

EXPLORING LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NON-ADVENTIST STUDENTS IN AN ADVENTIST ACADEMY

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Abstract

Adventist education is influenced by a philosophy that presents God as the Creator and sustainer of the Universe. Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL) as the basic tool for implementing a Christ-centered curriculum has received a lot of attention in literature. However, regardless of the fact that there are students of different faiths in Adventist schools, not much attention is paid to their perceptions of IFL. The behaviorist theories, humanistic theories, and the social and cultural theories emphasize the observance of human needs for effective learning. This case study was conducted in Cavite, Philippines, through interviews and observation of four non-Adventist students and two teachers in an Adventist Academy. The results and recommendations of this study may help equip Adventist teachers and administrators with effective strategies of IFL. The interviews and observations proved that there is an effective IFL in the academy. The strategies used are potent enough to positively impact the non-Adventists toward adopting Christian standards of living.

Keywords

Integration of faith and learning, Adventist education, non-Adventist students, Adventist Academy

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INTRODUCTION

Adventist institutions are meant to be evangelism centers. The purpose of Adventist education is to provide a training that result in a God-fearing human being with sound morals and correct deportment that guide the mental discipline (White, 1968). The educational system of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is founded upon a God-centered worldview. Biblical principles that prove God to be real; the source of truth, the source of knowledge, the creator, and the sustainer of the Universe is the basis of the Adventist worldview (Knight, 2006).

The origin of the Adventist beliefs advocates for the integration of faith and learning (IFL) in the Adventist curriculum. IFL purposes at internalizing biblical values on students and a view of knowledge toward a Christ-centered destiny (Rasi, 2000). Taylor (2001) provides effective strategies for practical implementation of IFL in the entire school. A lot of research has been done on the definition and strategies for implementing IFL. However, experiences of non-Adventist students in Adventist schools have received minimal to no attention. There is a high chance that non-Adventists students may be actually feeling neglected and have no voice in anything related to such institutions. The results of this exploration of non-Adventists experiences of IFL may guide teachers and administrators in venturing into strategies that will consider the perceptions of non-Adventist students. The Adventist church as a responsible authority of the schools may also lead in addressing the needs of both Adventists and non-Adventists.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

IFL comes as a direct response to Ellen White's advocacy for an education system conducted on Christian principles (White, 1968). According to White (1952), Adventist institutions are centers of evangelism. The duty of the school and the schoolteacher is to reach out to the non-Adventists in the school. It is, therefore,

imperative to mention that as the schools indulge in the IFL with an intention of winning souls, experiences of non-Adventists must be taken into serious consideration. The goal is to win not lose them.

Definition of IFL

Definition of IFL is key toward providing strategies and directing its implementation. Grasping the correct definition of IFL may help direct implementation in schools. If Adventist schools and individual Christian educators can grasp the correct definition of IFL, implementation will not be a problem. According to White (1968), IFL begins with the reformation of the teacher. A reformed teacher will stick to a curriculum that witnesses Christ in and outside the classroom with the intention of drawing the students to Christ. IFL therefore defined from a Biblical perspective will mean Christian service in and outside of the classroom.

Rasi (1993) defines IFL as a deliberate Biblical approach to the educational system. The definition clearly shows the presence of Christ in the curriculum. However, the fact that Rasi (1993) says it is deliberately done leaves out the aspect of the unintentional integration. According to White (1952), Christian teachers must be transformed and be endowed with the Holy Spirit if they are to effectively present Christ in their classrooms. The transformed teacher therefore integrates faith and learning intentionally and unintentionally. The teacher's way of life; dressing, talking, eating, and all aspects of his/her life presents Christ even before teaching academic subjects. Rasi (1993) therefore partly addresses IFL definition by not addressing the unintentional aspects of IFL.

Thomas (2012) defines IFL from an evangelistic perspective. The author claims that IFL seeks to convert people to a particular faith. According to Thomas (2012) IFL in Adventist schools is targeted at the non-Adventist students. However, White (1952) in

affirming IFL asserts that Christian education must be redemptive, aiming at restoring the image of God in a human being. The redemptive aspect of education applies to all students, Adventist, and non-Adventist: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Thomas (2012) also defines IFL not in full but partly. The part that he addresses is however critical in IFL. Adventist schools enroll both Adventists and non-Adventists. It is therefore the duty of the school and the teacher to make sure that the non-Adventists are evangelized to through IFL. However, it is important to address their experiences of IFL in order to reach out to them successfully.

Both definitions although leaving out some important aspects, they are a part of the whole. The accurate and full definition can be derived from the first school—the Garden of Eden. The relationship between God as the teacher, His students Adam and Eve, and the environment of Eden as the school was meant to exalt God as the Creator. IFL was maintaining a good relationship between the Creator and mankind (White, 1952). White (1952) mentions that even after the fall education has not changed its purpose—glorifying God the Creator. Therefore, IFL can be defined as a way of introducing God the Creator and acknowledging His creatorship through all aspects of learning and teaching. It is of paramount importance to consider the experiences of those of different faith in IFL to avoid losing them in the process. It is, therefore, imperative to conclude by saying IFL implies to all school activities that point students to Christ whether deliberately or not deliberately performed.

Purpose of IFL

The definition of IFL zeros the purpose at presenting Christ and helping the students to develop a sound relationship with God; and according to Chapman et al. (2014), this relationship develops a Christ-like character. White (1968) states that the purpose of Christian education is to preserve the students from temptations

and immorality. It is imperative to state that IFL distinguishes Christian education from secular education. It is meant to lead the students to Christ and guide them in holding on to values and beliefs that are Christ-centered; even after leaving school. Thomas (2012) defines IFL from an evangelistic perspective by saying IFL purposes at directing students to Christ and accepting Him as their personal savior. White (1952) affirms Thomas' (2012) definition by stating that Christian education must be redemptive and restore the image of God in human beings. Christian institutions are therefore supposed to be evangelical centers where students are pointed to Christ. It is important to state at this point that a Christian school that does not reflect Christ in all its endeavors has lost its identity (Taylor, 2000). The reflection of Christ must be seen everywhere including the teachers' characters (White, 1968). Hence, Thomas (2012) further states that the passing on of the teachers' faith to the students is the goal of IFL. Teachers must be role models of faith by displaying good behavior and promoting a good conducive IFL atmosphere filled with love and care. Students must enjoy good relations with loving teachers and hence, they will adopt their faith. The faith of the teachers must be seen in their works if IFL goals are to be realized.

The two major goals of IFL as highlighted by Thomas (2012) are evangelical purposes as a way of attracting the non-Adventists to accepting Adventist beliefs. It is because of this goal that non-Adventist experiences must be considered in IFL. If ignored, a negative impact may result and the IFL may be a weapon to push them away instead of being a tool to bring them closer. It is of utmost importance to deliberately come up with more effective IFL strategies targeted at impacting non-Adventists positively.

The second goal is the revivalist goal meant to strengthen those who are already Adventists. Youlden (2012) suggests that peer influence can be a powerful medium of ministry. IFL therefore

nurtures those who are already Adventists; and if well-equipped, they can be an effective instrument to reach out to the non-Adventists. Thomas (2012) also states that the presentation of God in IFL must give students enough evidence to acknowledge Christ as their savior or to grow in Him. The purpose of IFL is in double fold; targets the non-Advents and at the same time aims at strengthening the Adventists both for the purpose of imparting values that build a Christ-like character.

Strategies of Implementing IFL

The divine purposes of IFL leaves the Adventist schools and teachers with no choice but to deeply engage in IFL not only theoretically but mostly practically. Rhee, Bollenbough, and Goetz (2015) state that IFL is more personal than theoretical. The personal experiences given in Rhee et al. (2015) suggest effective strategies of IFL that address the perceptions of non-Adventists successfully to the point of winning them to Christ. However, the shared experiences show some mind disturbances at the point of cultural change. Students of different faith experience a culture shock when they join Adventist schools. Rhee et al. (2015) state that Christian institutions must practice IFL in a way that establishes a Christian culture. If according to White (1952) students are treated with respect as the image of God, IFL should aim at addressing the lived experiences of non-Adventists.

Role modelling is one of the culture building strategies as mentioned in Rhee et al. (2015). According to White (1954), early years of the child is the crucial time in shaping the child to what he/she will be later in life. Christian schools must therefore consider the fact that non-Adventist students already have their own religions that have considerable diversity within them and mark the student's identity (Chapman et al., 2014). Chapman et al. (2014) further state that some people are so much into their religious faith that they feel uncomfortable acting in a way that "conflicts with their religious values" (p. 4). White (1954) also counsels against

destroying the will of the child. Each student's view on IFL must therefore be treated with respect. However, teachers must provoke thinking and discussions that lead students to understand the truth on their own (White, 1968). When they see the truth by themselves, they will want to put it into application; hence, they accept Christ and copy the modelled Christ-like behavior.

Connecting the books and the Book is another strategy that emphasizes the themes of the Bible in all academic subjects (Rhee et al., 2015). The subject matter must be integrated with creation, the fall, and redemption. I. Smith, K. Smith, and Bass (2011) describe IFL as spicing academic subjects with Christian ideas. Rhee et al. (2015) further state that there is a need to search for effective integration theories and put them into practice. Therefore, IFL needs to be sought for and implemented intentionally by coming up with appropriate effective strategies and putting them into practice; thereby pointing students to Christ in all subject matter. It must also be pursued unintentionally by hiring teachers who will portray the image of Christ in their way of life.

Smith et al. (2011) say that Adventist institutions must be centers where the whole being of students are trained to meet the needs of the world now and later in their life after school. The strategies for IFL must therefore have a permanent impact on the student. As the mind is developed intellectually, spiritual growth must also be emphasized. The fruits of integration must be seen through the ripe products—the prosperous young men and women who are useful citizens (White, 1952). However, the goal of Christian education can be significantly achieved by the willing engagement of non-Adventist students in IFL leading to them accepting Christ as their personal Savior and living a changed life. That can only be achieved if IFL strategies are deliberately planned to attract a positive reception from non-Adventist students.

Theoretical Framework

The behaviorist's perspective is that behavior is learned. The purpose of Adventist education, according to White (1952), is to shape behavior. Behavior can be changed by providing a controlled environment (Knight, 2006). IFL advocates for a controlled environment that effectively reflects Christ in Adventist institutions as a way of teaching good behavior. Such an environment filled with love and care needs to accommodate those of different faiths toward the acceptance of Adventist beliefs.

Ivan Pavlov's classical conditioning demonstrates that learning can take place subconsciously (Zhang, Zena, Priimagi, & Ikkala, 2020). A perfect IFL environment is defined by the communication of academic content based on theological foundations (Nworie, 2016). Consequently, the academic aspect of the school and the spiritual aspect are inseparable. Therefore, non-Adventist students may subconsciously be inclined to Adventist teachings, when in fact the transformation must be by choice.

Burrhus Frederic Skinner's operant conditioning asserts that human beings learn to behave in certain ways if there is a positive reinforcement or punishment (Akpan, 2020). Hence, non-Adventist students in Adventist schools may seem to be complying with Adventist teachings only because of positive reinforcement or fear of punishment; and not necessarily because they are being transformed. That means they are enduring the process of IFL, not necessarily enjoying their transformation.

IFL purposes for human development (Wilkerson, 2015). The humanistic theories emphasize the importance of giving students a sense of control over their lives (Tulasi & Rao, 2021). Students must not feel forced to change their faith. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs highlights that students learn and develop best when their safety and security are assured (Tulasi & Rao, 2021); and they feel well cared for. Exploring lived experiences of non-Adventists studying in Adventist schools ensures that IFL is done in such a way that does not threaten the security and safety of

non-Adventist students but encourages them to evaluate themselves and their beliefs toward transformation.

IFL encourages respect for other people's cultures, even though they contradict Adventist beliefs. The socio-cultural learning theory stipulates that people of different cultures and social backgrounds have different ways of learning (Scott, 2013). Cultural sensitivity in teaching Christ may help achieve the goals of IFL. When teachers are aware of the lived experiences of non-Adventists in Adventist schools, they will use appropriate pedagogies for effective IFL, which will reach out to non-Adventist students in a positive way.

Adventist education must be based on a curriculum influenced by a philosophy that is centered on Christ (White, 1952). It is therefore the purpose of Adventist schools to change lives and influence behavior by the IFL. According to Knight (2006), Christ must be traced in all activities and places around Adventist institutions. Christian education is characterized by some process that assists teachers to help their students find God (Larson & Larson, 1992). The problem is that while getting fully engaged in IFL, the experiences of non-Adventist students are ignored.

METHODOLOGY

This case study used qualitative approach to allow in-depth data collection. Non-Adventist experiences on IFL have not been explored, hence, exploratory research was the most relevant (Creswell, 2012). As a way of enhancing understanding of the contexts, a case study was used as a research design (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). An academy was identified for data collection. Sampling was done from this academy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to:

1. Find out how teachers implemented IFL.
2. Establish the effectiveness of IFL in impacting non-Adventist students' lives.
3. Explore the IFL experiences of non-Adventists.
4. Identify better strategies of IFL that can be employed to give non-Adventists a better encounter with God.

Research Questions

As a way of addressing the issue of the non-Adventist students' perceptions of IFL, this study intended to answer the following questions:

1. How do teachers implement faith and learning?
2. How effective is integration of faith and learning in impacting non-Adventist students' lives?
3. How do non-Adventist students experience IFL?
4. How can IFL be improved to give non-Adventist students a better encounter with God?

Methods

Purposive sampling was used as a sampling technique since the targeted group of participants was already specified by the research phenomenon. Data was collected by conducting interviews with the participants and also by doing classroom observations to maximize the gathering of behavioral data. The collected data was then analyzed to draw conclusions and come up with recommendations. The flexibility of the qualitative approach helped gather a wide scope of data from the participants to inform sound conclusions and recommendations.

Tools

The use of an exploratory case study helped gather adequate and relevant information from the exploration of the central phenomenon from a carefully selected setting. Case study allowed the

use of interviews, observations, and documents. The use of two or more research instruments helps maximize the collection of adequate data which when triangulated will result in well reinforced and legitimate conclusions (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). The triangulation table as shown in appendix C helped to consolidate the research questions with the research tools for informed findings and recommendations. Conclusions were then made from the analyzed data.

Participants of the Study

According to Wa-Mbaleka (2016), a research study must be situated in a clear setting. This case study was carried in an Adventist academy in Cavite province in the Philippines. The international aspect of the academy allowed for a wide range of perspectives from different nationalities. Different religions represented from different countries also provided for different views of IFL resulting in data rich in variety and content. Snowball sampling was also employed using two participants who helped identify other participants who were non-Adventists. One student and a teacher were used to recruit other participants who were non-Adventists (Creswell, 2012). Out of the seven non-Adventist students identified at the academy, only four were engaged as participants for the study. Two Adventist teachers were also engaged as participants, the teachers' perceptions helped interpret the students' experiences.

As a way of trying to enrich the collected data with variety; maximum variation sampling was employed. According to Creswell (2012) maximum variation sampling involves the selection of participants with different characteristics. This study explored non-Adventist views of IFL, hence, the age variety was needed for the depth of the findings; participants were picked from different grade levels. The nationality variety also contributed to the scope

of the findings; students from different nationalities were selected, and finally the difference in religions provided an important diversity in the findings, students of different religions were deliberately selected.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began as soon as the interviews started. The simultaneous data collection and analysis helped notice the saturation point (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and hence, prevented waste of time by collecting data that would have been later discarded. The interviews were transcribed, and the triangulation of the different sources helped guide the analysis using the Taba strategy. Codes were highlighted as the data was being analyzed; and from the codes categories were established leading to themes that informed the discussion (Creswell, 2012).

The discussion of themes then led to the drawing of conclusions toward informed recommendations. The flexibility of the qualitative approach helped gather a wide scope of data from the participants to inform sound conclusions and recommendations (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The gathering of a lot of data with the use of different instruments ensured the accessing of all the required information that meaningfully addresses the research questions with the anticipation of providing solutions to the problem. A wide pool of meaningful data also guaranteed a meaningful analysis; rich in codes, categories, and themes that contributed to the construction of meaningful findings and conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

This study was done with careful examination of ethical standards. Entry permission was sought for by a personal visit to the academy. Salmons (2014) emphasizes verification of the participants' age. Since some of the participants were minors, parental consent was sought for. The assent forms (see appendix D) were

sent to the parents through the students for their approval. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study as well as steps involved before signing the consent forms (see appendix D). Appendix D is a combination of the assent for the parents and the consent of the students.

Participants participated voluntarily in this study. Appendix E shows a consent form that was sent to the teachers soliciting their participation in data collection. According to Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier (2013) it is the duty of the researcher to protect the population as a way of preserving integrity of the participants as well as for the research. Therefore, privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of the participants was observed as of prime supremacy. The interviews were conducted in places comfortable enough for both the interviewer and the interviewee for free expression of views and thoughts. Creswell (2012) suggests the use of codes as an aid for observing privacy of each participant in reporting the findings, thus, pseudo names were used for reporting results. After transcribing, all the interviews were deleted, and observation check lists were destroyed.

RESULTS

The presentation of results followed the four different themes that were developed basing on the categories that appeared most frequently in the collected data. The four themes included: IFL Strategies, Experiences of non-Adventists, Impact of IFL on non-Adventists, and Recommendations for IFL. The themes were a result of an improved wide range of initial codes and categories that were developed from the raw data.

Theme # 1: IFL Strategies

The teacher participants were asked to elaborate on the strategies they use for IFL. The teachers' responses were categorized

into; cooperative learning, maintenance of safe environment, ornamental strategies, modeling of good behavior, and relating topics taught to biblical texts and stories. These five categories formulated from the data were merged to form theme # 1. Both teachers mentioned the employment of cooperative learning structures for the effective implementation of IFL. They both stated that cooperative learning promotes a Christian spirit amongst the students. Several cooperative learning structures and techniques were mentioned. However, both mentioned the effectiveness of *four corners* in ensuring maximum participation as all students share their reasons for the choices made.

Promotion of a Christian environment was also mentioned by the teachers as a way of making students feel comfortable. Teacher 2 in responding to strategies he uses actually said, *"It's not only teaching, it's the environment itself."* Amongst other aspects that promote a good environment is the kindness of the teachers that was mentioned by all the four student participants. Student 1 stated that *"the environment is clean, nice, and safe, people are kind here."* Teacher 1 mentioned the use of scriptural decorations in the classroom as a way of emphasizing the biblical themes that she follows with each, and every topic she teaches. Teachers also model a loving Christian behavior. Student 2 when asked about her teacher said, *"She is nice and very good."* Both teacher's interviews and the observation highlighted a lot of integration through relating taught topics in the subject matter to biblical texts and stories.

Theme # 2: Impact of IFL on non-Adventists

The interview responses had a positive reflection on impact of IFL on students. The responses were then arranged into the following categories resulting in theme # 2; joys of learning about a caring God, acceptance of God as the creator of human beings, change in behavior, making connections of spiritual aspects and

daily life. The students and teachers' responses all zeroed to these categories as evidence of impact of IFL on non-Adventist students.

Students were asked how learning about God is affecting their lives. Upon responding to this question student 1 and student 2 both mentioned that the lessons about God help them face life challenges and joys knowing that God cares. Student 1 actually mentioned that, *"Learning about God helps me to get through bad times and good times."* Student 3 said, *"First time I knew God I was really surprised because in my country many people say that people come from miracles and I believed that, but here they say Jesus made people and I was interested in that."* He now knows there is a God who created people. Student 4 actually said when he becomes a parent, he will send his children to Adventist schools because he knows that if he was not in an Adventist school his behavior would not be the same.

Teacher 1 emphasized the change of behavior in students as a good indicator of impact of IFL. Both teachers confirmed that there is much impact on the students because when making connections in their lessons the teacher cannot differentiate answers for non-Adventist students from those of Adventist students. Teacher 2 expressed a lot of joy in the way his non-Adventist students make connections and how they make their personal reflections in journal feedbacks, he said, *"Honestly sometimes when they give their answers and I compare them with Adventist students answers I cannot tell the difference."* A good indicator of the impact of IFL and the acceptance of Adventist teachings. In the observation all students were happily participating. Both students and teachers are showing that IFL has a positive impact on students, hence, the strategies used are effective in impacting non-Adventist students.

Theme # 3: Experiences of non-Adventist students

Theme # 3 was formulated from the following categories: safe and conducive environment, good teacher-student and student-student relationships, good Bible teachings, and willingness to stay on. All the four student participants expressed much joy by being part of the academy. They all mentioned that it is a good place to be, and they are enjoying their stay.

Asked what they like most about the academy, they all said it is safe, there is no bullying, and they are happy. Student 4 actually said when he joined the academy it was a trial and error after having had bad experiences from the previous school and now, he is enjoying, and he feels safe. Student 3 when asked about the relations between teachers and students said, *“Teachers are kind and very helpful here compared to my former school.”* On the same note student 4 said *“teachers are really, really good and helpful, both teachers and students treat me like one of their own, they are awesome.”*

Students were also asked what they enjoy most, and Student 2 said he enjoys the teachings at the academy. Student 4 also mentioned that *“in other schools there is something missing in the teaching of the Bible and here I am enjoying the Bible teachings.”* All students mentioned that they want to stay on, they are enjoying every bit of the academy life. During the observation students seemed to be enjoying the lesson, they were all attentive and participating throughout the lesson regardless of being early graders. All students indicated that they have very good experiences of IFL at the academy all four were asked if they want to stay on and they all confirmed that they want to stay on because they are happy.

Theme # 4: Recommendations for IFL improvement

The final theme constituting of recommendations and areas of improvement suggested by the participants was formulated from two categories: IFL textbooks and IFL skills training. Students

expressed all joys. Asked what they need improved, they all said all is good they are happy. However, the teachers felt they are still not yet there, there is a need for more considerations.

Teacher 1 said as much as most is done there is a need for more textbooks with IFL, sometimes it is not easy in some subjects like math to integrate some topics without guidance. Upon responding to challenges, she faces in IFL she said, *“I find some challenges especially in teaching math (laughs). Because sometimes it’s hard to integrate.”* Teacher 2 also stated that much is done but there is a need to improve in the intentional integration for a more effective implementation. He said, *“Because for some of us it comes out naturally, but we need to be more intentional.”* Teacher 1 also mentioned that she improved her skills of implementing IFL after taking a course in IFL, hence, there is a need for teachers to take such courses for more effective and intentional IFL implementation. The responses on recommendations indicate that the academy embraces IFL a lot. The non-Adventist students’ expressions of happiness in an environment bound by Adventist doctrines also show that the academy is engaged in much IFL that is giving non-Adventist students a better encounter with God.

DISCUSSIONS

The themes generated from the interviews and observation data can all be zeroed on one main concept—effective implementation of IFL. The goals of IFL as a guide for this study were all elaborated both in the literature review and in the data collected. The literature review did not indicate any study on the central phenomenon of this study. However, the concern was to find out how non-Adventist students experience IFL. According to Knight (2006), biblical perspective must be the foundation and the context of all that is done. Christian schools must reflect Christ and preach God the creator in all aspects. Student 4 who transferred

from a non-Adventist school acknowledged the teaching of Christ in all subjects. When asked why he chose the academy, he said they agreed with his parents that other Christian schools that are not Adventist have little knowledge about the Bible. He confirmed that at the academy God is taught in all subjects. Asked how he feels learning about God in all subjects he said it is just like teaching God in different perspectives. In his final remarks he said, “*So far my experience here is becoming really, really good.*”

Taylor (2001) suggests strategies for implementing IFL in all aspects of the school. Participants indicated that the school environment—which the author classifies under contextual strategies, is promoted by good relations, and they feel safe and comfortable. The teacher participants also stated the ornamental strategies, as a deliberate way of IFL with scriptural wall decorations (Taylor, 2001). All the student participants also mentioned that their teachers and other students are kind and helpful. Student participants are appearing to be having good experiences with IFL, thus, interrelation and personal IFL strategies classified as experiential strategies in Taylor (2001) are being observed, and they are making a positive impact.

Teacher 2 mentioned that as an Adventist and having gone through Adventist systems IFL comes naturally when teaching. White (1952) encourages the engagement of teachers who are reformed in Adventist schools. Taylor (2001) also states the exemplary strategy as one of the illustrative strategies of IFL. Hence, the engagement of teachers who are called to serve results in the effective implementation of IFL. The good behavior and acts of love come naturally from the teacher, and as a result, the students feel loved and appreciated. When they feel part of the system like most of the student participants said, they tend to comply and accept the teachings. Student 2 asked about her experiences and how she feels in an Adventist academy, she said, “*I don’t feel like I am non-Adventist.*” Student 4, when asked what he likes most about the school, he mentioned that he likes the teachings.

Students tend to imitate teachers, hence, the good IFL atmosphere around the school.

Reviewed literature also revealed that IFL purposes at connecting the books and the Book (Rhee et al., 2015). Subject matter in all subjects must be connected to Christ. Teacher 2 stated that he provokes discussions in his science classes by telling the students that the devil sometimes hijacks what is meant for the good and turns it to evil. Such discussions prepare students to face the confusion of the great controversy. Hence, even the non-Adventists by being involved get impacted and get to learn of the truth. This study as it explored the lived experiences of non-Adventist was meant to help teachers come up with more effective strategies that will give non-Adventists a better encounter with God. Results show that all participants were happy and positively impacted by IFL.

IFL emphasizes holistic education as an important aspect of true education (White, 1952). The students are developed in all aspects of life; spiritually, mentally, socially, and physically. According to Pazmino (2008), heredity has a significant influence in the makeup of a person. Different people have different biblical perspectives dependent on what they inherited from their parents. Students in any given school come from different backgrounds and hence, different beliefs. Non-Adventist students in Adventist schools are no exception. IFL is meant to be structured in such a way that will address their inherited beliefs in a loving and accommodative way. Pazmino (2008) says, “persons have intrinsic dignity and are worth of respect and love” (p. 224). If Adventist education is to conquer the inherited beliefs of non-Adventists, it is therefore of paramount importance to respect their dignity by using IFL strategies that address their perspectives respectfully.

Pazmino (2008) provides Integration Developmental Concept that suggests approaches to be used in dealing with the inherited nature. He suggests that experiences have the power of changing the inherited nature. The same experiences will then produce tendencies that determine the behavior and the character of the person. As White (1952) states, if education is to draw students to Christ, it is important to provide an environment that reflects Christ. Pazmino (2008) further states that experiences can direct learning, and learning leads the learner to maturity. It is important to note that a truly Christian environment will provide Christian experiences resulting in Christian maturity. Adventist schools should therefore purpose at reflecting Christ in all aspects, environmentally, relationally, academically, personally, theoretically, and practically, pure IFL (Taylor, 2001). By so doing the inherited beliefs can be successfully addressed.

CONCLUSIONS

All participants expressed feelings of being content. They all struggled to state challenges they met at the academy and none of them mentioned any challenges. The terminology they used to express how happy they were, did indicate that there is indeed true and effective implementation of IFL.

The responses from the interviews were covering John Wesley Taylor's strategies of IFL. The contextual strategies were mentioned by students when they said the environment is friendly and safe. Teacher 1 also mentioned the scriptural wall hangers. The illustrative strategies were mentioned by teacher 2, he said he teaches faith not about faith; meaning he lives what he teaches, and it comes naturally. Teacher 1 said she uses biblical themes for her topics taught—conceptual strategies. The students also confirmed that God is taught in different perspectives in different subject matter. Good relations amongst teachers and students confirmed experiential strategies.

There were no prior preparations for the class that was observed. The teacher was just invitational saying she is ready. The observation proved that IFL is a daily exercise practiced at the academy. The degree of integration explained the joy all the student participants were showing. The academy was fully engaged in the IFL, not because of the call for duty but because of personal calling to serve. Hence, the results show that the planting of the seed is effectively done as mentioned by teacher 2 and the anticipated harvest is good. The fruits of integration must be seen through the ripe products—the prosperous young men and women who are useful citizens (White, 1952). The positive impact of IFL is evident. Hence, true IFL will always show positive results. Reference to the findings of this study may guide all Christian educationists and institutions in implementing IFL in a way that meets the goals of true education.

Basing on the results of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. There is a need for in-house training for teachers on the implementation of IFL in the classroom.
2. Adventist stakeholders need to invest in IFL materials like textbooks.

Further research may be done to explore:

1. The effect of IFL and its impact on racism in Adventist International Schools.
2. Teachers' worldviews and their impact on implementation of IFL in Adventist schools.
3. Teachers' level of education and its impact on IFL implementation in Adventist schools.
4. Lived experiences of students of color in Adventist schools.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide for Students

I am Tembinkosi Sibanda (Ph.D). I will be asking questions as part of my data collection for a study entitled, “Exploration of lived experiences of non-Adventists in an Adventist Academy.” Privacy and confidentiality will be observed through this interview and the entire study. I will therefore make sure your name does not appear anywhere in the study and this interview will not be discussed anywhere else except as a source of my findings that will guide the improvement of IFL strategies toward making it more inclusive to non-Adventists.

Any questions before we start?

1. How did you decide to come to study at this academy?
2. How do you like it here at this academy?
3. What do you like most about this academy?
4. How do you feel learning about God in your classes?
5. How has learning about God affected your life?
6. Anything else you want to share?

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide for Teachers

I am Tembinkosi Sibanda (PhD). I will be asking questions as part of my data collection for a study entitled, “Exploration of lived experiences of non-Adventists in an Adventist Academy.” Privacy and confidentiality will be observed through this interview and the entire study. I will therefore make sure your name does not appear anywhere in the study and this interview will not be discussed anywhere else except as a source of my findings that will guide the improvement of IFL strategies towards making it more inclusive to non-Adventists.

Any questions before we start?

1. How do you integrate faith and learning in your practice?
2. What challenges do you meet in IFL?
3. What are the joys of IFL?
4. How do you cater for non-Adventists in your practice?
5. How would you generally describe the impact of IFL on non-Adventist students in the academy?
6. Is there anything that you see needs to be changed in the implementation of IFL in the current curriculum and instructional practices?

APPENDIX C

Triangular Matrix

Questions	Inter-views	Docu-ments	Observa-tions	Comments
RQ1	√	√	√	Both teachers and student # 4
RQ2	√		√	All participants
RQ3	√			All participants
RQ4	√		√	Both teachers
RQ5	√	√	√	Students only
RQ6	√			All participants

Note: The check marks tally each research question with the data collection instrument that addresses the question.

APPENDIX D

Informed Assent Form for Parents

My name is Tembinkosi Sibanda. I am doing a research on the exploration of the lived experiences of non-Adventist students in Adventist academies in Cavite province. Through your permission I would like to engage your child as one of my participants in my study by interviewing him/her. I am exploring lived experiences of non-Adventist students in an Adventist academy. I will therefore be asking questions pertaining to their perceptions of faith and learning as part of my data collection procedures. I am soliciting voluntary participation from your child through your permission. It is estimated that participation in this study will take no more than 45mins of their time.

Please be advised that your child's confidentiality will be always preserved. The names and all other confidential details will not be revealed; neither will I discuss their opinions with anyone else. If you are willing to allow your child to participate in this study after having clearly understood what is involved in the study, please indicate your response by check marking and signing below.

() I allow my child _____ to be a participant in this study.

Signatures: Parent _____ Child _____

Date _____

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form for Teachers

My name is Tembinkosi Sibanda. I am doing a research on the exploration of lived experiences of non-Adventist students in Adventist Academies. Through your permission I would like to take your time asking questions and discussing your experiences on the integration of faith and learning. I have some questions to ask pertaining to how you implement and perceive the integration of faith and learning as far as non-Adventist students are concerned as part of my data collection procedures. I am soliciting voluntary participation from you. It is estimated that participation in this study will take no more than 45mins of your time. Please be advised that your confidentiality will be preserved at all times. Your name and all other confidential details will not be revealed; neither will I discuss your opinions with anyone else. If you are willing to participate in this study after having clearly understood what is involved in the study, please indicate your response by check marking and signing below.

() I agree to be a participant in this study.

Signature _____

Date _____