

Institute for Christian Learning
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

**THE ADVENTIST CONCEPT OF WORK EDUCATION:
ITS IMPLEMENTATION
AT HIROSHIMA ADVENTIST ACADEMY, JAPAN**

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Prepared for the
33rd International Faith and Learning Seminar
held at
Helderberg College, South Africa
January 30-February 11, 2005

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Seventh-day Adventist philosophy and history of education are closely linked to manual labor. Ever since the church opened its first institution of higher education at Battle Creek in 1874, Seventh-day Adventist educators stressed the importance of manual work even as they pressed on the road to excellence in academic studies, spiritual, moral and social development. One of the founders of the Adventist Church and the architect of its philosophy of education, Ellen G. White, summarized the central, grounding principle of Adventist education. “True education means more than the perusal of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come” (Ed. 14).¹

This statement focuses on certain fundamental principles that should govern Adventist concept of education. (1) True education is a concentrated perusal of a course of study, but it is more than that. (2) It prepares the student for the challenge and the duty of life here. (3) It must also prepare the student for the whole period of existence open before human beings; that is to say, education is a concern of both now and the hereafter, both time and eternity. (4) To accomplish this objective, education must deal with the whole being—physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of a person. (5) This multi-dimensional development must be harmonious—

¹ The book reference is abbreviated. The full reference is given in the bibliography.

that is to say, all dimensions must receive equal attention, without exclusion of any and with cooperative development of all. (6) Only when these five principles are fully understood and followed can the purpose of true education will be achieved: that is, preparation of students for “the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.”

The significant point to note in this foundational statement on education is the word “harmonious.” Ellen White places the physical first, to be followed by the mental and the spiritual. Not that physical is more important than others, but it is as equal as the others. Indeed one could construct a pyramid and place the physical at the bottom, with the mind above it, and the spiritual at the apex. Such a construction would suggest that we cannot achieve the highest goal of spiritual development if we neglect the basic physical development. The apostle Paul spoke of the importance of caring for the physical in a different, spiritual tone: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3:16, 17)

Thus the development and care of the physical is a Scriptural imperative. Almost all the philosophies of the world have recognized this in one way or the other. Hindus have their yoga. The Buddhists have their control of the bodily impulses. The Greeks talked in terms of athletics. Modern education places much emphasis on gymnasium, related exercises and physical fitness. But the uniqueness of Adventist emphasis of physical development is not in any of the above, not even in all of the above. It is to be found in linking physical development with academic and spiritual growth, and that physical dimension is further linked to useful work. While gymnastics, exercises, swimming and other sports do have a place in the cocurricular activities of a school,

they do not necessarily make up the physical dimension of education that Ellen White proposed and Adventist church embraced. The Adventist philosophy of physical development is grounded on useful work, leading to the learning of a skill, developing a purpose in life. Again to quote Ellen White: “Useful manual labor is a part of the gospel plan. The Great Teacher, enshrouded in the pillar of cloud, gave directions to Israel that every youth should be taught some line of useful employment. Therefore it was the custom of the Jews, the wealthy as well as the poorer classes, to teach their sons and daughters some useful trade, so that, should adverse circumstances arise, they would not be dependent upon others, but would be able to provide for their own necessities. They might be instructed in literary lines, but they must also be trained to some craft. This was deemed an indispensable part of their education” (CT 307).

Thus the principle of work education is a non-negotiable must in the over all philosophy of Adventist education. Adventists held on to this principle through out the world, especially wherever they started a boarding school, until fairly recently. In recent times more and more schools and colleges have neglected work education for various reasons, including the increasing cost of student labor, the inefficiency of school-operated industries, labor union requirements, social stigma on manual labor in some countries, etc. However, this does not mean that the principle itself is inoperative and inefficient.

This essay intends to present the biblical principles of work education, importance of work education and its components as defined by Ellen White and then present a study of how this concept is practiced in the Hiroshima Saniku Gakuin (Hiroshima Adventist Academy) in Japan. Without any apology, this presentation will contain a large amount of quotations from Ellen White, as these are necessary to inculcate in the minds of teachers and educational

administrators the importance of work education.

Biblical principles of moral education

Today work, particularly physical work, is considered as one of toil, weariness, and hardship. In fact in many countries, the type of work defines the social status of the individual. But this was not the case in the beginning when God created this world. God Himself sanctified work by creating the universe. Even before human worked, God worked. When God created Adam and Eve, He commanded them to work, to till the soil, to live by the fruits of their labor (Genesis 2:15). Thus physical work is not a result of sin; it is God's creative gift to Adam and Eve. Even as God created and worked the various components of the universe, He commanded His created beings to become partners with Him—to share the gift of work, the gift of creating within their human limitations.

When God issued the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, the fourth commandment sanctified both the need for labor and the need for rest to honor God. Work is thus recognized as the integral part of human life (Ex. 20:9). When Israel moved from slavery to freedom, work without meaning characterized the former and work with celebration marked the later. Hence in the promised land, work was celebrated through the feast of the tabernacles. The school of the prophets, founded by Samuel and nourished by Elisha, integrated both prophetic living and physical training (2 Kings 6:1-7). Physical work is foundational to life and health (Prov. 21:5). Both prophets Ezekiel and Amos condemned idleness and lack of physical work as responsible for many personal and social ills.

Jesus, the Creator, began His incarnate life with hard work. Until He was 30 years old, He worked as a carpenter, learnt self-discipline through hard work, understood the meaning of

toil and restlessness of the humanity He came to save, and became like one of us. “Jesus lived in a peasant’s home, and faithfully and cheerfully acted His part in bearing the burdens of the household. He had been the Commander of heaven, and angels had delighted to fulfill His word; now He was a willing servant, a loving, obedient son. He learned a trade, and with His own hands worked in the carpenter’s shop with Joseph. In the simple garb of a common laborer He walked the streets of the little town, going to and returning from His humble work” (DA 71).

As His disciples, He called men who worked—fishermen, tax collector, common men of varied toils. Thus He showed respect for work. He announced that He and His Father are active in working for the redemption of the world (John 5:17). The apostle Paul, a great scholar, was by profession a tent maker, who by personal example showed that mental and academic greatness is not enough; one should be able to support oneself by labor, and so he wrote to Ephesians to be productive in their labors and waste not one’s time (Eph. 4:28). The book of Revelation pictures the end of sin and the establishment of the new heaven and the new earth, where the redeemed will engage in fruitful work. The new earth would be a place of fruitful and fulfilling activity: “They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit” (Isa. 65:21). The new earth would be no place to sit through all eternity strumming a golden harp, or to float around on little white clouds, or to lead an ethereal, vaporized existence of a disembodied spirit. No, the new earth will be a real place with satisfying activity open to the saints. New Jerusalem itself will pulsate with a life of work (Rev. 22:1-5). The river of the water of life. The tree of life with twelve kinds of fruits, an yield a month. The leaves of the tree for the health of the inhabitants. What grander picture can we have on God’s concept of work.

The importance of work education

Work education begins with childhood. Many societies have an inborn bias against manual labor. A kind of caste division breeds contempt for physical work. When children are brought up in homes that have such contempt, they cannot but grow without appreciation for the usefulness of learning a work skill. “When the child is old enough to be sent to school, the teacher should co-operate with the parents, and manual training should be continued as part of the school studies. There are many students who object to this kind of work in the schools. They think useful employment, like learning a trade, degrading; but such have an incorrect idea of what constitutes true dignity”(CG 320).

Work education should be a part of school program. Adventist schools often do not have a work program because of one excuse or the other, ranging from economic difficulties to scheduling problems. However, when properly administered the money and efforts invested in such programs would yield benefits that would contribute to the all-round development of the pupil. “The benefit of manual training is needed also by professional men. A man may have a brilliant mind; he may be quick to catch ideas; his knowledge and skill may secure for him admission to his chosen calling; yet he may still be far from possessing a fitness for its duties. An education derived chiefly from books leads to superficial thinking. Practical work encourages close observation and independent thought. Rightly performed, it tends to develop that practical wisdom which we call common sense. It develops ability to plan and execute, strengthens courage and perseverance, and calls for the exercise of tact and skill” (Ed 220).

Work education promotes dignity of labor. “Notwithstanding all that has been said and written concerning the dignity of labor, the feeling prevails that it is degrading. Young men are anxious to become teachers, clerks, merchants, physicians, lawyers, or to occupy some other position that does not require physical toil. Young women shun housework and seek an education in other lines. These need to learn that no man or woman is degraded by honest toil. That which degrades is idleness and selfish dependence” (Ed 215).

Work education promotes mental health. “Youth who are kept in school, and confined to close study, cannot have sound health. Mental effort without corresponding physical exercise, calls an undue proportion of blood to the brain, and thus the circulation is unbalanced. The brain has too much blood, while the extremities have too little. The hours of study and recreation should be carefully regulated, and a portion of the time should be spent in physical labor. When the habits of students in eating and drinking, dressing and sleeping are in accordance with physical law, they can obtain an education without sacrificing health. The lesson must be often repeated, and pressed home to the conscience, that education will be of little value if there is no physical strength to use it after it is gained” (FE 146).

Work education trains better administrators. It instills in future administrators the ability for close observation, independent thought, courage and perseverance, and tact and skills. These are the talents that make up a good administrator. Says White: “The benefit of manual training is needed also by professional men. A man may have a brilliant mind; he may be quick to catch ideas; his knowledge and skill may secure for him admission to his chosen calling; yet he may still be far from possessing a fitness for its duties. An education derived chiefly from books leads to superficial thinking. Practical work encourages close observation and independent

thought. Rightly performed, it tends to develop that practical wisdom which we call common sense. It develops ability to plan and execute, strengthens courage and perseverance, and calls for the exercise of tact and skill” (Ed 220)

Work education promotes spiritual health and builds character. Ellen White argues that work education properly conducted in our schools will develop in students a feeling of satisfaction, a sense of helpfulness and an “approval of conscience for duty well done (CT 308). Work program also aids in promoting a spirit of self-reliance, habits of industry, shielding from undesirable effects of idleness (PP 601). “There is room within her [nature’s] vast boundaries for schools to be established where grounds can be cleared and land cultivated. This work is essential to the education most favorable to spiritual advancement; for nature's voice is the voice of Christ, teaching us innumerable lessons of love and power and submission and perseverance” (6T 178).

Work education trains properly in missionary work. “Missionaries will be much more influential among the people if they are able to teach the inexperienced how to labor according to the best methods and to produce the best results. They will thus be able to demonstrate that missionaries can become industrial educators, and this kind of instruction will be appreciated especially where means are limited. A much smaller fund will be required to sustain such missionaries, because, combined with their studies, they have put to the very best use their physical powers in practical labor; and wherever they may go all they have gained in this line will give them vantage ground” (6T 176-177).

Work education teaches the value of time and its management. Where proper work education is practiced, students learn the value of time, the meaning of efficiency, the need for

systematic approach to life's labors, craftsmanship and thoroughness in whatever is done. "One great reason why physical toil is looked down on is the slipshod, unthinking way in which it is so often performed. It is done from necessity, not from choice. The worker puts no heart into it, and he neither preserves self-respect nor wins the respect of others. Manual training should correct this error. It should develop habits of accuracy and thoroughness. Pupils should learn tact and system; they should learn to economize time and to make every move count. They should not only be taught the best methods, but be inspired with ambition constantly to improve. Let it be their aim to make their work as nearly perfect as human brains and hands can make it" (Ed 222).

Work education promotes purity and firmness. "It was God's purpose to alleviate by toil the evil brought into the world by man's disobedience. By toil the temptations of Satan might be made ineffectual and the tide of evil stayed. And though attended with anxiety, weariness, and pain, labor is still a source of happiness and development, and a safeguard against temptation. Its discipline places a check on self-indulgence and promotes industry, purity, and firmness. Thus it becomes a part of God's great plan for our recovery from the Fall" (CT 274).

Components of work education

What should work education consist of? While sky is the limit for including as many components as possible, the issue will be largely governed by the economic and industrial potential of the school. Ellen White, however, argues for certain indispensable components. These do not necessarily involve a large amount of funds, but it is possible to have them on both small and large campuses, and they will succeed in providing the basic building blocks of physical and character development.

Agriculture. Almost all the time wherever Ellen White speaks about manual labor in

schools agriculture occupies her foremost attention. Perhaps that is because agriculture is the first occupation God gave to human beings. Untainted by sin, agriculture had its beginning in Eden; and when sin is removed, agriculture in all its beauty and glory will reappear in the new earth.

“They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them” (Is. 65:22, 23).

“Working the soil is one of the best kinds of employment, calling the muscles into action and resting the mind. Study in agricultural lines should be the A, B, and C of the education given in our schools. This is the very first work that should be entered upon. Our schools should not depend upon imported produce, for grain and vegetables, and the fruits so essential to health. Our youth need an education in felling trees and tilling the soil as well as in literary lines. Different teachers should be appointed to oversee a number of students in their work and should work with them” (6T 180).

Vocational training. Before the students leave the school, they should be trained in some vocation or skill that will provide them with an alternative to mental occupation. Today’s psychology shows the truthfulness of what Ellen White told long ago. A successful person will not spend all his or her time in one line of work alone; variety and alternative occupation is true form of relaxation and recreation. Hence White counsels that our schools should promote a variety of vocational opportunities for students. “Various industries should be carried on in our schools. The industrial instruction given should include the keeping of accounts, carpentry, and all that is comprehended in farming. Preparation should be made for the teaching of

blacksmithing, painting, shoemaking, and for cooking, baking, washing, mending, typewriting, and printing. Every power at our command is to be brought into this training work, that students may go forth well equipped for the duties of practical life” (CT 310).

Cooking. While educators today may laugh at or ridicule the need for teaching cooking as part of work education in schools. But Ellen White had a longer vision which was both practical and religious. “Both young men and young women should be taught how to cook economically, and to dispense with everything in the line of flesh food. Let no encouragement be given to the preparation of dishes which are composed in any degree of flesh food; for this is pointing to the darkness and ignorance of Egypt, rather than to the purity of health reform.

“Women especially should learn how to cook. What part of the education of a girl is so important as this? Whatever may be her circumstances in life, here is knowledge that she may put to practical use. It is a branch of education which has a most direct influence upon health and happiness. There is practical religion in a loaf of good bread” (CT 313).

Training in everyday duties. Work education need not be limited to agriculture and technical skills. Education, White defined, must prepare a person for every day life. From flower arrangements to dress making, from cultivating an atmosphere of cleanliness to making the home a comfortable place to be are all part of practical education. “ Many of the branches of study that consume the student's time are not essential to usefulness or happiness; but it is essential for every youth to have a thorough acquaintance with everyday duties. If need be, a young woman can dispense with a knowledge of French and algebra, or even of the piano; but it is indispensable that she learn to make good bread, to fashion neatly-fitting garments, and to perform efficiently the many duties that pertain to homemaking” (Ed 216).

Hiroshima Saniku Gakuin: a case study in work education

Hiroshima Saniku Gakuin is one of the leading secondary schools in Japan. Located in the outskirts of the city that was vaporized by the first atomic explosion, the city stands as a symbol of peace and newness. Near the heart of the city there is another great symbol of eternal hope: the Seventh-day Adventist secondary school, dedicated to train the young people in the city and surrounding communities so that they can grow up to be useful and productive citizens with characters rooted in the essentials of faith and learning that takes place within the halls of that institution. The school is a boarding institution. In 2005, the enrollment numbers three hundred (300). It has forty-four (44) Adventist teachers and eighteen (18) Adventist staff. Thirty-six (36)% students are Adventists. For many years, one important element of those essentials was missing in the school's program. But recently, the administrators and owners of that institution—the Japan Union-- decided to restore that missing ingredients of excellence: work education with integration of faith and learning. Here is the basic outline of what is happening in the Hiroshima secondary school:

1. The school follows the government curriculum on the traditional subjects taught in the secondary school. These follow the syllabi set by the government. Teachers, however, are trained to integrate Christian faith and values in the subjects taught. A teacher-student bonding, a spiritual primacy, and a family atmosphere prevail in the school.

2. In addition to the traditional curriculum, the school has a strict religious education component which all students, both Adventist and nonAdventists, are required to take. The religious education focuses on Bible teaching, instilling in students the core values of Adventist life.

3. The third prominent component of education at Hiroshima Secondary School is the work education. All students are required to take part in the work program, regardless of whether they can afford to pay upfront the required fees for the total educational cost at the school. Work program is thus a compulsory part of school life for all students.

Work education at Hiroshima Academy

The work program at the school is well constructed, taking into account job availability, student readiness, and teacher participation. The following are some major pointers with regard to this part of education at Hiroshima Adventist Academy.

1. Public statement. The school in its bulletin and announcements publicly state its commitment to work education. It offers no apology, but insists that the school is owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and as part of the educational philosophy of the church, the school is committed to the “harmonious development of the physical, mental, and spiritual powers” of the child. While the “mental” is taken care of by well trained teachers in the classroom and the “spiritual” is taken care of by teacher-student relationships, faith and learning integration, and various spiritual activities on the campus, the physical is to be cared for by active promotion and participation of various kinds of manual work offered by 21 departments. The statement of philosophy on work is made known to parents and students before admission, and only after they commit themselves to the work program at school is admission granted.

2. Teacher participation. All teachers are expected to join the students in manual labor. No exception is allowed. The participation may include some supervision, but for the most part teachers work side by side with the students. This makes the student-teacher relationship strong and provides opportunity for developing friendship, for informal counseling, and for students to

confide in their teachers, and for teachers to learn more about their students.

3. *Minimum hours and pay.* Each student is required to work a minimum of eight hours a week, and no wages are paid for this minimum work. Needy students who choose to work above this minimum are paid 500 yen per hour, and the school provides sufficient work opportunity for all those who come from economically challenged homes.

4. *Choice of work.* For the work program to be successful, the school administration has realized that students should have the opportunity to choose from a variety of occupations. The school provides work in 21 departments including agriculture, wood work, iron work, horticulture, cafeteria, bakery, painting, construction, school affairs, and campus maintenance departments. Providing a choice offers an incentive for students to do what they enjoy the most. All the work on the campus from janitorial to office skills are mostly taken care of by students.

5. *Work education and career choice.* Not always the work students choose to do help them in their career choice. A janitor at school need not be a janitor after graduation, but the experience learnt at the school provides an advantageous addition on the students' curriculum vitae. Any employer who looks at such a curriculum vitae knows that here is a valuable potential worker who comes with an appreciation of the dignity of labor, and even if that person should choose to hold a managerial position, he or she would respect the employee holding the lowest position in the firm. One who learns the dignity of labor makes not only a good worker but also a good administrator and a good facilitator of inter-worker relationships.

6. *Training that students learn.* After a year or so of their involvement in manual work education, both students and their parents agreed that the education learnt at Hiroshima Adventist Academy is wholesome and much better than what was available in other schools primarily

because of the work program. Students agreed that the following are some of the values they have gained in work education: better health, strong bodies, vocational skills, occupational appreciation, dignity of all labor, team work, independent organization and execution of jobs, a sense of fulfillment, leadership, an appreciation for economic security, value of human and environmental resources, trust and honesty, value of time, and many more.

The result of active work education in Hiroshima Adventist Academy has placed the school on the educational map of Japan. Graduates of the school are perceived as better self-managers, dependable and hardworking. Character development is another outcome that is appreciated by the public that has seen the school at work. Truly, work education has changed this Adventist institution from simply a school of learning to an institution that develops the whole person who lives a responsible life, performs the task given with absolute integrity, and leads a wholesome life.

Conclusion

Work education may be seen by some as irrelevant waste of time. But anyone who subscribes to biblical priorities and Adventist philosophy of education as defined by Ellen White cannot subscribe to such a view. Just as faith is essential for the development of the spiritual life, just as development of academic skills are essential for the development of the mind, so is work education important for the development of the physical. The body, mind, and the soul become the objective of true education. Their harmonious development is one value that Adventist education cannot afford to neglect. Leave one out, we have an incomplete education. Have all three, and provide emphasis for all, we have a holistic education.