

Institute For Christian Teaching
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**RESPECT FOR LEARNERS:
A CHRISTIAN DIDACTIC PERSPECTIVE**

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Prepared for the International Faith and Learning Seminar
held at Babcock University
Ilishan-Remo, Nigeria: June 17 – 29, 2001

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

During my research in Psychology of Education, I focused on the relationship between the educator and the learner, and the powerful influence this relationship has on the development of the learner. I was particularly interested in the potential of the educator to make up for hindrances in the learner's development (such as an inadequate father-figure), and help such "restrained" learners to establish stable identities and fulfil their potential.

My findings revealed that learners who were "restrained in their becoming" (blocked in their development), inevitably had poor self-esteem (Sutcliffe 1996:264). Their bad behaviour and poor results improved astonishingly when I bolstered their self-esteem and treated them kindly and with respect.

Many lecturers in the secular institutions in which I lectured, shocked me by the disrespectful way they treated and spoke about learners. I also discovered that the majority of educators are not sufficiently aware of the part they play as significant role models for learners. Consequently, I devised a strategy by which educators can assist learners on their path towards becoming fully actualised individuals with firm identities. This strategy is largely based on the **respectful treatment of learners**, acknowledging them as people of worth, meeting their needs, and on the role modelling of mature behaviour on the part of the lecturer.

When I began lecturing at a Seventh-Day-Adventist institution – Helderberg College – I was impressed with the fact that the philosophy I had developed for myself was exactly in line with the philosophy of education espoused by Adventist institutions. It was exciting to find a strong emphasis on Christ in the Classroom and the integration of faith and learning. Now at last I can fully put into practice my research findings, and inspire other educators who have the same values and goals as I have.

Thus I have decided to take this opportunity to share my findings with you, and show how well Psychology of Education relates to our own Adventist philosophy of education. Furthermore, Christ's own respectful treatment of learners will be investigated with a view to helping educators treat their learners as Christ would do. Finally, I hope to encourage you by suggesting some strategies which you can use in your own classroom to improve the self-esteem of your students, helping them simultaneously to establish solid identities and motivating them towards the realisation of their full potential.

1.2 TERMINOLOGY

Emancipation:	freeing of the child by the parents
Identity:	the self
Restrained in becoming:	blocked/hindered in development
Self-actualisation:	self-realisation; fulfilment of potential
Self-concept:	combination of identity and self-esteem

Self-esteem:	self-respect; self-worth
Self-transcendence:	moving beyond the self
Significance attribution:	giving of meaning

- NOTE:** * **These findings apply not only to restrained adolescents but to youths as well.**
- * **All words in bold throughout the text have been supplied by the writer of this article.**
- * **The masculine pronouns he, his, him should be taken to include the feminine gender at all times.**

1.3 AIM

To convince the educator of the crucial importance of treating every learner with the utmost respect, especially in a Christian educational institution.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

- To show, from a Psychology of Education point of view, that respectful treatment of learners leads to enhancement of their self-esteem, identity formation and hence to their self-actualisation.
- To note the significance of the father-figure in the self-esteem and self-actualisation of learners.
- To point out the role of teachers as surrogate parents and role models.
- To indicate the clear link which exists between Psychology of Education and Adventist Philosophy of Education.
- To cite instances of Jesus' respectful treatment of learners, illustrating the connection between Psychology of Education and Adventist Philosophy of Education.
- To suggest the steps Christian educators can take to improve the self-respect and self-actualisation of their learners.
- To assist Adventist educators in their efforts to integrate faith and learning by emphasising the importance of respectful treatment of learners.
- To stimulate Adventist educators to follow Jesus' example of respectful treatment of learners in their own classrooms, so that the learners may not only enhance their sense of self-worth, but achieve their full academic and spiritual potential.

2. Research findings

In summary form, my research showed the following:

- Certain adolescents are restrained in their becoming owing to a variety of family, school and relational factors, such as inappropriate adult role models, repeated failure and poor communication skills.
- Restrained adolescents display inadequate identity formation, partly because they are still endeavouring to define an own identity, instead of having reached the point of refining and stabilising their identity.
- Through their behaviour in family, school and other relationships they plead for assistance in the formation of their identity, especially at school, where their plea

is often misinterpreted as misbehaviour or attention-seeking, if not completely ignored.

- Restrained adolescents consequently resort to their own ineffective efforts towards a meaningful existence.
- By means of a qualitative investigation, it was found that:
 - The identity formation of restrained adolescents is on the whole unsatisfactory in every respect. That is to say, they attribute inadequate meaning to life, themselves and their problems; they are not sufficiently involved in what they do, and they are bound by the infantile experiencing of their life-world in that they are controlled by their feelings and moods.
 - Parents of restrained adolescents tend to be inadequate, particularly their fathers, who are non-available, either literally or figuratively. Alcoholism, neglect and abuse are common.
 - Teachers of restrained adolescents are generally unaware of the significant role they can play in their identity formation, and need sensitisation and assistance in this area.
 - Adolescents restrained in their becoming demonstrate specific identity formation needs, especially in their relationships with self and with adults.
 - Teachers are in the position to provide support, not by means of additional scholastic guidance programmes, but through their approach to these adolescents, to their teaching and education in general (Sutcliffe 1996: v-vii).

2.1 The actualisation of learners restrained in their becoming

It seems that almost all people may be found to be restrained in some way or other, depending on the norm stated, even if it is a subjective norm. This might be because a person rarely if ever experiences the ideal situation for becoming – indeed the nature of this world is imperfect and we are all born into potentially restraining circumstances (v.d.Spuy 1992:113).

Learners restrained in their becoming typically have a faulty self-identity, low self-esteem and a negative self-concept. An inadequate self-concept, according to the literature, is the factor which to the greatest extent prevents self-actualisation. Self-transcendence is not a characteristic of learners restrained in their becoming, since these children have not succeeded in surmounting either their physical imperfections, their cognitive limitations, their negative affective experiences or their relational difficulties. In short, they have not moved beyond themselves (Ibid:111-112).

My studies suggested that the restraining influences in a child's life can mostly be traced to unsatisfactory relationships with parents, teachers, peers, siblings, self or

schoolwork – especially relationships with parents, and not to poverty, as was previously assumed. The children selected as being restrained in their becoming, without exception had broken homes, which was adversely affecting their actualisation (v.d. Spuy 1992:112-113). The chief need of the child restrained in his or her becoming emerged as the security and protection an adequate father-figure (all be it a teacher) can provide.

The actualisation of a children restrained in, for example, emancipation as an aspect of their becoming, is affected in every respect. The children's significance attribution (giving of meaning) is inadequate since they do not see the sense in the many unnecessary rules of their parents, which govern their coming and going. These rules are experienced as cramping. This feeling results in listless, indifferent involvement at school (Sutcliffe 1996:114).

Because children experiencing inadequate emancipating are so involved in pleasing their parents, they do not possess sufficient drive or motivation to please their teachers and their involvement with their schoolwork suffers.

Inadequately emancipated children feel so trapped by their parents that their experiences are of necessity unpleasant, so much so that they would prefer to leave home. Their unhappiness causes their schoolwork to suffer, which creates more unpleasant experiences and a damaged self-concept, effectively limiting self-actualisation.

A negative self-concept is concomitant with inadequate emancipating (freeing of the child by the parents), since children who are not afforded the room/space to live their own lives and be their own person, cannot feel good about themselves or develop confidence in their own abilities.

Self-transcendence also becomes impossible when emancipation is inadequate since the learners have not been freed to live above their present restrictive world or themselves. In fact it is often their parents' unconscious goal to prevent them from self-transcendence because with self-transcendence comes the children's realisation of the independent self and release from their parents (Ibid:114-115).

2.1.1 Importance of the father-figure in self-esteem of learners

The literature strongly agrees on the fact that having an adequate, caring, supportive father-figure significantly improves the self-esteem and sense of self (Sutcliffe 1996:117). As a rule, restrained adolescents (male and female) strongly identify with at least one male teacher, whom they see as a male role model, and who influences their identity formation positively. This indicates the deep need of restrained adolescents for a surrogate father-figure, in lieu of an adequate father (Sutcliffe 1996:250).

One can relate this to the improvement we experience in self-respect when realising that we have the most adequate, caring and supportive "Father-figure" in the universe!

2.1.2 Inadequate parents of restrained learners

To discover the role of teachers as surrogate parents of restrained learners, it is necessary first to define the role of the parents of restrained learners. In theory, restrained adolescents' parents seem to know what the role of parents should be in adolescents' identity formation, but they admit that they have not been successful in fulfilling that role. There is shifting of the blame onto each other or onto teachers, to excuse themselves from their ultimate responsibility. Parents of restrained adolescents are mostly in agreement as to the significance of the teachers' role in their adolescents' identity formation. Some parents go so far as to equate the significance of the teachers' role with their own. Others are even tempted to load the responsibility of their sons' and daughters' identity formation squarely on the shoulders of their teachers. Yet again, because of their incapacity to understand fundamental factors relating to roles and relationships, parents of restrained adolescents cannot make meaningful contact with teachers (Sutcliffe 1996:277).

The mother, in many cases, is the stronger contributor to the identity formation of these adolescents, the father frequently having an inverse effect on their identity formation in being a role model of how not to be. In this investigation the fathers were usually accused by their sons or daughters of not being good examples of what adults should be, but it could be that a mother may also not be a laudable exemplar of adulthood (Ibid:277). The extent to which restrained adolescents' identity formation needs are met by some parents is minimal. Although the mothers of these restrained adolescents as a rule respond admirably to meeting their needs, those needs which only fathers can fulfil, usually remain unfulfilled. This state of affairs is a major negative factor in the identity formation of restrained adolescents (Ibid: 278).

2.2 The role of teachers in the identity formation of adolescents restrained in their becoming

In the writer's own experience as a teacher, those students whose behaviour was the worst (usually described as "attention-seeking") by other teachers, were the ones she singled out for special attention. The reason these learners were looking for attention she traced to their crying need for acknowledgement and to be noticed. In other words, they needed boosting of their self-esteem, according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Reilly & Lewis 1983:207). When treated with respect, each of these learners without fail, registered a gain in self-worth. Their enhanced feelings about their worth always resulted in huge improvements in behaviour and achievement.

The writer herself experienced being an adolescent who was unusually influenced by teachers, largely as a result of having inadequate parental models. Especially during adolescence, these teachers played an essential part in helping her form realistic views of herself and her potential. Teachers were the ones who helped her see herself as a scholar, as a musician, as a performer and eventually as a teacher. Teachers not only taught her who she really was, but coaxed her to actualise her full potential as an educator. Furthermore, female teachers had the most lasting

influence, underlining the awareness that identification with a respected teacher of the same gender would seem to be significant in forming self-attitudes (Sutcliffe 1997:6).

The study conducted by the writer revealed that the teachers of restrained adolescents recognise that they do have a role to play in their identity formation, but in general are not sure what this role entails, and do not seem to be convinced of its true significance, or of their own capacity to fill that role, due to large classes and lack of time.

There would also seem to be far too many teachers who either minimise their role, are unaware of their influence, or blindly deny that they play any part whatsoever in restrained adolescents' identity formation. This scenario unveils the need for teachers to understand the true nature of their role in adolescents' identity formation.

There are admittedly those teachers who are aware of restrained adolescents' needs, and they do go some way towards meeting them. However, it seems fair to conclude that if teachers were more acutely aware of the role they play in the identity formation of adolescents who are restrained in their becoming, they would have more impact on their ultimate becoming (Ibid:278).

Rasi (2001) suggests that it devolves upon the teacher not only to initiate relationships with learners, but also to sustain these relationships.

Ellen White lifts the influence of teachers beyond the lives of the students to the lives of others they will come in contact with. "As the teacher awakens in the minds of his pupils a realisation of the possibilities before them, as he causes them to grasp the truth that they may become useful, noble, trustworthy men and women, he sets in motion waves of influence that, even after he himself has gone to rest, will reach onward and ever onward, giving joy to the sorrowing, and inspiring hope in the discouraged. As he lights in their minds and hearts the lamp of earnest endeavour, he is rewarded by seeing its bright rays diverge in every direction illuminating not only the lives of the few who daily sit before him for instruction, but through them the lives of many others" (White 1943:104).

The task of the teacher will be clearly defined in the section: Strategies for enhancing identity formation, self-esteem and self-actualisation of learners (see paragraph 5).

With respect to the role of teachers, restrained adolescents communicate the requirement of having smaller classes at school so that teachers can pay them more individual attention (the advantage of private Christian education!). They also want their teachers to understand them, believe in them and encourage them, and be more interested in them as persons than in the work. They, furthermore, demonstrate the needfulness of having at least one special teacher to talk to about those things they feel they cannot speak to their parents about (the advantage of our "mentoring" system). There is, concomitantly the implied need for teachers to afford restrained adolescents the opportunity to express their feelings, and to know themselves and discover their true identity by way of essays, discussions and relevant exercises (Sutcliffe 1996:276).

This kind of attention to the learners as unique individuals who are worthy of acknowledgement, is critical to the establishment of their identities, as well as to their sense of self-esteem.

Henson (1999:112) supports the needfulness of respectful treatment of learners with the following belief: “I firmly believe in treating students like fellow human beings who have feelings just like I do. They don’t appreciate being embarrassed or humiliated or confronted with problems in front of their peers. But they do respond to kindness, encouragement, a friendly tease, and a smile. I try to teach manners in my classroom by being mannerly to my students.”

2.2.1 Teachers as role models

Considering the inadequacy of the parental role models of restrained adolescents, it devolves upon the teacher to take up the position of the much-needed role model. Certain requirements are essential for this role.

In the research the teacher’s own identity, self-concept and personality, the relationship with religion and parents of pupils, and subject knowledge were all shown to have a significant influence on the identity formation of adolescents, especially those who are restrained in their becoming (Sutcliffe 1996:11-15).

Ellen White (1943:230) is more specific on the relationship of the teacher to religion: “Every Christian teacher should have an intelligent understanding of what Christ is to him individually. He should know how to make the Lord his strength and efficiency....”

Ellen White (1943:31) goes even further in explicating the teacher’s religious qualification: “In order that the teacher may accomplish the object of his work, he should be a living embodiment of truth, a living channel through which wisdom and life may flow. A pure life, the result of sound principles and right habits, should therefore be regarded as his most essential qualification.”

The “teacher is not a mere purveyor of information, but a role model, a caring person, an inspirer of vision, and many other things that are central to Christian education” Knight (2001:5).

It is important for the classroom to be student-centered rather than teacher-centered. Furthermore, the value of each student must be communicated through classroom atmosphere and teacher emphasis. A spirit of acceptance must be modelled by the instructor (and possibly enforced) until a feeling of being genuinely appreciated sets in on the part of the students (Morrison 1994:31).

Michael Pearson states very eloquently that we “need to be models of those who have found a way through life, not sought to escape from it” (6CC:294).

Ellen White, under inspiration, has much to say about the character of the teacher as a role model for students. “In order to exert the right influence, he should have perfect control over himself, and his own heart should be richly imbued with love for his pupils, which will be seen in his looks, words, and acts” (1950:39). (See Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students for copious notes on the character of the teacher.)

3. **Link between Psychology of Education and Adventist Philosophy of Education**

I was interested to discover a very definite connection between Psychology of Education and Adventist Philosophy of Education. To me this link indicates that **our philosophy of education has well-established educational and psychological foundations.**

A major premise of Psychology of Education is that education is primarily directed towards self-actualisation [the fulfilment of potential], and that the educator is merely a guiding influence (van Rensburg, Kilian & Landman (1981:262). These authors point out that “the educator’s responsibility consists in making his subject conscious of his own personal duty and then helping him to accomplish it. The urge towards competence is promoted by the acceptance of responsibility.”

The rationale behind Seventh-day Adventists’ philosophy of education is also to develop in students the whole of their human potential, and bring them into harmony with their Creator and fellow human beings, so that they may perform the church’s unique mission to the world (Student Diary, 2001:Helderberg College).

The philosophy of education of the Seventh-day Adventist church is summed up in the well-known quotation of Ellen G White in the book Education (1952:13): “True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come”.

The twin focus then in our particular philosophy of education as SDA educational institutions, is

- (a) the preparation for **service** in this world, and for the world hereafter (i.e. realisation of our full potential), and
- (b) the **holistic** development of mind, body and spirit.

In Psychology of Education and in this text the various components of the learner are often mentioned as being important to development, that is: the cognitive (intellectual), affective (emotional), conative (will), normative (moral) and physical components. Hence, a holistic approach to education is essential, from the point of view of Psychology of Education as well.

When looking at the main concepts dealt with in the discipline Psychology of Education, it becomes apparent that there are many similarities with the Adventist philosophy of education. Psychology of Education has first and foremost to do with pedagogic **relationships**, i.e. the relationships of the learner with the teacher, with him or herself, with

the subject matter, with peers, and with his or her environment, and even with God. In other words, Psychology of Education has to do with the whole “lifeworld” of relationships in which the learner engages during the education act. For education to be successful, all of these relationships should ideally be satisfactory.

As Adventist educators, relationships are also extremely important. We see our whole duty on earth as summed up in our respectful relationship to God (first four commandments) and to our fellow man (last six commandments).

Psychology of Education rests largely on a learner-centred approach, whereby the many levels of the learner’s **needs** must be met if effective education is to result. What did Jesus do? He first saw to people’s physical and emotional needs before teaching them anything spiritual. In line with Psychology of Education, which says our lower-order needs must be met first before our highest need for self-actualisation can be addressed, our Philosophy of Education maintains that all our dimensions must be taken into account if we are to achieve our full human potential.

According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Reilly & Lewis 1983:207), self-esteem needs are on the 4th level out of 5. In other words, self-esteem is a very important higher-order need which needs to be addressed before we can become the best people we are destined to become. Hence my emphasis on treating learners with respect in order to develop their self-esteem. And hence Jesus’ very careful and respectful treatment of every learner he encountered!

The educational philosophy advocated by Ellen White and the one implied in the Bible, puts the **needs** of the student at the very focal point of the educational endeavour (Knight 2001:5). This point is confirmed by Cadwaller (1974:480).

However, there is one major difference between Psychology of Education and Adventist philosophy of education, and that is what makes it unique when compared with every other Christian (or otherwise) philosophy of education. Ellen White (1952:30) explains that “in the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one.... To aid the student in comprehending these principles, and in entering into that relation with Christ which will make them a controlling power in the life, should be the teacher’s first effort and his constant aim.”

Again, however, Adventist philosophy of education takes the meeting of students’ needs one step further - into the realm of the spiritual: The student “can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. Cooperation with that power is man’s greatest need. In all educational effort should not this cooperation be the highest aim?” (White 1952:29).

Finally, the emphasis in this article is on the important role of teachers in the identity formation of restrained adolescents. In our Adventist philosophy of education, these concepts simply go under different names. **What we as Adventist teachers aim to do, is partly to help students discover their true identity as sons and daughters of God, and to set them on the path of forming firm, stable new identities in Christ. We enthusiastically seek to create a strong sense of self-esteem and worth as blood-bought heirs of eternal life.**

So the truths that I discovered in my study of a secular discipline – Psychology of Education – I have found are being put into practice in a marvellous way in our Adventist institutions. I have discovered for myself that all truth is God’s truth, no matter what guise it takes, and the source of all truth is God (see Sire 1990:141).

4. Jesus treats learners with respect

Jesus is our example in all things (1 Peter 2:21), so if He treated learners with respect, it is our privilege to do the same.

4.1 Nicodemus (John 3:1–21)

Because of the economical style of the gospels, it might often appear as if Jesus is being abrupt, even rude to Nicodemus and others who asked Him questions. Yet Ellen White tells us in her book *Steps to Christ* (1921:13) that He always spoke the truth kindly and in love. As He spoke the necessary words of censure, there were tears in His voice. “He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention. . . . He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul.” He would never break a bruised reed; He would never snuff out a smouldering wick (Isa.42:3).

“Nicodemus had come to the Lord thinking to enter into a discussion with Him, but Jesus laid bare the foundation principles of truth. He said to Nicodemus, “[it] is not theoretical knowledge you need, so much as spiritual regeneration. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a new heart” (White 1898:171, Chap.17). Yet Christ spoke with such solemn dignity, and both look and tone expressed such earnest love, that Nicodemus was not offended as he realized his humiliating condition” (White 1898:173).

In the same way, when our students appear keen to discuss the “theory” of religion, they more than likely have the same need as did Nicodemus – to be born again. It is our privilege to lift up Him who draws all men unto Himself (1 John 1:29). “Not through controversy is the soul enlightened. We must look and live” (White 1898:171).

4.2 Woman of Samaria - at the well (John 4:4–30)

Jesus broke the social code on two counts and spoke to a woman and a Samaritan. In the classroom we need to override social codes and cultural prejudices in the interests of education. It is our unconditional acceptance of learners that builds their sense of self-worth. Selmon Dio (1996:5-6) expounds this point well: “It was Christ’s acceptance of the adulterous woman that won her for God. When the Samaritan woman, a lifetime prostitute, came to Jacob’s well, Jesus did not neglect her. Jesus did not judge her social status or her character but sought the opportunity to transform her character. . . . With Jesus, there was no partiality, no differences in social status or position, and no discrimination. Every one was equal. **A teacher’s work is similar to [that of] Jesus.**”

“An accepting attitude may be defined as the willingness of a teacher to accept students with their weaknesses and strengths. An attitude of acceptance is nothing

but a teacher's willingness to assist students in their struggle with class work. Acceptance is patiently teaching students when they do not understand the subject matter. Acceptance means neither being irritated nor uttering discouraging words that will demoralize a student. An accepting attitude is continually supporting students to keep working hard at their schoolwork. It is being flexible enough for the young people to come and receive help and support when they need it."

"The hatred between Jews and Samaritans prevented the woman from offering a kindness [some water] to Jesus; but the Saviour was seeking to find the key to this heart, and with the tact born of divine love, He asked, not offered, a favour. The offer of a kindness might have been rejected; but trust awakens trust" (White 1898:184, Chap.19). In a similar way, the Spirit of God will grant us this "tact born of divine love", so that we may have the discernment to find the key to unlock our students' spiritual needs. As Jesus characteristically used everyday objects from nature to focus the minds of His learners on heavenly things (White 1943:240), we may do the same in the classroom.

4.3 Jews - synagogue in Capernaum (John 6:54-65)

Jesus met the Jews' criticisms by pointing them repeatedly to the truth - "I tell you the truth..." We can do the same in our classrooms, instead of becoming defensive when students criticise and question us. "Instead of being irritated or offended when students do not meet expectations, teachers [can] help students to meet the expectations of the school and the teacher" (Dio 1996:7).

Just as many of the Jews were offended when Jesus spoke the truth to them, so will many of our students be. They may even turn against us and seek to discredit us on the campus, as did the Jews to Jesus. But "the servant is not greater than his master" (Matt.10:24). Let us not withhold truth and hard sayings in order to flatter and pamper our students, no matter how difficult this might be. Their eternal destiny is at stake.

4.4 Mary Magdalene (John 12:4-8); caught in adultery (John 8:5-11)

Jesus understood the weakness of Mary and He knew her heart. The Spirit of God will give us the same discernment. Let us not condemn or judge our students, but read behind their behaviour to see their true needs, desires and motives.

Christ saw that Mary was "embarrassed and distressed. He knew that in this act of service [the anointing of His feet] she had expressed her gratitude for the forgiveness of her sins, and He brought relief to her mind" (White 1898:56, Chap.62).

"Reprimanding students in front of their peers may embarrass them unnecessarily. Speaking to them privately helps their integrity and self-esteem" (Hawley, 1996).

"Christ hates the sin, but loves the sinner. This will be the spirit of all who follow Him. Christian love is slow to censure, quick to discern penitence, ready to forgive, to encourage, to set the wanderer in the path of holiness, and to stay his feet therein" (White 1898:462, Chap.51).

Pray God that we will have the attitude of Christ towards our students who are caught in sin, “neither do I condemn you....Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11).

4.5 Disciples: last supper; feet washing; asleep in the garden; Jesus' prayer for (John 13:1-17; John 17:6-19)

Jesus humbled Himself and took the role of servant to His disciples at the table and when washing their dirty feet. He was not too proud to silently role-model the kind of behaviour He wanted to teach them. This same quiet attitude should be ours. “This action opened the eyes of the disciples. Bitter shame and humiliation filled their hearts. They understood the unspoken rebuke, and saw themselves in altogether a new light” (White 1898:644, Chap.17).

Regarding the servant role of the teacher, Selmon Dio (1996:10) notes that “servant-leadership classroom management creates respect for the teacher, students, and for the school.”

When Jesus' disciples were sleeping during the time He needed their support, He showed His “humanness” by asking them to watch and pray with Him. We as teachers must show that we are human too. Furthermore, Jesus prayed for His disciples. How do we feel when another person prays aloud for us? - special, validated, built up. We need also to pray aloud for and with our students. This will enhance their self-esteem, dignity and identity as loved children of God.

4.6 Peter's reinstatement: "feed my sheep" (John 21:15-19)

When Peter denied knowing Christ, Jesus did not say anything. He simply looked at Peter with great love and disappointment, and gave him another chance. “The Saviour's manner of dealing with Peter had a lesson for him and for his brethren. It taught them to meet the transgressor with patience, sympathy, and forgiving love. Although Peter had denied his Lord, the love which Jesus bore him never faltered. Just such love should the under-shepherd feel for the sheep and lambs committed to his care” (White 1898:815, Chap.85).

Let us follow Christ's example toward our students, by not censuring them too harshly, and always giving them another chance to fulfil their potential in the building up of His kingdom. If a student has not managed to submit work that is up to expectation, allow the student to resubmit the work and help to bring them up to the required standard. Jesus gave Peter the chance to prove his repentance from his disloyalty by requiring him to “feed my sheep” (John 21:17).

If students have done wrong, give them something to do which will be proof of their repentance. For example, if students have been dishonest in an examination, let them make reparation by doing an extra project along the lines of honesty. This will help to restore their damaged self-esteem, and affirm their identity as loved children of God.

5. Strategy for enhancing self-esteem and self-actualisation of learners

It is the privilege of teachers to assist learners who are restrained in their becoming in realising their potential, although their full potential will never be achieved on this earth. Teachers should be optimistic about a student's education. Since it is most frequently as a result of broken homes and unstable relationships with parents that children are restrained in their becoming, the task of guiding children towards actualisation often rests on the shoulders of the teacher – especially today, when an alarmingly small proportion of families are in tact.

- First of all the child's, also the family's, physical and basic needs should be attended to since no person can transcend the concrete situation if the primary struggle is to survive. If a family is sufficiently provided for, teachers can educate properly and children can actualise their potential (v.d.Spuy 1992:117).

According to Gaikwad (18CC:43), long before the academic basics including the “3R's” can be taught to learners, there is another fundamental set of “3R's” that need to be taught. They are relatedness, respect and responsibility. Learners who master these skills and attitudes have a sense of self-esteem. This correlates not only to positive behaviour, but also to greater academic achievement.

“Christ-centered behaviour in the classroom includes being sensitive and sympathetic to the needs of a student. Respecting the opinions of students as worthy of respect is important. Respect begets respect. Respecting students' opinions will increase students' respect for the teacher. Therefore, a wise teacher will reason with students instead of imposing opinions on them. Give them alternatives to choose from and let them bear the consequences of their own behaviour” (Dio, 1996:12, following Ellen White).

- Children from “disadvantaged settings” should be assisted to actualise themselves as well as possible, in the fields of their strengths and interests. Minor successes in actualisation will obviously have a positive effect on their becoming in general.

“One of the tools the student uses to compensate is to counterbalance his weaknesses by capitalising on his strength. It will be [the] teacher's work to find his strong points. It is risky to send a student into the world with no skill, no unique knowledge, no means of compensating. He must be able to say, ‘I may not be the most popular student in school, but I am the best trumpet player in the band!’” (Poddar, 6CC:123).

Actualisation (a short-term endeavour) in one minor area can instigate actualisation in other areas, and eventually have a major influence on the child's becoming (a long-term endeavour) (v.d.Spuy 1992:118).

I am indebted to Mrs Sushila Poddar for the following strategies for developing self-esteem among learners (6CC:120-131 – adapted):

- # Help learners to base their self-esteem on Christ rather than on the opinion of their peers.
- # Help them measure themselves not only against others but with the standards set by God. Tell them: “God plus you makes the whole person. **God's sacrifice for you equals worth!**”

- # Examine your own attitudes because a sizeable portion of learners' self-esteem emerges from the way they think you see them. They also can detect your unspoken attitudes. When the students are convinced that they are loved and respected, they are inclined to accept their own worth as people.
- # Make a conscious effort to "catch students doing good". Commend them for their positive attitude and good behaviour as frequently as possible, both in private and in public.
- # Encourage learners to set goals for themselves.
- # Give extra time to students who are struggling academically.
- # Let slow learners learn at their own speed.
- # Allow each learner to determine his or her own learning style. [This will enhance the sense of having a choice and free agency, in turn creating a feeling of self-worth and clear identity]. "No man or woman is fitted for the work of teaching who is... arbitrary, or dictatorial" (White 1943:233).
- # Teachers must discipline students with respect and love [like God does].
- # One way to damage self-esteem is to avoid punishment altogether. Mrs Poddar quotes Ellen White on this point (1943:155): "Teachers should not allow disregard of their word to pass unnoticed. Let them be sparing of censure."

We should seek to preserve students' self-respect through helping them see their fault and enlisting their own will for its correction. We can also encourage self-respect and a desire to be useful by asking the older to assist the younger, the strong the weak, and, so far as possible, let all be called upon to do something in which they excel (Herbert Douglas, 2001:10, citing Ellen White).

- # Poddar again refers to White (1888:27) as saying: "It is pleasing to God that you should cultivate self-respect by living so that you will be approved by you own conscience, and before men and angels. [In other words, teach students to do what they know to be right, and you will help them build their self-esteem and fulfil their spiritual potential.]
- It is necessary for teachers to **look behind children's unacceptable behaviour for the apparent reasons and their unmet needs**. They should help children realise their potential in the following ways:
 - If teaching the subject English, for example, the teacher could promote adequate significance attribution by choosing comprehension passages dealing with issues of immediate interest to the learner, such as music; by debating issues such as abortion and selecting set books which highlight important moral principles such as honesty. Once the learners' interest is aroused and they see the meaningfulness of English classes, they will become involved in learning themselves. They will be motivated to do well at this subject as they see the relevance of it to their daily life and the world of work. As they experience the pleasure of success in one subject, they will experience the incentive to achieve in other areas of their lives, thereby building a healthy self-esteem. A healthy self-esteem is a very important step towards self-transcendence, which occurs when learners lose themselves in the joy of learning for its own sake (v.d.Spuy 1992:119).
 - By teaching the value of group-work, the teacher may facilitate relationships among children who are adjusting to divorce or remarriage in their homes (Barney & Kaford 1987:60-61). In this way learners who are restrained in their becoming because of relational difficulties may be assisted in overcoming these restraints and actualising themselves completely (v.d.Spuy 1992:119). Moreover, **through group-work each**

student gets the chance to discover his or her strengths and weaknesses, thereby gaining a clearer sense of identity. In addition Gaikwad (18CC:50-51) discovered that one of the main benefits of group-work (or “co-operative learning”) is higher self-esteem based on self-acceptance.

- Teachers’ relationships with restrained adolescents favourably influence these adolescents’ identity formation if positive meaning is attributed to these relationships by the restrained adolescents. To be successful, teachers of such adolescents ought to consistently personify adult values and standards. Physically, they will keep themselves healthy and vital, affectively warm and kind, cognitively well-informed and organised, conatively strong in taking decisions and making a variety of choices open to adolescents, and normatively honourable and reliable. Furthermore, if they enlist the interest of adolescents, then identity formation and self-actualisation will be the result (Swanepoel 1990:97).
- Teachers of restrained adolescents should nurture a good relationship with themselves, in other words build a solid identity, healthy self-concept and self-esteem. Furthermore, a sound religious relationship, good relationships with the restrained adolescents’ parents, and with the restrained adolescents themselves, are prerequisites in order that restrained adolescents might attribute significance to their relationships with teachers.
- Restrained adolescents attribute the correct meaning to their own gender identity, especially when teachers have a sure sense of their own masculinity or femininity, and treat male and female restrained adolescents equally.
- Moreover, teachers of restrained adolescents should help them attribute significance to their particular life-worlds, and thus understand who they are in relation to others.

The answers Adventist educators give students about the meaning of life are based on our Christian worldview. This worldview gives a clear reason for being and a definite purpose for life. Furthermore, our aim as educators to bring back genuine relevancy requires us to live what we believe to be true, and be able to give the reason “in season and out of season” – 2 Tim.4:2 (John Matthews, June 2001).

- The elements of authority, mutual understanding and trust ought to be in operation in meaningful relationships between teachers and restrained adolescents, as this will contribute to the identity formation of the latter.
- Generally, restrained adolescents prefer to remain uninvolved with adults by virtue of their disillusionment with a parent or parents, and even with teachers. They avoid physical involvement in sport, affective involvement with peers and teachers, cognitive involvement with academic work, conative involvement with career choices, or for that matter, any choices whatsoever, and normative involvement with adult standards and rules.
- If effective identity formation is to be achieved, the involvement of restrained adolescents must be engaged by teachers in as many of the above areas as possible. Even involving adolescents in one of these areas tends to have a corresponding effect on other areas. For example, getting an adolescent physically involved in sport usually

leads to improved self-esteem which has an advantageous outworking on the academic self-concept and accordingly on identity formation.

- Encouraging involvement in art or music may have a good influence on adolescents' career choice, or normative involvement in moral debates may result in better relationships with adults and their norms. "Have class discussions on ethics and values in the classroom. This might include such areas as respect for others and their belongings ... and how students want others to treat them" (Henson 1999:113).
- If teachers involve students in a variety of activities, restrained adolescents are assisted in defining their special interests, and consequently themselves. Thus, for teachers of restrained adolescents, vigorous involvement in all the good things life has to offer appears to be a primary objective if identity formation is to be the result. In Adventist institutions the emphasis placed on spiritual activities is especially important in helping students reach the highest level of development. "It is when intellectual and spiritual power are combined that the highest standard of manhood is attained" (White 1943:66).
- Happy experiencing in relationship with teachers is particularly important for restrained adolescents, because they are inclined to have unhappy relationships at home. Dio (1996:6) mentions how important a cheerful attitude on the part of the teacher is in helping us witness for Christ. He admonishes: "No anxiety should be brought to the classroom. A depressed looking appearance has a negative influence on learning."

Dio, following Gordon & Burch (1996:14) suggests that all can be made interesting and exciting to young people by a teacher who has learned how to create a relationship with students in which the needs of the teacher are respected by the students and the needs of the students are respected by the teacher.

- The experiencing of congenial, trusting relationships with teachers, in which there is mutual knowledge of each other, respect and unconditional acceptance, is fundamental to restrained adolescents if they are to progress satisfactorily in the formation of their identities.

"We need to create such respect for persons in the classroom that students feel free on occasion to expose their pain and their passion" (Pearson 6CC:294).

The inspired advice of Ellen White is: "Teachers and students are to come close together in Christian fellowship. The youth will make many mistakes, and **the teacher is never to forget to be compassionate and courteous**. Never is he to seek to show his superiority. The greatest of teachers are those who are most patient, most kind. By their simplicity and their willingness to learn, they encourage their students to climb higher and still higher "(White 1943:269).

Ellen White (White 1943:93) continues: "The teacher who is severe, critical, overbearing, heedless of others' feelings, must expect the same spirit to be manifested toward himself. **He who wishes to preserve his own dignity and self-respect must be careful not to wound needlessly the self-respect of others**. This rule should be sacredly observed toward the dullest, the youngest, the most blundering students. What God intends to do with these apparently uninteresting youth, you do not know."

- Teachers should therefore do all in their power to make restrained adolescents' experiencing of their involvement in class- and extra-mural activities pleasant. Especially academic activities are ideally experienced as enjoyable by way of teachers making success possible. Small successes lead to larger successes, which build self-esteem and a positive student-identity. Consequently the constituting of agreeable relationships between teachers and restrained adolescents is of great importance in the identity formation of the latter.

Chandra Hawley (1996) posted a useful document on the internet under the heading: Teacher Talk: Respect! She gives some pointers:

- # **Listen carefully when students speak.**
Remain open-minded and objective. Consider their messages carefully. Avoid interrupting a student, or offering unsolicited advice or criticism.
- # **Respect students' personal space.**
Students may feel threatened and become agitated if you violate their personal space.
- # **Use friendly gestures, not aggressive ones.**
Avoid "finger-pointing". Open, upturned palms may be more appropriate and effective.
- # **Use preferred name.**
Ask each student how they would like to be addressed in the classroom. Only in rare instances would their chosen name be inappropriate.
- # **Get on their level.**
Try to adopt their physical level. If they are seated, try kneeling or bending over, rather than standing over them [This naturally refers to younger learners only].
- # **Ask questions rather than make accusations.**
This assumes that the student is a responsible person. "Are you ready to begin?" rather than "Put your magazine away. It's time to start class." Use a concerned and kind tone.

6. Conclusion: Appeal to Adventist teachers to apply above strategy themselves

It has been shown in this paper that the teacher has a powerful part to play in building the self-esteem of students of all ages. A healthy self-esteem not only contributes positively towards the establishment of learners' identities, but also towards the fulfilment of their total potential – spiritual included.

When students' religious relationships are fulfilled, it will contribute toward their spiritual security and the establishment of their identity (Warren 1992:56). Yes, if we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all things will be added to us (Matt.6:33). Let Adventist teachers be sure that they themselves have a well-established, stable identity, a healthy self-concept, self-esteem and self-image; a cheerful personality, robust relationships and a balanced life, before trying to incorporate these principles into the lives of their charges!

Respect for learners is fundamental to the integration of faith and learning because our respectful treatment of learners strengthens their faith in a God who loves them enough to die for!

Finally, Sire (1990:137-138) advises that “as we do become activists, attempting to put into action the lifestyle and principles that emerge from our search [for the good], we need to **respect** all others as made in the image of God. No moral program, no spiritual principle, takes precedence over the dignity of any person – believer or not, intellectual friend or enemy.”

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