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# Multi-Level Partnering in Adventist Education



C. Garland Dulan

It is common nowadays for institutions of higher learning to form alliances, memoranda of understanding, and collaborative efforts in order to reduce duplication of services, form partnerships, and improve relationships with entities that share similar purposes.

Within the Adventist Church, however, there appears to be reluctance to form partnerships across levels of education (i.e., universities and/or colleges forming collaborations with secondary schools or with primary schools). What causes this reluctance? What would be the advantages to forming such relationships?

Consider, for example, how we might develop a program that encourages universities to partner with other educational levels. Let's assume that a university offers degree programs in the areas of business—finance, accounting, and so forth. Universities generally require their professors to regularly engage in research endeavors that further knowledge in their field of expertise. Why not develop a partnership with an Adventist K-12 school system to discover more productive ways of financing elementary or secondary education? The researchers could then study a variety of approaches the K-12 schools could use to enhance their financial situation. The research endeavor might involve identifying the problem, reviewing the literature on school finance, forming hypotheses, developing a research design aimed at resolving the problem, collecting data from private and public education systems, analyzing the data, reporting findings, and then proposing solutions. The research might also identify schools or school systems that have been the most successful in making Adventist education financially accessible to families with various income levels. This area of research is sorely needed by the church as it attempts to provide education worldwide to individuals and families with varying abilities to pay for Adventist schooling.

Through careful and intentional planning, union conferences might develop a fund that provides incentives for such collaborations. Funding might be made available only to those entities willing to partner with another educational level in solving a problem of critical importance to the level(s) engaged in the partnership. Professors and/or teachers could use the funds to obtain release time, research assistants, support for travel, and other research-related expenses. In the publish-or-perish environment of the university, research could be conducted that not only furthers the career of the scholar but also helps the church solve perennial problems.

The advantages are many. People at different educational system levels would get to know one another and develop an understanding of each other's problems and challenges. Collaborative efforts might even be formed in areas not heretofore contemplated. Just think about it: The church would not only further the integration of faith and learning, but also the integration of faith and practice.

To qualify to receive the funds for collaboration/partnership, applicants would have to submit a clear research design. The design could be proposed by elementary and secondary education to benefit colleges/universities or by colleges to benefit K-12 systems/institutions. Partnering would be the primary determinant for approving and funding research proposals.

Considering all the time, money, energy, and talent we invest to achieve the mission of our institutions, shouldn't we collaborate to achieve our shared objectives?

There are a few areas in the church where this has been attempted—such as in the Value-generation research—but most of them have been aimed more toward providing research information than toward developing multi-level partnerships.

My hope is that the proposal briefly presented in this editorial can be broadened to include many possible areas where collaboration could benefit multiple educational levels. ✍