'Adventist' in the name indicates a focus on the second coming of Christ. The next significant theme identified in the data from the NAD education workers is share the Good News.

## Share the Good News

One hundred and eighty-seven of these teachers perceive the mission of their institution to be sharing the Gospel of Christ. The main expression used by 114 of these participants was *sharing Jesus*. Others stated that it was *to give the message of salvation in Jesus Christ*. This focus is really on evangelism and outreach which is all part of being a Christian. This resonates well with the mission of the SDA Church and is perceived clearly by these education workers as a mission of their school. Forty-one participants stated that the mission is *to show God* or *to show them the Way*. Again, this is linked to sharing the Good News of Christ with the students and others. *Spreading the good news of redemption* and *uplifting Christ* were other responses given to this question. In addition to sharing the Good News with their students as part of the mission, 56 of these teachers also believed that *the mission of my school should be to make every student a disciple of Christ*. These teachers want to share God with their students as was clearly identified in the first theme of leading the children to Jesus. The theme of sharing the good news advances the first theme from the students' having a relationship with Jesus to acting on that relationship and becoming active disciples. It seems fitting then with Christ as the focal point that there would be a theme called Christ-centered education.

## Christ-centered education

In the six themes presented above there is much focus on Christ and sharing Him with the students. It is therefore not surprising in that respondents to the survey stated that the institutional mission is *to provide a Christ-centered education* (42 participants) or *to lift up Christ to my students in every subject and situation of the day* (57 participants). One participant stated this theme as: *I teach academics through the lens of the Bible*. This idea was repeated by nine other participants. Another teacher said, *show students Christ in every part of their education*, which was echoed by eight (8) other participants. The analysis of the data reveals that the participants are focused on their work as educators; however, they are also aware and focused on presenting Christ within their classrooms and workplaces. This understanding of presenting Christ is also prevalent in the next theme of God's love.



## God's love

The theme of God's love is the eighth major theme within the NAD teacher data for question 1. This theme was expressed by 98 participants in four different ways in the data. The first way, identified by 46 participants, is that the mission is to *show/present/share God's love*, to ensure that students and those around are shown God's love. The second way the theme of God's love was presented was expressed as demonstrating *unconditional love, to radically love our students, all you do, do in love* and/or just *loving* the students (22 participants). The third way of showing God's love is to *teach about God's love* and to *help them see God's great love for them*, to explain what God's love is and how it is expressed and experienced (18 participants). The fourth way drawn from the data is to *teach kids to love God* or *nurture student love for Him* (16 participants). All the ways of demonstrating or showing God's love include active participation by the education staff at these schools and reflects a Biblical basis and mission. Once again this theme aligns very well with the Church's overall mission. The focus on community presents as the ninth theme and is supported by 51 participants.

## Community focus

Fifty-one participants perceived that the mission of their school is to focus on the community. This theme of community focus includes concepts such as *to serve our community* (11 participants) and *to be a light in my community* (30 participants). The perception of serving the community and being a light in the community incorporates an aspect of evangelism and reaching out to society. Four participants stated that *we get to know the community* and *connect with the community*. Another point was included by another four participants who perceived the mission of their institution as one that *benefits the community*. Three other participants perceived the mission of their school to be one of *bringing the community together*. One participant summed up their perception of the mission of their institution as being *to bring the love and acceptance of Jesus Christ to the community*, clearly showing an outward and wider focus on society than just the students who attend the school. The tenth and final major theme identified in the data for question 1 is that of Adventist education.

## Distinctly Adventist

Thirty-six participants highlighted the fact that the mission of their school was to be distinctly Adventist. Nineteen participants stated that their school has *a distinctly SDA point of view* or *SDA worldview*. Fifteen participants said that the mission of their institution was *to help their students to be Seventh-day Adventists*. A further four participants stated that the mission was to enable *the SDA students to be missionaries*. Across each of these points the intention is distinctly Adventist.

There is definitely a common thread linking these ten themes—lead the children to Jesus, education, preparation for this world, service learning, eternity focus, share the Good News, Christ-centered education, God’s love, community focus and being distinctly Adventist. In each theme the ideal of working for Jesus and presenting Him to the students and their families is prominent, strong and clear. There is an overwhelming unity of a Christian mission across most of the responses indicating an understanding of the institutional workers’ role in discipleship and the essence of what this means within their institution.

### **What makes it different from similar but non-SDA organizations? (Question 3)**

On the survey the NAD education workers were asked to respond to the following open-ended question:

*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 (Question 3):*

In this question participants were asked what they perceived to be the difference between their school and other similar schools. As for question 1, participants provided their responses in their own words and some participants provided more than one point of difference. Hence an appreciable number responses contributed to more than one theme identified across the data. As with the previous question (Question 1) this chapter continues to report on the 1,002 NAD education workers who took part in the survey. The following table

presents the eleven significant themes that emerged from the 2018 NAD data.

**Table 8.2: Themes from the NAD responses to question 3**

Theme	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
1. Integrate faith and learning	311	31
2. Adventist affiliation	284	28
3. No response/Nothing	216	22
4. Committed staff	112	11
5. Emphasize growing a relationship with Jesus	109	11
6. Broad base of support	104	10
7. Educate whole child	66	7
8. Caring tolerant family feel	51	5
9. Freedom to connect teaching with Biblical principles	51	5
10. Hope for the future	47	5
11. Students trained for service	46	5

Interestingly the data reveal two themes that stand out far ahead of the other themes, namely that the perceived differences are *integrate faith and learning* (311 participants) and *Adventist affiliation* (284 participants). The third-ranked theme was the “No response/Nothing” category, highlighted in the table above. This result is quite telling and noteworthy. According to the data 216 participants (22%) did not or could not answer this question. This is a significant result and raises questions about why the participants did not address this question. Of the two hundred and sixteen participants in this section only four provided some explanation or reason. One said, *sadly, not much*; another said, *unfortunately not a positive thing*; two said, *I am not familiar with other organizations like mine*. These responses, although limited, provide some insight into numerous possibilities as to why participants did not want to answer the question, could not provide an answer to the question, perceived that there was no difference, and more. There was no follow-on question or place on the survey for participants to clarify the reason for not responding and so other than the few statements provided we have no clear indication for this response. This is an area of concern and one that requires further investigation. As shown in the Table 8.2, the

remaining eight significant themes of difference are: *committed staff* (112 participants); *emphasize growing a relationship with Jesus* (109 participants); *broad base of support* (104 participants); *educate whole child* (66 participants); *caring tolerant family feel* (51 participants); *freedom to connect teaching with Biblical principles* (51 participants); *hope for the future* (47 participants); and, *students trained for service* (46 participants). It is very interesting to note that with each of these ten identified themes of difference there is a strong Christian focus and connection. Each theme of difference, as identified by these NAD teachers will now be addressed below.

### **Integrate faith and learning**

In response to question 3 the main point of difference raised by 311 NAD education workers was that their school *integrated faith and learning*. This theme focused on Jesus across all areas of learning where faith and academics are integrated into one. The exact words of *integrate faith and learning* were used by 124 participants. A further 119 participants reiterated this theme, stating that *we are Christ-centered in everything*. Several participants stated that *Jesus is the heart of everything we do*. Another participant said, *we provide God-centered education with an emphasis on incorporating God in all lessons*. This theme was also articulated by 70 participants as *we use a Christ-inspired curriculum* and/or *we use the Bible as the foundation for learning*. One of these participants further explained that *prayer and bible study completely saturate all class activities*. These statements show that the participants directly link their faith and the learning in their classes as the main difference and are clearly aware of this point of difference. Another aspect raised as part of this theme was that learning is presented at their school through a Biblical worldview. Eighteen participants highlighted this point of difference which impacts learning and is unmistakably another form of integrating faith and learning, for example, *everything we do is done through a Christian worldview including all subjects and values*. The fact that this theme was highlighted as the perceived most significant difference for these education workers is encouraging to note. The integration of faith and learning is an important element and one that is part of the vision and mission of Adventist education. This links directly with the next theme from the data which identifies the

Adventist affiliation as a significant point of difference from similar institutions.

### **Adventist affiliation**

This second significant theme of difference was highlighted by 284 NAD education workers. Clearly the fact that their school is an Adventist institution made it different. One hundred and seventy eight participants highlighted that the name Adventist identified them as different. Some participants provided explanations with this, for example, *keeps its distinctive Adventist perspective*. Several participants shared that there were *advantages* to having the Adventist affiliation as *almost everywhere in the world there is a community of believers*, which is a distinctive difference from other schools. Having this Adventist affiliation means that there are church beliefs and doctrines that contribute to this theme of difference. Sixty-five participants highlighted this fact with statements such as: *our school exists to share our unique biblical worldview with our community and to serve the education needs of their children* or *to share our belief system*. Another consequence of Adventist affiliation was the Adventist focus on mission which, as 29 participants stated, is *to proclaim the Three Angels' Messages to our students and to the world*. Two other specific differences shared by the NAD education workers were *Sabbath* (39 participants) and the *health message* (30 participants). These three points are peculiar to Seventh-day Adventists and set them apart from other denominations, again highlighting specific points of difference that are uniquely Adventist. Linked directly to this theme was the next significant theme identified by the NAD education workers as that of committed staff.

### **Committed staff**

One hundred and twelve participants perceived that the difference between their institution and other similar schools is the level of commitment of staff to God: *whatever we do is to the best of our ability to God's glory*. The responses by 57 participants covered this aspect of the staff being *faithful to God* and *Christian with a mission*. One participant encapsulated it with this statement: *the spiritual component where SDA Christian teachers have the opportunity to*

*partner with parents as “another voice” in reaching students for Christ.* One participant linked all the components raised for this theme as follows: *The organization at my school resembles a family of professionals dedicated to the success of our students using Christ’s love as example and inspiration.* This statement identifies professional committed staff educating students totally in Christian love as the perceived difference. In addition, it was believed by 36 participants that staff who focus on relationships and create a family atmosphere contribute to their school’s being different from other similar schools. The following statements from the data express this:

We are a family. We encourage connection to each other as we strive to connect to God. The commitment of the staff to form positive relationships with the students. Deeper personal connections between teachers and students.

This theme of committed staff was also explained by another 29 participants who expressed that the staff are *caring, kind and love their students*, for example: *the way Jesus loves us (teachers) is how we love your children and family and our school offers caring, loving staff.* One last aspect identified in the data relating to this theme of committed staff raised by eight participants and already stated in this section is that of professionalism. Participants stated that staff *network with others* and are *highly educated*. People are an important resource within an institution and especially in a school. The fact that these NAD education workers are aware that this is a significant difference shows their awareness of the huge impact teachers have across their work area. This theme identifies that a difference is the commitment of the staff to Christianity and the mission of sharing Jesus which links directly with the next theme identified from the responses to question 3.

### **Emphasize growing a relationship with Jesus**

The theme of growing a relationship with Jesus was expressed by 109 participants. Eighty-eight of the NAD education workers used similar wording, namely, *we emphasize health and growing a relationship with God and our goal is to have our students meet Jesus and enter into a loving relationship with Him.* This identified theme of difference also included good discipleship where *we are actively discipling our students to follow Jesus.* Twelve participants stated that

discipleship was the difference in their institution as that was leading others to a relationship with Jesus. A further 12 of these participants highlighted that *we offer opportunities to know and love Jesus and encountering Jesus everyday* was the difference they perceived between their school and a similar school. Again, this theme has a significant Christian focus and has Jesus as the center. The fifth identified theme of difference from the NAD data is that of a broad base of support.

### **Broad base of support**

One hundred and four participants identified this theme of support as a significant difference from other schools. The participants identified support provided mainly by the wider Adventist community. Fifty-six NAD education workers identified the support-base provided by the structure and organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a national and international organization as a point of difference. This was stated repeatedly and is exemplified by the following two statements: *The support network the church provides to help our schools as a part of a worldwide effort; we are a worldwide family.* This was reinforced by the close connection and networking done with other Seventh-day Adventist entities. Twenty-six of the participants identified that the broad base of support extended to their community is a point of difference – *we have various organizations we use to meet the needs of the community such as ADRA, Life Hope, etc.* In addition, twenty-three participants felt the point of difference was because *I feel supported. We have a close connection with the church.* Many of the Adventist schools are linked or associated with Adventist churches in the local area. This broad base of support is intentional and provides stability for workers as demonstrated in the following extract: *Not only are we an integral part of the church's outreach, we also operate under the same employer and therefore follow the same guiding principles and other organizations aren't a part of that and may have different guiding principles/values.* Clearly this connection to a support structure beyond the local school is valued by the NAD education workers and unmistakably makes a difference for these participants.

## Educate whole child

The theme of educating the whole child was identified by 66 participants. One participant articulated this difference so clearly stating, *our school is different from schools that are not religiously affiliated in that we place an emphasis on the spiritual development of our students*. The most common phrase in this theme (used by 56 NAD education workers) was: *we differ from other Christian schools in that we aim to educate the whole child—physical, mental, spiritual, social/emotional*. Ten participants discussed the spiritual development as important. One participant stated, *I believe that our holistic approach to education, body, soul, and mind is completely unique and identifiable*. Another teacher said, *our SDA school educates the whole child (body, mind, soul) to know that a part of him/her was made to last forever*. Another teacher wrote, *we do not just teach academic subjects we also teach morals, character, we teach them for eternity*. For these teachers there is a difference and it is the focus on more than just academics. Another participant contributing to this theme wrote, *our school believes in character building*. This holistic approach identifies the spiritual dimension as the point of difference. Another statement from one of the answers to question 3 sums this theme up well for the Adventist schools: *a spiritual life is normal, expected and encouraged*. This sentiment runs throughout the data and connects each of the themes, again obviously presenting the mission of the education institution to present Jesus as the center. The next theme of a caring tolerant family feel connects with each previous theme and again presents Christianity in action.

## Caring tolerant family feel

Fifty-one participants highlighted the caring tolerant family feel as the point of difference between SDA schools and other similar schools. Providing a *small family feel* was identified by 29 participants. Nine participants stated that the difference is that they are a conduit of grace and kindness where *we give students much more grace than public institutions, for better or for worse* and that there is *redemptive justice, giving students multiple “second” chances*. Because there is a caring tolerant family feel individual attention is given and everyone is known by name (7 participants). One participant stated: *We treat*



*our students with love and respect. We know everyone by name, they are not numbers. Another participant said, we tend to be tolerant of teachers and students, while another person said our school is a place of acceptance. This was echoed by others, for example, we are accepting of all people whether connected to the Adventist church or not. Across the data the fact that there is an investment in every individual is evident and a consequence of being in a small close-knit community. Once again this presents Christianity in action. In addition to a caring tolerant family feel the eighth theme of difference identified by 51 participants was that staff had the freedom to connect their teaching with Biblical principles.*

### **Freedom to connect teaching with Biblical principles**

Although not as prominent as the other themes of difference identified, this theme highlights the aspect of freedom and openness that the teachers feel they have within their institution. Thirty-two NAD education workers used the word *freedom*, while 21 participants used the word *openly*. One participant stated that there is a difference in the *freedom we have to connect what we are teaching our students to Biblical principles and things such as prayer and the Holy Spirit. Another participant said, I can freely bring Jesus into any part of the day. These statements were echoed by others: we get to openly talk about and teach Jesus. These teachers are aware that this difference is endorsed and supported by their institution, for example, we are able to unashamedly talk about what the bible says in a supportive framework of accreditation, etc.*

### **Hope for the future**

This theme, although significantly connected with the Adventist affiliation, is presented separately because 47 participants (5%) stated that the difference in their institution is that they have a *hope for the future beyond this world. This hope is in the second coming of Christ (22 participants) and so our school is different in that we have a mission emphasis because we believe Jesus is coming very soon. Because of this belief there is hope for a Heavenly Kingdom (11 participants) and a perspective that emphasizes that there is something beyond this world (3 participants) which essentially is eternity (12*

participants). This means that the focus is on hope for a future beyond what we know: *we do not just teach academic subjects we also teach morals, character, we teach them for eternity*. This theme of hope for the future provides a goal and aim where, as one participant stated, *the education is superior preparing students to serve in this world and a better one to come*. This focus on hope provides direction and again links directly to the Christian focus. Another Christian focus is that of service to others which was identified as the last significant theme of difference in the data.

### **Students trained for service**

Forty-six NAD education workers identified that the point of difference for their institution was that they trained their students for service. Specifically *training students for service* was stated by 25 participants, while 19 participants stated that *students are trained for missions and outreach*. Statements contributing to this theme included: *a worldwide collaborative mission to reach our youth and train them, not just academically, but spiritually, preparing them to be missionaries in every field; intentionally engages students in service and mission service; and, service opportunities for our children to connect to their world and the eternal one*. Training students for service to others was complemented by the objective of training students *how to live a life of service for Jesus* (6 participants). *Service-oriented learning* is a Biblical practice and one that Christians practice.

The main feature connecting all ten themes is that each theme is distinctly Christian based and focused. Integrating faith and learning is the mission of these Adventist-employed workers who have clearly identified these themes as the distinctive difference for their school. The fact that the staff are committed to Adventist education and leading their students to Jesus is obvious across the themes. Although 22% of the participants could not state a difference for their school, 78% distinctly shared their understanding of the differences between their school and other similar institutions. The data show that the connection between all the themes is significant for Adventist education and that is perceived to be a significant difference between SDA and other similar schools.

## The “no response/nothing” category

For both questions addressed in this chapter there was a *no response* component. For Question 1 the *no response* (9%) was much lower than for Question 3 (22%). It appears that NAD education workers felt more comfortable with sharing their perceptions of the mission of their institution than with identifying the difference between their institution and other similar institutions. More work is needed in order to understand better the reasons for the *no response component* to these two questions, especially Question 3.

## Conclusion

The themes extracted from the responses to Question 1 match quite closely the themes developed in the responses to Question 3. The teachers in the North American Division have identified the mission themes of their school as the recognisable themes of difference for their schools. Almost all the themes are Christ-focused or focused on fulfilling the mission of a disciple of Christ with a future focus of His soon return. These link directly to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## References

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