



## Challenges and Effectiveness of Nurturing Programs among Seventh-day Adventist Secondary Schools in Southern Tanzania Union Mission

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**Abstract:** This study was about challenges and effectiveness of nurturing programs among Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in Southern Tanzania Union Mission through the descriptive research design. A sample of 284 students and 57 school staff participated through interview and questionnaire. Data analysis was done through the thematic approach. Challenges that schools faced in implementing nurturing programs include lack facilities for spiritual programs. Corporal punishment was a hindrance for teachers to nurture students as it was difficult for teacher to sit down with emotionally wounded students and implement nurturing programs. Despite the outlined challenges, the implementation of nurturing programs was somewhat effective as students reported the existence of a number of spiritual, social and character development nurturing programs. The study recommends that school owners should equip the schools with adequate facilities like spiritual books and chapel buildings and provide staff houses so that teachers may live within school premises and find time to provide nurturing programs after class hours. Schools should be commended for the existing nurturing programs and staff members should be encouraged to continue providing various nurturing programs.

**Keywords:** Nurturing programs; challenges; effectiveness, integration of faith and learning.

**How to Cite:** Magere, D. D., Allida, D. R. and Ojwan'g, M. (2023). Challenges and Effectiveness of Nurturing Programs among Seventh-day Adventist Secondary Schools in Southern Tanzania Union Mission. East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences 4(2), 101-108. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2023v04i02.0281>.

### Introduction

The original human being was created pure and without sin in all aspects of life. Later, the devil come and destroyed the image of God in human beings. The destruction caused by sin changed the spiritual, social, intellectual and physical aspects of human being (White, 1968). Jesus Christ came on

earth to redeem and restore the lost image of God into human beings. In response, the philosophy of Adventist Education aims at restoring human beings into the lost image of God the creator. The education provided in Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) schools is Christ-centered, which conveys formal education and nurtures the complete enlargement

of the whole person—spiritually, intellectually, physically and socially for life here and for eternity (White, 1952).

As the process of nurturing is aided by four important agencies, the home, the local church, the school/college/university and the world church, parents become the first teachers and source of nurturing programs which lead to the child’s development of morals, right perception and appropriate world-views at home.

The local church is a place where spiritual and intellectual nurture is directed to believers and in this case students. The spiritual nurturing provided by the local churches brings about spiritual growth among students who attend church services (East Central Africa Division, 2015).

The third agency is educational institutions which receive students who have passed through nurture from homes and the local church. White (1952) makes it clear that when teachers in church schools stand in a classroom, they perform greater job in redeeming the life of the young ones. The redemption process of young ones can be wisely done through well-designed and implemented nurturing programs.

The fourth and last agency through which nurturing is provided is the world church. This is the agency through which all the other three agencies are overseen. Policies that guide the church and its institutions are prepared under this agency to

ensure equity of Adventist Education (East Central Africa Division, 2015). Having a very remarkable Education policy, Nyabwari et al., (2013) state that the Seventh-day Adventist church owned schools are not expected to experience wicked behaviors. Appearance of such behaviors in SDA schools signify that these schools are more or less similar to secular schools.

According to SOPHE and ASCD (2010), where learning takes place, students need a favorable, caring, nurturing and healthy environment. Shek (2010) conducted a study in Hong Kong to find the effect of nurturing programs in schools. The study revealed that about 20% of young people in Hong Kong had various forms of psychosocial and adjustment problems. Though schools in Hong Kong were said to emphasize whole-person development, their stress on the aspect of nurturing programs was unfortunately not mirrored in the formal curriculum. Hence, the integration of nurturing programs in the formal curriculum was lacking.

Mseli and Ilomo (2021) conducted a study among SDA secondary schools in Arusha and Kilimanjaro Regions, Tanzania to establish the effectiveness of holistic Education. The findings revealed a significant and positive relationship among the physical, the spiritual and the mental aspects of learners. Hence, school leaders were advised to maintain the same trends of inculcating holistic aspects.

**Table 1: Disciplinary Cases in Adventist Schools in STUM**

Immoral behavior	Number of cases recorded at School			Total
	School 1	School II	School III	
1. Absconding from school	17	22	23	62
2. Love affairs	14	05	06	25
3. Theft	12	08	05	25
4. Cheating in exams	12	-	04	16
5. Fighting	11	03	02	16
6. Others (possessing mobile phones, mild strikes, making noise, school properties destruction etc.)	-	8	12	20

Despite the emphasis placed in the philosophy of Adventist education, Adventist schools in Southern Tanzania Union Mission (STUM) have been experiencing disciplinary issues like cheating in examinations, fighting, property destruction, sexual immorality, abscondment from classes and strikes as reported in Table 1. The persistence of such behaviors lead to expulsion of students from schools

contrary to expectations of parents, guardians and the society (Southern Tanzania Union Missi, 2019).

STUM is an SDA church administrative territory that comprises 18 political regions located in the Southern, Eastern and Central part of Tanzania. Selected schools in Table 1 are Kitungwa Secondary School in Morogoro Region, Mbeya Adventist Secondary School in Mbeya Region and Iringa

Adventist Secondary School in Iringa Region. This study, therefore, sought to establish challenges and effectiveness of nurturing programs in Adventist secondary schools in Tanzania.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

This study was guided by two theories namely Faith Development Theory developed by James Fowler III and Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura. The two theories involve the age range of learners in secondary schools.

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Faith Development Theory involves six stages by which individuals develop their faith from birth to maturity: (1) the Intuitive–Projective Faith (preschool age) is the first stage of individual faith development. (2) Mythical-Literal Faith (6 to 12 years) is the second stage while (3) Synthetic-Conventional Faith (13-18 Years) is the third and (4) Individuative-Reflective Faith is the fourth stage (18-22 years). (5) Conjunctive Faith (Mid-life crisis) is the fifth and (6) Universalizing Faith (Enlightenment age or later adulthood) is the sixth and last stage (Andrade, 2014, pp. 3-4). This study suits better in the third stage of the theory which is the Synthetic-Conventional Faith that involves individuals between 13 to 18 years. In this case, the school environment, staff, friends and the religious community have a great influence on the students' day-to-day life.

The spiritual development theory is reinforced by the Social Learning Theory that was developed by Albert Bandura who maintained that most human behaviors are learned observationally through modeling. The observer forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed and on later occasions (Bandura 1977).

### **Review of the Literature**

This section is the literature review that addresses the variables under this study.

#### **Nurturing Programs**

Nurturing involves taking care, feeding, protecting someone, especially young children and helping them to develop and succeed. Hosie (2013) and Lucas et al. (2006) describe nurturing as a set of

activities that allow school staff members to develop and embed a culture throughout school life.

#### **Factors Affecting Nurturing Programs**

Challenges facing the implementation of nurturing programs are similar to those affecting other aspects of the curriculum in a school. For the sake of this study, the implementation of nurturing programs in a school setting is related to what Chaudhary (2015) expressed that any program implementation cannot be useful without learners because they are the central focus of the implementation.

Resources, materials, facilities, teachers, the school environment, culture, ideology, evaluation and assessment may affect the nurturing implementation. Resources include Bibles, spiritual books and other books and journals. Teaching materials include boards, pianos, drums, guitars, flutes, violins, balls. On the other hand, physical facilities include workshops, sports fields, multipurpose halls and the cafeteria. All these facilities may affect the character of learners as they interact in school settings. Other interest groups which may affect nurturing are parents, government regulations, time tabling issues and school owners' priorities.

Spiritual nurturing faces numerous challenges including absence of Bible study groups, prayer meetings, camp meetings and Weeks of Spiritual Emphasis in schools. Absence of such aspects in school curriculum weakens the spiritual growth of learners. Spiritual passiveness among school staff is another key factor that may affect students' character development in the sense that students are likely to imitate bad behaviors from school staff members, which may affect the character development process (Nyabwari, 2016).

#### **Spiritual Nurturing**

According to White (1952), Christian education aims to expand spiritual knowledge and beliefs among learners. It strengthens their self-worth and commitment to the divinely arranged world. White (1968) believed that Christian education should support learners to know the value of their existence to others as they interact with the world in matters that reflect faith viewpoints. Adventist education seeks to describe essential differences in the way individuals are to realize their being in relationship with God-the Creator, self, others and the world at large. Furthermore, White, (1952) advocated Christianity over academic excellence

much as both aspects are very important for learners to excel. Capitalizing academic issues at the expense of spiritual nurturing may affect the holistic development of learners.

The Bible clearly states, "But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4b, King James Version). According to this text, spiritual nurturing is a partnership between God and mankind. In Adventist Secondary School education, the focus is placed on values, choices and Christ-like character. In such schools, spiritual values are an added advantage toward the intended Christian lifestyle.

### **Social Nurturing**

According to Ogeno (2008), social nurturing enhances effective decision-making powers. Furthermore, social nurturing helps learners to know, appreciate and value themselves. The SDA form of education supports handling the academic, relational, intercultural and societal encounters that exist among students. Reigeluth and Garfinide (1994) and Banathy (1991) put it clearly that the primary aim of Adventist education is to prepare students for a life of service to the church and to the larger world community. This goal can be achieved when schools create friendly environments for learners. School staff and students should therefore live in a loving and caring relationship as one family. When each school staff becomes a role model for students, learners with good character become role models to fellow learners (Banathy, 1991).

According to Lyon (2017), social nurture in secondary schools should be the continuation of previous nurturing programs provided at home through primary schools. According to White (1952), manual labor training can help to mold students' character. Therefore, manual labor training is supposed to be given preference in the school curriculum. A human body as Kumar (2017) points out, needs to be engaged in activities that improve its capacity to overcome opportunistic diseases and attacks. Body exercise reduces the risks of depression, anxiety and certain cancers. In this case, lack of manual labor affects social nurture in the sense that a depressed student is socially unwell too. A student who is always sick will not be able to easily mingle with peers and so the social aspect of life is impaired.

### **Character Development**

The world keeps changing very fast, bringing in postmodern cultures and systems that may alter the

values and morals of learners. Through globalization, young people are attracted to violence, crimes, immoral sexual practices, media-influenced values, drug abuse, dirty music, fighting, property destruction and unwillingness to receive counsel from older folks (Knight, 2005). Adventist Schools are therefore called to fill this emptiness of missing values among the youth who happen to attend schools (Ndiku et al., 2014).

In order to get desired character development traits among students, school rules and regulations are to be enhanced to fit the context and school staff are to foster positive attitudes toward students (Nur et al., 2020). According to Tyrell (2012), esteem, adoration and friendly relationship with people at home and with church family members have a great importance in character building. School staff could make effective interventions in character education by integrating character education into their teachings and nurturing programs for their students to benefit.

### **Methodology**

This section various aspects of the methodology that guided this study.

#### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research approach using the descriptive research design. The study used a questionnaire and the interview schedule with students, teachers, school administrators and school chaplains.

#### **Population and Sampling**

Out of the population of 1006 students and 67 school staff, a sample of 286 students and 57 school staff were randomly selected to constitute the sample. Finally, 284 students and 57 staff filled out the open-ended questionnaire and seven administrators were interviewed.

#### **Data Analysis Methods**

Analysis of data was done through the thematic approach in that similar themes were organized together to address a particular research question. Literature was used to enhance the discussion of findings from the field.

### **Results and Discussion**

This section presents findings of the study. The findings are presented through guiding research question and are discussed using literature.

**Research Question 1:** What challenges are facing schools in implementing nurturing programs among Adventist Secondary Schools in Southern Tanzanian Union Mission?

To answer this research question, heads of the schools and their deputies were interviewed. When asked to express challenges facing the implementation of nurturing programs, one school administrator reported that “lack quality facilities for academic and spiritual programs such as spiritual books, chapel buildings and play grounds is a hindrance in designing nurturing programs.” The administrator further added that “how can a teacher remain at school to counsel and inspire students when he is in hurry to catch up with a public transport to go back home?” This suggests that lack of staff houses in schools is a hindrance for teachers to provide counseling to students after class hours as part of nurturing.

Another school administrator reported that failure of staff members to support the nurturing programs is a challenge. The administrator particularly reported that some school staff members have a feeling that nurturing belongs to school patrons, matrons, chaplains and parents at home as they think that students must come to school well mannered. Therefore, lack of teachers’ participation affects the quality of nurturing programs.

Some students were reported to have been severely beaten up by teachers as part of disciplinary measures. This makes it harder for teacher to sit down with emotionally wounded students and implement nurturing programs through counseling in a friendly manner. The reported approach of beating up students as disciplinary measures is against the redemption approach which is advocated by White (1952). In the redemption approach, teachers need to create a friendly atmosphere with their students so that the learners will feel free to express their problems to teachers and teachers in turn can respond to the problems in a friendly manner.

One more administrator reported that “we have insufficient funds to develop and implement nurturing programs.” This statement opened some more follow up questions on how funds could be necessary for designing nurturing programs. The interviewee said, “Teachers need extra duty allowance to stay back at school with students for nurturing programs. This is because their teaching load does not afford them extra duties outside their

job descriptions.” The administrator added that to curb this challenge, “more school staff are to be employed in order to cater for the needs of other programs besides classroom activities.”

According to Nyabwari (2016), scarcity of dedicated school staff members in designing nurturing programs kindles the existence of social conflicts among students and in some cases the conflicts could extent up the school staff. In line with Guissani (2001), this problem can be resolved through the integration of faith and learning as Christian faith-based schools attempt to be objective in grounding students with spiritual knowledge toward spiritual, social and emotional development. Therefore, the integration of faith in learning in classrooms can be one of the best options used to curb the challenges of the teachers’ limited time for administering nurturing programs.

The fourth administrator had this to say: “Recruitment of school staff is not properly conducted. As a result, some recruited workers are not committed Christians and they don’t support spiritual nurturing programs.” The administrator added, “workers are employed not by merit but because they are related to one of big leaders in higher authorities in the church system. When these workers are employed out of nepotism, they lack the enthusiasm at work.” Employment of non-committed teachers might dilute the quality of Christian education as young ones are likely to be influenced by what they see from the non-committed school teachers (Lapsley & Woodbury, 2016). Therefore, school staff in SDA schools have to be objective in setting a good example to their students no matter the critical conditions the teachers might be facing.

**Research Question 2:** How effective are nurturing programs in the Adventist secondary schools?

This research question was addressed through the questionnaire and interview with teachers, chaplains and students.

### **Spiritual Nurturing Programs**

Some students and staff members mentioned a number of spiritual nurturing programs which they considered existing in their schools. These programs were listed in order of frequency: Singing, Friday evening worship, mid-week prayers and weeks of spiritual emphasis. The list further included camp meetings, Bible study and Community Sabbath school programs. One chaplain reported that “I am

encouraged by the regular church attendance, improved discipline among students, spiritual growth among students and school staff, fellowship and increased faithfulness among students and staff members.”

Another chaplain had this to say: “I praise God for the increased number of baptized students because 90% of students have accepted Jesus through baptism. The number of baptisms is attributed to spiritual and character development programs at our school.” These views are supported by Nyabwari (2016) who advised that spiritual nurturing programs could be an effective strategy in character development endeavors in faith-based schools. Such programs include involvement of students in Bible study, weekly Sabbath-school quarterly lesson discussions and Wednesdays’ prayer meetings. The author added that spiritual nurturing programs can be achieved through weeks of spiritual emphasis and students’ involvement in annual Camp meetings. White (1968) advised that Christian education should draw learners nearer to their Creator through spiritual nurturing programs. Therefore, the reported spiritual nurturing programs need to be maintained for improving students’ spirituality.

### **Social Nurturing Programs**

Respondents mentioned the following social nurturing programs to be existing: group work, sports and games, visitation done by school staff together with students, singing groups, debate clubs, youth programs, subject clubs and study tours. These findings are commended by Tyrell (2012) who pointed out that Christian schools should struggle to nurture students toward social and emotional development.

According to Reigeluth and Garfinide (1994) and Banathy (1991), the foundational aim of Adventist schools is to prepare students for a life of service to their family, the church and the larger community. The reported participation in social activities shape the young people in schools for service right there and in the bigger community after completing their studies. The reported group work, sports and games, visitation done by school staff together with students, singing groups, debate clubs, youth programs, subject clubs and study tours increases students’ interactivity and prepares them to work with people with different backgrounds and temperament. Therefore, social nurturing programs

play a big role in preparing students for service here and after.

### **Character Development Programs**

Respondents reported the existence of the following character development programs in their schools: counseling sessions by school chaplains, matrons and patrons, students’ involvement in leadership, working together in outdoor activities, equality in provision of student services and volunteering. In a survey that involved 200 schools in New Zealand, McClintock (2017) discovered that it was not technology that made a difference in faith based schools but it was the outcome of attractive character development programs that made the difference. Therefore, the existing character development programs need to be maintained for students to grow character wise.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

Challenges that schools faced in implementing nurturing programs include lack facilities for spiritual programs. Lack of staff houses was a hindrance for teachers to provide counseling to students after class hours due to long distance from home to school. Corporal punishment was another hindrance for teachers to nurture students as it was difficult for teacher to sit down with emotionally wounded students and implement nurturing programs. Lack of funds was another challenge as schools failed to provide extra payment for teachers to stay in schools for nurturing programs beyond the overloaded classroom hours. Finally, uncommitted teachers diluted the quality of Christian education and therefore was a hindrance for effective implementation of nurturing programs.

Despite the outlined challenges, the implementation of nurturing programs was somewhat effective as students reported the existence of a number of spiritual nurturing programs such as singing programs, Friday evening worship, mid-week prayers, spiritual emphasis weeks, camp meetings, Bible study programs and Community Sabbath school programs. Existing social nurturing programs included group works, sports and games, singing groups, debate clubs, youth programs, subject clubs and study tours. Finally, character development programs included counseling sessions, working together in outdoor activities, equality in provision of student services and volunteering.

## Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the study recommends that school owners should find ways to equip the schools with adequate facilities like spiritual books and chapel buildings for enhancement of nurturing programs. They should also strive to provide staff houses so that teachers may live within the school premises and find time to provide nurturing programs. Teachers should be provided with training on how to integrate faith in learning as this is one of recommended ways of nurturing programs in Adventist schools.

Despite the existing challenges, schools should be commended for the existing spiritual, social and character development nurturing programs and teachers and other staff members should be encouraged to continue providing various nurturing programs so as to prepare well-rounded students through the spiritual, social and character development nurturing programs.

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