An Inquiry into the Role of Chaplains in Seventh-Day Adventist Schools in Uganda

Israel Kafeero

Adventist University of Africa, Ongata Rongai, Kenya

Abstract

This study is approached with a presupposition that Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) school chaplains in Uganda are engaged in discipleship work. The paper sought to understand the role of chaplains in SDA secondary schools in Uganda. This study adopted a qualitative research approach. Data were collected by conducting interviews. A purposive sample of 10 secondary schools was selected from a population of 96 secondary schools. These schools were SDA Church operated, and others were privately owned but affiliated to the SDA Church in Uganda. Data were analyzed using logical cross case-analysis. The findings indicated that SDA school chaplains in Uganda perform the role of school pastors by proselytizing. However, they struggle with issues of nurture and retention due to the porous nature of their converts.

Key Terms: Discipleship, Chaplaincy, Nurture, Retention, Uganda

Introduction

According to Paget and McCormack, school chaplaincy, which is commonly referred to as campus chaplaincy (CC), is responsible for taking care of the spiritual and moral life of an educational institution. In addition to coordinating the religious life of an institution, school chaplains also assist in the personal and spiritual growth of students and other members of the institution. Chaplains are also involved in counseling on a variety of issues such as relationships, and youth addiction. They also organize programs that add to the quality of life of students.[1] Whereas there has been an evaluation in chaplaincy care in schools whereby a chaplain's work is moving from offering pastoral (ministerial) work to providing support for persons across faith traditions without an

agenda for conversion, this may not be the case in Uganda where chaplains may perform the roles of a school pastor and provide chaplaincy care. Most schools in Uganda, even those that belong to the government, have a religious founding body. Therefore, those bodies still require and supervise chaplaincy services at the schools. Thus, in Uganda, if a school was founded by a particular religious body, only chaplains that subscribe to that faith are employed in that school to provide all the services that are required, including discipling young people.

Discipleship is a core function of persons engaged with youth groups in the SDA Church, including but not limited to chaplaincy work in schools. Young people are expected to be led into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and be helped to embrace His call to discipleship.[2] The essence of discipleship is to make followers who are supposed to walk in the footsteps of the discipler. However, it is also well documented that young people, of the Christian faith, are abandoning their faith at an unprecedented rate. In the SDA Church, the numbers of backsliding members are staggering. The Church's statistical figures show that in 2019, 229,434 were dropped from the membership books and, 265,059 went missing. In 2020, 168,286 were dropped and 291,583 went missing.[3] In 2020, 168,286 were dropped and 291,583 went missing.[4] A high percentage of those backsliders could probably be young people who have gone through the gates of church-operated or affiliated secondary schools. Therefore, school/campus chaplaincy, which is a spiritual care ministry offered to the school-going or college students, stands at the crossroads, at a critical moment in the spiritual journey of the young people in the SDA Church in the context of the study. Research shows that high school years are a critical time in the lives of young people. It is at this stage that they are exploring and choosing what future they want to have.

---

[2]   Seventh-day Adventist Official Website, "Youth", accessed on 20 July 2021. https://www.adventist.org/marriage-and-the-family/youth/.

[3]   General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, *2021 Annual Statistical* Report Vol. 3, accessed on 13th July 2021. https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2021.pdf

[4]   Ibid

This of course includes values and career choice. It is a stage of confusion due to the adventure in new ideas, and behaviors, and the experience of how it feels to be independent and an adult.

This research is aimed at inquiring into the roles played by chaplains in the SDA Church-supported and affiliated schools in Uganda. Therefore, the research sought to investigate the following: What is the experience of the chaplains in the selected schools as they narrate their discipling role? Is there a difference between the roles of a school pastor and that of a school chaplain in Uganda? How much of the chaplain's itinerary is devoted to discipling in these selected schools? What strategies are there to follow up on the converted disciples who go through their gates? How supportive is the school administration in the work of those chaplains? These are the major research questions for this article.

I utilized a qualitative research approach for collecting and analyzing data. I also developed an interview guide which I used as I interacted with the chaplains. Chaplains were probed into their roles to see if, in their discipling roles they do the work of a school pastor or chaplaincy. By using a purposive sample, 10 secondary schools were selected from a population of 96 secondary schools, 35 owned and operated by the SDA Church and 61 privately owned but affiliated to the SDA Church in Uganda. Participants were interviewed, and the qualitative data collected were analyzed using the logical cross-case-analysis method.

Conceptual Framework

This study utilized the theistic worldview on the presupposition that the triune personal God of the Bible, who created human beings in His image, exists, and that He finally communicated personally to us through Jesus Christ. Although the image of God in human beings was deformed because of sin, Jesus was crucified as a ransom for the sinful world. After his resurrection, Jesus left the world with the Holy Spirit who works with believers to get involved in the great commission (Matt 28:18-20). The Holy Spirit aids in the effort of redeeming the lost through baptism, and the subsequent involvement in discipleship. The redeemed

are cultivated and nurtured to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, with the resultant aim of subsequent restoration of the original dignity which was lost when Adam and Eve sinned and were chased out of the Garden of Eden.[5]

Research Questions

This paper focus on three research questions:

1. What are your roles as a school chaplain?

2. How do you understand discipleship?

3. What strategies do you have for nurturing and retention?

Survey of the History of Chaplaincy

The word, chaplain, is a transliteration from the Latin word, *chapelain*, which means a guardian of *Capella.* Capella, according to history, was a cloak given to a poor man by a compassionate fourth-century soldier by the name of Martin, who saw a beggar in the cold and chose to cut a piece of his clock and gave it to him. This Martin later became the Bishop of Torres and when he died, his cloak (Capella in Latin) was enshrined as a reminder of the sacred act of compassion.[6]

Chaplains today have continued to offer compassionate care to all people irrespective of their background. The military has utilized chaplaincy services for the longest. Chaplains have served the armies of the world from as far as the Old Testament times. A priest used to go with the ark of the covenant during the Israelite

5   J. W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 32-34.

6   Paget and McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain*, 2.

conquests.[7] Even after settling in Canaan, the same practice continued.[8]

In the book of Genesis chapter 3, God acted as a chaplain when He went out of His way to visit the first couple who had sinned and were hiding due to shame (Gen. 3:8-10). God set a model for compassionate care. Chaplains do not wait for clients to meet them in offices, instead, they are the ones who go out to seek and minister to clients irrespective of their religious affiliations. We see God asking Adam a question, not because God was ignorant, no, God is and remains omniscient. But the question illustrates God's remarkable attribute of sagacity.[9] Chaplaincy visits, therefore, should emulate what God did when He visited Adam. God exemplified a caring communication of listening with empathy.[10]

In the New Testament, Jesus also demonstrated a compassionate visit when he went down to the well to meet a Samaritan woman. As a chaplain, Jesus could not wait for a shameful prostitute to come to him. Instead, he went out to meet her and minister to her soul. Without judging her, Jesus offered a ministry of presence and allowed the client to express her feelings. According to Holm, "ministry of presence enables chaplains to collaborate with God to complete creation."[11] Jesus' method of conducting a ministry of presence was an illustration for all subsequent chaplains to emulate.

---

[7]   In Exodus 17:11, Joshua commanded the army of Israel to attack the Amalekites. The priest, Moses, Aaron and Hur went together with the army and Moses prayed to God by raising up his hands and the Amalekites were defeated. In Joshua 3:6, the priests are instructed by Joshua to take the ark of the covenant ahead of the group before crossing River Jordan. In 2 Chronicles 20, a Levite by the name Jahaziel (vs. 14) encouraged the Israelites as they faced the invading armies of the Ammonites, Moabites, and people of Mount Seir.

[8]   1 Samuel 4, the ark together with the priest who carried it, accompanied the army of Israelites as they went to fight the Philistines. Unfortunately, the priests were killed, and the ark of the covenant was captured during the war.

[9]   J. Skinner, *Genesis*, A critical and exegetical commentary (New York: Scribner, 1910), 77.

[10] D. James-Tannariello, *Heaven Touches Earth Through Hospital Ministry* (Minneapolis: Mill, 2013), 14.

School Chaplaincy

The philosophy of Adventist education emphasizes the development of the spiritual, physical, emotional, and social aspects of students. This philosophy is Christ-centered. The SDA Church teaches that God's character and purposes for the universe are revealed in the Bible, in Jesus Christ, and nature, and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these Bible truths can be understood. For that reason, the SDA Church views education as redemptive, aimed at restoring the lost human beings to the image of their creator.[12] The school chaplain, therefore, is an integral part of the Adventist educational system in realizing the goal of Adventist education.

The education policy of the SDA Church stipulates that Adventist secondary education focuses on values, choices, and Christ-like character. It is expected to offer students avenues whereby the Christian faith is made relevant to their emerging needs, leading to a more mature relationship with others and with God. The expected outcome for students completing Adventist secondary schools includes, among others, a maturing faith and a life dedicated to church service.

The core responsibility of the school chaplain is to care for the spiritual and emotional aspects of the students without neglecting the physical and social aspects. In addition, a school chaplain is a professional, trained, and accredited minister to shepherd, counsel, and manage the crisis. He or she should be equipped with skills for dealing with major events of human life like death and divorce, in addition to leading worship services in the school community.[13]

In a 2014 study conducted in Australia about the role of school chaplains, it was found that 34% of [chaplains'] time is spent in group, classroom, and school activities. The study also found that most chaplains run programs or activities in which they work with small groups of students. In addition to assisting students to build self-esteem, school chaplains were found to offer time and support in seasons of grief. Sometimes chaplains assist teachers in classroom activities, while others were found to participate in all

sorts of programs depending on their abilities and capacities and the needs at the school. Such programs included art, drama, music, and school sporting activities.[14] In each of these, the chaplain's role was to give support and care to the students.

School chaplains, according to Caperon, offer a vital ministry to today's youth. Caperon identifies a disconnection between this age group and the church. According to him, school chaplains play a vital role in connecting the youth to the church through planned spiritual activities. This connection provides young people with spiritual capital, drawing from the energy and wisdom of a faith tradition of their church and the Bible.

Discipleship

Discipleship is derived from the term, disciple, which means a follower. It is understood to refer to the act of making disciples. 'Disciple' is commonly associated with the twelve disciples of Jesus in the New Testament (NT), which is why the usage of the term in the Old Testament (OT) is scanty. Disciples are not foreign in the Greek world. We see philosophers and religious leaders attracting and working with disciples. To become a disciple, a person had to seek out a teacher, and accept to follow him and also his principles.

The same is true in the rabbinical tradition where a "learner" or "student" (דימלת, *talmid*) attached himself to a rabbi. A Rabbi means, my great one. It can also mean a teacher or master. The OT prophets had people who followed them, and these could be described as disciples. The master-disciple relationship is only used once in OT (of a student in musical instruction; 1 Chr 25:8, even though such a relationship was a common phenomenon in the land of Israel. "The Greek equivalent does not occur at all in the Septuagint. None of the terms appear in any Jewish literature until the time of Philo (i.e. at approximately the same time as Jesus).

---

[14]   Jeremy Patrick, "Religion, Secularism, and the National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program." *University of Queensland Law Journal* 33, no. 1, Jan. 2014, pp. 187–219. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com.koha.aua.ac.ke:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=97298743&site=ehost-live.

Later in rabbinical literature, *talmîd* switches meaning to become a specialized term for the student of Torah."[15]

The word, disciple (μαθητής, *mathētēs*), is derived from the verb, to learn (μανθάνειν, *manthanein*). In the early classical period, it was used to refer to a learner in a general sense, or more technically as an institutional pupil of the Sophists. Again, we also find that in the late Hellenistic period, the term was still in use.[16] Kerry defines discipleship as a process of becoming like Jesus by slowing down. Kerry draws as an illustration of people with disability. Such persons offer the world the opportunity to realize the importance of being present at the moment, rather than rushing on to the next moment. Disciples should learn to accept to be gentle in service of receiving and giving.[17] Equating discipleship to mentorship, Ndaruhekeya posits, "Jesus mentorship style was engaging; allowing disciples to relate with Him closely. A disciple is a service render. Mentoring as discipleship needs both sides to participate."[18] Jesus did not only instruct, but he also demonstrated and afterward sent his disciples to practice what they learned and they came back to report to him (Matt 10:1-42; Luke 10:1-17). We learn from Jesus that engagement in ministry is key to discipleship.

Expounding on the idea of establishing both mentorship and discipleship groups, McAuliffe concluded that it doesn't matter whether one is a truth-seeking believer or a first-time engager, all disciples should be involved in ministry. This is so because every

---

[15]   D. Nässelqvist. "Disciple," *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press. 2016. Logos Bible Software.

[16]   Ibid.

[17]   Kerry M. Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefullness, and Gentle Discipleship. Health and Social Care Chaplaincy [Internet]. 2018, page 72. [cited 2021 Aug 4];6(2):250–2. Available from: http://search.ebscohost.com.koha.aua.ac.ke:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLAiFZK190430003287&-site=ehost-live

[18]   Isacka V. Ndaruhekeye, Biblical Mentorship as Discipleship to Enhance Adventist Students' Commitment to Faith: A Practical Model for Nurturing and Retention Strategies at the University of Arusha in Tanzania. Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences. Accessed on Aug 20, 2021 at https://saudijournals.com/media/articles/SJHSS_62_60-77_c.pdf

person called to be a disciple comes with a unique gift.[19] This argument is augmented by what we see happening after the death and resurrection of Jesus. The disciples and apostles continued with the work of discipleship with little hesitation. Barnabas discipled Paul when no one wanted to accept him (Acts11:25-26). In the same vein, Paul discipled Timothy (Acts16:1-5) and Titus.

In the great commission, Jesus commands us to go and make disciples of all nations. The first activity he mentions is "baptizing" (Matt 28:19). Whereas getting baptized is one single event, "teaching them all" (vs. 20) is not. Teaching is not just imparting book knowledge, it must also involve practical lessons. This is what Jesus did when he sent out his disciples to practice what he had taught them. Bradshaw and Flickinger compare the process of disciple-making to the harvest cycle. The cycle involves preparing the soil (which involves pre-evangelism activities of making friends with people), sowing the seed (which involves sharing Bible studies), cultivation for harvest (which involves inviting people to church for visitors' days, or Bible studies at home or), harvesting (evangelism campaigns, revival meetings, etc.), and the last stage is preserving the harvest (which involves teaching new members the Bible beliefs and strengthening them to stay in faith).[20]

In a none pluralistic chaplaincy environment like Uganda, to succeed in preserving the harvest, White postulates that we should apply Jesus's method. First Christ mingled with all men without discrimination. In doing so, he showed interest in their affairs, and as a chaplain, he was sympathetic, and this was demonstrated through ministering to their needs. This gesture resulted in people gaining confidence in him. It was only them that Jesus called them to follow him as disciples.[21]

---

[19]   Jeffrey McAuliffe and Robert McAuliffe, *The Ephesus Model: A Biblical Framework for Urban Mission* (Global Mission Centers, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2017), 40.

[20]   John Bradshaw and Eric Flickinger, *Successful Public Evangelism: Step by Step* (Chattanooga: It is Written, 2017), 8.

[21]   Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, chapter 9, accessed on 22 August 2021, https://egwwritings.org/?ref=en_AA.19.2&para=127.64.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is interactive since the researcher collects data in the natural field setting using, in most cases, a face-to-face mode. According to McMillan and Schumacher, "qualitative research describes and analyzes people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions. The research interprets phenomena in terms of meaning people bring to them."[22] Qualitative researchers, therefore, seek to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it.[23]

There are five common types of qualitative research: Basic or Generic, Ethnography, Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, and Case Study. This study adopted the Basic or Generic approach which identifies recurrent patterns in form of themes or categories. The goal is to describe, interpret, and understand the phenomena under investigation.

A purposive sample of 10 chaplains was selected from 10 secondary schools out of a population of 96 schools operated by the SDA Church, and private schools operated as church-related, in Uganda. Purposive refers to a type of sampling where research selects participants based on the knowledge of the field where the inquiry will be conducted. Having worked in the chaplaincy department in Uganda Union for four years, I was well acquainted with the population of the study. Whereas I did not know every chaplain in the school selected, I chose schools that represent the entire country, not one region. So purposive sampling in this paper may be understood to refer to the regional representation of data. The schools I selected were in the northern, eastern, central, southern, and western regions of Uganda.

Participants were interviewed via phone. I designed a ten-question structured interview guide that I used during the interviews. Data were analyzed to understand recurring patterns and themes

22   J. McMillan and Sally Schumacher, S. *Research in Education: A Conceptual Intro-duction*, 5th ed. (New York: Longman, 2001), 395.
23   Sharon B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Application in Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 205

were developed. Data were analyzed by using a logical cross-case analysis. This is one of the methods of qualitative data analysis whereby "categories are crossed with one another to generate new insights for further data analysis. These cross-categories reveal logical discrepancies in the already-analyzed data and suggest areas where patterns might be logically uncovered."[24]

Ethical Consideration

Any research that involves human subjects must be approved by a government-registered Institutional Ethics Research Committee (IERC). So, I sought permission from Strathmore University, Kenya, whose IERC is registered by Kenya's National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Further, I sent a consent form to all the respondents in this study to allow me to interview them. All of them consented by signing the forms.

Research Credibility, Reliability, and Transferability

In this inquiry, I used several methods to increase the reliability and validity of the results. These include constant involvement, participant reviews, and probing for contrary evidence. With regards to reliability, I gave a detailed report on the research process by clarifying all stages of the research from data collection to content analysis. The use of direct quotes was vital to increase the reliability of this study. Transferability was attained through the use of naturalistic generalization which draws on "tacit knowledge, intuition, and personal experience that helps to look for patterns that explain individual experiences as well as events in the world around."[25]

Findings and Discussions

This study envisioned examining the discipleship role of secondary school chaplains in the SDA Church-owned and related

---

[24]   McMillan and Schumacher, S. *Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction*, 480.

[25]   Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Application in Education*, 211.

schools in Uganda. The Church in Uganda has of 35 owned and 61 related secondary schools scattered all over the country, thus making a total of 96 secondary schools (Table 1).

The Church is divided into seven regions as shown in Table 1. The central region, which has 48.9% of the total number, hosts the capital city of Uganda, Kampala. In addition, this is where the Church started in 1927[26] before it spread to other parts of the country. This explains why the Church's total membership in the central region is higher than in other parts of Uganda.

Table 1. Uganda Union Mission: SDA Owned and Related Secondary Schools by August 2021

NO.	CONFERENCE/FIELD	CHURCH SCHOOLS	CHURCH-RELATED	TOTAL	%
1.	Central Uganda Conference	11	36	47	48.9
2.	Western Uganda Field	02	07	9	9.3
3.	Mid-Western Uganda	01	04	5	5.2
4.	South Western Uganda	04	01	5	5.2
5.	Eastern Uganda Field	07	08	15	15.6
6.	Northern Uganda Mission	02	03	5	5.2
7.	Rwenzori Field (Kasese)	08	02	10	10.4
	TOTAL	**35**	**61**	**96**	**100**

Source: Conference/Field Education Directors

Table 2 portrays a high percentage of membership in the central regions than in any other region in Uganda. This is explained by the facilities and amenities that can easily be accessed affordably.

---

[26] D. Matte. "Uganda." *Encyclopedia of the Seventh-day Adventist*, 2019, accessed on August 20, 2021, https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=AFKH&highlight=Uganda|Union|

Thus, this is the area where schools with good academic standards are found.

Table 2. Uganda Union Mission SDA Membership Statistical Report 2021

TERRITORY	MEMBERSHIP	%
Central Uganda Conference	248,072	54.4
Eastern Uganda Field	36,454	8.4
Northern Uganda Field	28,162	6.5
Rwenzori Field	55,207	12.6
Southwestern Uganda Field	29,254	6.4
Western Uganda Field	39,015	9.0
Totals	**436,164**	97.3

Source: https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2021.pdf

Demographic Survey

The ten chaplains interviewed were purposely selected from ten secondary schools. Five were church-operated and five were private but affiliated to the SDA Church. Table 3 shows the demographic analysis of the study sample.

The schools selected for the study represented all the seven regions of the SDA Church in Uganda (Table 4). The demographics reveal that there were no female chaplains which could be explained by the purposive sample selection employed Chaplains were all below 35 years of age. This means that the chaplaincy ministry has a longer serving span of chaplains. Majority of the chaplains (73%) hold a bachelor's degree in Theology or Chaplaincy. Only one chaplain had enrolled in a master's degree program.

The ten chaplains interviewed were purposely selected from ten secondary schools. Five schools were church-operated and five were privately operated but affiliated to the SDA Church. Table 3 shows the demographic analysis of the study sample.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Study Sample

Data	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	10	100
Female	0	00
Age Bracket		
25-35	7	70
30-45	3	30
Number of Children		
1-3	4	40
4-7	6	60
Education		
Master	1	09
Bachelors	8	73
College diploma	2	18

Note: n=10 chaplains

Table 4 shows the regional distribution of the study sample. Since the sample was small and because I wanted a representative sample from all regions of Uganda, the chaplains interviewed were from schools that span the seven regions of the country. Although the central regions had 54.4% of the total church membership, for representation, I chose only three chaplains from there because I needed to balance and include all regions of the country. Nevertheless, the rest of the regions received less than three respondents to make the total purposive sample I needed.

Table 4. Regional Distribution of Sample Study

Region	Number	Percent
Central Uganda Conference	3	30
Eastern Uganda Field	1	10
Northern Uganda Field	1	10
Rwenzori Field	2	20
Southwestern Uganda Field	1	10
Western Uganda Field	1	10
Mid-Western Uganda	1	10

Note: n=10 chaplains

Data Analysis and Discussion

Data were analyzed by using a cross-case approach. Each of the three research questions was answered based on the responses of the chaplains interviewed. All the responses were typed verbatim and crossed with each other to generate patterns. Finally, open coding was used to identify the categories that were used in establishing the patterns.[27]

Research Question 1: What are your roles as a school chaplain?

Several different responses were typed verbatim and arranged from the highest to the least score (Table 5). All the ten chaplains interviewed, coded A-I, responded that their major role was the spiritual development and growth of students. Elaborating on how this role augments discipleship, (Chap: A) has this to say, "discipleship is in every activity that I do." Another chaplain added, discipleship occupies 85% of his work (Chap: B).

---

[27]   A. L. Strauss & J. Corbin, *Basic Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), 167.

Although several roles were mentioned singly by chaplains, roles 13-17 are related to role number one. For example, conducting holy communion, preparing students for baptism, and propagating the truth clearly shows expanded roles for spiritual growth and development.

Role number 16 was unique in that the chaplain was required to be present when students were enrolling for a new semester. According to Chap A, students are checked to make sure each has a Bible, a Song Book, and a Basic Bible Manual. This is indicative of the seriousness with which SDA-owned and affiliated schools take the word of God. According to Taylor, "for an education to endure, we need to teach our students by our example"[28] The Bible is highly valued as sacred writing. According to White, the Bible "presents many illustrations of the results of true education. It presents many noble examples of men whose characters were formed under divine direction, men whose lives were a blessing to their fellow men and who stood in the world as representatives of God."[29] This is the reason a Bible is mandatory for every student to have in the surveyed schools.

Looking at these roles in Table 5, it is evident that school chaplains in the SDA-owned and affiliated schools in Uganda double the role of a school pastor and that of a campus chaplain. They are engaged in proselytizing and thus are expected to carry out activities to complete the cycle of discipleship as prescribed in Matt 28:19-20.

---

[28]   J. W. Taylor, *And you shall teach them: Contours of the divine plan*, 35 min., Video Resource.
[29]   White, E. G. *Education*. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), chapter 7, accessed 24 September 2021, https://egwwritings.org/book/b29

Table 5. Responses for Question 1

Roles	Codes
1. Spiritual Development and Growth of students	Chap: A/B/E/C/D/H/G/J/F/I/
2. Organize worship at school	Chap: A/B/E/C/D/H /G/J/I/
3. Conduct counseling to both stud and staff	Chap: A/B/E/C/D/G/J/F/I/
4. Assist in disciplining/pleading and advocating for students	Chap: B/E/C/H/J/F/I/
5. Conduct Bible study	Chap: A/B/C/J/F/
6. Prepare devotion of different groups	Chap: A/B/C/H/
7. Go between conference and school	Chap: A/B/H/I/
8. Monitor welfare of students	Chap: E/H/F/
9. Sourcing students in the community (marketing)	Chap: B/H/
10. Involvement in local church	Chap: B/D/
11. Organize Peer counseling	Chap: A/J/
12. Plays a parental role to students	Chap: B/I/
13. Train youth groups activities	Chap: A/
14. Conduct Holy Communion	Chap: A/
15. Prepare students for baptism	Chap: A/
16. Enrollment day checking	Chap: A/
17. Propagate the truth	Chap: C/

Response number 16 is informative about the unique role chaplaincy plays in schools. Serving as parents to students is a comforting gesture for both parents and the students who would be joining boarding schools for the first time. This role can be an "entry wedge" to the hearts of students for the chaplain to start the discipling role. Role 4 exposes chaplains to be seen as disciplinarians. Further probing revealed that the chaplain's role on the disciplinary committee is to advocate and plead for the students who could be facing tough penalties.

Eventually, this role puts chaplains in a better of position of offering compassionate care and being there for the students. Although role 15 was mentioned by one chaplain, it is implied that all chaplains carry out this role as part of their pastoral work. During the interview, chaplains were asked to estimate how many students were baptized in their school annually before Covid-19.

Table 6 shows the responses.

Chaplain	School Population	SDA %	Baptisms 2019	Baptism %
ChapA	1100	70	124	11
ChapB	1300	60	248	19
ChapC	350	10	33	9
ChapD	1400	25	153	11
ChapE	526	60	74	14
ChapF	400	40	65	16
ChapG	500	23	76	15
ChapH	190	53	11	6
ChapI	380	55	40	11
ChapJ	600	45	37	6
Total	**6846**	-	**861**	**13**

Research Question 2: How do you understand discipleship?

This research question was intended to explore the chaplains' understanding of discipleship. The responses were varied, and they included the following:

"Sharing good news to those who do not know Christ" (Chap: A). "It is reproducing oneself in another" (Chap: B). "Taking wholesomely the grace of Christ to the whole world, talk to them and work on behalf of Christ" (ChapE). "As a chaplain, I have to be a disciple of Jesus first,   then I can be able to invite others to be disciples" (ChapH). "It is leading others in [sic] Christ's way by first winning them to Christ" (ChapC). "Bring up people to enter a saving relationship with Jesus, intentionally and continuously, understanding that it is Christ and Christ alone to look up to" (ChapD). "Sharing the knowledge of Jesus Christ with people and follow them up to see if they are following" (ChapG). "Making someone follow Jesus Christ" (ChapJ). "To make disciples. After which you send them out, so I train them to go outside for mission, to continue to show the light they have received from our school" (Chap: F).

Whereas the responses give a sense that the chaplains did not articulate a clear definition of discipleship, they were right on their

goal: making students follow Jesus. Respondents were asked about baptisms in their respective schools. Since the great commission starts with baptism and then the process of discipleship continues, Table 6 reveals that 13% of the total number (6,846) of all students enrolled in 2019, were baptized. This number, however, includes both converts and those who were born members of the SDA Church. Here again, you can get a sense that SDA chaplains do carry out proselyting work in schools.

Discipleship should continue after baptism until a call to "follow me" is answered by the convert in beliefs and actions. According to Jesus' method of successful evangelism, as articulated by E. G. White, a call to follow Jesus comes after successive steps, all building up to making one a firm disciple. Ellen elaborates that Jesus first mingled with people. In other words, he became their friend. He was "sympathetic with them and he tried to meet their needs, won their confidence, before calling them to follow him."[30] In practice, the chaplains interviewed tried to do that. The responses to question one revealed that chaplains mingled with students and students were at ease with them. They were open to the chaplains, speaking out about their issues during counseling sessions. Occasionally students could organize themselves for group counseling.

Cross-analysis with research question one revealed that chaplains assigned students to perform certain duties during worship programs and other youth activities. This gesture imitates what Jesus did when he sent his disciples out to practice what he had taught them. It is a good learning exercise and experience for discipleship. Taylor argues that "to prepare a generation that will bring about revival and reformation, students must experience the presence and power of God"[31].

Responses to research question two indicate that SDA school chaplains are responsible for making sure that students experience the presence and power of God through getting involved in worship and community service activities. For example, one chaplain said:

---

[30]   White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 143.
[31]   J. W. Taylor, Video Resource.

"…to make disciples. After which you send them out, so I train them to go outside for mission, to continue to show the light they have received from our school" (Chap: F). Again, this shows the doubling of roles of the school pastor and school chaplains.

Research Question 3: What strategies do you have for nurture and retention?

The responses to this question included the following: "We give them introduction letters to take to churches whereby pastors or elders sign then every time they go for worship and when they come back we require to see the signatures. We also get their phone contacts to call them" (Chap A). "It is a big challenge to us. We have not implemented giving them letters" (Chap B). "We have a record of all we baptize, and we give them the contacts of pastors or elders from where they will be worshiping" (Chap E). "Some, we talk to the parents to allow students to be baptized. Some parents who are not free, do not talk to them. Others we do not have their contacts because they do not have phones" (Chap H). "We communicate to the churches where they are going and connect them to the elders. Also, we opened a WhatsApp group for those who have smartphones. We keep in contact" (Chap C). "We lose them. But now we have started keeping record and we contact those who have WhatsApp" (Chap D). "It is difficult. We have no contact after they leave the school. But we try to contact the pastors and elders where they are going" (Chap G). "We get their contacts at baptism. We call them occasionally. We encourage those who have challenging parents. We also have a WhatsApp group now' (Chap J). "We follow them up through the pastors or elders where they live" (Chap F).

Analyzing the responses to research question three revealed some common themes or categories and the resulting patterns (Table 7). Whereas the common pattern in following up with students for nurture and retention is through making contacts with the pastors or elders where the students live, the next common pattern raises serious concern. Many expressed a problem with follow-up work.

A statement from Chap D that "we lose them", should be a concern not only to the school but to the mission of the SDA Church.

Table 7. Building Patterns from Categories for Nurture and Retention

Themes/Categories	Codes	Patterns
Introduction letters	LET	CON =6
Connect to pastors or elders	CON	PROB =5
Get phone contacts to call them	CON	WSAP =2
It is a big challenge for us	PROB	PAR =2
Contacts of pastors or elders	CON	CAL =1
WhatsApp group	WSAP	LET =1
We lose them	PROB	
Some parents who are not free	PAR	CON=Making contacts
It is difficult	PROB	PROB=Problem following up
We contact the pastors and elders	CON	WSAP=WhatsApp groups
We get their contacts at baptism	CON	PAR=Issues with parents
We get contacts at baptism	CON	CAL=Calling them up
Call them occasionally	CAL	LET=Writing introduction
Challenging parents	PAR	letters for them
WhatsApp group	WSAP	
Contact Pastors or elders	CON	
No contact after they leave	PROB	

The common pattern of making phone contacts (CON=6) is achieved in two ways. Either by contacting the pastor/elder of the local church nearest to the student's residence, or directly calling the student to find out if he or she is attending church. Both ways pose challenges. The student may not know the contacts of the local church and the chaplain may not be able to locate the local pastor of the area or the elder.

Calling students to find out whether they are attending church or not is also problematic. Some students may not speak the truth, others may not have phones or may change their contacts, and so the chaplains can easily lose them (Chap D). However, when chaplains were probed further on the frequency of calling students, many said it was not frequent due to a lack of facilitation of airtime from the school administration. A pattern coded WASAP had only three responses simply because chaplains are not facilitated to engage in such social media communication. Most of the chaplains interviewed said following up with students on this social media

would be the best option since it is cheap, accessible, and can reach many who may be near or far.

The reason they gave for not using WhatsApp is due to a lack of facilitation from their employers. Schools that are run by the SDA Church and those run privately but related to this Church are regarded as centers of evangelism. White says that "in the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one."[32]

But evangelism circle is never complete until the converts have matured as followers of Jesus and are integrated into the service of the Lord and savior Jesus Christ. This is only possible through discipleship. In this era of Covid-19, which is referred to as the "new normal," social media must be embraced as a means not only of evangelism but also of discipling new converts. The Church as a body should work out possible mechanisms that will enable young people from schools to be discipled via social media. It is a race against time given the rate at which young people are embracing social media.

The impact of social media on school-going youth cannot be underestimated. Young people are being bombarded with information from all fronts. This puts the discipling school chaplains at a crossroads since they have more time with young people than even their parents or pastors of churches. In the epistle of 1 Peter 5:8, Peter warned thus: "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Young people in secondary schools and those who left for university, face serious challenges.[33] Muller postulates that "when we call young people to faith, we are not calling them out of the world, and into heaven. Rather, we're calling them to live God's will and the way in the world."[34]

---

[32]   White. *Education*, 30.

[33]   **Humberto Rasi,** *Ministering to Adventist Students in Public Universities***. Ministry Magazine, June 1990. Assessed on August 18, 2021,** https://www.ministrymaga-zine.org/archive/1990/06/ministering-to-adventist-students-in-public-universities

[34]   Walt Mueller, *Engaging the Soul of Youth Culture: Bridging Teen Worldviews and Christian Truth* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2006), 14.

The SDA Church should join forces with the school administration and chaplains in this work of reclaiming the souls of students who leave secondary school after getting baptized. The chaplain alone may not have the resources or the capability to do the follow-up work. The call to discipleship comes with a cost to the disciple as well as to the discipler. The Church must be willing to meet this cost at any price.

Jesus warned those who choose to follow him that they must be willing to forego all including their family (Luke. 14:25-27). In 2 Tim.3:12, Paul tells the youthful disciple, Timothy, that all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted. The chaplains see this happening to the students who accept to be disciples. Chaplains face challenges with the parents of the students who decide to get baptized. Five chaplains interviewed expressed problems with the issue of following up with students. When students return home and conversion is discovered, it upsets some parents to the extent of refusing students to attend church. Some students are transferred to other schools. This is one of the reasons some chaplains responded by saying, "we lose them" (Chap D).

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of chaplains in discipling students in selected secondary schools in Uganda. This study was approached with a presupposition that SDA school chaplains carry out proselytizing role which, in the traditional role, is the work of school pastors. The study was conceptualized in a theistic worldview and the God-ordained mission of the church in fulfilling the great commission of Mat 28:19-20. Statistical figures reveal that the SDA Church is grappling with high losses of baptized members. Many young people get baptized during their stay in secondary schools operated by or those related to the Church. Therefore, I examined the chaplains' understanding of discipleship, their role, and the strategies they put in place for nurture and retention. Ten chaplains were interviewed from ten schools purposely selected out of a total of 96 secondary schools. Qualitative data were analyzed using a cross-case method. The

roles performed by the interviewed chaplains were diverse but they all had one focus, to proselytize young people. There is no question SDA chaplains were engaged in discipleship. However, when it came to nurture, chaplains faced problems reaching out to students after they left school. Plans were in place to reach out to students once they graduate from secondary schools, but many hindrances were also cited. One of the viable plans, which may prove effective for nurturing and retaining young people in the church beyond secondary, is the use of social media. Several social platforms can be used to reach students near and far. However, hurdles exist in operationalizing this plan. A concerted effort is needed to mobilize resources if such a plan is to succeed.

There was a common practice that after graduation or during vocations, converted students were handed over to the pastors or elders of the churches where the students live. This method also posed serious challenges, and it did not prove to be very effective due to high mobility, parental restrictions, and logistical challenges. An effective way of handling this transition is needed. Intentional and coordinated efforts are needed to bridge the gap. The Church as a body should get involved in bridging the gap between the chaplain as a discipler at school and the new discipler. Without this bridge, baptized members will continue getting lost without a trace. Therefore, I make the following recommendations:

1. Since these disciples span fields and conferences (Table 1) in Uganda and even beyond, the chaplaincy ministry offices should be mandated to lead in organizing the transition of passing on the baton (the disciples or converts) to the rightful discipler.

2. There is a noticeable research gap when it comes to nurturing and retention of youth in the continent of Africa.

3. This study raises a need for a quantitative continent-wide study with a large number of respondents to understand the extent of the problems of nurture and retention.

4. Social media platforms should be harnessed for efficient means of reaching former and current students. In this age

of information and technology, the SDA Church should be at the forefront of embracing it as young people are pro-social media. However, more research is needed in this area to find out how media platforms can be harnessed for discipleship and the resultant solution to the problems of nurture and retention.

5. Parents of students in boarding schools should sign a document surrendering their guardianship to the chaplains. This would shield chaplains and the schools from parents who may wish to sue them for converting students.

Israel Kafeero, Ph.D., is a Senior Lecturer of Applied Theology at the Theological Seminary, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya. He could be reached at kefeeroi@aua.ac.ke.