



Charline Barnes Rowland

As of December 2017, the Seventh-day Adventist education system worldwide had 8,539 schools, 106,976 teachers, and 1,935,898 students.<sup>1</sup> These statistics indicate that the denomination operates one of the largest Protestant school systems. While many of these students are of the Adventist faith, some of them come from non-Adventist backgrounds due to parents and guardians valuing quality Christian education that focuses on more than academic knowledge.

Adventist education is about preparing learners for responsible citizenship in this world and in the world to come. Walter Douglas, emeritus professor of Adventist Church history at Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.), wrote that “many nations are being transformed from insulated societies with one dominant race and culture to ones that are racially and culturally diverse.”<sup>2</sup> He also noted that the future of Seventh-day Adventist education requires boards, administrators, and faculty not to “ignore nor escape the inevitability of the effect of these shifts on their educational mission and practice, institutional culture, pedagogy, and curriculum.”<sup>3</sup> To accomplish this goal, Adventist schools must recognize and respect that their student and teaching populations come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Schools need to promote a nurturing and safe environment that not only celebrates diversity, but also utilizes instructional methods that are sensitive and cohesive, in order to foster the balanced development of the whole person as God’s creation.<sup>4</sup> Such an environment will require all educators in Adventist schools—administrators and teachers—to work on intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual aspects of learning through intentional, engaging, and inclusive best practices.<sup>5</sup>

#### What is Culturally Responsive Pedagogy?

The theme section of this issue of the JOURNAL promotes intentional, harmonious development of all stu-

dents in Adventist schools through a framework called *culturally responsive pedagogy*. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), also known as Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT),<sup>6</sup> recognizes the importance of including students’ cultural references in all aspects of learning. CRP is a structural curriculum framework with three dimensions: (1) academic achievement, (2) cultural competence, and (3) sociopolitical consciousness.<sup>7</sup> Academic achievement requires the integrated curriculum to be exciting and equitable with high standards. A culturally competent educator knows the various ranges of culturally and linguistically diverse students and can adjust instruction in the learning process. Sociopolitical consciousness expects teachers to deal with reality and equip students with critical lens and concrete skills to manage social and political challenges resulting from biases.

#### How Does Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Fit Into Adventist Schools?

Many Christian educators have committed to teach values that are in conflict with the world so they choose to work in a religious school environment rather than in a secular one.<sup>8</sup> While all educators are challenged with teaching and learning tasks, including curriculum design, instructional techniques, and student-parent-teacher relationships, teachers in Adventist schools are also called to fulfill institutional mission. This is demonstrated in the classroom by the teacher’s beliefs, attitudes, and practices.<sup>9</sup> By focusing on restoration of human beings through the intersection of faith and learning, Adventist educators live out the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup> But what about the intersection of faith and learning with diversity and inclusion? Calling for more dialogue, peace, and social cohesion in intercultural education?

Adventist education is about intellectually engaging in a global society with a faith-based perspective. Having a God-centered curriculum will teach students to embrace diversity and seek solutions to societal inequities. However, it is not just about teaching content, but also about helping students and their families as-

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sist others in the mission of Jesus Christ—providing restoration for the world now and the world to come.

### In This Issue

In the special section of this issue, authors of diverse educational backgrounds and experiences offer a wealth of information on culturally responsive pedagogy within Adventist education. The writers not only celebrate awareness of cultural diversity within Seventh-day Adventist schools, but also provide best practices for successful learning opportunities to students from all cultures.

Kalisha A. Waldon draws upon spiritual principles and lessons learned from the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ—real-world examples, and educational research to support the education and culture of the whole child. Anita Strawn de Ojeda, Loren Fish, and Jovannah Poor Bear-Adams incorporate Native American values in addressing the spiritual, mental, academic, and physical needs of students while honoring their families of origin in “Culturally Responsive Christian Education at Holbrook Seventh-day Adventist School.” In “Shielding Students From Stereotype Threat: Instructional and Developmental Implications,” Michael Milmine and Elvin Gabriel define Stereotype Threat (ST) and its adverse effects on performance by members of a particular social-identity group. They also provide Christ-centered approaches to reduce it and create supportive school and classroom environments. In the *Perspectives* section, Dale Linton’s “Celebrating the World in Your Classroom,” provides ways for teachers to better recognize the influence their own cultural heritage plays in defining who they are and how they teach in order to engage meaningfully with diverse groups of students.

I hope these articles serve as catalysts for the educational ministry within Seventh-day Adventist and other Christian schools. God needs educators—administrators and teachers—who value the whole child, who value inclusion, and are willing to teach in a culturally diverse manner. In addition, He needs educators who can inspire students to counter injustice within and beyond the classroom. Culturally responsive teaching provides the framework to help faith-based institutions translate Scripture into action by advocating the education of the head, the heart, and the hand.

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### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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