



Julián Melgosa

A few years ago, a friend gifted me a book entitled *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson, MD.¹ The book is a parable about four little characters: two mice and two little people. The first duo acted like mice, and the second, even though they were about the size of mice, acted much like people. All of them lived together in a huge maze and spent most of their days searching for what they wanted the most: cheese. The mice followed simple behaviors: searching for cheese and eating it. The little humans were more ambitious and searched for better and bigger cheese.

Eventually, the little people found an abundant reserve of cheese and thought it would be their source of satisfaction forever. So, they worked less and less and became arrogant because of their success—so much so that they didn't anticipate what was coming. One day, when both the mice and the little people arrived at their cheese station, they were dismayed to discover that there was no more cheese. The mice, realizing that this was a possibility all along, proceeded to search for more cheese. The two little people, however, were angry that someone moved their cheese and found themselves stuck in a cycle of blame and inertia. This parable is about change and our resistance or inability to face it. We may live comfortably for a while without realizing that change is approaching, and it thus catches us unprepared.

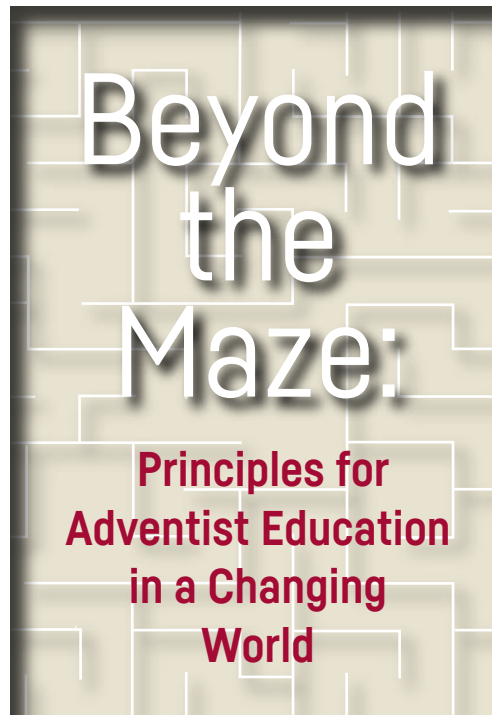
What do we do with change in education? Adventist

education goes back to the 19th century. Can we apply its principles in the 21st century?² I believe the answer is “yes” as long as we hold onto the essential philosophy, do not get bogged down with detail, and are ready to change and adapt. Take, for example, the schools of the prophets. Ellen G. White, the major proponent of Adventist educational ideology, drew basic principles of education from these institutions.

The message that our schools “should become more and more like the schools of the prophets”³ appears repeatedly.⁴ What were the schools of the prophets? These schools prepared individuals for service. In her book *Education*, White explained that these schools were not for future prophets, but for future teachers, those called to instruct the people in the works and ways of God. That is why Samuel, under the Lord's guidance, established these schools to “serve as a barrier against the wide-spreading corruption, to provide for the mental and spiritual welfare of the youth.”⁵ Samuel founded two of these companies, one in Ramah and the other

in Kirjath-jearim. Others were added later.⁶ The Bible calls those who attended these schools “the sons of the prophets” or “the company of the prophets”⁷ over the first few chapters of 2 Kings.

What were the features of the schools of the prophets? First, the core subjects included the Law with a thorough study of the content of the Pentateuch parchment rolls, as revealed directly by God to Moses.



Continued on page 51

Other subjects taught included history, music, and poetry. Second, the learners, regardless of class and financial ability, were required to practice manual labor with the double purpose of financing their expenses and learning skills that would make them fully autonomous. Third, students learned how to pray and practiced devotion; they learned how to approach their Creator. And fourth, faith, central to the whole educational program, directed students toward the Lamb of God—the one who takes away the sins of the world.⁸

How do we, then, utilize this foundational example to define and carry out our educational mission? First, we need to develop curricula for subject areas that address real, current needs, with the Bible at the core, so that students can make adjustments and contribute to contemporary society. Curricula should not only be produced from a pragmatic criterion, but should also consider aesthetics (poetry, music, art, etc.) and axiology (focus on the truly important values as inspired by the Bible) in accordance with the Adventist philosophy of education. Second, students must become skillful in multiple practical and manual skills relevant to current settings, like planting organically, using electronic devices to preach the gospel, acquiring contemporary life-skills, or becoming an everyday media critic—someone who can access and critically analyze and evaluate media (e.g., Websites, news sources and outlets, and social media in all its forms). This will provide both learning experiences and more than one way for them to support themselves while enrolled in formal education. Third, a deep and meaningful relationship with God is to be the center of our educational programs. This may mean going beyond the traditional didactic approach to presenting devotionals and spiritual experiences using participatory methodology to guide young people into a better relationship with God.

This current issue of the JOURNAL offers a set of articles that represent the effort of contemporizing and applying traditional Adventist principles to the reality and demands of the 21st century. Dovich offers advice on how to bridge faith and technology in our schools and colleges, while reminding us that each vocation is a gift from God. Douglas discusses ways to display hope and preserve the big truths while performing leadership roles in a postmodern society. Doukmetzian and Doukmetzian discuss effective governance and address the legal and fiduciary duties of boards. Martin and Conneen describe varied attitudes toward vaccinations and provide administrators with suggestions for meeting the needs of all students while navigating the different perspectives. Villafior-Almocera suggests ways to monitor quality fieldwork in online education, and Neria de Giarate describes one university's approach to mentoring non-traditional students. In the final article, Agard offers

practical suggestions for using graphic organizers to help students activate prior learning, engage in reflection, and build faith connections in math.

These topics would have had little relevance a hundred years ago, yet they are necessary today, and this issue presents them with the principles of Adventist Christian education in mind. Faith must be central across the whole educational program; as educators, we must strive to use every means necessary to integrate faith into all teaching and learning experiences, making God's principles foundational to any educational effort. In sum, we need to be constantly alert to preserve our ideals and philosophy, but do so in meaningful ways to avoid becoming startled by change that makes us cry out in desperation: "Who moved my cheese?"

Julián Melgosa, PhD, is Associate Director of Education for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A. He serves as Liaison for Higher Education and Advisor for the North American, South American, and Trans-European divisions. Dr. Melgosa also serves as the Associate Editor for The Journal of Adventist Education (International Editions).

Recommended citation:

Julián Melgosa, "Beyond the Maze: Principles for Adventist Education in a Changing World," *The Journal of Adventist Education* 81:2 (April-June 2019): 3, 51.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Spencer Johnson, *Who Moved My Cheese?: An A-Mazing Way to Deal With Change in Your Work and in Your Life* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1998).
2. Floyd Greenleaf wrote a two-part article on the nature of change in Adventist education. To read more about this topic, see Floyd Greenleaf, "Has the Leopard Changed Its Spots? A Commentary on Purpose, Principle, and Change in Adventist Education," Part I, *The Journal of Adventist Education* 68:5 (April/May 2006): 5-14; and _____, "A Commentary on Purpose, Principle, and Change in Adventist Education," Part II, *ibid.* 69:1 (October/November 2006): 4-13.
3. Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publ. Assn., 1923), 489.
4. See also _____, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1913), 252, 548, 549; _____, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1890), 592-596.
5. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 46.
6. *Ibid.*
7. 2 Kings 2:3. *New International Version* (NIV). Holy Bible, *New International Version*®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
8. White, *Education*, 47.

Free Tools

Peer-reviewed,
informational
& practical
articles, plus
NEW free App!

THE JOURNAL OF
**ADVENTIST
EDUCATION**
jae.adventist.org

Curriculum
& Instruction
Resource
Center
Linking
Educators

 **circle**
cicle.adventist.org

Inspiring,
inclusive,
interactive
how-to blog
for you!

Seventh-day
**Adventist
Educators**
educators.adventist.org

The Journal of Adventist Education® is the award-winning professional journal for Adventist educators and everyone interested in Christian education. We've partnered with CIRCLE and the Adventist Educators Blog to provide you with access to FREE resources for your teacher's toolbox – kindergarten through graduate-level education.

We're here for you!

facebook.com/educationdialogue/