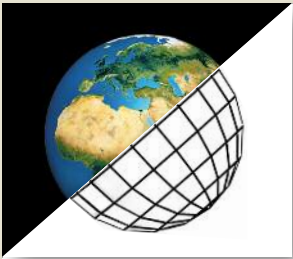




Carol Campbell



An Unchanging Mission in a Changing World

An organization's mission, vision, and values identify its purpose (Why it exists) and goals (What it plans to accomplish) and remain relatively unchanged over time. Adventist education seeks to educate the whole person—spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social-emotional—with the aim of preparing learners to serve God and humanity.¹ However, an organization's strategic roadmap from mission to vision (How it accomplishes its goals) must be flexible, adapting to an ever-changing cultural context. Ellen White stated, "No exact pattern can be given for the establishment of schools in new fields. The climate, the surroundings, the condition of the country, and the means at hand with which to work must all bear a part in shaping the work."²

In the past several decades, significant cultural shifts have occurred with the development of new communication tools, affecting the way in which we think, work, and interact with others. These shifts served as the impetus for new working environments for 21st-century citizens—moving from unconnected goals to a shared vision; from a context of isolation to one of collaboration; and from a decision-making process based on one's perception of reality to a data-informed culture. The notion of work as predictable shifted to the concept of a dynamic, creative, and innovative learning organization; and from a focus on the parts of the workplace to a systems view of the relationship among the parts.

Pink³ characterizes these changes as the transition from "algorithmic" to "heuristic" tasks in the workplace. An algorithmic task is one in which employees follow a set of well-defined instructions down a single pathway to one conclusion; a heuristic task is one in which employees experiment with possibilities and devise novel solutions. During the 20th century, most work was algorithmic in nature, but outsourcing and automation have changed this. It is estimated that in the United States, 70 percent of job growth now comes from heuristic work, while only 30 percent comes from algorithmic work. Similar shifts are likely, worldwide, as technology continues to impact the way we think, work, and communicate.

The changing cultural context, however, has not led to significant changes in educational methodology. Schools, in general, continue to focus on preparing students for a 20th-century workplace, with teaching and learning highly routinized and predictable. Change theory, though, emphasizes that schools must be involved in a strategic cycle of continuous improvement to meet the needs of 21st-century learners.⁴ So what type of educational shift is necessary to prepare Adventist students to serve God and humanity in the 21st century?

From the beginning, God designed us to wonder, question, and learn about our environment. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were encouraged to explore and share what they had learned with

God and the angels.⁵ This type of learning was also encouraged in the schools of the prophets.⁶ More than 100 years ago, Ellen White noted, "Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. . . . It is the work of true education to develop this power, to *train young people to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other people's thought*. Let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen."⁷

Neuroimaging has shown that as we age, cognitive processes tend to shift from the creative right brain to the logical left brain. Learners arrive at school full of wonderment and questions, but the more time they spend in school, the more their natural curiosity diminishes. With a heavy emphasis on algorithmic tasks, a "knowing-meaning gap" results, with students having little or no time to apply and think deeply about what they have learned. In addition, such practices often lead to a significant disconnect between life in school and the reality of life outside of the classroom.

Thus, educational theorists and researchers have begun to confirm what Ellen White stressed many years ago. Greater emphasis is being placed on the value of providing learners with opportunities for meaningful inquiry and critical thinking so they are better prepared for the changing world outside of school.⁸ Specifically, Marzano notes that most educators rely heavily on teacher-centered instruction that emphasizes lecture, practice, and review.⁹ Instead, he cautions, "Instructional shifts are required to help students process information, be more thoughtful and analytic about their conclusions, and apply their knowledge." The Partnership for 21st Century Learning¹⁰ has identified the 4Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity) as vital 21st-century outcomes with the goal that students will acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will prepare them to be creative, connected, and collaborative lifelong problem solvers. Costa and Kallick,¹¹ likewise, emphasize a balanced approach where knowledge, skills, and dispositions are developed in the context of rich, challenging tasks that demand skillful, creative, and cooperative thinking. Several frameworks are available to aid in the development of critical thinking and inquiry practices. The C3 Framework,¹² in particular, outlines four dimensions: developing questions and planning inquiries, applying disciplinary tools and concepts, evaluating sources and using evidence, and communicating conclusions and taking informed action. These processes redefine the student-teacher relationship, placing students at the center of the learning, with teachers as facilitators to guide students to take ownership of their own learning. In student-centered

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or personalized learning,¹³ teachers deeply engage all learners in the acquisition of key knowledge and skills, while creating opportunities for thinking “so that they can pursue powerful questions, tackle complex problems, collaborate with diverse people, imagine new possibilities, and communicate their ideas.”¹⁴ How should Adventist educators respond, then, to the changing cultural context of the 21st century and the mounting evidence that supports a shift in educational practices, while maintaining the distinct Adventist education mission and vision? The authors in this issue share some ways in which Adventist education, from early childhood through higher education, can become relevant to 21st-century learners through a focus on Ellen White’s recommendation to “*Train the young people to be thinkers . . . not mere reflectors of other people’s thought.*”¹⁵ How can thinking be made visible in your classroom and serve as the strategic link between mission and vision?

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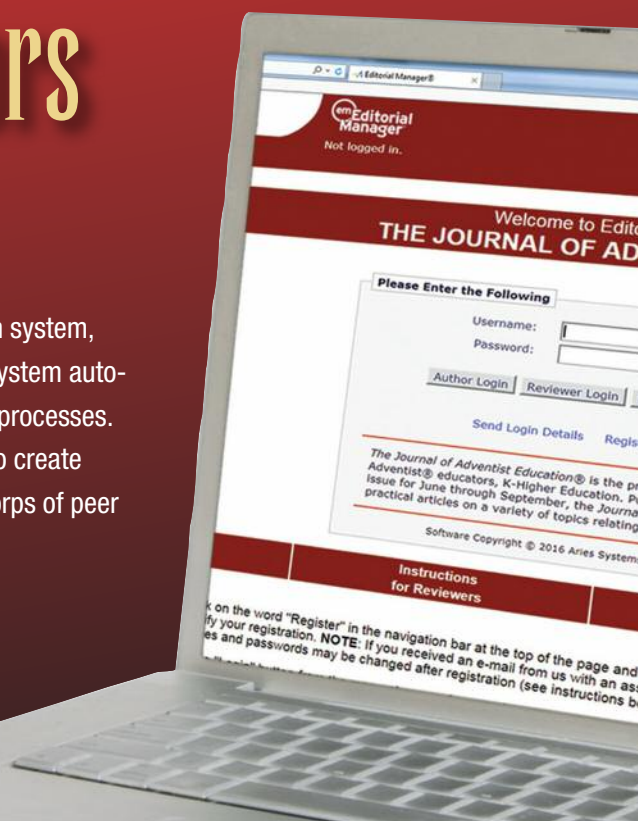
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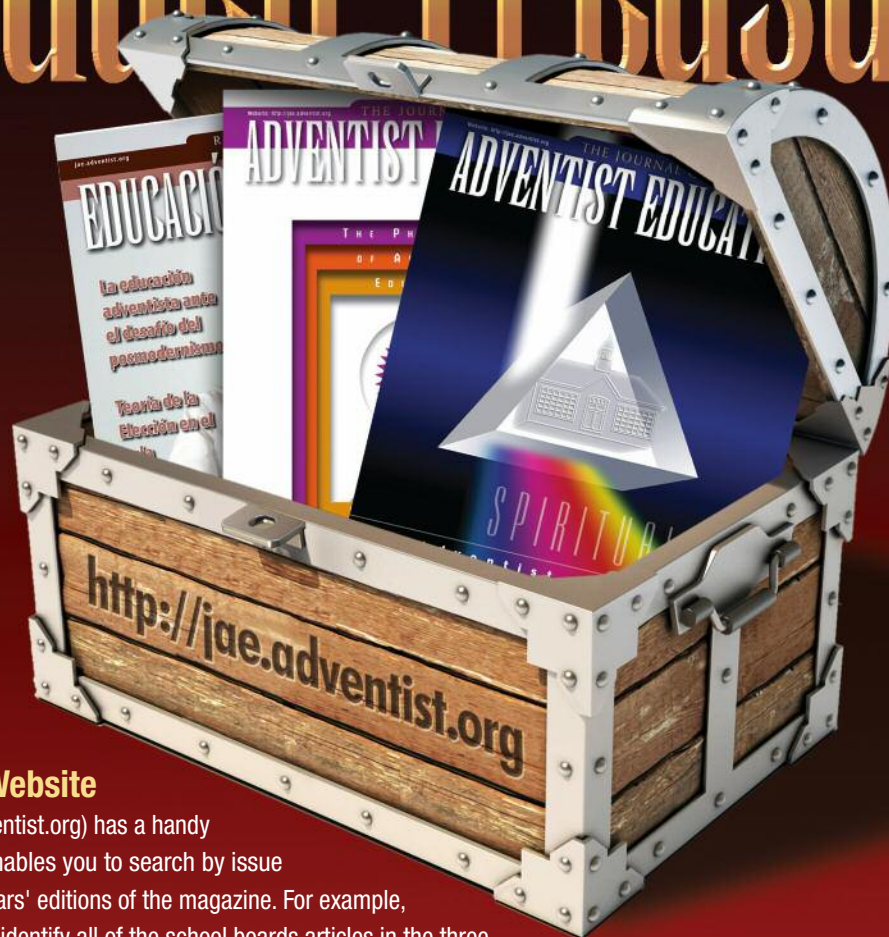
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