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A Biblical Model for Professional Development to Transform Teaching Practices

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Abstract

In the past, professors have always taught as they were taught, but this needs to change, Why? Due to the fact that the majority of professors completed their graduate degrees in a non-Adventist institution of higher learning. So if they teach like they are taught, they won't be teaching from an Adventist Christian worldview. In addition, the changing student demographics along with the infusion of technology into our daily lives is providing the tools and an opportunity for professors to teach differently than they were taught. Three main changes professors are facing today include: the professorate expectations, a different student body, and the changing nature of teaching. Each of these factors alone would encourage change, but added together they will require change.

How will this happen and who will help professors make this transformational change which will lead to increased learning? This paper will describe a need for professional development specifically developed to meet the needs of professors hired to teach in Adventist Christian Institutions of Higher Learning, a model intentionally developed on a biblical foundation. These professional development activities must include opportunities for professors to learn how to develop their own courses on a biblical foundation with an emphasis on the Adventist Christian worldview. This professional development model for use in Adventist Christian Institutions of Higher Education will build professional development opportunities on Psalm 25:4-5, "Show me your ways (model), O Lord; teach me in your paths (teach). Guide me in your truth (mentor) and teach me. For you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you (reflect). This text highlights: model, teach, mentor, and reflect, research based best practices for professional development (McQuiggan, 2012). These professional development strategies will also reflect Jesus as the master developer of people.

Key Words – professional development model, transformational teaching, model, teach, mentor, reflect, biblical foundations of faith and learning

A Biblical Model for Professional Development to Transform Teaching Practices

For professional development to make a lasting difference, it must go beyond just using new instructional techniques for introducing a new piece of software to increase student participation. It must take the entire professor into consideration— Adventist Christian worldview which is their beliefs, values, and assumptions. Effective professional development must bring our thinking and reflection about teaching into consciousness and allow us to critically examine what we believe and value in our work as professors. The goal is to open up new possibilities and introduce new ways of thinking about teaching—a goal that can then become transformative and change practices in the classroom. Professional development that provides professors the opportunity to investigate, experiment, reflect, discuss, and collaborate with other professors can help them better their practice.

The authors of this paper, who direct the Center for Teaching Excellence and Biblical Foundations of Faith and Learning (The Center) at Southern Adventist University (Southern), adhere to current research for improving professional development; but we also believe professional development for professors in Adventist institutions of higher education must be built upon a biblical foundation. They have identified Psalm 25:4-5 as the biblical foundation for The Center showcasing the most effective form of professional growth and biblical vision for professors at Southern. “Show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me. For you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you” (Psalm 25: 4-5, New International Version). This text highlights: *model* “show me”, *teach* “teach me”, *mentor* “guide me”, and *reflect* “you are God my Savior—my hope is in you.” To model, to teach, to mentor, and to reflect are all research based best practice strategies recommended for use with professional development (McQuiggan, 2012). The authors believe if professors have good models, learn the most effective instructional practices, spend time reflecting on personal application, and have a mentor throughout the implementation in the classroom, they will become transformed into more effective teachers.

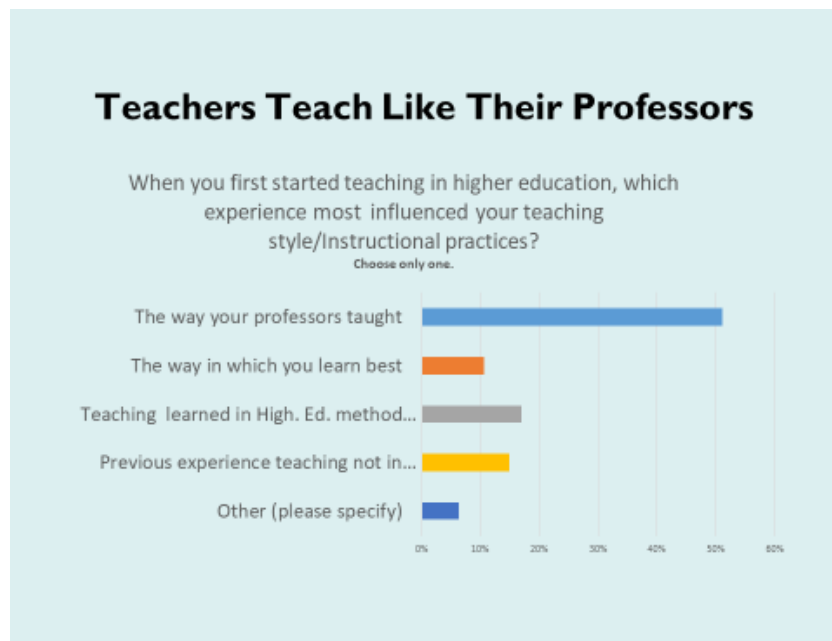
Psalm 25 is a Psalm of wisdom; it has a powerful message for each of our lives—and a powerful message for changing one’s perceptions and practices of teaching. In verse 5, David appeals to God to teach and mentor him in His ways. “Guide me in your truth and teach me,” he writes. Later in verse 9, David confirms “God guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way.” David entreats us in Psalm 25:11, “Teach me thy way, O Lord.” David is praying for God to show him the direction he should take and reminds us that we must seek God’s instruction. He is not asking for personal gain to go his own way. Charles Spurgeon comments, “This prayer evinces a humble sense of personal ignorance, great teachableness of spirit, and cheerful obedience of heart. Lead me in a plain path. Help is here sought as well as direction; we not only need a map of the way, but a guide to assist us in the journey” (1997).

Teach like Their Professors

A distinctive quality among professors is that most have completed advanced degrees in their areas of expertise with little or no training on how to share their expertise with others, and yet they are hired as professors at colleges and universities, as scholars with the specific job assignment of sharing their scholarly information with students. A professor’s initial teaching model is typically born from that of their own professors, and they begin teaching as they were taught (McQuiggan, 2012). Professors also acquire values and assumptions about teaching from the basis of their Adventist Christian worldview—their “set of convictions about how reality functions and how they should live” (Pearcey, 2004, p. 23) which forms their fundamental belief system about the community and society in which they live. A professor’s teaching model is furthermore influenced by the institution they are hired to teach in; its mission, vision, and values and how those are carried out in its daily life.

In a recent survey of current faculty at Southern, 51% of the 94 professors responding said their initial teaching style was most influenced by the way their professors had taught them. This was more than triple the next highest influencer; when 17% indicated they modeled their teaching after techniques learned in College/University teaching methods courses or student teaching experiences. (See Appendix A for survey findings)

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Why Change?

The new millennium seemed to be a marking point in time where the influx in technology brought major changes to life as we know it. Institutions of higher learning were not immune, but in fact pressured to also change the way they do business. As business and careers change, higher education must also change to stay relevant and current not only to attract students, but to also retain them. With the growth of fully online institutions and now most colleges and universities offering online components, the competition for students is increasing, and consumer expectations and demand are driving many of the changes. Faith-based institutions of higher learning are facing the same reality. They are having to rethink how they do education and why their brand of education is different and better than not only other secular institutions but also other faith-based institutions. Identifying these changes is critical to how one will adapt to meet the new needs of faculty and students.

Shortly after the beginning of the new millennium and these multitudes of changes, a major study was done with the members of the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education, the oldest and largest professional association of faculty development scholars and practitioners in higher education. The study goal was to isolate the forces of change, the key challenges and stressors facing faculty members, and what POD sees as the impending new directions for the field of faculty professional development. The respondent's comments centered around three areas of change: the impact of the changing professoriate, the increasingly diverse student body, and the changing model of teaching and learning (Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, and Beach, 2006). The next section will take a closer look at each challenge and the role professional development teams can do to help.

The Changing Professorate

The first and one of the most cited and important challenges facing professors is the expanding role of faculty on campus. Professors are in the middle of the transformational changes taking place both to their traditional roles of classroom teaching and to the changes happening in the institution surrounding them. Many new faculty are coming on campus due to the retirement of a large number of veteran professors. Because new faculty are learning so much when coming in to a new university, they may not be ready to learn more about teaching. Instead, they may need to initially focus on survival skills such as policies and procedures of the new university, how to advise and reach students, and fit into new surroundings.

Universities are beginning to experience financial shortcomings due to the economic downfall at the end of the first millennial decade. They are having to restructure budgets; and faculty costs are being carefully scrutinized looking for new ways of doing education. Consequently, many institutions are hiring adjunct professors to not only achieve budget savings but also to respond to the changing interests of students and to bring students a closer connection to the real world workplace.

The professorial modifications have meant pressure is intensifying for existing faculty on campus, bringing stressors upon them to keep up with the changes taking place in the workplace their students will be entering. Remember, fluctuations in the workplace will likely bring new specialties in their fields of study and will surely require faculty to learn the new technical skills of an increasingly technological workplace. These then expand the role of the professor as they must, too, think about new directions in teaching as many are expected to design and offer online courses, and engage in more interdisciplinary team teaching. Finding balance in all this is of utmost importance.

Professional development teams in Adventist institutions of higher education have their work cut out for them to assist professors in finding the balance necessary to maintain a balanced personal lifestyle. These teams need to provide resources for professors to walk through institutional expectations of preparing and teaching courses from a syllabus based on a biblical foundation, understanding who their students are, providing students with feedback and assessment plans as well as to understand appropriate and necessary institutional and departmental policies and practices. Professional development staff must learn and follow best practices of professional development to carry out such an overwhelmingly complicated task.

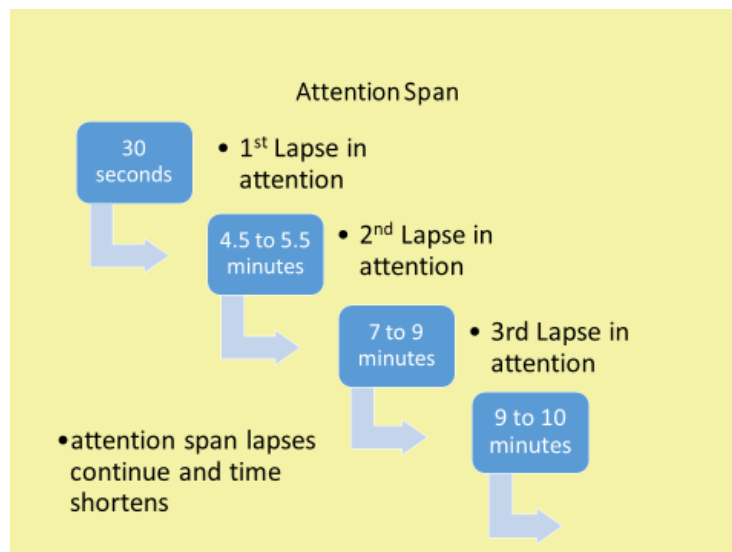
The Changing Student Body

The second challenge to address is the change of the make-up of the student body being taught whether on or off campus. Changes in the millennial generation have been documented from the beginning of the century. They have been, “frequently characterized as having deep understanding of, and appreciation for, technology and social connectedness. This generation of learners has also been molded by a unique set of cultural influences that are essential for ...educators to consider in all aspects of their teaching, including curriculum design, student assessment, and interactions between faculty and learners” (Roberts, Newman, & Schwartzstein, 2012).

However, the majority of millennials are in the final stages of collegiate life and will soon be replaced by the following generation, “Generation Z” or “The Founders”, as they have been tagged, who also bring additional changes to the student body. In April of 2015, Time Magazine reported on the differences found with Generation Z students. They quoted a specialist who said, “Their brains are wired differently” and that as they move into their college years, it is becoming apparent just how they differ from previous cohorts (Levit, 2015). Levit also noted that Generation Z now accounts for more than one-fourth of the United States population. (Ford, 2015).

“Generation Z consists of students born between the mid-1990s and 2010, and learn differently because of their exposure to technology. These students have also been brought up differently and like Millennials, they are forcing professors to re-think how we present our material.

“Generation Z students may have shorter attention spans that are more easily engaged by changing approaches often. ... These students will not tolerate the “sage on the stage” form of teaching and connect more easily to...professors as facilitators or guides. They are highly capable of self-directed learning and critical thinking but only when they feel what they are learning is important or valuable. They prefer active learning and a student centered learning environment. In the next five years, the most effective professors will be doing tasks right along with the students and showing them that it is OK to make mistakes” (Ford, 2015).



When employers began cutting back jobs, after the financial crisis of 2008, more students began entering higher education for initial degrees as well as retraining to meet the emerging new workplace requirements. The enrolled group of new students became larger and more diverse. Diversity not only in the typical areas such as race, gender, and ethnicity, but correspondingly in educational background and preparation for the scholarly work required by higher education professors.

Millennial students have different characteristics than previous generations; and those coming to Adventist institutions of higher learning are compelling the institutions to change. Based on conversations with currently enrolled students, the authors learned these millennials are looking to be engaged and when they graduate, Adventist millennials want to be ready to meet the world head on, with their Adventist Christian worldview developed. They, like other millennials, want to come away with an understanding of how the scriptures apply to their vocation and calling. A Southern student explained the importance of “Relevant Religion” to his generation at Southern,

- “During my Student Association campaign, I chose to emphasize "Relevant Religion" because I wanted us students to practice our faith by reaching out to worship with students at nearby universities such as the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Lee University, and Covenant College. I felt that worshipping with these students would allow us to share our faith and affirm our beliefs by giving us more outlets for expression. I also would have liked us to expand our presence in the greater Chattanooga community and build more relationships across the city” (H. Palm, personal communication, May 11, 2016).

Professors in Adventist institutions must continually challenge students to choose the Lord and use their Adventist Christian worldview as the perspective from which to make decisions about their calling, career, and vocation.

Professors themselves must stay educated about the concept of generational differences because they are real. Effective teaching will necessitate an understanding and appreciation of the students’ backgrounds, interests, and brain-based learning preferences. However, specific challenges emerging from the changing student body can be addressed by professional development teams. Educating professors to the generational differences, increased student diversity, and the underprepared student is essential. Research in brain-based-learning implores professors to identify new teaching models that will help students who Have different ways of learning effectively.

Another area to be addressed by professional development teams is the large number of underprepared students who are now entering colleges and universities academically unprepared to meet the current course work in at least one key area of reading, writing, or mathematics. This brings great stress and pressure as faculty find they need to spend more time in class and out of class to accommodate and remediate students, and to institutions who may need to put into place additional fundamental courses in reading, writing, and/or mathematics.

An additional issue for professional development leaders to address is underscoring the changing student body and the faculty who try to teach them. Although many students may be underprepared and diverse, still many of them outperform their professors with their technical skills. The influx of social media platforms and communication technologies surely affect the classroom and expectations students have for faculty. What happens in the classroom needs to be significantly different from the lecture halls of the past.

What Makes Us Different?	Generation Z (Founders) 2000-2015?	Millennial 1984-2000	
	Multi-task with 5 screens	Multi-task with 2 screens	Gen X 1965-1980
	Focused on the future	Focused on the present	Boomer 1946 -1964
	Create things	Share things	
	Communicate with images	Communicate with text	Silent 1928-1945
	Realists	Optimists	

The Changing Nature of Teaching

The changing environment for teaching and learning, is the third pressing challenge for faculty and institutions, a challenge booming with implications for professional development. For a while now the research has been advocating for more student engagement and active learning techniques to replace the lecture halls to which many faculty members were accustomed. Teaching and learning must change in all classrooms if we expect to keep students in our colleges and universities. There simply are too many options out there for students to choose from. Professors no longer have the option of thinking students will just need to adapt to the copious reading and lecture halls professors are comfortable with and in the past may have worked.

Professorial fears that accompany learner-centered teaching must be dealt with. These fears include not being able to cover the amount of content and not having as much control over the lesson being presented. Professors also fear the integration of technology tools that students now have access to, are comfortable with, and expect to be integrated into the teaching and learning; whereas, they often lack sufficient personal technology expertise or even understanding of the technology.

Professors who experience these fears need to accept the challenge to change and must garner help to provide more active learning components to keep students engaged in their learning. Plus, they must learn how to allow students to have more control over the individual learning tasks while encouraging students to learn from each other as they reflect on their learning, organize the content, and summarize discussions using communication technologies and learning management systems (LMS). Professors need to be more focused on designing courses to meet the generational needs of the students at hand. This will include learning new methods to provide feedback to students throughout the semester. It is essential for professors to ask for feedback *from the students* as to how they are learning thus far, and how the professor can help facilitate learning better, as well as to provide specific feedback to *the students* on their progress in the course. Professional development teams can help faculty by featuring opportunities to showcase active learning and engagement techniques and offer guidance on how to adjust these techniques, evaluate the impending student data, and implement improvements in classroom teaching and learning practices.

Why don't they make these changes?

If the research on generational differences has been around since the late 1990's on how students need to be more engaged in the classroom, require more feedback, and how professors need to incorporate more active teaching techniques—why are these things still hard to find in many classrooms throughout higher education institutions? Why are we still even talking about lecture halls and how to get students to read their \$300 textbooks? It goes back to where we started—how professors learn to teach. Ollie Dreon described the situation precisely in his February, 2016 Blog, *The 8 BLOG, Educate, Collaborate, and Innovate*,



“We know that active learning works. But the inertia of teacher-centered instruction is overpowering. It’s the model that many instructors experienced as students and in which they were successful. These lived histories inform their pedagogical beliefs and impact the instructional strategies they employ and the instructional technologies they use” (Dreon, 2016).

While the research seems convincing, displacing the practice of lecturing is quite difficult. To change this inertia, professors need help coming from across the institution. A study done by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation identified only 8% of faculty felt academic administrators effectively supported changes in teaching (2015, FTI Consulting). Many report, larger teaching roles are the culprit, as discussed earlier. Professors don’t believe that administrators are supporting them with policies, infrastructure, and time to see, learn, and apply changes in teaching and student learning. In addition, when learning something new, professors always fear failure.

Professors have historically been considered the scholars and the “experts” on campus. Now, with so many changes, professors are experiencing several major opportunities for failure which may damage their perceived role as “expert.” These risks are impeding their growth with new strategies and methods.

Instructional innovation takes pedagogical risks—the risk of trying a new active learning strategy or technique and possibly having it be unsuccessful. No professor wants to be in front of the class trying something new and have it fail, leaving students wondering what that was all about or becoming even more confused as they study. The same goes for trying a new technological tool and having something not go right. In this case, the students may actually know more than the professor, and the professor may no longer be viewed as the “expert” because he does not know as much as the students. The professor’s colleagues are another major risk—often times an innovative professor might try something new only to hear concern from colleagues about the effectiveness of the active learning strategy, taking time away from content introduction thus watering down the curriculum or the rigor of the course.

Lost is the focus on student learning; now we find professors assisting students finding their calling, career, and vocation, helping them to develop their own Adventist Christian worldview from which to operate their lives from. But, it should be the most important part of what professors do. Academic administrators will go a long way to show faculty their support by hiring and supporting professional development staff whose role it is to help faculty understand and overcome their perceived risks of failing, and by helping them incorporate the research into practice. It will take transformational change in professors to affect real classroom change. It will take modeling, teaching, mentoring, and reflecting.

Transformational Teaching – must be a goal of professional development

This biblical approach to professional development is also supported by professional development research. Cranton & King’s research about adult learners confirm, “...generally (professors) learn their craft through *experience*, *modeling* themselves on others, and *reflecting* on their practice” (Cranton & King, 2003). Cranton and King go on to suggest that for professional growth to be *transformative*, professional development activities must be built around these approaches. The Center intentionally encourages professors to critically examine their teaching practices for transformative learning about teaching to take place. Once professors learn to reflect on their teaching they are ready to discuss professional knowledge with their colleagues and will develop more collaborate relationships with them. This will empower more faculty to feel comfortable and supported in making these changes.

Laura Desimone reported in the Kappan magazine that “knitting together the qualities of high-quality professional learning and evaluating the results can lead to improved student learning” (Desimone, 2011). This research has been validated by individual professor research studies at Southern when comparing their student results between semesters after choosing to implement new research based methods of teaching.

Christ as the Master Teacher

“Jesus was conscious of the importance of teaching by his words, and demonstrated in concrete terms the intangible realities which He was seeking to convey. He was aware of the content of His teaching and the capacities and understandings of His learners. Therefore, He employed different methods to teach His disciples” (Ninan, 2010).

Ellen White emphasized that not only was Jesus unquestionably an effective preacher and popular healer, He was also a master teacher. She called Jesus, “The best teacher the world has ever known” (White, 1894). “Throughout His teaching, Jesus emphasized the importance of knowing the truth and of developing an *experiential* knowledge of God” (Taylor, 2011). Intrinsic in the word experiential is that we must be *doing* something. Do it or experience it—students cannot just *know* it. “Now that you *know* these things, you will be

blessed if you *do* them” (Matthew 7:21, New Living Translation); and, “The Son of Man will soon come in the glory of His Father and with His angels to reward all people for what they have done” (Matthew 16:27, New Century Version).

We know thousands of men, women, and children of all ages flocked to see Christ, carefully listening to Christ’s every word. The lessons he taught spread like wild-fire and literally changed the world. “Show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me. For you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you” (Psalm 25: 4-5, New International Version). As we have indicated, this text highlights: *modeling* “show me”, *teaching* “teach me”, *mentoring* “guide me”, and *reflecting* “you are God my Savior—my hope is in you.” This Bible text portrays Jesus as The Master Teacher. Yes, this text is the biblical foundation for the Center; but as we look closer at Christ Jesus, we see evidences of how He incorporated these strategies while on earth. For faculty professional development to be successful, it must be built on this same biblical foundation.

Transformational Change



Model

We will find no greater model than Jesus Christ. He didn’t just teach on prayer, He modeled the prayer and often went off to pray. On the final night in the Garden of Gethsemane, prior to His arrest, Jesus modeled time and again how the disciples should be praying. Jesus didn’t just talk the talk, but He walked the walk. Professional development teams must also model what they want professors to teach. The PDS teams must use engagement and active learning techniques to motivate faculty with presentations. While teams can provide access and training for different ways of teaching and integrating technology, the reality is that unless we promote evidence-based conceptualizations of how students learn, these efforts won’t make much of an impact. Faculty must have good models to observe. The greatest lessons we teach come from our actions, not what we say. Professional development teams must show professors, through modeling, how to create classroom experiences of active teaching and learning, as well as how to live from an Adventist Christian worldview. They must simply *“practice what they preach.”*

Teach

As we look to imitate Jesus’ model of teaching, there are several noticeable characteristics which appear often. He was spontaneous, but adaptable and selective to meet individual needs. When the people came to Him, He was always about His Father’s business, but He adapted His message to His audience—the rich young ruler, the Samaritan woman, or when He taught His disciples. In every case, Jesus knew His message and could spontaneously adapt it to the learning needs of His audience, showing respect to the individual, finding words, object lessons, and even miracles to illustrate and teach the content He so wanted to get across.

Christ was original. He did not teach like the scribes and Pharisees before Him. He wasn’t tied to the methodology or even the content or traditions of the Old Testament. Even when He was 12 years old, His first recorded exchange with the teachers in the synagogue, people were in awe of His understanding and His ability to ask discerning questions (Luke 2:27, New International Version). Mark records a Sabbath when Jesus began to

teach in the synagogue, many who heard Him were astonished and asked, “Where did this Man get these ideas? What is this wisdom He has been given? And how can He perform such miracles?” (Mark 6:2, New International Version). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus frequently used the contrast: “You have heard it said ... but I say” (Matthew 5:21-48, New International Version). You can tell in these passages Jesus was not just lecturing, but garnering collaborative inquiry, teaching as much or more by deeds as by words to help His audience apply all that He taught.

Jesus was sensitive to the “absorption level” of His learners. Mark indicates that Christ taught only as much as His learners could understand, while John records that near the end of His ministry, Christ told His disciples, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now” (Mark 4:33 & John 16:12, English Standard Version). Each of these incidents is an indicator that Christ was observant of His context and attuned to the needs of His students.

Sarah Rose Cavanagh’s book *The Spark of Learning* is intended to “energize the college classroom with the science of emotion” (Dreon, 2017). According to Cavanagh, students’ emotional responses to classroom activities are based on their assessment of two critical factors: control and value. In a classroom environment, students must “feel in control of the activities and outcomes that are important to them” and that “the activity or material represents meaning or worth” (Cavanagh, 2016). This is true for the up-coming Generation Z students and it is certainly apropos to teaching professors. Professional development staff must be careful to teach in a way that professors clearly feel in control of their own expertise and their discipline content, and must believe that the activities they are learning have worth to their unique situation.

In planning professional development experiences, six principles that are seen in the example of the Master Teacher, and are “grounded in the literature and practice of adult education” (Lawler, 2003, p. 17) should be considered: Professional development should (a) create a climate in which participants feel respected; (b) encourage their active participation; (c) build on their experiences; (d) employ collaborative inquiry; (e) guide learning for immediate application; and (f) empower the participants through reflection and action based on their learning.

Mentor

Jesus imparted both knowledge and values through His words, yes, but also through His actions. He showed the woman at the well, and even more so His disciples, that the Kingdom of God was different than what the world had to offer. To mentor is the biblical format for passing on the faith from one generation to the next. It is shown as a relational learning process as demonstrated with this text:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, New International Version).

Perhaps even greater examples of the relational aspect of being a mentor can be found in Psalms and Hebrews; “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you” (Psalm 32:8, New International Version). “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10: 24-25, New International Version).

Ellen White tells us, the Holy Spirit brings the change.

“It is impossible for any of us by our own power or our own efforts to work this change in ourselves. It is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, which Jesus said He would send into the world, that changes our character into the image of Christ; and when this is accomplished, we reflect as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. That is, the character of the one who thus beholds Christ is so like His that one looking at him sees Christ's own character shining out as from a mirror. Imperceptibly to ourselves, we are changed day by day from our ways and will into the ways and will of Christ, into the loveliness of His character. Thus we grow up into Christ, and unconsciously reflect His image...” (White, 1995).

How important is it, that mentors give their mentees, the wisest of all counsel? How important is it, that we know these mentors are reflecting Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit? And how does this relate to today’s professional development? Generational research identifies one of the greatest needs is to make

connections and build relationships with those around you. These relationships allow true change to take place. Because the professor's role is of utmost importance to help students form an Adventist Christian worldview. From the Adventist Christian worldview the student builds knowledge and understanding from which to use as they choose how to respond to life's challenges. We, too, must remember that these same professors indicated they are primarily teaching from the examples of how they were taught. So, what if many of the inherited teaching practices our professors have identified as current practice, do not align with teaching from a biblical perspective or with effective strategies for teaching students in today's classroom? This is a real problem since in our own study, Southern professors most often got their advanced degrees from institutions that do not espouse our Seventh-day Adventist biblical beliefs. In fact, we know, most faculty did not even attend Bible-based institutions of higher education. Therefore, it becomes imperative that professional development be made available to professors to build their understanding of teaching from a biblical foundation while identifying and meeting the generational needs of the students.

Successful professional development programs should also include a variety of Godly Adventist mentors, those who are willing to put in the time necessary to build effective relationships where the exchange of ideas is mutual. There are a variety of ways in which this could happen. One-to-one mentoring is tried and true, when proper resources are allocated, such as time, and opportunity. But relationships can also be built with blended and online delivery formats.

“Consider the following example where ‘reverse mentoring,’ in which newer, more technologically savvy faculty members assist and work collaboratively with the senior faculty. In fact, during the first two to five years of a new faculty member's career, the junior member and the senior faculty have experiences from which all can benefit. The senior faculty can orient the junior faculty member to the institution's traditions, cultural norms, practices, and unique history, whereas the junior faculty member can introduce the senior faculty to new pedagogical approaches, emerging technologies, instructional tools, and delivery models” (Diaz, V., Garrett, P.B., Kinley, & Kohrman, P., E.R., Moore, J. F., Schwartz, C.M., 2009).

Professors are like students with similar needs and constraints. Mentoring programs can be built around these constraints and provide valuable, current, “just-in-time” teaching/mentoring opportunities via communication technologies such as FaceTime, Skype, or even a cell phone. In all the mentoring opportunities, demonstrable best practices should be in the forefront and they must address the variety of roles held by professors.

Reflect

Taking time to reflect is the final, but often neglected best practice technique recommended for use in professional development, and is essential for transformative change to take place. A Bible example is found in the story of Enoch.

“It was through constant conflict and simple faith that Enoch walked with God. He realized that God is ‘a very present help in trouble.’ ...Constantly his meditations were upon the goodness, the perfection, the loveliness, of the divine character. His conversation was upon heavenly things; he trained his mind to run in this channel. As he looked to Jesus, he became changed into the glorious image of his Lord, and his countenance was lighted up with the glory that shines from the face of Christ” (White, E., ST, October 12, 1904).

The focus is on Jesus. After three short years mentoring the disciples, had Jesus done enough? Would Christ's examples of going off by Himself to reflect upon His calling, the will of His Father, and upon the events of the day, be enough to model the importance and power of reflection to make the transformational changes that would be necessary to bring others to His Heavenly Father? Would the disciples know what to do and how to be the witnesses, the teachers, God needed them to become? What would they do first? They would reflect.

“As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief. As they called to remembrance the words that Christ had spoken to them before His death they understood more fully their meaning. Truths which had passed from their memory were again brought to their minds, and these they repeated to one another. They reproached themselves for their misapprehension of the Saviour. Like a procession, scene after scene of His wonderful life passed before them. As they meditated upon His pure, holy life they felt that no toil

would be too hard, no sacrifice too great, if only they could bear witness in their lives to the loveliness of Christ's character (White, E., Acts of the Apostles, 36).

Jack Mezirow is considered to be the modern foundational specialist on the role of reflection to transform learning. He stated,

“To make ‘meaning’ means to make sense of an experience, we make an interpretation of it. When we subsequently use this interpretation to guide decision-making or action, then making ‘meaning’ becomes ‘learning’. Reflection enables us to correct distortions in our beliefs and errors in problem-solving” (Mezirow, 2000).

Professional development staff should introduce, model, and provide opportunities for professors to take the time to do critical reflection during professional development events. When professional developers engage professors in discussion about teaching experiences and their thoughts and questions during the process the reflective practice, it can lead to thought-provoking discourse and the creation of new understanding. The goal is for professors to continue using reflection to help interpret their teaching and learning experiences independently to make meaning and lead to individual transformative change.

Conclusion

Other biblical passages confirm the importance of the biblical principles from Psalm 25:4-5: model, teach, mentor, and reflect. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 21:11 that the wise man gains knowledge from instruction. It is important to discern or reflect upon instruction and seek knowledge from those who are wiser and more knowing. The wise professor will incorporate the instruction given to him and be mentored by seasoned professors, thus building his knowledge base; “The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out” (Proverbs 18:15, New International Version).

Paul also shares this view, writing, “Now follow the example of the correct teaching I gave you, and let the faith and love of Christ Jesus be your model” (2 Timothy 1:13, Common English Version). Paul continues on with the importance of following a good model when he says in 2 Timothy 3:14, “Keep on being faithful to what you were taught and to what you believed. After all, you know who taught you these things.”

All of these passages tell us that professors must be taught with effective active teaching and learning techniques, so they can then model them in their own teaching. After each lesson they must take time to reflect, and be mentored as they implement new techniques in their individual classrooms. The question arises, will professional development be successful; will it be transformational if these steps are put into place in a university setting?

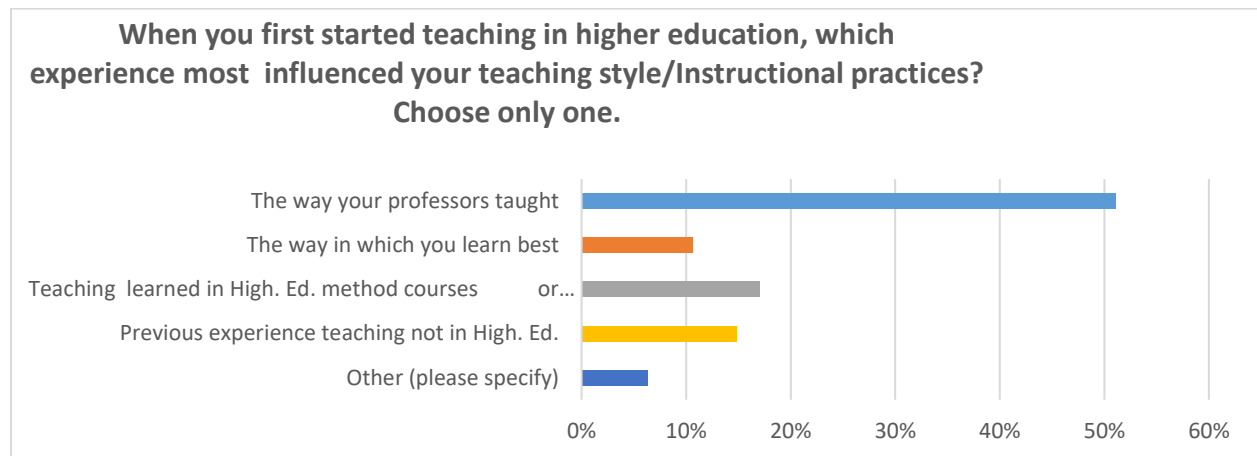
Colleen Flaherty (2016) shares two of the newest studies on the effects of faculty professional development activities. She reports for Inside Higher Ed.com that professors can learn to become more effective teachers. These studies report that, broadly speaking, faculty development can have a measurable impact on teaching and consequently student learning. The research confirms that faculty consistently self-report learning gains aligned with professional development goals at the end of the experiences. Faculty can demonstrate that they can look back at past development opportunities and describe changes in their teaching aligned with the goals of the professional development experience. The researchers say that their analysis of the professors' syllabi, assignments, methods and grading scales backs up those claims as does a review of student work.

More importantly, the studies indicate professors who amass a more extensive professional development history, show measurably larger changes in their teaching than faculty whose participation is slight. Furthermore, it can be shown that what institutions value, and enact in various professional development opportunities— powerfully advance student learning when coupled with assessment or follow-through (Flaherty, 2016).

Through carefully structured professional development activities, faculty in Adventist institutions of higher learning can recognize and probe current teaching assumptions and analyze the outcomes of choices made and actions taken. It is only when professors bring to mind these assumptions, critically question them, and reflect upon the outcomes, that they can allow themselves to open up to alternative and transformative techniques of teaching. The authors believe true transformative learning will take place through the continuous cycle outlined in Psalm 25: model, teach, mentor, and reflect. Learning is a process and will become more natural when a self-reflective learner examines the model, practices the teaching techniques modeled, is mentored through professional development opportunities based on an Adventist Christian worldview, and finally reflects on outcomes with an open mind to the change process. Once begun, this cycle needs to be repeated, for a professor to reflect lifelong learning leading to a transformational change in the classroom.

Appendix A

When you first started teaching in higher education, which experience most influenced your teaching style/Instructional practices? Choose only one.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
The way your professors taught	51%	48
The way in which you learn best	11%	10
Teaching learned in High. Ed. method courses or student teaching experiences	17%	16
Previous experience teaching not in High. Ed.	15%	14
Other (please specify)	6%	6
Answered Question		94



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