FEATURE

Faith Development among Elementary Students in an Adventist Campus: A Case Study

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Abstract. *The elementary age is fundamental to a person's faith development. After a careful search, however, few studies were found on faith development of elementary students in the Adventist church. Previous studies on faith or spiritual development in an Adventist setting focused more on adolescents and young adults in high schools and colleges (Arego, Role, & Makewa, 2014; Christie & Christian, 2012; Schulze, 2012), thus prompting the need to have a study on elementary students within the Adventist setting. This qualitative case study used Fowler's faith development theory to explore the faith development experiences of elementary students whose parents study in Asian Adventist University (AAU). Individual interviews and focus group interviews were used to collect data. The data was analyzed using Taba's inductive method. Findings showed that family background, environment, and participation were key influences in faith development of elementary students. It is recommended that faith-based instruction for children should be participatory. Adults should involve themselves with children to model faith to them.*

Keywords: faith development, education, elementary students, Adventist campus, Asia, Adventist church, case study, faith development theory, teachers, administrators

Introduction

When the Bible says, "train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he would not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6, KJV), do we pause to think about what is the best method to "train" the child? Do the methods teachers and parents

use work in this training? These questions and many more about faith development in children prompted the pursuit of this study.

A careful search of literature did not identify studies on faith development of elementary students in the Adventist church. Previous studies often focus on spiritual or faith development in adolescents, teenagers, college students, and adults; not faith development in elementary-aged children (Casimiro, 2004; Christie & Christian, 2012; Petersen, 2012; White, 2014). Other studies on faith or spiritual development in an Adventist setting focused more on adolescents and young adults in high school and colleges (Arego et al., 2014; Barna Group, 2013; Christie & Christian, 2012; Schulze, 2012). Thus, a scarcity of studies exists in the area of faith development in elementary students within the Adventist setting.

A study by Bellamy, Mou, and Castle (2004) in a non-Adventist setting, however, showed that participating in activities organized by the church enriches the faith development of children. Grajczonek's (2010) literature review on children focused on spiritual development and not faith development even though these studies mention how the terms of spirituality, religiosity, and faith are often used interchangeably (Casimiro, 2004). Faith in this study is about the belief in God. It does not look at the relationship the person has with God. That relationship will be tagged as spirituality.

This current study, therefore, focuses on the development of the Christian faith in children on an Adventist campus. It explores how the children begin to know about and believe in God, their stand in this knowledge and what things influence their belief. Thus, the assumption is that the participants are exposed to the Christian faith based on their living on an Adventist campus and attending the academy. The purpose of this study thus is to explore how the experiences of elementary-age children in an Adventist campus setting enables the development of their faith.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study is to explore the faith development of students at the elementary level. Thus, it is important to explain what faith is. As faith, religion, and spirituality are often used interchangeably (Kimball, 2008; Newman, 2004), a distinction will be made between the two. Several authors (King & Roeser, 2008; McClure, 1996; Nash, as cited in Newman, 2004) have reiterated in their studies about the differences between faith and spirituality. Mentioning this distinction is, therefore, necessary to draw attention to faith, which is the focus of this study. As McClure (1996) stated, it is necessary to make this distinction when dealing with child education.

What is Faith?

According to Newman (2004), it is almost impossible to define faith because it holds a different meaning for each individual. This difficulty can be linked to its universal nature as faith is deeply rooted in each human while they try to make sense of their lives (Fowler, 1981). McClure (1996) gave a way to distinguish between spirituality and faith. Spirituality is referred to as "encounters with the divine mystery" (p. 8). Faith however "like theology, comes as a reflection on those encounters" (McClure, 1996, p. 8). Kruidenier (2017) in his definition of spirituality also mentioned that it is when a person engages with a power higher than self. Newman (2004) defines faith as the set of beliefs that a person accepts. Using Newman's words, faith can be said to be an "accepted set of personal beliefs" (p. 103). It "is relational, implying the trust of one upon another" (Newman, 2004, p. 104). Faith is, therefore, the way people understand their interaction and encounter with the divine, God.

Newman (2004) added that faith is making meaning of the human activity. It is not restricted to religion or a particular system of belief. One could have faith and not be spiritual or religious. It supersedes religion (White, 2014). Thus, a person can have faith and not be linked to a specific religion or be spiritual. In other words, faith is what you know about a belief, spirituality is being in connection to the source of your knowledge, and religion is what you do to show what you know and what goes on inside of you. For Fowler (1981) faith is not just a way man makes sense of life, but it includes elements of loyalty and trust. It directs the path where the heart and the will are aligned to go. Faith is more than a religion that one belongs to.

Faith Development

Faith development as a concept refers to the process through which a person grows in faith. John Westerhoff and James Fowler's work on faith development theory gives a majority of the knowledge known in the field of faith development (Keeley, 2010; McClure, 1996; Worsley, 2013). As faith is given to man from God and the manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit, one needs to be careful when making an analysis and confining it to stages (Keeley, 2010). There is a limitation in working and discussing faith using the faith developmental theory (Keeley, 2010) based on this realization that faith and its growth in man is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit. Schulze (2012) defines faith development as believing with the mind and heart, belonging to a congregation, caring for others and the environment, and doing the convictions related to the faith.

These faith development theories, understood in the light of other developmental theories, can explain and help us understand what to expect of people at different stages of their life. It is important to note that the developmental stage of children affect not just the physical, mental, or social development, but also faith development (Habenicht & Burton, 2004; Haggray, 1993; Keeley, 2010).

As McClure (1996), Grajczonek (2010), and Haggray (1993) mentioned, Fowler's theory was influenced by other psychosocial theories such that of Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg; thus showing the interconnectedness of faith development and other areas of human development.

According to Fowler, humans go through seven stages of faith development. These stages are undifferentiated faith, intuitive-projective faith, mythic-literal faith, synthetic-conventional faith, individuative-reflective faith, conjunctive faith, and universalizing faith (Keeley, 2010; Haggray, 1993; Petersen, 2012). Each of these stages has distinct characteristics, which are briefly discussed below.

Undifferentiated faith. This is the pre-stage of faith development, according to Fowler's theory (Fowler, 1986). The first images of God are formed at this stage. The child needs safety and trust (Fowler, 1981). A safe environment where there is care, love, trust, and safety is important at this stage (Keeley, 2010). Within this sort of environment, a child at this stage begins to form a positive image of God.

Intuitive-projective faith. People at this first stage of faith development cannot think on their own or form abstract ideas. The faith of others is what they use at this stage—in most cases, the faith of their parent (Andrade, 2014; Fowler, 1981, 1986; Keeley, 2010). Repetition is also an important part of this phase.

Mythic-literal faith. Elementary age children between the ages of 7 and 12 belong to this stage. Storytelling and people other than their parents begin to influence their faith development at this stage (Andrade, 2014; Fowler, 1981, 1986; Hebert, 2017; Keeley, 2010; McClure, 1996; Worsley, 2013). They can narrate their own experiences and understand the perspective of others. A sense of fairness and justice is strong for children at this stage (Hebert, 2017). Culture and society are intertwined and have an influence on the faith of the child at this stage.

Synthetic-conventional faith. People—teens and young adults—at this stage are able to understand abstract concepts (Fowler, 1981; Schulze, 2012). They now can place the individual bits of stories in the larger picture because it is influenced by the people they interact with such as people from home, school, church, and media (Andrade, 2014; Fowler, 1981). They want to form an identity for themselves as well as belong to a group (Fowler, 1981, 1986; Keeley, 2010). Having personal and social identity is therefore crucial for people within this stage.

Individuative-reflective faith. The authority for faith now rests on the individual. It is no longer controlled externally. People examine the importance of their faith at this stage. It occurs from early to late adulthood (Andrade, 2014; Fowler, 1981, 1986; Keeley, 2010).

Conjunctive faith. Faith is in the hands of the individual; they have come to be at peace with the faith they have and are not afraid to encounter other faiths that may oppose theirs. The person has a grounded faith, yet they are open to the

perspectives of other faiths. This stage occurs around the mid-life of the individual (Andrade, 2014; Fowler, 1981, 1986).

Universalizing faith. The faith they have accepted in the previous stage brings changes to the lives of the individuals in this stage (Andrade, 2014; Fowler, 1981, 1986). These people have gotten to the apex of faith development, and they hold high values. Change does not come easily when a person is at this stage.

There have been doubts over the model of Fowler's theory of faith development over the years. It is said to be gender and culturally biased, for it is a reflection of male Western culture (Keeley, 2010; Kruidenier, 2017; Petersen, 2012). On the other hand, authors in previous studies have found it useful in tracing the way people develop faith (Keeley, 2010; McClure, 1996; Worsley, 2013). In spite of the unfavorable light in which some put it (Kruidenier, 2017; Petersen, 2012), it is still a useful tool to understand the stages people from a different culture and of different gender develop in faith. Thus, this study takes into consideration that Fowler's theory is regarded to be biased; yet it is a framework suitable for use in this study.

The focus of this study is on elementary-aged children who belong to the mythic-intuitive stage of faith development. Henceforth the study focuses on children in that stage. Thus, the next section discusses the shaping of faith in children through the mediation of the people in the environment such as parents and teachers. It also takes a look at the application of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to learning.

Shaping Faith

Faith formation in a child includes things that occur in the environment, such as interaction with people, symbols, and rituals (Christie & Christian, 2012; Haggray, 1993; Newman, 2004). Parents provide the first experience of faith as seen in Fowler's primal stage of faith development (Fowler, 1981). Children depend not only on their parents, but other adults in the community of faith to experience God (Tan, 2014). Therefore, home is the starting point for faith development and it expands to include other people and elements in the environment.

A study by Christie and Christian (2012) showed that faith-oriented schools seek to contribute and provide the appropriate environment needed for the child to develop and experience faith. Learning is a social process because individuals are not isolated and they interact with people as they learn (Phan, 2012; Shabani, 2016; Tan, 2014; Verenikina, 2003). According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development, the environment plays an important role in learning and development (Schulze, 2012). The individual knows and learns when they get support from the environment (Phan, 2012; Schulze, 2012).

Vygotsky's theory indicates the use of mediation and interaction with the environment in cognitive development, whereby the elements of the environment contribute to the development of the child (Shabani, 2016; Verenikina, 2003). In children developing faith, this interaction is found when they attend faith-based social activities and interact with teachers and peers. Interacting with more experienced people shapes learning (Shabani, 2016; Verenikina, 2003). This interaction contributes to shaping their faith.

Previous studies indicate that the school is involved in aiding the spiritual and faith developments of students (Christian & Kilgour, 2014; Christie & Christian, 2012; Horan, 2014). The faith development of the students is affected by the school. A study by Christian and Kilgour (2014) mentioned the need for continuous scaffolding as children enter high school to strengthen their faith and lead them to form the intuitive stage of faith. As the findings of their study showed, elementary-aged children were more accepting of faith than those in high school. Thus, scaffolding becomes a necessity while in the mythic-literal stage during elementary school.

The definition of faith given for this study is what is known about a belief and that definition is being applied to the belief and acceptance of the Christian God. The focus of this study is on people in the mythic-literal faith development stage (elementary-aged children) of Fowler's faith development theory. Though the process of faith was not observed in the study, the experiences of the children in learning about God which leads to faith in Him are examined.

To explore the faith development experiences in children, this study uses the following research questions:

1. What does faith development look like among elementary-aged children?
2. What contributes to faith development in elementary-aged children?
3. What are the challenges in faith development in elementary-aged children?

Methodology

A qualitative approach using the case-study design was used to conduct this study. The details and description of the methodology are given below. It includes discussion on the research design, research setting, sampling, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and researcher's reflexivity.

Research Design

This study uses qualitative case-study design. According to Creswell (2012), Hesse-Biber (2017), and Yin (2016), qualitative studies are used to explore, find meaning, and get an in-depth understanding of an individual, system, or organization. The interest in understanding what goes on in human interaction

contributes to what makes a study qualitative (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A case study is an open-ended exploratory design in research that uses single or multiple cases to find meaning within a specific context (Hammersley, 2014; Merriam, 1998). The case in this study is faith development in elementary students. The bounded system consists of the children and parents who provide information about the case.

As faith development is a personal phenomenon that differs from one individual to another, a qualitative case study was used to gain an in-depth understanding of what experiences encountered on the campus enhanced the faith development in children. Extensive data collection from different individuals gave insight to what their faith development journey has been like.

Research Setting

The setting for this case study research is an institution of higher learning, AAU, in South-east Asia. The campus is located in the Philippines. Many students on this campus come to study with their family bringing with them their elementary-age children. There is an academy that includes elementary education of these children. The campus also has a church that provides several experiences to enhance the faith of people on campus as well as those affiliated with the university.

In describing the setting, the academy where the student attends elementary school is not separated from AAU as a higher educational institution. It is considered as an entity because the campus community is inter-connected. The ideas of the participants would be better understood when the campus is considered as a community, in which the academy is a part.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this study. It is a sampling method that ensures that the participants chosen are those that will give the needed information for the study (Merriam, 1998). This sampling method facilitated choosing children who are involved in the faith enhancing activities that are provided in the institution. The specific criteria for choosing the children and parent participants are that the participant (a) is willing to participate in the study, (b) has lived in the institution's campus for at least one year, (c) is an elementary student at the institution's academy (d) attends Sabbath school, (e) is member of the Adventurer/Pathfinder club activities, and (f) is parent of a child who meets the previous criteria and is willing to participate in the study.

Using the selection criteria above, one child from each grade of the six grades in elementary school was chosen to participate. This choice was to have representation from each grade level to share their experience. The parents were

chosen based on their willingness to participate in the study after giving consent for their child to participate.

Data Collection

The data was collected through the use of individual interviews. Children in the range of Grades 1 to 6 were interviewed. There was also be a focused group interview for the children to get more perspective. The focus group was used to enrich the data gotten from the individual interviews. It added perspective from different people discussing the same issue in one session.

Interviews are a necessary tool in qualitative research study. It helps the researcher to explore the case deeper and probe till answers are found (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Yin, 2014). There were separate interview questions for individual interviews, focus group, and parents. A total of ten participants were interviewed: three individual interviews for children, four children in a focused group interview, and three parents for individual interview.

A semi-structured interview was used to get data from the participants. According to O'Reilly, Ronzoni, and Dogra (2013), semi-structured interviews have general questions that provide a guideline for what you are asking. The interview was flexible depending on the response of the participant. Thus, each interview with the participants in this study was between 25-35 minutes. The individual interviews were conducted at a time and venue chosen by the participant to ensure convenience. For the focus group interview, I chose a venue that was neutral and accessible to all the children participants. Audio recordings of the interview sessions ensured that no information was lost from the interviews.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done using the three steps in Taba inductive method to analyze the content. The three steps—concept formation, interpretation, application—were combined with the content analysis to make sense of the data (Siddiqul, 2013; Merriam (1998). Thus the data w read several times to generate codes through repeated patterns. Next, the codes were categorized to later come up with themes. The analysis resulted in the generation of 63 codes. The codes were grouped into 17 categories, and then 6 themes emerged at the end of the process. These themes summarized the findings of the study according to the research questions.

Rigor was observed in this study, and it was established through credibility, consistency, and transferability (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam (1998), credibility connects the findings of the study to reality. I used direct quotations from the data to show that the interpretations are the reality of the participants. Triangulation of interview sources was also used to ensure credibility of the study. Merriam (1998) mentioned that triangulation can be

done through the interview of different people from a different perspective. Thus in selecting participants, the children were from different grade levels to show their different cognitive capacities. Consistency was obtained through the use of peer examination audit trail and researcher reflexivity (Merriam, 1998; O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). In addition, transparency in reporting the steps followed in the research ensured that this step was taken care of. For transferability, a clear reporting of the setting through thick description is employed (Merriam, 1998).

Ethical Considerations

Permission was gotten from AAU to conduct the study with the participants since they are affiliated with the institution. Clearance was given by the Ethics Review Board of the institution to ensure that the research is free of harm to the participants. Informed consent was sought from parents of the children participants, children, and parents that participants. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw whenever they wished to do so. Anonymity and confidentiality were achieved by not using the names of the participants in the study. A pseudonym is assigned to each participant and their responses will be used only for the study. Feedback of the study was provided to parents and parent participants during the conference presentation on the study. The published version would be shared with them too.

Researcher's Reflexivity

I work in the Sabbath school and Adventurer club of the setting for this research study. I wanted to find out what works best for the children and if any of the things we do have actually contributed to the development of their faith. As research is done not only to contribute to knowledge but also to improve practice (Cooper, 2014; Merriam, 1998), the study of this setting will improve my practice. Other teachers in faith communities can extend the findings to their setting. This experience teaching in Sabbath school and Adventurer might affect the way I interpreted the data.

The choice of topic and participants were deliberately done to get the perspective of children and their parents in relation to the teachings and activities they engage in in the school and church that contribute to faith development. Some of the participants were once my students in either Adventurer or Sabbath school. I am currently teaching some of them and I have not taught others. Either way, there is a prior cordial relationship between me and the participants because I engage with a number of children in the setting outside of the Adventurer club and Sabbath school. With this background, I was conscious of myself during the interview to take a researcher stance, where I am learning from the children participants and not in the position of their teacher.

Results

The data collected through interviews with the children, focus group, and parents helped to answer the research questions. Results of the study are presented below according to the research questions. The research questions (RQ) are (a) what does faith development look like among elementary-aged children? (b) What contributes to faith development in elementary-aged children? (c) What are the challenges in faith development in elementary-aged children?

To understand the results of the study, the profile of the participants is given in the tables below.

Table 1

Profile for Children Participants

Participant's Pseudonym	Interview type	Gender	Grade level
David	Individual Interview (IdI)	Male	Grade 1
Camilla	IdI	Female	Grade 6
Helen	IdI	Female	Grade 5
Brenda	(Focus Group)FG	Female	Grade 2
Josh	FG	Male	Grade 3
Aiden	FG	Male	Grade 4
Jessica	FG	Female	Grade 4

Table 2

Profile for Parent Participants

Participant's Pseudonym	Interview type	Country	Designation
Lilly	IdI	China	David's mum
John	IdI	Chile	Camilla's dad
Hailey	IdI	Philippines	Helen's mum

RQ#1: What Faith Development Looks Like in Elementary Aged Children

The interviewed children spoke with enthusiasm when sharing about their faith development. Talking about their faith experience provided the data needed to understand what faith development looked like for them. The following were themes that described their faith development.

Theme 1: Participation and engagement. Interview data from parents and children showed that active participation and engagement in different activities is an important part of faith development. Sabbath school is a good place to be engaged as children learn about God. In order to make some abstract ideas concrete for children, teachers use crafts, PowerPoints, questionings, and examples to engage them and enable them to understand better the principles of faith. This is

seen in the enthusiasm of David when he said, "*I like that we have craft.*" Helen also had this to say about how teachers helped them to participate in Sabbath school: "*they share some PowerPoint and they do some questions and I really like to participate a lot also as well also in the class.*" Camilla understands better when there are examples for her to see "*sometimes if there is not samples you don't understand. I like when people give examples of something*".

Theme 2: Character formation. The data showed that the children are forming and shaping their character at this elementary stage of their lives. They develop a prayer life from their experience with the people around them. The parents noted the changes in the prayer life of their children. According to John, his daughter will not go out to school in the morning without praying: "*[Camilla] likes to go early to the school but [Camilla] doesn't go to school, if she doesn't pray.*" Helen also mentioned that "*I do pray to God always before I go to sleep like I always do…with my grandmother. Because every time I don't pray to God before I sleep, well, I can't sleep.*" Thus, parental influence contributes to this prayer life.". As Lilly mentioned about her son "*I always tell him if you have any problem just pray to God, ask God to help you.*"

Another character that portrays the faith development of the participants is that of help and concern for others. David who had a problem with English when he got to AAU now helps another student that struggles with English. "*Now he's helping his Chinese friend who just come here and cannot understand what teacher said so he, my son sit beside her and always help her*" (Lilly). Camilla worries about her friends and will do anything to help them. She also feels that she has a responsibility to tell her classmates about God "*I have classmates who don't know. We have to explain to them . . . it's like our fault because we're the ones that are supposed to tell others about God and His coming. If we don't do that it's our job it will be like we're not doing our job.*" Thus, the character formation is gradually developing in the children as they express their faith outwardly.

RQ#2 Contributors to Faith Development in Children

There are different things that play a part in the faith development of children. From the interview data gotten from parents, children, and the focus group discussion, the participants mentioned several things that contribute to their faith development. Below is a summary of themes that emerged from the data.

Theme 3: Family influence. The influence of family members was repeatedly mentioned in the data. Mum, dad, grandparents, uncles, and cousins were mentioned by the participants as having a role to play in the faith development of the children. When asked how they came to know about God David said "*my mum…and daddy*". Helen also said, "*my grandmother always tells...teaches me about God*". Camilla's parents took her to Sabbath school as a child and she enjoys

stories about Jesus. Her father John also mentioned that family worship is key in their home where each person takes turn to conduct worship. This finding shows the importance of the family in influencing the faith of the children.

Theme 4: Faith-oriented clubs and activities. Participant's involvement in the Adventurer and Pathfinder clubs and other activities where they learn about God on campus helped their faith development. The church on campus has an Adventurer and Pathfinder club and the children mentioned how they had learned more about God from joining the clubs. When asked what activities they engaged in that helps them learn about God, Jessica from the focus group listed Adventurer club as one of them, "*Err there's Adventurers….*" Camilla had this to say about the Pathfinder club "*because pathfinders helps you aside from learning it's also about God and telling others about God. So it helps you a lot.*"

The Sabbath school program is linked to the church. It operates on Saturday mornings before children join the worship in the main church. Participation in the Sabbath school added to the children's faith. Lilly said "*in the church yea Sabbath school, Sabbath school is very good for children*" when asked if the church helped to develop her child's faith. Camilla said, "*I think going to Sabbath school because they teach you in an easier way*" when asked which of the activities she attends helps her learn more about God.

Girls' club is another activity that girl participants mentioned as a contributor to their faith. It is a care group where girls meet to learn more about life and God. When asked what club activities she joins on campus, Helen mentioned girls club, "*yea I do join the girl's club*". When further question was asked on how it has helped her faith, she narrated an object lesson used to teach in the club. Hailey mentioned the girls' club as an activity that is helping her daughter. Camilla's father also mentioned, "*The girls' club was good for [Camilla] because [Camilla]. . . learnt many many* [sic] *things good for her and learned and helped to develop to study the Bible.*"

Theme 5: Environment. The three parents who participated in the study mentioned the positive influence the environment—AAU campus—has on the faith development of their children. Hailey said, "*She is like more knowledgeable in bible now and she can quote a lot of bible verses…. She got it from the school, the academy…it's more support here in [AAU]*" when she talked about her daughter's faith. One of the key features in the environment mentioned by the participants was mostly linked to the AAU academy where the children attend. According to Lilly, "*this environment, this campus is very good for his faith growing… as far as I know, they have the worship before the class.*" Having Bible subject as the first class every day in the school was an important aspect of their faith development. When asked what in the school helped them to learn about God as a follow-up question, Aiden said, "*They do bible before they do anything. Bible is the first subject*". Asides from the school, John thinks the environment, in general, provides opportunities for children's faith to grow. He said, "*This place is, [AAU] is have*

the good opportunities to develop the faith". Parents get support from teachers to reinforce what they teach their children about faith.

Several of the children mentioned how other people in the campus community help their faith. During the focus group interview, Brenda, Jessica, and Aiden mentioned that Pastors, builders (those who do construction work on campus), friends, friends of their parents, members of the community they belong to, and everyone they meet around on campus. "*My mum's friend, aunty Irene, she taught us that every time before we even eat, we have to pray*" (Aiden). A leading question to the group was, "so you mean that it does not matter and everybody here helps you in a way to learn about God" to which the children gave a "*yes*" chorus answer. They look up to adults as models to help them in their faith journey. "*They don't push us, they give us an example of doing it. They're a big model*" (Jessica). Individual interviews with Helen and Camilla also showed that they learn from being in the environment. They answered "yes" to the follow-up question on if the environment had helped with their faith.

Jessica mentioned specifically how the cultural diversity of AAU campus contributes to her faith. She said, "*in [AAU] because of the like diversity here, there are many culture that you could learn how they learn about God, when they learn about God, why they learn about God; I think that's a really good way to understand it. Because you get all the knowledge from different people you put it together to make something that would recognize God in other people*". Thus being in a campus with people from different cultural background adds to the faith development.

Theme 6: Stories. Several of the participants mentioned how stories help their faith development. Helen, David, and Camilla mentioned that stories about people helped them to learn about God. These stories are not just bible stories, but character building stories or stories about the faith journey of other people. Bible study also contributed to the growth of the children. They mentioned how they are encouraged to read the bible by teachers. Stories from the bible also help them to learn more about God. "*Because story can help us whenever we ask a question about it we can know the answer they can always tell us*" (Josh). Aiden, Brenda, and Jessica mentioned that there is an adult in the campus community who organizes bible study for kids. They can get baptized after joining the bible study for some time. "*His baptism works that you have to get bible study for a certain amount of time, . . . after the bible study, you get baptized*" (Jessica).

RQ #3 Challenges Children Face
in Faith Development

In order to grow in their faith, there are some challenges the participants mentioned that could hinder their development. One of such as mentioned by Camilla is temptation from influences around can affect their growth. She said,

"*Sometimes like the temptation are there because, or social media now because everything is like so many people do so many bad things in the news like killing, shootings, stuff like that*".

Another challenge that the children on this campus face is language. Camilla, Aiden, and David mentioned that they had a challenge with language when they first got here. It made it difficult for them to understand anything that was going on. It was like a test for them because it was not easy to learn a new language. With prayer and time however, they were able to overcome this challenge. Even though it may seem that it is not directly affecting their faith, it was a challenge that taught them to grow in faith. "*Before we come here he, how to say he doesn't know how he didn't know how to speak English I told him don't worry just pray, pray to God, God will give you wisdom and help you learn very quickly*" (Lilly). "*When I came I had no English memory in my mind, no English until I went to class English. English, everywhere they spoke English then after that I spoke English*" (Aiden). Both participants mentioned that language was a challenge at first in AAU. With God's help, they were able to overcome this challenge. When people discuss about God, they are able to understand because they know what the people talk about.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, it can be seen that the traits of the mythic-literal faith development stage are true for children in AAU. The data showed that people other than their parents influenced their faith development. They listened to people around them on campus and even seek that these people will model faith to them. As mentioned by Tan (2014) in his work, adults in the faith community influence the faith development of children. The study showed that children in AAU have the same experience.

Theme 1 showed that participation and engagement are important to participants. Roberto and Pfiffner (2007) mentioned experiential learning activities that are engaging as being effective in faith development. Habenicht and Burton (2004) advocated for hand-on active learning for children in the mythic-literal stage. Thus, the finding is supported by other authors' views on what elementary children need to contribute to their faith development.

Fowler (1981) mentioned how culture and society influence the faith of the children. Jessica and Aiden's experience shows that they are influenced by the culture of the people surrounding them in the campus community. Other participant's experiences also indicated that they are able to narrate their experience from the perspective of others.

Stories are an important part of the mythic-literal stage of faith development (Fowler, 1981). Seven children participants agreed that stories had helped them to develop their faith. The stories are either bible stories, real-life experiences of

people, or character building stories they have heard from adults and family members.

In agreement with Vygotsky's theory, theme 5 shows that the environment plays an important role in faith development. Learning as a social process is not isolated, and the individual learns from the support of the environment (Phan, 2012; Schulze, 2012). Several things from the environment such as the kindness of people on campus; cultural diversity; and influence of pastors, teachers, and other adults on campus contributed to the faith development of the children. This finding is not isolated because literature has shown a similar situation in other settings (Christie & Christian, 2012; Haggray, 1993; Newman, 2004). The school is also a part of the environment that contributes to faith development (Christian & Kilgour, 2014). All the participants alluded to the influence of the school in the faith development of the children. The first subject in school every day is Bible. They sing songs about Jesus, memorize Bible verses, and have Bible quizzes to test their knowledge of what they have learned.

Based on the results, it is recommended for future research to explore if people in the advanced stage feel the same way about faith development on the campus as the children. It is also recommended that faith-based instruction for children both in school and the different faith-based clubs, should be participatory. Adults likewise should involve themselves with children to model faith to them. Recommendation for parents is that family worship time should not be neglected. Children learn first from their parents and then get experience from people outside the home.

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