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Abstract

Like their counterparts in elementary and secondary education, Seventh-day Adventist educators at the tertiary level have been challenged by their administrators to integrate faith and learning. Implementation on an instructional level has focused on teaching/learning strategies based upon biblical narratives, themes, or principles that are relevant to a particular lesson or unit of instruction. While these activities can impact students, they fail to integrate faith into the course content itself. This paper is a report of a landmark study in which a college composition course was redesigned using a course design model that fuses faith and learning by utilizing a biblical conceptual framework in which the core course concept is a bridge between a biblical worldview and the subject matter. This study can have application to courses across the spectrum of disciplines in tertiary faith-based institutions.

For nearly four decades, Seventh-day Adventist educators have defined, discussed, trained for, and implemented the integration of faith and learning at every level of education. A plethora of resources for the integration of faith and learning abound in scholarly journals and on denominational websites. Training events for Adventist educators have focused on the rationale for integrating faith into student's classroom experiences and inspired teachers to take the time to implement faith-building teaching/learning strategies into their courses. Yet, as Korniejczuk and Brantley (1993-1994) say, "[w]orkshops and teachers' conventions often do a better job of inspiring commitment to IFL than in defining the concept in instructional terms" (p. 10). In addition, most subjects across the disciplines at the tertiary level have little to no intrinsic faith connection. To meet this need, instructional strategies for implementing faith into specific disciplines have been identified over the past 20 years in Adventist publications. However, these strategies can be viewed as unwelcome add-ons by students who choose to attend faith-based institutions.

Rasi (1988-2006), in discussing how to integrate faith and learning, uses biblical worldview terminology when he suggests that teachers "approach their subjects from a biblical-Christian worldview perspective" (n.p.) to connect curricular content with faith. One missing element in the literature and in practice is assessment. Some studies have assessed student's perceptions of faculty spirituality or of a teacher's integrative strategies, yet no studies are available that assess the effectiveness in establishing a biblical worldview for subject matter of the course itself. Quantifying the effectiveness of specific courses in connecting a biblical worldview within students themselves is a vital component to the process of integrating faith and learning.

This review of the literature will describe the current definitions of *the integration of faith and learning* and how the lack of a unified definition impacts practical implementation and how

the term itself presents a dualism. This literature review suggests the need to shift to the use of

the term *biblical worldview*. The articles described in this review were found using databases

such as *circle.adventist.org*, *ict.aiias.edu*, and *ebscohost*.com. Subject terms include but were not

limited to: *integration of faith and learning -- definition, assessment, implementation, strategies*

and *biblical worldview*.

Why the terminology needs to change.

The recommended shift in emphasis from the *integration of faith and learning* to *biblical*

worldview is not simply semantic but necessary in order to have a greater impact in course-level

implementation within the wide range of disciplines in higher education. The first reason that

Adventist education needs to shift away from the term *integration of faith and learning* is the

lack of specificity in the term itself. Nwosu (1999) noted that within Adventist education "there

is no standard definition for integration of faith and learning" (p. 253). Rasi (2013), in the most

quoted Adventist definition of the term, defines it as combining faith and values with teaching

and learning in "a deliberate and systematic process of approaching the entire educational

enterprise – both curricular and co-curricular – from a Christian perspective" (np). Taylor (2012)

enlarges the definition with a holistic worldview -- "linking faith and learning to life" (p. 10).

Cox (2014) states that the integration of faith and learning, in spite of the lack of unified

definition, happens when "biblical concerns and academic content are interconnected" (p. 25).

Badley (2009) says that the term is ambiguous because "its three component words – faith,

learning, and integration – all carry several potential meanings" (p. 7). Taylor (1988-2006)

discusses potential meanings for each term with the added dimension of *life* in his monograph,

"A biblical foundation for the integration of faith and learning."

In her dissertation study, Nwosu (1999) discovered that Adventist educators defined the

integration of faith and learning in different ways. Eighteen of the 35 combined participants from

three different training seminars defined the term intellectually as "thinking Christianly" and

"seeking the mind of God," or "seeking a balance between the spiritual and the secular realms"

(p. 246); nine participants defined it as "related to lifestyle" issues (p. 250); seven as Christian

"discipleship" (p. 251); only one participant used all three: seeking God, lifestyle, and

discipleship. Bailey (2012) in his survey of current literature suggests that the term itself has

devolved into a "slogan." Roy (2001) asserts that the integration of faith and learning has lost its

"potency" over the years but not its relevance although the term has "become a cliché" (p. 613).

A more important reason to shift away from the use of *integration of faith and learning* is

the dualism inherent in the term itself. Pearcey (2008) describes this dualism as spreading "a

layer of spiritual devotion … like icing on a cake" (p. 37) over the school curriculum while the

subject matter itself is no different than that taught in secular schools. She notes, that no matter

how thick the icing is, it is still a separate entity. Even frequent use of the strategic biblical

narratives, principles or themes in content courses fail to fuse faith and learning into one entity.

This dualism presents an artificial separation and permeates Christian tertiary institutions, which

compartmentalize "religion" into isolated courses and/or the isolated use of biblical components

in individual lessons. Esqueda (2014) describes this compartmentalized life as "sacred faith"

versus "secular profession" (p. 92) and describes higher education as silos of departmentalization

whose isolation and individualism mirror the separation of faith from learning in general in

society today.

The most important reason for Adventist tertiary institutions to shift to *biblical worldview*

is to unify the curriculum across the disciplines, visioning each course in each discipline as a

facet of God's unified truth. As Pearcey (2008) asserts, Christianity gives both the truth about the

"whole of reality" and "a perspective for interpreting every subject matter" (p. 34). Esqueda

(2014) claims that a coherent philosophy of education cannot come from the dichotomy of sacred

versus secular as evidenced in the prevailing concept of faith and learning. Rather, biblical worldview unifies the two by *fusing* faith and learning.

When assessing training events for the integration of faith and learning, Nwosu (1999) was surprised to discover that rather than practical training in how to implement faith and learning integration in the classroom, the training seminars she observed required instead the production of publishable papers which "became an end in themselves" (p. 261) through publication or as requirements for tenure. A recent survey of the two primary sources, *circle. adventist.org* and *ict.aiias*, for articles and monographs using the subject term *integration of faith and learning* results in literally hundreds of articles and monographs. Many focus on the rationale for the integration of faith and learning. A significant number of articles give specific teaching strategies for the implementation of the integration of faith and learning in the different subject areas through the use of biblical narratives that have contextual relevance or biblical themes and principles that connect to a lesson or unit of instruction. However, these strategies are not necessarily intrinsic to the course content itself of the specific disciplines.

To address the need for a unified definition and implementation of the integration of faith and learning in course content that is intrinsic to subject matter itself, Gettys and Plemons (2016) created a tertiary course design model in which professors create a biblical conceptual framework from the unified biblical foundation of creation, the fall, redemption and restoration. Their course design model utilizes a biblical conceptual framework as a bridge between biblical worldview and course subject matter. It aligns the biblical framework with declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, learning outcomes and assessment and demonstrates that the shift from the *integration of faith and learning* to *biblical foundation* is not merely a shift in semantics but a shift in paradigm.

The current research builds on the implementation of faith and learning as evidenced in Adventist higher education by redesigning the first semester of college composition on a biblical conceptual framework in which biblical worldview is embedded in the course itself and is assessed. The goal of this redesign is for students to connect their creation of academic essays in college composition course to the biblical concept of *design* as evidenced in God's creation of the universe.

Statement of the Problem

College composition is a general education gateway course required for all college freshmen; it does not, however, have any inherent connection to biblical faith. Composition teachers can integrate faith through the use of teaching strategies that ask students to consider biblical narratives, themes or principles or give students writing prompts that reference their religious beliefs or spiritual life experiences, but these strategies are add-ons that can have useful application but are limited because they are not intrinsic to process of writing college-level academic papers. The purpose of this present study is determine whether redesigning college composition on a biblical conceptual framework will result in students grasping a truth about God that is intrinsic to their writing assignments by making a clear connection between the course content and a biblical worldview.

Sub-problems

This study was guided by two sub-problems, the first of which is to examine students' perceptions of the connection between a biblical foundation and college composition subject matter. The second sub-problem is to examine the differences in the number of students who perceived a connection between the biblical foundation of God as Master Designer of all creation and of themselves as God-gifted designers of academic essays.

Importance of the Study

This study is important because it demonstrates how teachers in faith-based tertiary institutions can implement faith and learning on a deeper instructional level by fusing the two constructs, *faith* and *learning*, into *biblical worldview* in which they can re-designing courses across the disciplines with a biblical conceptual framework. Implementation of such a framework will facilitate students making the connection between biblical truth and course content and demonstrate a truth about God that is intrinsic to each specific discipline.

Definition of Terms; Assumptions; Limitations

The following terms are operationally defined for this study: 1. *Biblical worldview* is the belief in the following foundational principles of scripture: creation, the fall, redemption, and restoration. 2. *Biblical conceptual framework* is the use of an over-arching concept that bridges biblical worldview and course content. It is explicit to this study that the participants were completely honest; that the study will have scientific merit; and that the sample will be representative of a broader population. This is a landmark study with limitations in budget, accessibility and timeframe that worked with data readily available. The four major limitations of this study are: 1. This was not a comprehensive or exhaustive study. 2. The sample was localized to 6 sections of college composition over 2 semesters and, therefore, not necessarily representative. 3. The study did not use a true control group but utilized data from prior semesters. 4. Question 4 on the self-created survey was given as a pre-survey and post-survey to students in only 2 semesters of 101 with limited responses from the total pool of students and, therefore, needs to be tested multiple times to assert validity and reliability.

Hypotheses

This study was guided by two hypotheses: 1) the re-design of college composition upon a biblical conceptual framework will significantly improve students' perceptions of a connection

between a biblical foundation and college composition subject matter, and 2) the percentage of students who connect God as master designer of creation to themselves as God-gifted designers of college writing will significantly increase by the end of the course among those students who are in the experimental group.

Method

Participants and Materials

The population of this study was 92 freshmen and sophomore college composition students at Southern Adventist University in 6 sections of ENGL 101: 3 sections in the control group and 3 sections in the experimental group. Of these 92 students, 57 received the new course design. The participants were only taken from the courses taught by the author of this study. The materials used were: 1) a school-wide administration survey given to every student on a volunteer basis with 13 range questions and two open-ended questions. This study looked at student responses to Number 7 only from the range questions. 2) Number 4 only on a teacher-created survey administered as a pre-survey and post-survey. Number 7 of the range questions on the "Student Course Evaluation" reads: "The instructor helped me see the subject matter from a Biblical perspective." The responses students make for number 7 are a LIKERT scale from 1-5. Number 4 on the teacher made pre-class / post-class survey reads: "How does a Biblical worldview connect to College Composition?"

Design and Procedure

This study is a non-experimental comparative study utilizing survey methodology. This study is primarily quantitative in nature. The course instructor collected and prepared data for analysis. In order to quantify students' perceptions, this study used two survey types: one that uses range questions with a LIKERT scale and one that uses a specific response to an open-ended question. The "Student Course Evaluation" survey was online and given at the end of each

semester within the last two weeks of the class. Students were free to complete the survey

voluntarily and given extra credit in the course for completing the online survey within a time

perimeter. The pre-survey and post-survey were distributed in class on the first day and the last

day respectively for sections B and D in ENGL 101, fall 2014. Students were given

"assignment" points for completing the survey. The design of this study includes information

given to students over the course of the semester based upon the biblical conceptual framework

used to redesign the course.

Implementation of Redesigned Course

The redesigned ENGL 101 course was implemented during 3 semesters: summer session

2014 and fall semester 2014, sections B and D. The implementation of the course design model

focused on the foundational concept of *design* in creation and connected this to writing by design

with intentionality. Each unit of instruction made the connection between God as Master

Designer and the students as God-gifted designers of college-level, academic essays.

Data Analysis. For the purpose of analyzing question 7 from the online "Student Course

Evaluation," the participants were placed in one of two groups: the control group or the test

group. The control group for the assessment included ENGL 101, 2013 summer session 3 and

2013 fall semester sections B and D. This control group did not receive the experimental course

design model but, instead, a traditional composition course design. Number 7 from the "Student

Course Evaluation" online survey was compared between the control group and the test group

that featured the new course design. The means of these two groups are being compared in order

to determine significance and test the first hypothesis of this study.

The students in the test group who participated in the teacher-made survey had their pre-

course survey and post-course survey scores analyzed to see if the mean difference was

significant. Answers to the open-ended question 4 on the teacher-made survey were compared

pre-class and post-class in 2014 fall sections B and D. Only those student answers that

incorporated the term *design* were counted as a positive response. The student scores were coded

and entered into SPSS version 22.0 to perform a data analysis to test the second hypothesis of

this study.

Null Hypotheses. There are 2 hypotheses in this study, which were tested in their null

form. Hypothesis 1: the re-design of college composition upon a biblical conceptual framework

will not significantly improve students' perceptions of a connection between a college

composition subject matter and a biblical foundation. An independent samples t-test has been

used to test this hypothesis. Hypothesis 2: the percentage of students who connect the core

concept of design as foundational to both college composition and a biblical worldview will not

significantly increase by the end of the course. A paired samples t-test has been used to test this

hypothesis.

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Results

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Hypothesis 1: t (90) = -.739, P = .231 one tailed.

Hypothesis 2: t (34) = -9.220, P < .001 one-tailed.

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Discussion

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Findings. For hypothesis 1, this study revealed no significance difference between the

control group and the test group. This, however, does not mean that there was no appreciable

difference between the student perceptions in the test group of the biblical conceptual framework

for college composition. The link between college composition and the biblical conceptual

framework needs to be pursued by further research.

For hypothesis 2, analysis of the raw data shows great significance in the students'

perceptions. In the pre-course survey, not one student connected college composition to a

biblical foundation. By the end of the redesigned course, 25 or the 35 participants in post-survey

made a connection between the biblical conceptual framework of *design* and the college

composition. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the re-design of college composition using a

biblical conceptual framework.

Limitations. The rationale for this study was to experiment with fusing the content of

college composition with a biblical foundation for that content. The author of this study was

committed to integrating faith into composition at an instructional level in which students could

perceive the connection between the course itself and a biblical foundation for the course. The

course instructor did not want the testing of this a new course design to impede the

implementation of that design. The present study was not a comprehensive or exhaustive study

and had limited time, budget, and accessibility. Additional limitations of this study include the

following: the sample is not necessarily representative as it was localized to only 92 students; the

study did not use a true control group but utilized data from previous semesters that received a

traditional course model; the teacher-made survey was given to students in 2 semester only and,

therefore, needs to be tested multiple times to assert validity and reliability.

One additional limitation regards the variable of classroom worships. It is possible that

students' perceptions of the course content as assessed by using number 7 on the "Student

Course Evaluation" is based upon their perceptions of the spirituality of the instructor through

the use of non-use of targeted worship activities. Some high scores in the control group may be

traced to this variable. Future studies should have a true control group, better consistency in the

surveys used, and a plan to remove non-tested variables in order to increase the accuracy and

reliability.

Implications. The present study calls for a broad-based change in the approach Adventist

education takes to integrating faith and learning. The course design model created by Gettys and

Plemons (2016) meets the needs of Adventist educators across the spectrum of disciplines in

tertiary institutions to create content courses that logically and authentically fuse course content with biblical worldview. Rasi's (1988-2006) clearly articulates the aim for the integration of faith and learning: "to ensure that, by the time students complete their studies, they will have freely internalized beliefs and values and a view of knowledge, life, and destiny that is Bible-based, Christ-centered, service-oriented, and kingdom-directed" (n.p.). The potential for this aim to be realized will increase when every course taught by every instructor in every Adventist tertiary institution utilizes, on a foundational conceptual level, the great narratives, principles or themes of scripture to reveal each facet of truth about God.

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Appendix A

Course Concept Map for College Composition 101: Writing by Design
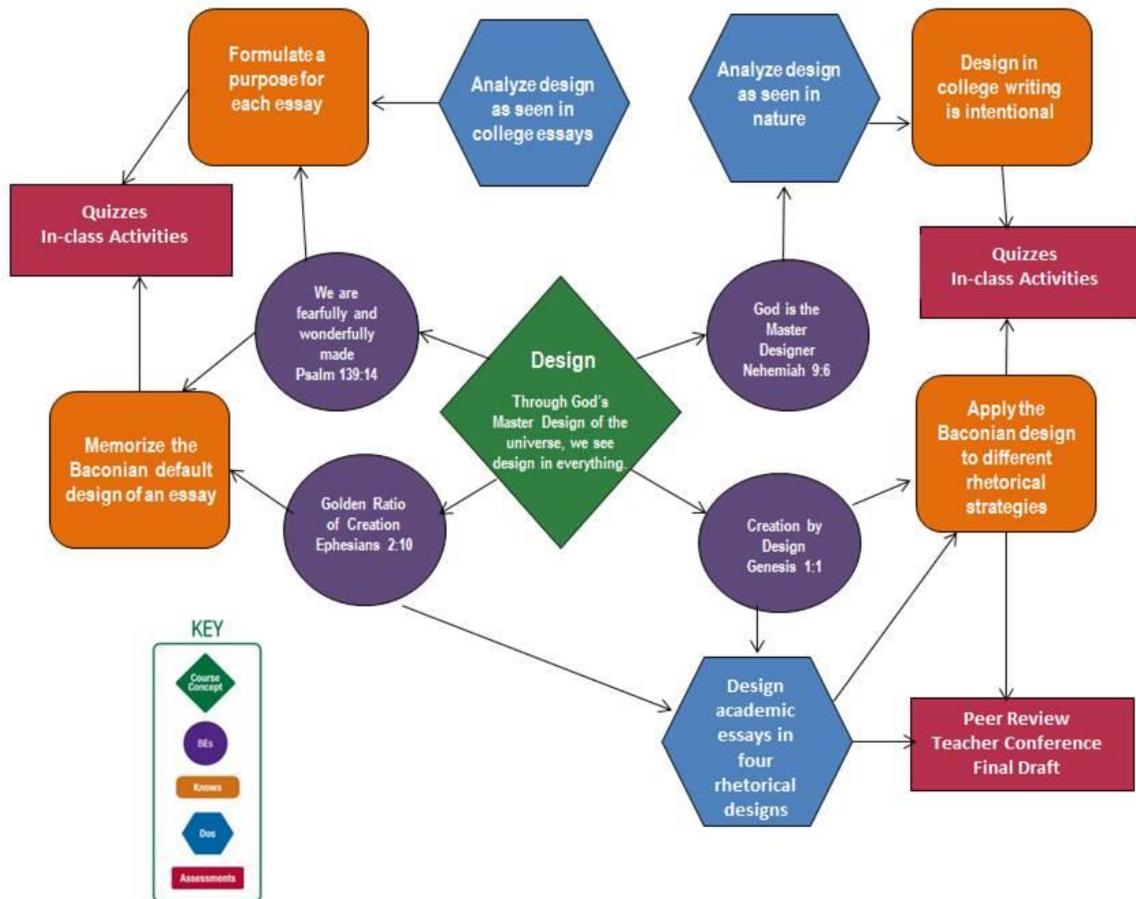
Appendix B

Table 1: SPSS Output showing Group Statistics for Question 7 of the Online Survey.

Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Rating	Control	44	4.55	.791	.119
	New Design	48	4.67	.781	.113

Table 2: SPSS Output showing Independent Samples t-test Results.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Rating	Equal variances assumed	1.087	.300	-.739	90	.462	-.121	.164	-.447	.205
	Equal variances not assumed			-.739	89.094	.462	-.121	.164	-.447	.205

Appendix C

Table 3: SPSS Output showing the Descriptive Statistics of the Group that Answered
Question 4 of the Teacher-made Survey.

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PreTest	.00	35	.000	.000
	PostTest	.71	35	.458	.077

Table 4: SPSS Output showing the Results of the Paired-Samples t-test for Question 4.

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	PreTest - PostTest	-.714	.458	.077	-.872	-.557	-9.220	34	.000