FEATURE

A Narrative Inquiry of an Adventist Educational Leader in Asia

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Abstract. *Adventist higher education has a great need of excellent leaders. This study describes the process of capturing the life story of an exemplary Adventist educational leader in Asia. It aims to present the essential details that led to an understanding of the leader's life experiences that inspire current and future Adventist leaders. The related literature on educational leadership was explored. The leadership emergence theory by Robert Clinton formed the theoretical framework, which extended to several related themes. The study was conducted using a narrative inquiry design with one purposefully selected participant. The data was collected through interviews, observations/shadowing, documents, and literature review. Reported here is the biographical sketch that is the initial product of a narrative inquiry. This biography results from restorying, a procedure used in narrative inquiry where the story is chronologically organized to the purpose of the research. The participant of this study applied his spiritual gifts and leadership skills that he obtained throughout his training in different fields of his work-life experiences. As a result, he made a vast contribution to the development of the institutions that he served. The recommendation of this study is that aspiring leaders should accept God's calling as it comes, regardless of the position, time, place, monetary benefits, or other things. This study is in line with leadership emergence theory, which argues that leadership development is a process; and leaders are made, not born.*

Keywords: career path, critical life events, influence of significant persons, leadership, leadership emergence theory, narrative inquiry

Introduction

Leadership is different than administration in a way that it relates itself to influencing a person or a group. According to Sharma and Jain (2013), "leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 310). Leaders have their attributes: beliefs, values, ethics, and character that affect their decision-making. In leadership, there are talents and abilities that one needs to develop to improve the likelihood of success at being an effective leader. Thus, there is a need for leadership growth (Maxwell, 2007). Leadership growth is a process. It may not look the same for everybody because people are different. However, every person needs to go through it; even those who think that they were born with a natural ability for leadership.

People have often failed to recognize the value and importance of good leadership (Cushing et al., 2003; Rasi, 1993). A general belief seems to exist that leadership is only for selected people. Thus, many a potential leader may lose opportunities that pass them by as they do not avail of the opportunities to learn to lead. Leadership is learned and is a process which spans the entire life of the person (Kjellstrom et al., 2020). Therefore, the importance of leadership development needs to be more widely known. Intentional ways of developing leadership must be in place (Schomburg, 2008) which includes leadership training even from childhood.

A general misconception of leadership exists with the idea that leadership is easy. However, leading people in the real world may not be easy. Many leaders struggle in their initial leadership positions in organizations. Leaders often are seen relying solely on their own efforts without realizing that their leadership skills can be learned and developed. Whether leaders are made or born as debated through the years (Boerma et al., 2017), leadership skills can be learned using various means such as self-study, education, training, and experience (Sharma & Jain, 2013). Leadership can be compared to a muscle: the more it is used, the stronger it gets.

The desire to learn and grow in the realm of leadership brings dividends. Such individuals develop competencies that make their leadership more effective as the years go on (Maxwell, 2011). This study presents a narrative of the life of an exemplary leader in Asia whose leadership skills show developmental growth, as supported by literature. Two research questions guided the study:

1. What enduring personal relationships and experiences in childhood and adolescence contributed to the development of the selected Adventist educational leader?

2. What significant professional relationships and experiences enhanced the development of the selected Adventist educational leader?

Literature Review

This study is supported by the leadership emergence theory by Robert Clinton. The leadership emergence theory points to how God works in developing people over their entire lifetime. Christian leaders undergo six developmental phases as their lives unfold (Clinton, 1989n). Those phases are named as follows: (a) sovereign foundations, (b) inner-life growth, (c) ministry maturing, (d) life maturing, (e) convergence, and (f) afterglow or celebration. These phases help assess how God works in leaders' lives if they become more attentive to His leading and give attention to important tasks. This theory is a useful tool to assess Christian leadership development.

Leadership is influencing followers to go beyond the call of duty, to contribute their all in achieving team goals (Jago, 1982). It is also defined as "getting people to commit to the mission, to take the hill, to be all they can be" (Hunter, 2004, p. 32). These definitions focus on four elements, which include process, influence, groups, and common goals (Northouse, 2016). Leadership involves interaction with people being led in order to achieve common goals (Emery et al., 2013). Therefore, it is evident that leaders naturally exert influence on a group in a better way. The operational definition of a leader we use for this study is the following: a leader is a principled and effective individual who exerts influence on a group of people toward the goal achievement.

Relationship and Experiences of Leaders

Leadership styles seek to explain how and why certain people become leaders. Some focus on the characteristics of leaders, while others try to identify the behaviors that people can adopt to improve their leadership abilities in different situations (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003). This section highlights leaders' journey to leadership: personal and professional relationships and experiences; professional relationships and experiences; and personal and professional challenges.

Personal relationships and experiences. Enduring personal relationships refer to the relationships that leaders may have as children and adolescents. These relationships may be with their parents (father and mother), siblings, relatives, and other important people outside of their families (Rosario, 2014). It may be true that the attitudes and skills witnessed in adulthood can be traced to the childhood of an individual (Maxwell, 2007; Padilla, 2005). According to Clinton (1989a), leaders emerge from some significant historical influences and personal events that happen in the family as well as the impact of the environment.

Influence of parents. According to White (1952), home is the heart of society. Society is composed of families. Families are composed of parents and children. Therefore, parents are the heads of homes. As heads of the home, parents have the responsibility to make society a good place to live in. Consequently, society's failure and success depend on the influence of the home (White, 1952).

Home-life affects children who are the future nation. So, one can see the absolute necessity in making homes a training ground that brings light and not darkness, godliness and not hedonism, and progression and not regression. Home is the beginning and the end of any future nation. A nation without proper home training is doomed to collapse (White, 1952).

Paternal and maternal characteristics influence the ideal leader-image in their children (Antonakis, 2012). In exploring the childhood of leaders, some studies have found that both parents greatly influenced leaders' growth and development. From the beginning of children's cognition, starting with the mother's caress and father's knee, parents play a big role in helping their children to become independent and explore their individuality (Brooks & Goldstein, 2001).

If parents rightly train up their children in any aspect of their children's lives, the Bible says that those children will never depart from the teachings of the parents. Maxwell (2007) stated three ways that parents become good leaders for their children: (a) by modeling because a good example is worth a thousand sermons and has more impact than any lecture that parents could give to their children; (b) by having the ability to discern the uniqueness of a child to teach him or her accordingly; and (c) by creating memories in the mind of the child in order to retain early experiences and embrace them later in life.

Influence of significant persons. There are a number of people who may play important roles in leaders' lives. Some of them may be family members, teachers, and even friends. Often, teachers impact the lives of their students for a wrong education, often starting in the mind (Knight, 2016). For example, most teens in high schools are not sure of what they can become; they often need outside support, which is best found in the school (Cafferky, 2016; Rosario, 2014; Thayer, 2018).

Among the portraits in leadership, Padilla (2005) states that leaders' childhood, adolescence, and formal education are important factors. Similarly, Lawrence (2006) also states several leaders who were shaped by significant persons in their childhood, adolescence, and formal education. Both Padilla (2005) and Lawrence (2006) present several school presidents who became leaders as the result of having good relationships and experiences with their teachers, colleagues, friends, and other leaders.

Critical life events. There are several ways that people learn in life; one is through critical events. Life events that happen in the life of leaders during their childhood or adolescence contribute to their leadership growth and development. Personal experiences play an important role in an individual's growth and development (Madsen, 2007). The childhood experiences of a person have an effect on his/her maturity. It is found that leaders may perform their professional roles better if they had a high sense of personal history (Madsen, 2007). A difficult childhood is often a reason for adults manifesting concern for others and maximizing their gifts to bring out the best in themselves.

Impact of the environment. Day to day, parents need to have a right conception of the life in which their children live. They should be aware of the influences and associations that should surround their family. It is the parents' duty to guide their children to the right friends, education, and environment (White, 1952). Every individual in the circle of companionship of young people impacts their lives. The problem is that the impact that comes from friendships will exert an influence for good or for evil. That is the reason why God's Word emphasizes developing the mind and cultivating the character traits of the young (Ellis & Elmendorf, 2018). The associations they maintain, the principles they follow, the habits they develop will be useful in this world and the next (White, 1952).

Professional relationships and experiences. Professional relationships and experiences that influence the development of leaders are educational backgrounds, career paths, mentors, and networking (Rosario, 2014). These professional relationships refer to those connections that leaders have formed with teachers and administrators in school, supervisors and colleagues in the workplace, mentors, and other leaders. Professional experiences refer to their educational background up to the postgraduate level and the career path, which includes the job assignments they had taken as they moved through the professional ladder (Rosario, 2014). Some details related to these two aspects are presented below.

Educational background. Teachers may influence students more easily, as they spend more time with students at school (Maxcy, 1991). The lessons, which draw the attention and affections away from the world and toward the foot of the cross, are the most vital lessons for teachers and students to learn (White, 1952). Being raised in a godly Christian home will help to generate a greater desire for children to seek out education that is fundamentally and principally grounded in Jesus Christ (White, 1952).

If the parents want to shape the character of their children, they have to consider not only their advice and counsel provided at home, but also to choose good schools for them (Knight, 2016). The point here is that Jesus will not change the character at His coming; the work of character shaping and molding is done as children grow. Their daily lives determine their destiny. Therefore, it is important for the parents to provide the best education for their children (Knight, 2016).

Career path. Anyone has the potential to lead if they get the right training and support (Rosario, 2014). Career path is a factor that impacts the professional development of leaders. The experiences of leaders in teaching and administration are indispensable in the effective discharge of their duties in becoming school leaders.

Methodology

A narrative inquiry is a research design that makes use of the first-person accounts of experiences or events told in story form (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It follows a methodological use of story. According to

Richardson (1995), narrative should be valued if we wish to understand the deepest and most universal of human experiences. Narrative studies describe people's experiences, which are expressed in their lived and told stories (Creswell, 2013). Narrative inquiry centers on the experiences of people. It takes into account people's experiences in their community or surroundings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

According to Creswell (2012), a narrative research study must meet the requirements for a qualitative research study. A researcher would do well to follow these guidelines when evaluating a study for quality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000):

1. The researcher maintains a focus on one subject.

2. The individual's life experiences are written in the study report as stories.

3. All relevant experiences are sequenced in order to make a comprehensive story with a beginning, middle, and closing act.

4. The study offers context in significant detail for the stories.

5. The study includes an analysis of themes derived from the story.

6. The researcher works with the participants to ensure accuracy, completeness, and approval of the story as it is converted into study-form.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

This study consists of only one participant. Purposive sampling was used in choosing which participant to research. Purposive sampling is the most sensible strategy for this research because it allows the freedom to choose someone who can provide rich information about the topic of this study (Creswell, 2008), one who is willing to collaborate with the researcher for a period of time actively, and one who is willing to give extensive and multiple types of information (Creswell, 2013).

In this study, the participant was selected based on certain characteristics (Patton, 2002). The participant had to meet the following criteria: (a) was born and raised in an Adventist family, (b) is an Adventist church member, (c) was educated in the Seventh-day Adventist school system, (d) has a positive view of the Seventh-day Adventist educational philosophy, with at least 30 years of experience working as an educational leader in Adventist schools in Asia, (e) served as president of an Adventist institution of higher education, (f) is willing to collaborate with the researcher for a long period of time, (g) is willing to share information needed for this study, (h) and demonstrated effective leadership with referent leadership qualities. The above criteria helped in the selection of an exemplary Adventist educational school leader for the current study. The participant was selected according to the predetermined criteria.

Data Collection

For data collection process, we discuss the data collection methods. The main research tool was a series of in-depth interviews. The primary author collected the data. Therefore, the description below of data collection is written from the perspective of the primary author. Observations and shadowing, and document analysis were supplementary tools. Here is a description of the research tools and the process of collecting data using each of these tools.

Interviews. Interviews help in getting crucial facts and enable researchers to understand the participant's perspective (Patton, 2002). Interviews helped to find out how the participant of this study interprets his world. Forming good interview questions (Merriam, 1998) was an important step in this process. Good interview questions are those that are directly related to the research questions (Merriam, 1998). The primary author conducted the interview and the descriptions below are a representation of the account through the five sets of major interviews conducted during this study. In the subsequent description, the personal pronoun "I" denotes the primary author.

During the interviews, I needed the help of a research assistant due to the massive data that was expected. I had one research assistant. He helped me in recording and videotaping all five interview sessions. To ensure that the participant was prepared to share his story, I sent him the interview guide by email prior to the scheduled interview times (Creswell, 2013). I conducted five sessions of face-to-face interviews, and several other pieces of information were collected through emails sent to the participant in order to cover the whole life story. The interview sessions were conducted at times and places preferred by the participant. Each session extended from 60 to 90 minutes. An audio recorder was used to record the interviews. As strong evidence and proof for the collaboration between the participant and researcher, video recording was also used to better record the conversation, emotions, and research setting. Interviews were transcribed as soon as they were completed.

Observation and shadowing. Shadowing is one way to observe a participant for qualitative research (McDonald, 2005) that enables researchers to gain an in-person understanding of how decisions and processes occur at a particular institution's daily operation in a distinct role (Bartkowiak-Theron & Sappey, 2012). This is direct observation where the researcher follows the participant—watching and listening—for a set length of time (McDonald, 2005). I shadowed the participant, an educational school leader, for two weeks. I had the chance to keep track of his actions and the circumstances in which he fulfilled his professional roles in the work place inside and outside his office during these days. I also observed the reactions prompted by his actions, comments, and meeting decisions and tried to make meaning of his intentions. I shadowed him in all school meetings that he was presiding or attending. With his permission, I was able to visit his home more than once necessary to obtain additional information.

Document analysis. Merriam (1998) suggests that a researcher can use data from documents in the same way as data coming from observations and interviews. I used several types of documents that served to supplement the data obtained through interviews and observations. The documents included the participant's official documents such as curriculum vitae, academic credentials, awards, certificates, and other related documents to get additional professional and academic information

Researcher Flexibility

The primary researcher has been a product of Adventist education, which created interest in educational leadership and effectiveness. This special interest led to taking up educational administration as an area of specialty in the author's doctoral studies. The secondary author has over four decades of educational experience, primarily in higher education. She teaches qualitative research courses and has guided several research students in their writing.

Ethical Considerations

The study employed the protocols for collecting the data ethically. Approvals were obtained from the authors' institutions, as well as from the participant. Informed consent took the form of process consent as it was an iterative process of data collection. Interviews were collected in safe environments as suggested by the participant. The participant agreed to have the name known and so the issue of anonymity did not arise in this study. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

Trustworthiness

This study employed the quality criteria of (a) credibility, (b) dependability, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was ensured through triangulation (data sources, theories, and researchers), member checking, and iterative interviewing, and pilot study. Dependability was established by providing a detailed description of the phenomenon. Confirmability was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and audit trail. Transferability is made possible through the detailed description of the context and participant's life as an educational leader.

Data Analysis

This section presents how the data was analyzed: narrative form. The chosen data analysis framework was that of Muccio et al. (2015), which they call metamorphosis. They propose that one way to analyze data in narrative inquiry is to (a) identify resonant metaphors and repetitive motifs and (b) get the emergent themes, which are the use of a thematic approach for the analysis of narrative

inquiry (Creswell, 2013). The data analysis presented here primarily reflects the steps for creating the biographical sketch of the participant.

These are the four steps that resulted in the biographical sketch. First, the transcripts of the interviews, observation and shadowing notes, and the documents were read through repeatedly until a good understanding of the data was obtained. Second, the significant words, phrases, and sentences in the data documents were highlighted. Third, codes were assigned to those significant words, phrases, and sentences. Fourth, the codes were grouped into larger units of meaning or themes.

After the data analysis, the next step was data representation (Muccio et al., 2015). Among the ways that are suggested is writing a participant's narrative called restorying (Creswell, 2013). Restorying is a process of reconstructing the narratives as told by the participant in a chronological sequence observing the elements of time, place, plot, and scene. The following is the result of this restorying in a biographical sketch of Dr. Stephen Guptill, the educational leader chosen as the participant for this narrative inquiry.

Biographical Sketch

This section is a prose narrative, a re-storying from the participant's interviews, official documents, and observations (Creswell, 2013). We present the story of Dr. Stephen Roscoe Guptill as his personal and professional narrative. We followed the procedure of data representation, as suggested by Muccio et al. (2015). This narrative is chronologically sequenced by observing the elements of time, place, plot, and scene (Creswell, 2013). The narrative includes family background, childhood relationships and experiences, adolescent years, educational experiences, and career paths that weaved together a tapestry of productive educational leadership outcomes.

Family Background

Dr. Guptill's grandparents were poor American citizens who lived in California. Their poverty stemmed from the American economic depression, which lasted from 1929 to 1939. He highlighted that his maternal grandparents had three children, two girls and one boy, of which the mother of Dr. Guptill was the second-born. Dr. Guptill's mother's family used to grow enough vegetables to feed the family plus a little more to sell. Furthermore, they had cows and chickens on their farm. Having their land made it easier for the family to survive during the economic depression.

Dr. Guptill's mother was 10 years old when her parents became Seventh-day Adventist church members. She was able to attend Seventh-day Adventist schools up to the college level. After high school, at about 19 years old, she got married; then, she became a dental assistant.

Dr. Guptill's paternal grandparents had financial setbacks during the American economic depression. They had no land of their own and rented a house to stay in. Furthermore, they had many children to take care of. Making and selling homemade candy was their family business. Children would go from door to door selling candies in order to earn money to buy food and pay school fees at the Adventist church school.

The father of Dr. Guptill was a working student at Lodi Academy in central California. Having to work in order to survive while he was still young made his father delay his studies. Dr. Guptill's father got married during his last year of college, right after his mother graduated from high school. His father was eight years older than his mother. Soon after their marriage, his father was drafted into the US Army during the Second World War.

During World War II, Dr. Guptill's father was taken to another state to serve in the army. After a few weeks, his mother moved to the place near where her husband was stationed. His father was able to visit his mother sometimes on weekends. Unfortunately, Dr. Guptill's father developed a severe case of the "valley fever" disease. He spent many months in the hospital. This was very hard on the newlywed couple. He was eventually discharged from the American army because of that health issue.

After the Second World War was finished, all the people who were drafted were given government grants to go to college. Dr. Guptill's father was also given that grant. That is the reason why – together with his wife – they moved to Pacific Union College (PUC) to finish up his degree in theology. During that time, Dr. Guptill's mother was pregnant with her first child.

Dr. Guptill's father graduated with a degree in theology, but he did not work as a pastor. He was shy to speak in public. Although he was a godly man, preaching was not his talent. He moved to La Sierra College, where he earned another degree in accounting. It was during that time that Dr. Guptill was born.

Childhood Relationship and Experiences

Dr. Guptill was born in Loma Linda, California, in 1948. His parents were both Seventh-day Adventist members. His father worked at Loma Linda Hospital in the accounting department, while his mother worked as a dental assistant at the Loma Linda School of Dentistry. He was the second child in the family with only one sibling. Dr. Guptill spent his childhood and adolescent years in the Loma Linda school environment.

Father, a solid example. Dr. Guptill was privileged to have a good relationship with his father right from an early age. The best words that he could use to define his father were "role model." His father did not criticize anybody in the church. He regularly gave offerings and tithe to the church. In addition, he was very careful about spending money. He was a leader by example in all his qualities.

Dr. Guptill described his father as a very devout Adventist. He was a church elder. He liked to read and share the word of God from the Bible texts and quotations from Ellen White, the Spirit of Prophecy. Dr. Guptill said, "I remember many times him sharing with me Bible texts and quotations from Ellen White that he felt would really enrich my experience."

Dr. Guptill considered his family middle class. He walked to and from school while his classmates, who were sons of medical students and physicians, were driven to school. Although his dad was very careful with funds, his mother was a bit free in her spending. Though strict with money, his dad was very generous in giving to the church. He made a systematic plan to try to help the church. Even in retirement, though living frugally, he contributed generously from his retirement pension every month, giving it to the church for God's work and mission. In that way, Dr. Guptill learned from his father the principles of philanthropy and the joy of giving.

Dr. Guptill's father often gave financial counsel to him and his new bride. "When Peggy [Dr. Guptill's wife] and I got married, my dad would often share with us, financial counsel. I remember him saying, 'Shun debt like death.'" He would also read to them from the Spirit of Prophecy about spiritual things. The wisdom that his dad shared with Dr. Guptill helped him throughout his entire life.

Financially, Peggy had a similar family background, sharing similar views on how to save and spend money wisely. Even though both had good jobs, they were frugal with their finances. Stewardship is one of the many that Dr. Guptill's father was able to pass down to him that had an impact on his later years.

A caring mother. Dr. Guptill had a very close relationship with his mother and enjoyed spending time with her. His mother opened his mind in several dimensions. She taught him how to appreciate a wide variety of things, including how to dress well. In this way, he learned how to be a distinguished and well-dressed individual. His mother taught him to appreciate beauty and fine things and understand that inner beauty is what matters the most in a person.

Dr. Guptill's mother continued to influence him in many areas of his life. For example, she taught him how to be a presentable person. She also passed on to him the spirit of commitment. Furthermore, knowing that his mother was always praying for him gave him the courage to face life. He and his mother were kindred spirits until her death at age 90.

An inspirational sister. Dr. Guptill has one sister whom he loves and adores. Like most siblings, Dr. Guptill and his sister disagreed and argued about normal childish things while growing up but have always loved and cared deeply for one another. His sister actually arranged a blind date for him when they were in the academy. She was dating someone at the time and they were going to the beach with her friends. She invited her brother and his friends as well. That ended up being Dr. Guptill's first-ever date. Dating was a new experience for him, but

having his sister there made it enjoyable. His sister was protective of him and always cared for him.

Dr. Guptill sometimes feels dissatisfied with himself as he compares his life with his sister's. While Dr. Guptill is a pastor, a church leader, a member of the Executive Committee of the General Conference, his sister seems to have a more vibrant spiritual life than he does. However, his sister's example encourages him and reminds him every day to think along the lines of his sister towards the good. His sister has had a very big influence on him. She is a very caring person. When their mother was incapable of taking care of herself anymore, she moved in with her daughter. Dr. Guptill's sister showered their mother with love and care until their mother's last days, who lived to be 90 years old. His mother had become dependent on his sister, who ended up becoming a wonderful guardian and provider for her. They became very dear to each other. In the spiritual dimension, Dr. Guptill can clearly state that his sister has had a very big influence on him even to this day.

Other significant people. This section is about some selected significant people in Dr. Guptill's childhood. Dr. Guptill remembers two of his teachers who impacted his life when he was still young. One was his first-grade teacher, who was quite strict, and the other was his choirmaster, who empowered him to love music. He also remembers a woman, his mother's friend, who impacted his life significantly.

When Dr. Guptill was in the sixth grade, his dad left his accounting job to pursue a new job as an administrator in a nursing home. They moved to the town near the nursing home. Dr. Guptill stayed with one of his mother's friends, Mrs. Johnson, until their own house was ready. Mrs. Johnson was a jovial and friendly, grandmotherly figure. Dr. Guptill learned from her that the world is not perfect and that things do not always go in our favor. In addition, "She would tell me a few things about hygiene, making sure that my socks were clean every day and things like that, things I needed to learn," Dr. Guptill recalls.

Adolescent Years

After ninth grade, Dr. Guptill joined his sister at San Pasqual Academy, a boarding academy about two hours away from his home in Loma Linda. There, he developed leadership skills as many opportunities opened up for him. He got involved in the music program. He joined the choir and took voice lessons.

Once, the teacher got sick in the middle of a concert, so he asked Dr. Guptill to direct the singing and gave him the responsibility of making sure everything went according to plan. He was also the student director of the choir. He received tutoring and gained experience in managing and directing the choir from the director. When he went back home, he put his skills into practice. He started a children's choir at their home church and shared the expertise that he had learned. It was a really good experience to improve his leadership skills.

Dr. Guptill's Education

Dr. Guptill attended Adventist schools from elementary through his doctoral program. He earned his doctorate in Educational Administration and Leadership at Loma Linda University in 1982; Master of Public Health from Loma Linda University in 1974; Master of Divinity from Andrews in 1974; and Bachelor of Arts from Loma Linda University in 1970. Dr. Guptill worked as a college student at Loma Linda University from 1966 to 1970. He was a student worker in different departments such as media, library, child development center, and resident assistant in the dormitory. Even though he had to work while studying, he enjoyed getting new experiences from those different areas. He enjoyed his school years and had a good experience with his friends. At first, he focused more on social things than on academics. He recalled that he was more relaxed with his studies during his elementary, high school, and college years and was an average student. It was when he was at the master's and doctoral level that he became more serious with his schoolwork.

While he was pursuing his Public Health degree, he realized that he was capable of getting excellent grades. He found that he liked being at the top of his class, and thus, he became more interested in earning top grades. His grade-point average rose considerably at that time. He was the first to defend and graduate with a doctorate in Education Administration from the La Sierra campus of Loma Linda University.

Dr. Guptill was brought up in a very God-fearing home. The economy back then was such that students could work their way through school and still attain a good education. He was a working student, and he worked all summer long—and all year long—whenever he was not studying or in class to help with his tuition costs. Adventist education was never a question for his family. It was automatically the only option. He was very busy in school, so he really did not have that much time to think about the economic and political situations happening at the time. His heart, mind, soul, and body were fully focused on school and church activities alone.

College and University Years

Dr. Guptill's mother was an influence in developing his friendship with his future wife, Peggy. When his mother would come to visit him and his sister at their boarding school, she would stay with his sister in the girls' dorm. In this way, his mother got to know some of the girls in the dorm. He vividly remembers his mother talking to him about the type of friends he should be having.

Dr. Guptill's mother recommended that he should become friends with Peggy. She said, "I think the girl that you should be friends with is this one over here." He was surprised at her suggestion because he had never thought of Peggy as a girlfriend, but his mother pointed out, "She is a good girl, she has her head on straight, and she is smart." He hesitated, though, because Peggy was a year ahead

of him in school, was the girl's club president, and the valedictorian of her class. He did not think he had a chance, but his mother encouraged him to make friends with Peggy.

Dr. Guptill recalls, "Peggy and I eventually became good friends and started dating, not feeling any coercion from the family or anything at all, but somewhat naturally and no doubt that was one of the best decisions in my whole life." As time went on, Dr. Guptill and Peggy got to know each other better, became very dear friends, and eventually got married in 1970.

Though he knew Peggy was a good lady to marry, he continued to date her without marriage engagement. He said, "I do not want to get married before I get a job." After he got a permanent job to work in Indiana Conference, he then proposed to Peggy officially. When he proposed to her, Dr. Guptill gave Peggy a dozen red roses and a wristwatch. According to him, roses were quite expensive in the United States. Those gifts were the signs of being engaged for Dr. Guptill and his future wife. Their two families were happy about their engagement.

Peggy and her sister started to prepare for the wedding right after the engagement was made. Interestingly, Peggy had her sewing machine, and she was the one who made her bridesmaids' dresses. They got married six months later, which was one week after Dr. Guptill's graduation from Theology at La Sierra College.

After one year of working as an assistant pastor, the conference sponsored Dr. Guptill to go to the seminary at Andrews University. While in the seminary, he was able to conduct evangelistic meetings with his fellow students in a town near Andrews University and participate in an evangelistic field school in Scotland. He taught a number of classmates how to play the guitar, and he also participated in a singing group.

To his surprise, the seminary had a ninth quarter feature where students could focus on one area that they were interested in. Therefore, Dr. Guptill and some of his classmates decided to go to Loma Linda University School of Public Health and take their ninth quarter and if possible, stay for a few extra months and get a master's degree in public health. He was happy to go back to Loma Linda as that was where his family lived. During his studies in Loma Linda, his firstborn son, Scott, was born.

About the time he was ready to graduate from public health and the seminary, the General Conference was looking for someone with a master's degree in Public Health, with a ministerial background, who would be willing to teach at the college in Hong Kong. Since he fit both categories, Dr. Guptill and his family ended up moving to Asia in 1974.

Career Path

Dr. Guptill served in the following institutions located in various countries: (a) the United States as the pastor of Indiana Conference from 1970 to 1971; (b) Hong Kong, where he taught at South China Island Union College from 1974 to 1980; (c) the United States as vice president of Pacific Union College from 1982 to 1984; (d) the United States as president of Friends of San Diego Academy Corporation (198401990); (e) Bangladesh as president of Bangladesh Adventist Seminary and College (1990-1995); (f) Singapore as the Associate Education Director of the Asia-Pacific Division from the year 1995 to 1997; (h) the Philippines as Education Director of the Asia-Pacific Division in from the year 1998 to 2005; (i) finally, in the Philippines as the president of Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies from 2006 to 2019. Dr. Guptill served internationally, always in Adventist institutions. His purpose was to serve in the field of Adventist education and the Seventh-day Adventist church in general.

Each time he went to a new place, he looked for how he could best accomplish God's work there. He likes the saying, "Bloom where you are planted," and has sought to be a positive influence in each institution. He learned that when there was a need, God empowered him to do things and amazing projects that were very challenging.

Dr. Guptill believes that service is the highest criteria for leadership. Leaders are called by God to be of service. He argues that if a leader is not the best person to serve, then he or she should get out of the way and let the best person be in the position. Service is the highest and the best criteria, and that is why God deserves to be God. "God deserves to be God because He is of great service." Dr. Guptill believes that it is God who has created leaders, and He is the one who empowers them. He said that God blesses leaders. Therefore, leaders should not want to substitute God with anybody else. According to Dr. Guptill, leaders should work for the good of the people that they are serving. His philosophy is to set aside one's agenda and seek to fulfill God's will in serving those within his or her care.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Dr. Guptill has a rich spiritual heritage. He was born to a Seventh-day Adventist home that lived by the teachings of the Bible. He grew up in an Adventist community that valued education and had a strong spiritual tradition. In the 1930s, his grandparents experienced economic depression in the United States. Hence, the time that Dr. Guptill was born and raised in was characterized by frugality, industry, and resourcefulness. These experiences shaped him as an Adventist educational leader who is rooted in biblical faith and values.

Dr. Guptill's education and career path were progressively designed by God. He was educated in Adventist schools at all levels of his academic journey. In the same way, Dr. Guptill had opportunities to work in Adventist institutions from the beginning to the end of his career path. From a classroom teacher to the president

of an international institution, God continually moved him to positions of responsibilities where he could utilize his potential better than before.

Recommendations

The findings of this narrative research provided insights to some recommendations for practitioners and future researchers as follows: (a) Christian leaders are urged to consider service as the focus of their leadership; (b) leaders can adopt the "bloom where you are planted" philosophy and do their best in the place where they are called to lead; (c) researchers may engage more than one participant to help to compare with and confirm the findings of this study; (d) researchers may employ other types of narrative inquiry designs such as autoethnography where the participant leader does a narrative study on self; (e) researchers may want to employ other qualitative research designs such as phenomenology or case study. For example, phenomenological studies can help focus on the certain life-changing event of a leader and case studies can provide details of the "bounded system" the sources of development in a deeper way.

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