

Institute for Christian Teaching  
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# **VALUES-BASED SERVICE LEARNING IN ADVENTIST HIGHER EDUCATION**

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# VALUES-BASED SERVICE LEARNING IN ADVENTIST HIGHER EDUCATION

## 1. Introduction

The main purpose of this essay is to challenge and stimulate an interest among Adventist Educators and Adventists' higher education institutions to engage in values-based service-learning immediate communities in order to meet both the needs of the participating communities, and those of the higher education institutions. The values-based service-learning model is the proposed tools for meeting this need. The values-based service-learning is a service-learning that is based and informed by the Bible-worldview. God is the centre and reason for values-based service-learning.

It is anticipated that an Adventist educator will not only teach content, but will also introduce a student to the dimension of the Bible truth and values within a field of study as a way of making the learning and teaching experience more wholistic. From this encounter, a student will be armed with experiential knowledge that prepares him/her to participate in shared learning. The student will learn from mutual sharing of knowledge with the community. Communities have their own "social capital"<sup>1</sup>, resources, and assets, and these are critical in values-based service-learning.

The paper will look first into the history, challenges and weaknesses of service-learning, and then suggest values-based service-learning as an alternative model in Adventist higher education institutions so that it becomes the culture of an institution.

## 2. Service-learning

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<sup>1</sup> For the discussion of "social capital," see Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *The Journal of Democracy*, 6:1, 1995, pp. 65-78. Putnam defines "Social Capital" as "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit."

Service-learning is fairly a new subject in learning, and debates are still continuing relating to definition, adoption and implementation. The subject of service-learning has received due attention from various higher education institutions, and as a result there are several definitions of service-learning. In the early 1990s Kendal<sup>2</sup> counted about 147 various definitions of service-learning. One of the issues in defining service-learning is the two extremes views, namely academic service-learning, which focuses on the significance of service-learning as an academic enterprise, and the community service-learning, which places its accent on the importance of the community partner in the learning activity. Eyler & Giles define service-learning thus,

“Service learning is a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students work with others through a process of applying what they are learning to community problems and, at the same time, reflecting upon their experience as they seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves.”<sup>3</sup>

Service-learning involves a student in events where both the community and a student are key recipients of knowledge and service, and where the aim is to provide a service to the community and, equally, to enrich and heighten the student learning experience.<sup>4</sup> The primary focus of service-learning is integrating community service with scholarly activity such as student learning, teaching, and research.

### 3. Challenges and Successes of Service-learning

As mentioned earlier, service-learning is a fairly “new pedagogy,”<sup>5</sup> but its “intellectual roots”<sup>6</sup> can be traced back to the works of Jane Addams, John Dewey, and Dorothy Day.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the works of J. Eyler, and D. E. Giles, “The Theoretical Roots of Service-Learning in John Dewey: Toward a Theory of Service-Learning.” In *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, (1) 1, 1994a, pp. 77-78.

<sup>3</sup> J. E. Eyler and J. Giles, *Where's the learning in service learning?* San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 1999, p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> S. E. Mohamed, “Community engagement in Southern African higher education institutions.” A paper presented at the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE), in Umuahia, Abia State in Nigeria, November 2005.

<sup>5</sup> B. R. Barber and R. Battistoni (eds.), *Education for Democracy*, Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1993, p. ix.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce W. Speck, “Why Service-Learning?” in *New Directions for Higher Education*, No. 114 New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Summer 2001, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> K. Morton and J. Saltmarsh, “Addams, Day, and Dewey: The Emergence of Community Service in American Culture,” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 4, 1997, pp. 137–149.

The 1990's experienced an increase in documented material on service-learning.<sup>8</sup> One can safely say that the service-learning has not only become a searchable discipline, but quite a number of higher education institutions have created centres of service-learning and service-learning coordinating structures.

As a new approach to learning, service-learning implies that there is still insufficient supply of empirical search to ascertain its impact or effectiveness.<sup>9</sup> For the little research done, it appears that students who participate in service-learning tend to develop a positive social responsibility,<sup>10</sup> improve academic performance and grades,<sup>11</sup> improve higher order thinking and analytic skills,<sup>12</sup> increase commitment to service and civic responsibility,<sup>13</sup> increase university or college attendance and retention,<sup>14</sup> develop career awareness and interest<sup>15</sup> and career expertise or skills.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Speck, "Service-Learning," p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> A. W. Astin and L. J. Sax, "How Undergraduates Are Affected by Service Participation." *Journal of College Student Development*, 39, 1998, p. 251.

<sup>10</sup> See the work of J. Eyler, and D. Giles, *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> G. B. Markus, J. P. F. Howard, and D. C. King, "Integrating Community Service and Classroom Instruction Enhances Learning: Results from an Experiment." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 15, 1993, pp. 410-419; See also A. Wurr, "Service-Learning and Student Writing: An Investigation of Effects," *Service Learning Through a Multidisciplinary Lens*. Eds. Shelly H. Billig and Andrew Furco. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2002, pp. 103-121.

<sup>12</sup> D. E. Giles, Jr., and J. Eyler, "The Impact of a College Community Service Laboratory on Students' Personal, Social, and Cognitive Outcomes." *Journal of Adolescence*, 17, 1994, pp. 327- 339.

<sup>13</sup> G. B. Markus, J. P. F. Howard, and D. C. King, "Integrating Community Service and Classroom Instruction Enhances Learning: Results from an Experiment." pp. 410-413.

<sup>14</sup> J. A. Hatcher, R. G. Bringle, and R. Muthiah, "Institutional strategies to involve freshmen in service," In E. Zlotkowski, (Ed.), *Service learning and the first year experience*, Columbia, SC: National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, 2002, pp. 79-90; See also S. Gallini and, B. Moely, "Service-Learning and Engagement, Academic Challenge, and Retention," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Fall 2003, pp. 5 - 14.

<sup>15</sup> L. M. Fenzel and T. P. Leary, "Evaluating Outcomes of Service-Learning Courses at a Parochial College," A Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL: March 24-28, 1997, pp. 1-20.

<sup>16</sup> L. J. Vogelgesang and A. W. Astin, "Comparing the Effects of Community Service and Service-Learning," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*; Vol. 7, 2000, pp. 25-34; See also A. W. Astin and L. J. Sax, and J. Avalos, "The Long-Term Effects of Volunteerism During the Undergraduate Years," *The Review of Higher Education*, 21 (2), 1999, pp. 187-202.

Some studies have demonstrated personal and social benefits from service-learning. For example, service-learning increases a student's self-confidence,<sup>17</sup> promotes empowerment and ability to alter their behaviour through positive focus,<sup>18</sup> and they tend to engage in pro-social behaviours as opposed to at-risk behaviours.<sup>19</sup> These studies help to throw more light on effectiveness of the service-learning programme.

Similar impact studies were conducted in South Africa after its democratic elections in 1994, and subsequent to that there was an extensive reform on educational system. The impact studies ran concurrent with an implementation of a new system of education. Those studies revealed a sense of satisfaction from the participating communities seeing that they played a role in problem-solving. Students were reported to have developed a sense of community service. Those studies pointed to challenges, such as, reluctance on the part of the higher education institutions to view the participating communities as partners, and also that higher education institutions concentrated on fulfilling a requirement for students instead of seeing to it that participating communities also had their goals and needs met.<sup>20</sup>

At the moment of writing, funding for participating or implementing service-learning in South Africa is limited to the public higher education institutions. Helderberg College will be implementing a full scale values-based service-learning in June 2007, and funding has been provided in the 2007 from Helderberg College central budget. Currently Helderberg College is participating in other kinds of unstructured community service. Helderberg College is still in the process of fully institutionalising values-based service-learning. This move makes Helderberg College to be the only private 'higher education institutions' to plan to implement values-based service-learning.

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<sup>17</sup> Switzer et. al., "Parental Helping Models, Gender, and Service Learning," in J. R. Ferrari and J. G. Chapman (Eds.) *Educating Students for to Make-a-Difference: Community-Based Service Learning*, Binghamton, NY: The Harworth Press, 1995, pp. 5-18.

<sup>18</sup> B. Shaffer, *Service-Learning: An Academic Methodology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Department of Education, 1993; See also W. Morgan and M. Streb, *How Quality Service-Learning Develops Civic Values*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1999; Furco 2003)

<sup>19</sup> A. W. Astin, and L. J. Sax, "How Undergraduates Are Affected by Service Participation," In *Journal of College Student Development*, 39, 1998, pp. 251-263.

<sup>20</sup> J. Mouton and L. Wildschut, "Service learning in South Africa: lessons learnt through systematic Evaluation," *Acta Academica Supplementum*, 3, 2005, pp. 116-150.

There are challenges in implementing service-learning programme. The common challenges cited by some institutions are that of time and resources. The benefits of service-learning outweigh its disadvantages in the sense that service-learning creates a space for interactive engagement between the higher education institutions and communities,<sup>21</sup> and studies have demonstrated the positive outcomes on students.

#### **4. Weakness of Service-learning**

Service-learning, in spite of its gains as demonstrated by empirical studies, is not based on biblical and moral values. The non-biblical approach reduces the service-learning to a mere human construct, intended to benefit both the provider or student and recipient of service or community. Service-learning, as practiced by many public and private higher educational institutions does not foster values such as faithfulness, diligence, equality, respect, and integrity, compassion, Christ-likeness, and acceptance.

The values-based service-learning is a proposed alternative model that can be used by Adventist higher educational institutions to reach out. 'Values-based service-learning' will be discussed at length later.

#### **5. Values-based Service-Learning**

The values-based service-learning is centred on and informed by Bible-based or Christian values. The assumption is that the worldview of an Adventist educator, together with that of a student, is centred on God, Jesus Christ, and His Word (Bible). When the Adventist educator takes a student by the hand, leading him/her from childhood to adulthood, she/he does that with the ultimate goal of reproducing Daniels and Esthers for the world, for the church, and for God's Kingdom.

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<sup>21</sup> Speck, "Service-Learning," p. 10.

The Adventist education was established and modelled on Samuel-led and initiated schools of prophets,<sup>22</sup> whose intention was not only to supply the nation with God-fearing leaders, but also to protect candidates from the corrupting influences of their day. Ellen White writes, “Samuel gathered companies of young men who were pious, intelligent, and studious. These were called the sons of the prophets. As they communed with God, and studied his word and his works, wisdom from above was added to their natural endowments.”<sup>23</sup>

Notice that the companies of young men or prophets did not only study God’s Word, but they also studied nature and science (God’s works). Apart from the content of their study, Ellen White mentions that the young men demonstrated values of sincere devotional life, intelligence, and diligence in their schoolwork. Later Ellen White’s views of Christian education, to a certain extent, would be based on the pattern of Samuel’s school of prophets. In encouraging community service as part of the curriculum, Ellen White introduced what we would term values-based service-learning component in the learning life of a student. She wrote,

“Wherever possible, students should, during the school year, engage in city mission work. They should do missionary work in the surrounding towns and villages. They can form themselves into bands to do Christian help work. Students should take a broad view of their present obligations to God. They are not to look forward to a time, after the school term closes, when they will do some large work for God, but should study how, during their student life, to yoke up with Christ in unselfish service for others.”<sup>24</sup>

Notice that Ellen White uses phrases such as “city mission work,” “missionary work” and “Christian work” to refer to students’ involvement in their immediate communities during “their student life.”<sup>25</sup> Ellen White appears to be saying that community service should be incorporated within the curriculum. From this perspective, Ellen White’s usage of the phrase “city mission work,” “missionary work” and “Christian work” within the

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<sup>22</sup> 1 Sam 19:20; See also E. G. White, *Conflict and Courage*, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970, p. 139.

<sup>23</sup> E. G. White, *Christian Education*, Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1894, p. 61

<sup>24</sup> E G White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, [1914], 1943, p. 547.

<sup>25</sup> White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 545, 546.

context of “their student life” anticipated the values-based service-learning. The values-based service-learning was not foreign idea to Ellen White, but she did not use the values-based service-learning phrase as proposed in this paper.

The Bible promotes the following specific Christian values that become the basis and part of values-based service-learning:

***Faithfulness.*** “Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he *was* faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him,” (Dan 6:4). Teachers need to model faithfulness among students so that students catch this value, and this value should be internalised, and also be incorporated into values-based service-learning subjects or modules. This value, if internalised, will manifest itself in keeping promises, honouring appointments, submitting accurate reports, and not telling lies or half truths.

***Diligence.*** “And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all *that* he had he put into his hand,” (Gen 39:4). Like Joseph, student should demonstrate persistent and hard-working effort in carrying out one’s assignment. Diligence includes not only the value of faithfulness in transacting business, but also the value of fruitfulness. One can faithfully carryout a duty unfruitfully or merely meeting minimum requirements. Diligence also includes the value of accuracy. We serve the God whose standards of performance are higher than the worldly standards.

***Integrity.*** This quality is manifested when a student or educator consistently adhere to Bible morals and principles. “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*,” (Acts 22:12). The gospel flourishes when those witnessing for them demonstrate integrity.

***Compassion.*** “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd,”



(Matt 9:36). Compassion is a Christ-like value which causes a student to suffer with the suffering.

**Respect.** “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves,*” (Phil 2:3). Others should be put ahead of us. Adventist educators are to model respect for others who are less fortunate and disadvantaged. This respect is based on the fact that all human beings have been created in the image of God (Gen 1:27).

**Acceptance.** Jesus Christ demonstrated the value of acceptance when He visited with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:5), forgave a woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-7), called notorious Matthew (Matt 9:9), and He ate with sinners (Luke 15:1, 2). Jesus Christ set an example of how to treat and except others. Christ taught His followers to love others neighbours as we love ourselves (Matt 22:39). They do not need to earn our love and acceptance because we did not need to buy or earn our acceptance in Christ.

## **6. Role of an Adventist Educator in Values-based Service-learning**

The role of an Adventist Educator cannot be overemphasized. Teachers have a powerful influence in the development of students. An educator has power to build or destroy a student. An Adventist educator is an agent of change in that students look up to them for guidance. Ellen White, in cautioning Educators in their awesome responsibility, says, “Their (children) minds are impressible. Any thing like a hasty, passionate exhibition on the part of the teacher may cut off her influence for good over the students whom she is having the name of educating.”<sup>26</sup> Adventist educators are to model Christian values and also infuse them in the process of designing values-based service-learning courses or modules.

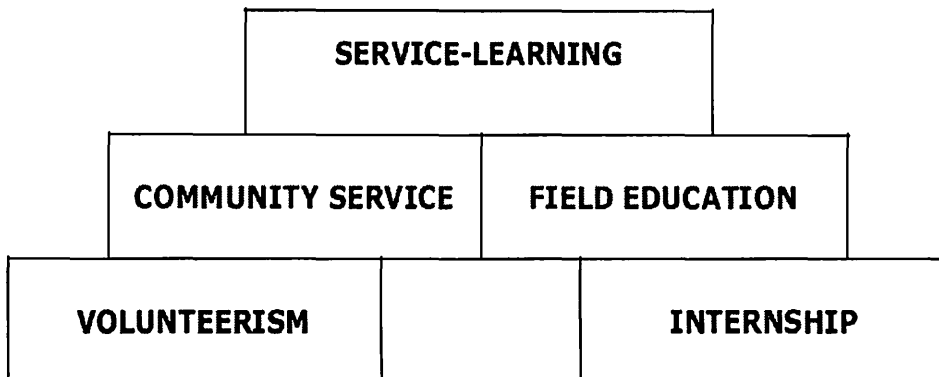
### **6.1 Types of Community Service**

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<sup>26</sup> E G White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923, P. 267

Community service (or often termed “civic responsibility”) has become the acid test for determining the relevance of private and public higher education providers (including the religious sectors) to their immediate communities. There are different types of community engagement. The commonly known community service programmes are community outreach or service, field education, internships, volunteerism, and of late, service-learning. These community service programmes are “not necessarily discrete or mutually exclusive and boundaries between them are blurred.”<sup>27</sup> Furco<sup>28</sup> helps to explain and differentiate among types of the community engagement programmes:

Recipient	BENEFICIARY	Provider
Service	FOCUS	Learning



Several words and definitions have been used to explain different types of student ‘community engagement’ in ‘higher education institutions’. These different types of ‘community engagement’ may be placed on a continuum between two important distinctions, namely:

- The primary *beneficiaries* of the service (i.e. community or student/provider); and
- The primary *goal/focus* of the service (i.e. community service or student learning).

<sup>27</sup> “A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service-Learning.” *Higher Education Quality Committee*, Council on Higher Education, Pretoria, South Africa, June 2006, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> A. Furco, “Service-Learning: A Balanced Approach to Experiential Education.” In *Expanding Boundaries: Service and Learning*, 1(1), 1996, pp. 2-6.

- i. *Volunteerism*: the focus and beneficiary of service is the community. The student or provider might not necessarily gain a reflective knowledge seeing that some of the activities are not related to his/her field of study, and they are perceived as extra-curricular activities – taking place outside of the class or tuition time.
- ii. *Internships*: the focus and beneficiary are the provider of service or student, and the student benefits from the experiential knowledge. Internships are integrated in the student’s curriculum.
- iii. *Community Service or Outreach*: the primary focus is the community, and the goal is to provide service to the community.
- iv. *Service-learning*: the focus is dual, namely, providing service to the community, and equally enriching the learning experience of the provider or a student. In short, reciprocity is the key characteristic in service learning.

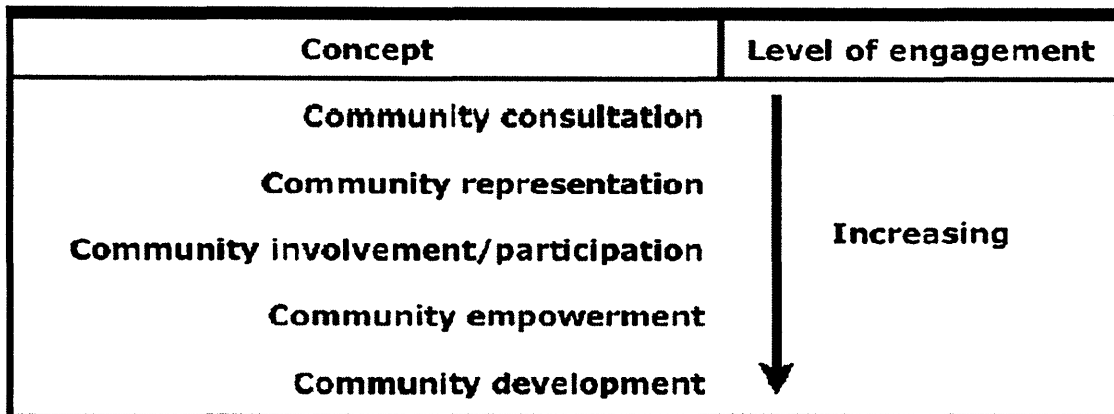
The service-learning is a popular means of community engagement in many higher education institutions because it tends to meet the needs of both the provider or student and the participating community.

In the past higher education institutions harboured an assumption that communities did not know anything, had nothing to offer, and that there was nothing academic about a community. That assumption ignored the “social capital,”<sup>29</sup> social assets, and social wisdom of the community. Notice a continuum in a report written by the *Effective Interventions Unit* (2002)<sup>30</sup> that illustrates the different levels of involvement. See the following figure:

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<sup>29</sup> R. D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone. The collapse and revival of American community*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000, p. 19; Putman defines ‘social capital’ as “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.” See also by the same author, R. D. Putnam, “Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital,” *The Journal of Democracy*, 6:1, 1995, pp. 65-78.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted from Tamarack - *An Institute for Community Engagement*, [www.tamarackcommunity.ca](http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca)



This model demonstrates that engagement can vacillate or/and move between passive approaches such as community consultation, to proactive approaches such as community development. In community consultation, communities are often informed of the plans, but there is no structure to accommodate their views and input. This paper proposes a model that takes the community seriously, and invites them to an equal partnership in the programme.

### **7. Model for Institutionalising Values-based Service-learning in Adventist higher education institutions**

Adonis & Daniels' Model<sup>31</sup> for institutionalising service-learning in higher education institutions is worth noting seeing that it captures principles of infusing service-learning in the life of an institution:

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<sup>31</sup> P. Daniels, and T. Adonis, *Moving towards Service-Learning: The Need for Institutionalisation*. A Paper presented at Community Service-Learning Conference, "Exploring Community Service Learning in Higher Education: 'Learning in, from and for the field', 17-18 March 2005, University of Johannesburg, South Africa, 2005.



The above-mentioned figure suggests that values-based service-learning should become central focus in the mission, vision, and also part of the strategic plan of the higher education institutions. It should be part of the life and ethos of the higher education institutions, and this means that it should permeate teaching, learning, research, higher education institution culture, subjected to quality-assurance, incorporated into staff development and incentives, and regular assessment of the impact of service learning on students and community, and in the life and culture of the higher education institutions.

The Adventist higher education institutions are well positioned to take advantage of service-learning and then transform it to values-based service-learning seeing that it is part of its prophetic identity, and mission. In short, the other higher education institutions engage in service-learning from a non-biblical point-of-view, but the Adventist higher education institutions will take different and unique approach – an approach that is informed by the Christian values.

The process of institutionalising values-based service-learning takes time because proponents need to first buy into the programme before they even sell it to others. The leadership should be brought on board. Those championing this course should be

relentless in their enthusiasm, and form partnerships with those who are interested in order to win others. Some Adventist higher education institutions are like a ship. They take time to shift from old paradigms into new ones. The champions of the values-based service-learning should refuse to be discouraged, and persist because their course is noble and will yield good fruits in future.

## **8. Christian values and Adventist Education**

Christian values and Adventist education are not necessarily two opposing concepts. True Adventist education will not be complete without Christian values, and Christian values are part of any sincere Adventist education. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a rich heritage of values-based community engagement that is rooted in the Christ-event at the Cross.

The Adventist Church derives its ethos and passion for service from its Leader and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The Adventist Church is driven by its prophetic self-consciousness, which in turn informs its mission and identity. The Adventists' prophetic self-consciousness is rooted in and nurtured by the Word of God, or Bible. There are specific passages in the Books of Daniel<sup>32</sup> and Revelation<sup>33</sup> which inform the prophetic self-consciousness and mission of the Adventist Church. The values-based service-learning should not be separated from the preparation of the soon return of Jesus Christ.

## **9. Simple steps of implementing Values-based Service-learning**

- a) An academic staff member integrates a values-based service-learning component in an existing course or integrates it in a new course s/he is designing.
- b) The service requirement is 20-40 hours during the semester (or as per requirement of the institution's 'values-based service-learning' policy).

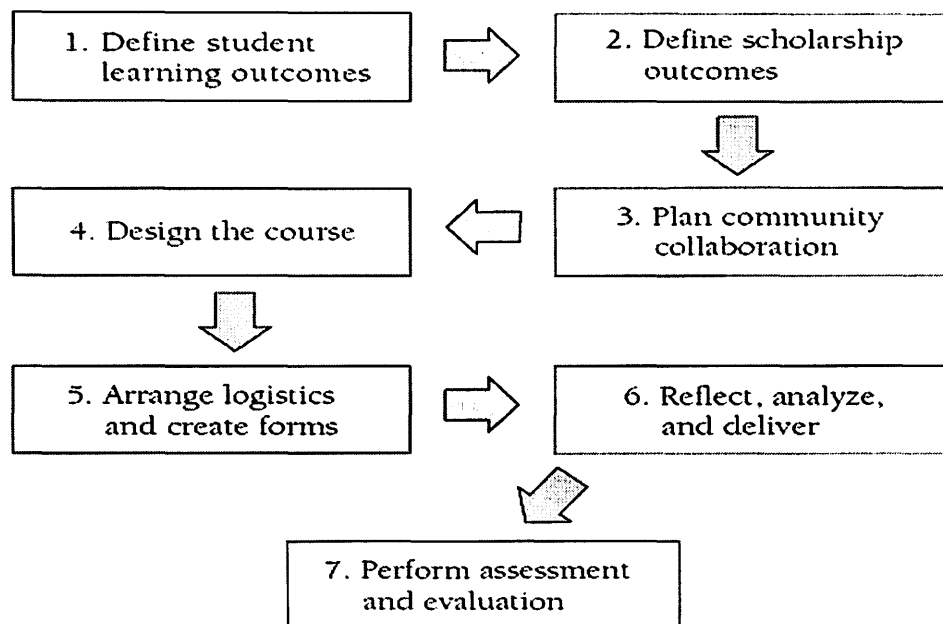
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<sup>32</sup> Dan 8:13, 14; 9:20-27. Unless otherwise stated, all the Bible quotations are from the King James Version (KJV).

<sup>33</sup> Rev 10:11; 14:6-12.

- c) The service experience is with a service and/or community agency, which the academic staff member has chosen, either with the help of the values-based service-learning office on campus or through his/her own connections.
- d) The academic staff member conducts reflection activities, both in and out of the lecture hall.
- e) Student reflections are integrated with module subject matter in order to ensure academic learning, as well as effective service.
- f) The academic staff member monitors the service experiences of his/her student.
- g) The evaluation of the student's values-based service-learning experience is included in the module assessment criteria and is done by the academic staff member, with feedback from the community and service agency supervisors.

**10. A Process of designing a course that has Values-based Service-learning based on Service-Learning Course Development Model<sup>34</sup>**



Note that community is involved in Step No. 3 (Plan community collaboration) of the above model before Step 4 (Design the course). This means that the community

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<sup>34</sup> Quoted from M S Rubin, "A Smart Start to Service-Learning," In *New Directions for Higher Education*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., No. 114, Summer, 2001, p. 18.

involvement will influence the process of designing a course. The community will feel empowered to realise that they are not just a mission field, but they are also missionaries in seeking for solutions for their challenges.

## **11. Conclusion**

A case has been made for values-based service-learning and its efficacy. The ethos and mission of the Adventist Education lend themselves to values-based service-learning because of the Adventist Church's prophetic self-consciousness and the urgency of the impending coming of Jesus Christ. It has been demonstrated that service-learning, in general, has a positive impact in responding to the needs of both the provider of service or student and the recipients of service or the immediate community.

It has also been shown that service-learning has positive outcomes particularly to students in the areas of college or university retention, enhanced self-confidence, advanced or developed cognitive skills and high grades, and career awareness and reflection. Ellen White supports the idea of missionary work by students during their student life, not necessarily outside the term of the school. This means that she anticipated values-based service-learning in her writings.

The values-based service-learning will assist the Adventist higher education institutions to be responsive to the needs of and empower their immediate community, and also to make values-based education accessible. The adoption and implementation of values-based service-learning require a high level of commitment from higher education institutions management or leadership, faculties, and student body. The values-based service-learning programme has its own challenges, but its gains outweigh its challenges.