

Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

**The Administrator's Personal Relations in a Christian School
As a Model for Faith and Learning**

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INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose:

The chief purpose of this paper is to point out an effective approach to leadership in our educational institutions so that the aims of our educational programs in Faith and Learning process are better achieved.

B. Mission of an Adventist School:

The aim of an Adventist school is more than imparting knowledge of the subject matter. It is to impart such an education which is "to restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind and soul that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized." (Education p.15, 16). In other words, a concerted effort is made in our schools to impart "true education" to a "total man". The emphasis is on individuals and their maturity.

But how to see that this noble mission is fulfilled? The Principal is to coordinate the various activities of the school. Ellen White wrote "Secure a strong man to stand as principal of your school, a man whose physical strength will support him in doing a thorough work as a disciplinarian; a man who is qualified to train the students in habits of order, neatness and industry." (Counsel to Teachers p.213, 214). When Moses selected men to lead Israel he said, "search out faithful men, righteous men, qualified men." (Ex.18:21).

In I Timothy 3, Paul tells Timothy to find qualified men to lead the church. The Old Testament principle of choosing qualified individuals to lead is repeated in the New Testament.

A "strong" administrator, who has the ability to get things done through others, should be appointed. In other words, a strong administrator must have a knowledge of human nature and ability to guide his fellow teachers and to "train the students in the habits of order, neatness, and industry." (E G White. Testimonies Vol. 5 p. 422, 423)

C. Selection Criteria of School Administrators:

It is interesting to survey some of the criteria applied in the selection of administrators for our educational institutions. I have been observing how some administrators were selected in the past and even now. I shall list my observations for discussion and each reader can verify them against his own observation and experience.

Some educational administrators are chosen based on the "senior-teacher-able-administrator" theory. Seniority in the teaching profession does not mean that one has automatically acquired leadership ability. It is true that by long innings as a successful teacher, one can be a good administrator, possibly because of his observation of or association in decision-making.

The second approach in appointing a school administrator is the "acquired degrees-required posts" theory. This theory has been associated with another method which apparently has been the "right-connections" concept. The selection of a school administrator is based on not "what you know but whom you know".

The third selection method which unfortunately seems to be gaining some prominence these days is the "sons-of-the-soil" theory. Needless to say that suitability and efficiency are sacrificed at the altar of this theory in our country.

Lastly, the "move-over" theory has been used in some cases for selecting administrators. At some stage when it becomes necessary to move a person out of one place, he is appointed principal; it is a way of appeasing a trouble-maker. Because of the above approach in selecting school administrators, we are facing a number of problems.

D. School Problems:

We are not able to introduce the 'faith and learning' process in our schools because some of the school administrators have not studied in Adventist Schools. Some of them have not received Adventist-oriented education. They were appointed as school administrators because they have a degree which is necessary in government recognized schools. This situation mostly exists in our day schools.

The integration of 'faith and learning' process is not so possible in the day schools because the administrators have not had a thorough Adventist education. But in the boarding schools it is possible to introduce the 'faith and learning' process because most of the boarding school principals received Adventist-oriented education.

The second problem that our schools are facing is in selection of members of the faculty. Thirty-three percent of staff in the day schools have no Adventist background. Therefore, they are not able to give the necessary guidance to the students in implementing the 'faith and learning' process.

The third problem that we are facing in our schools is admission of non-Adventists. The boarding school situation is also becoming bad as we have at least 20-50% non-Adventist students studying in the boarding schools.

At present our day schools are dominated by non-SDA students, whose influence seems to dominate the Adventist influence of our children. Hence, the Christian character of Adventist children should be such that they can exert greater influence on the non-Adventist students. In order to achieve this influence the Christian (Adventist) home and the church must play a greater role in developing the character of our children to equip them to be missionaries in the school. The school administrators must provide an opportunity for the non-adventist students to develop a

Christian character by introducing a "faith and learning" program. The administrator can recruit more Adventist staff, and through their influence the non-Adventist students can imbibe Christian character. This is the challenge facing our educational institutions.

The integration of 'faith and learning' must be a very personal thing. No one can experience or practice it for another. This is a great challenge to educational administrators and teachers to bring about some change in implementing the 'faith and learning' process in Adventist schools. In order to achieve this goal the school administrators must possess a very good relationship with the staff and the students.

E. Personal Relations of a School Administrator:

This situation deals with the relevance of a 'human relations' approach to school administration. It appears that administration in Christian schools involves basically the stewardship of talents of people entrusted to the leaders. The administrator bears a solemn responsibility in fostering and nurturing human talents. Often administrators take good care and use all modern techniques of budgetary control in the management of finances and other immovable objects, but when it comes to the handling of human resources--staff and students in the school--they manifest the least concern. Ellen White counselled: "They are as

accountable to God for their capital of physical strength as is the rich man for his capital of money." (*Counsels on Stewardship*, p.121).

The Hawthorne studies conducted by Elton Mayo and his associates at Harvard University stated the success of the human relations movement depends on a leader who:

(1) concerns himself with the feelings and attitudes of his men, (2) encourages members to think and work so that they will be self-motivated to perform their best, and (3) develops an atmosphere which will permit them to contribute most creatively.

In other words, the school administrator, following the human relations approach, understands the feelings and attitudes of his fellow teachers and the students in the school. He encourages them to be thinkers and problem-solvers, not mere reflectors of his thoughts, so that they will be self-motivated to do their best. He develops an atmosphere in the institution which will permit them to contribute most creatively to achieve the ideals of the school. As the leader is, so is the institution. It could be said, that the institution is the shadow of its leader.

The following are some of the qualities of an administrator:

1. The administrator is to lead, but not to drive. A good leader gets his group moving so smoothly towards its goal that it continues to move even when he is absent. The

administrator should remember that the teachers and students in his institution are not pieces of equipment. The teacher and students are not placed in the school at his disposal. They are human beings with their hopes, fears, and problems, and a heavy price has been paid for them by the Saviour. It was said, of a certain school administrator that a little curse or an adverse remark made about him by one of his teachers was sufficient to get that teacher transferred from his school. It was apparently made known that he also did similar things with the students.

2. Some administrators feel that they are superior and expect others to serve them. If they feel that they are better than others, they can't hope to understand the group and they cannot make them work with him. The administrator should establish close contact with his staff and students. Emerson once wrote to his daughter that he cared little for the name of the school she attended, but he cared much for the teachers and administrators with whom she studied. He understood that the school is a living agency, a place of life where teachers live. How much contact does the administrator have with his students and staff? Is he accessible to them for offering guidance, counsel to reach their goals or, is his programme such that he is out most of the time?

3. Shouldn't an administrator let his teachers and students feel important in the school programme?

No man can do a good job if he does not respect himself in that job. He cannot be interested in it if he does not feel it is worth doing. We come across some administrators who treat others with scant respect. The administrator has no right to demand, or even expect from others what he is not willing to accord to them. For example, if he knows that one of his workers has a sick son, he should make it a point, to enquire about him or if one of his men is ill in the hospital, a visit will make all the difference. If he receives a leave application from a teacher he must realize how much this leave application means to the teacher who is making it. All these things are possible provided that the leader has sympathetic feelings which compel him to place himself in another's stead.

4. Should the administrator let people feel successful?

The administrator in our institution assumes the role of a monitor. The monitor is some one who is committed to the success of others. He or she is at once a coach, a door operator, and an encourager. He does not feel jealous of other's success and discourage him. He does not place a hurdle in his progress by misinterpreting his noteworthy performance by saying, "so and so does things successfully always with one goal in mind--that is to get the chair." Barnabas took Paul and introduced him to the apostles because he saw in him a man with various gifts. The true leader uses his higher position to help some one else move

up even if they "pass" him. He will do much harm if he makes things miserable for others compelling them to eventually leave the institution. The institutions need a Barnabas so that there can be a Paul. Let us remember that one cannot live without the other.

5. Does the administrator compliment a teacher or a student who has done an unusually good job?

A pat on the back seems to motivate others. For example, a young executive worked six months to work out details and made excellent arrangements for the conference. Delegates from all over the world came and attended the conference. It went off very well, and all the delegates who came to the conference felt happy and they were well pleased. On the last evening of the conference the young executive was in a dark corner. He was alone taking a drink. An elderly gentleman saw this young executive and asked him why he was not joining the final evening's good programme. He knew the kind of treatment the director had shown. No one said "thanks". How simple it is to say "thanks", yet how much it means when spoken in sincerity. People are motivated by achievement and by recognition of their efforts. The sense of success is one of the best tonics to keep a man happy and effective in his job. But to get this sense of success, he must be told by leaders that he has done well. He can't always assess his results for

himself. One is inclined to criticize and find fault--slow to appreciate, but quick to criticize.

6. Do you explain yourself fully?

You are dealing with people and not machines. As an administrator, you need to communicate your goals and ideals to people so that they will be provided a satisfactory stimulus to their urges. The teachers and students look to you for setting pace to activities. Only when they are fully informed on issues, do they actively participate in the programme. Students to some extent do not support even a good program unless they are given full explanation and motives. Ellen White wrote: "Teachers and principal should work together as brethren. They should consult together...that all their decisions in reference to the school may be such as will be approved of God". (*Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 87).

7. Do you listen to grievances?

It is wise to remember that no matter how small or unreasonable a grievance may seem to you, it is important and entirely reasonable to the students making the complaint about it. Examples are, food in the cafeteria, a lack of water in hostels, or a rough treatment by a staff member. If it were not significant he would not be making it. By refusing to listen, you run the risk of possibly a hunger strike on the campus, or discussion within the faculty, breaking of a principal's house, and you weaken your stature

as a leader. An administrator should not give the impression that he picks on a student or a member of the staff because he voiced his grievance. It is not right leadership either to delay looking into a grievance.

"Justice delayed is justice denied."

8. Do you criticize in private?

To humiliate a teacher or student by criticizing him before the group gains you nothing. On the contrary, it may aggravate the problem and probably lead to a confrontation.

Inspiration has this admonition to the administrators.

"Cultivate the habit of speaking well of others. Dwell upon the good qualities of those with whom you associate, and see as little as possible of their errors and failure."

(Ministry of Healing, p. 492).

9. What do you speak about a student who made mistake in the past but has turned a new leaf since then?

Christian educators will remember that they need God's forgiveness. The student's dignity should be respected. You may say something sweet or not say anything at all to the student, but write a note to his parents.

10. As the administrator of a Christian institution, do you have a living relationship with your God and fellowmen?

A good leader practicing the human relations approach will establish and maintain a living relationship with God and himself and his fellowmen. The cross of Christ has two beams: one vertical, and the other horizontal. A Christian

school administrator will do well to realise that he needs a living relationship both vertically, between God and himself on one hand, and horizontally, between himself and his fellow teachers and students. The New Testament teaches this fundamental principle--love God and your fellow men. This is the substance of the human relations approach and the Golden Rule. The school administrator is to build in his fellow workers the character of God by close interpersonal relations which are wholesome.

Dr. S.N. Mukerji, in his book, "Secondary School Administration" states that the success of the school depends on the types of administrators. There are two types of school administrators--autocratic and democratic. In the first type of administrator, the principal serves as a type of dictator in his school. He does not confer with his staff. He assumes that his function is to command and that the duty of the staff is to obey. "It is not theirs to reason why, but theirs to do and die." He determines the entire policy of the school, and remains aloof from active group participation except while demonstrating his dictatorial behaviour.

The next type of administrator is the principal who conceives it his duty to act as a leader among his co-workers and not as a dictator. He desires to be known as a "brother" to his staff rather than as their "boss". All

policies of the school are evolved through group discussion, encouraged and drawn out by him.

An institution, where the dignity and worth of the individual is not fully recognized, cannot thrive properly. The duty of the principal is to know each and every member of his staff very thoroughly, his strength and his weakness, his merits and his limitations. Kipling's Subaltern in the "Brushwood Bay" is appropriate here: "Get to know your men, and they'll follow you any where. That's all you want. Know your men". The success of the school depends in a large measure upon the intimacy that is established between the principal and his staff.

F The Qualities of a Christian Leader:

It is quite interesting to note how different authors perceive leadership qualities. Christian leaders should have a fair knowledge of how different people view leadership. What qualities must a dynamic Christian leader possess to make a Christian organization all that it should be from the Christian point of view and yet make it a productive organization? Ellen G White provides the following guidelines:

1. The Christian leader must be in touch with God. "They should pursue a course of life that will honor their creator, and ennoble themselves, and bless their fellow men. (Ellen G White, Testimonies Vol. 5, p. 422, 423).

2. He will be a man of prayer. God is looking for leaders who will come to Him for guidance through prayer--not formal prayer, but a real opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Christian leadership is prayerful leadership.

3. The Christian leader looks to Jesus. Satan will assail him with temptations of all kinds; he needs to look to Jesus for power. (White Manuscript p. 140. 1902).

4. The Christian leader will be kind. Unlike Thorndike's concept of a weak leader who is sentimental, he will be a man who is sensitive and compassionate toward the suffering of other men, with less chance of climbing to managerial success. A Christian leader will have the power of kindness. Ellen G. White had a very special concern for the youth of the church. She said, "God holds the managers of his institutions responsible to treat the youth in the employ of these institutions with courtesy, respect and kindness."

5. The Christian leader will exhibit loyalty. Satan is working hard to take away from the fold those who are inclined toward independent judgement. There must be loyalty to the church and toward its established principles. (Ellen White, 'Gospel Workers' p. 443, 444).

6. A Christian leader must be faithful. In Testimonies, Vol. 2, p. 467, 468, Ellen White suggests the great need for faithful leaders.

7. Humility is an important characteristic of a Christian leader. Position does not give him holiness. He needs dependence on God because of his position and responsibility. (Ellen White. **Prophets and Kings**. p.30).

8. Integrity is a must for the Christian leader. In a world where moral fiber of nations is at the breaking point, God is earnestly seeking men of integrity to take up leadership positions. Ellen White implores that integrity must be preserved at all costs.

9. Christian leadership also demands ability. There is need of men who have cool heads and sound sense. Here again Ellen White offers a number of qualities of a good leader:

- (1) God's cause is in need of men and women who will make patient and thorough investigation of the needs;
- (2) Those who possess warm and kind hearts, cool heads, sound sense, and unbiased judgement;
- (3) Those who are sanctified by the Spirit of God, and can fearlessly say, 'No' or 'Yes' and 'Amen' to propositions;
- (4) Those who have strong convictions, clear understanding, and pure and sympathetic hearts;
- (5) Those who have a large capacity for work;
- (6) Those who practice the words: "All ye are brethren";

(7) Those who strive to uplift and restore the fallen humanity. (**White Manuscript 34, 1901**)

10. Good Christian leaders will both maintain and promote individuality. "Yes men" are not a strength to the cause of God. (**White Letter 380, 1907**) fully recognize the essential dignity of every individual teacher. The principal is helpful for assigning duties to his teachers and for supervising their work.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion shows that the principal of a school should fully recognize the essential dignity of every individual teacher. The principal is helpful for assigning duties to his teachers and for supervising their work.

There are examples of principals who are successful in their administrative work. For example Mr.'X' has been the principal of several schools. Whatever the schools he served in, he worked hard and earned success. The financial position of the school was made sound, the examination results used to be high, but he would not last more than a year or two in any school. In spite of his hard work, he had always been accused of not "getting along" with the staff and students. There are a number of examples we can quote. These examples indicate to us that the school

administrator must not only have good academic qualifications, but some thing more.

He must be able to understand the feelings and attitudes of his fellow workers and students. Here the emphasis is upon the attitudes, feelings, and the behaviour of people. Of all the factors of administration with which a leader deals, man is by far the most important. The relationship between the leader and his man in the job is spoken of as human relations. It involves understanding and promoting interpersonal relations in the school, and this will enable him to get along with the staff and students.

The Adventist administrator's personal relations with his staff and the students would enable him to run the school in a manner that will facilitate the introduction of "faith and learning" principle in his school. He should change the present situations of our school setup in India by appointing all Adventist teachers so that they can implement the "faith and learning" process among Adventist school children, as well as, non-Adventists who come to our schools to acquire "true education".

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