

Chapter 1

Headline Results

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Participant Numbers

This book is a report and analysis of the findings from surveys conducted among teachers in Seventh-day Adventist schools, in Australia in 2013 and 2016, and among teachers in Seventh-day Adventist schools, in the Solomon Islands in 2013. Table 1.1 lists the number of potential participants, as well as the mode of collection of surveys (Survey-Monkey vs. paper surveys distributed at professional meetings).

Table 1.1

Survey Participation Rates in Australia and the Solomon Islands

Country	Conference	Collection method	Number present/available	Number surveys	Participation rate
Australia	NNSW, GSYD, SNSW	Paper	462	383	83%
Australia	VIC, TAS, NA, QLD	Survey-Monkey®	334	136	41%
Solomon Islands	Solomon Islands Mission	Paper	452	357	79%
Total Sample			1248	876	70%

The Teachers

The ages of teachers in Australia are distributed nearly evenly across the age groups from 20 through 59 (average age = 42 years); while over 66% of the teachers in the Solomon Islands are under the age of 40 (average age = 37). This might be compared with the 49% of Adventist teachers in the United States of America who are over 50 years of age (this percentage figure includes the 13 teachers over the age of 70 that do not appear in the table; average age = 48) (see Table 1.2, which also includes comparative data from surveys collected in the United States of America in 2018).

Table 1.2

Distribution of Ages of Survey Participants

Age	Australia		Solomon Islands		USA	
	Number	Percent- age	Number	Percent- age	Number	Percent- age
20–29	118	26%	105	30%	71	9%
30–39	99	21%	125	36%	154	19%
40–49	131	28%	75	21%	200	24%
50–59	93	20%	36	10%	235	28%
60–69	20	4%	10	3%	158	19%
Subtotal	462		351		818	

In Adventist schools in Australia, 50.9% of the teachers have worked for the Church for more than 10 years, while in the Solomon Islands this statistic is 38.7%.

Over 97% of Adventist teachers in Australia and 98.5% of Adventist teachers in North America have a bachelor's degree or better; while this is true of only 14.7% of Adventist teachers in the Solomon Islands. It may also be observed that 56.5% of Adventist teachers in North America have a master's degree or better, compared to 23.6% of Adventist teachers in Australia (see Table 1.3, which also includes comparative data from surveys collected in the United States of America in 2018).

Table 1.3
Teachers' Qualifications

Qualification	Australia		Solomon Islands		USA	
	Number	Percent- age	Number	Percent- age	Number	Percent- age
Primary school	2	0.5%	14	4.0%	0	0.0%
High school	4	0.9%	80	23%	1	0.1%
Trade certificate/ Trade license	2	0.5%	84	24%	1	0.1%
Associate degree	5	1.1%	118	34%	10	1.2%
Bachelor's degree	320	73%	46	13%	365	42%
Master's degree	98	23%	5	1.4%	445	51%
Doctoral degree	5	1.1%	0	0.0%	45	5.2%
Subtotals	436		347		867	

Teachers in Adventist schools in Australia and the Solomon Islands lead active religious lives, as evidenced by the percentages who participate in religious activities noted in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4
Religious Activities and Selected Beliefs

Percentage who:	Australia	Solomon Islands
Attend church worship services at least once a week	76%	60%
Report a positive commitment to the local and world SDA Church, and their most frequently reported level of commitment was "very strong"	80%	92%
Said that they had made a personal commitment to Jesus that was still important in their life	97%	98%
Strongly agree that they believe in a personal God who seeks a relationship with human beings	92%	85%
Pray at least once a day (outside of attending a religious service)	71%	30%
Participate in prayer groups, Scripture study groups, etc. ≥ weekly	33%	56%
Have received a definite answer to a specific prayer request	86%	91%
Read their Bibles once a week or more often (outside of a religious service)	68%	57%
Agreed that the "Bible is the work of people who were inspired by God and who expressed their message in terms of their own time and place"	89%	83%
tithe at least 10% of their income	82%	52%

Percentage who:	Australia	Solomon Islands
strongly agree that they expect Jesus to return to Earth a second time	90%	96%
use religion as the basis for deciding what is right and wrong	49%	81%
strongly agreed that they serve the mission of the Church through their work as teachers	84%	84%

Teachers were asked about their commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA Church). They were asked to respond on a six-point scale which ranged from 0 (*Non-existent*) through to 5 (*Very strong*). Table 1.5 reports their responses. As may be observed in Table 1.5, the overall pattern of commitment to the SDA Church was very similar at the local level and at the worldwide level. More than 80% of respondents chose positive responses.

Table 1.5

Commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church

	Local SDA Church		Worldwide SDA Church	
	AUC	SIM	AUC	SIM
<i>Non-existent 0</i>	0.0%	3.7%	0.7%	2.8%
<i>1</i>	5.3%	1.9%	2.6%	1.8%
<i>2</i>	15%	2.8%	14%	2.8%
<i>3</i>	15%	14%	16%	18%
<i>4</i>	33%	52%	34%	53%
<i>Very strong 5</i>	33%	26%	32%	21%
n =	151	108	153	109

Note: AUC = Australia Union Conference; SIM = Solomon Islands Mission; n = number of participants who answered this item

Between them, the items in the survey allow an estimation of how strongly teachers in Adventist schools in Australia and the Solomon Islands assent to the 28 *Fundamental Beliefs* of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (see Table 1.6). Assent was taken to include the responses, “strongly agree”, “agree”, “embrace it wholeheartedly”, “accept it because the church teaches it”, and “accept it because I think it is probably correct”.

Table 1.6
*Percentage Who Assent to the 28 Fundamental Beliefs
of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*

Heading of Fundamental Belief	Survey Item	Australia	Solomon Islands
1. [Holy Scriptures]	[Q65/Q92: ... the Bible is ... the work of people who were inspired by God and who, though expressing their message in terms of their own time and place[, expressed eternal truths]	89%	83%
2. Trinity	Q62o/Q86g: I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (i.e., I believe in the doctrine of the Trinity)	94%	97%
3. Father	Q62b/Q86a: I believe in a personal God who seeks a relationship with human beings	96%	95%
4. Son	Q62c/Q86b: Jesus Christ is the Son of God	96%	98%
5. [Holy Spirit]	[Q62o/Q86g: I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (i.e., I believe in the doctrine of the Trinity)]	94%	97%
6. Creation	Q62p/Q86h: I believe God created the world	95%	99%
7. Nature of Man	Q76d/Q93d: When a person dies their body remains in the grave and their soul sleeps until the resurrection	96%	86%
8. Great Controversy	Q76a/Q93a: All humanity is involved in a GREAT CONTROVERSY between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His love, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe	99%	97%
[9. Life, death and resurrection of Christ]	[Q62g: I believe that Jesus was born of a virgin]	94%	94%
10. Experience of salvation	Q62f/Q86c: I am saved the moment I believe and accept what Jesus has done for me	90%	96%
11. Growing in Christ	Q56a: Pray outside of attending religious services \geq daily	71%	30%
13. The Remnant and its Mission	Q76g/Q83g: The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days a REMNANT has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus	87%	98%
18. The Gift of Prophecy	Q76h/Q93h: ELLEN G. WHITE as an inspired messenger to the Adventist Church	89%	98%

Heading of Fundamental Belief	Survey Item	Australia	Solomon Islands
19. [The law of God]	[Q86e: There are clear and absolute standards for what is right and wrong]	85%	90%
20. The Sabbath	Q76b/Q93b: The seventh day of the week is the SABBATH according to the Bible	97%	98%
21. Stewardship	Q79/Q98: In the last 12 months, as a percentage of my income, I estimate that I have given as tithe $\geq 10\%$ of income	82%	52%
22. Christian behavior	Q76c/Q93c: Adventist standards in DIET	87%	92%
24. Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary	Q76f/Q93f: The INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT beginning in 1844	65%	80%
25. Second coming of Christ	Q62m/Q86f: Jesus will return to Earth a second time	94%	96%
26. Death and resurrection	Q76d/Q93d: When a person dies their body remains in the grave and their soul sleeps until the resurrection	96%	86%
27. Millennium	Q76i/Q93i: After the millennium, God will restore the Earth as a home for the righteous who were resurrected or who were alive at his coming	99%	98%
28. [New Earth]	[Q76e/Q93e: The Adventist Church's interpretation of END-TIME PROPHECIES]	86%	98%

That individuals who live in different parts of Australia and the Solomon Islands, who have different life circumstances, different levels of education, and different levels of responsibility, can agree so widely on a set of beliefs is truly remarkable. Humans will always have differences of opinion, and Australians in particular are well known for their independence. Yet of the 22 *Fundamental Beliefs* tested in the survey, no fewer than 18 are believed by more than 85% of the respondents (more than 90% assented to 11 of them).

On the whole, then, it is plain that teachers in the Adventist schools in the SPD believe in the 28 *Fundamental Beliefs* of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Teachers' Understanding of Mission

Question 1 of the survey invited participants to respond in their own words to the following: "I work at a Church-connected school/organisation. If I were asked what the mission of my school/organisation should be, I would say [please write one or two sentences]: ..." These

responses from participants were provided without prompting from the survey. After multiple readings of the responses from participants, and using NVivo as a tool, common themes have been identified by Sherene Hattingh and reported in Chapter 9. They are listed in Table 1.7, starting with the most frequently occurring theme (see further discussion of methodology and results in Chapter 9).

Table 1.7

Themes From the Australian Teachers’ Responses to Question 1: “What should be the mission of my organisation?”

Theme	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
Work, e.g., education	135	26%
Share the good news	118	23%
Leading others to Jesus	115	22%
[No response]	94	18%
Christian environment	84	16%
Representing God to others	70	13%
Help in becoming good citizens	52	10%
Preparation for eternal life	34	7%
Service	34	7%

These responses may be compared to those provided by Adventist teachers in the Solomon Islands (see Table 1.8)

Table 1.8

Themes From the Solomon Islands Teachers’ Responses to the Question, “What should be the mission of my organisation?”

Theme	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
Preparation for eternity	86	28%
Teach the good news	75	24%
Work e.g., educate, help, etc.	67	21%
Lead people to Jesus	65	21%
Opportunity to represent Jesus	46	15%
Seventh-day Adventist	43	14%
[Misunderstood the question]	33	11%
Values and difference	23	7%
Provide a Christian environment	22	7%
Serve others	17	5%
[No response]	7	2%

Item 2 asked teachers to rate a series of pre-defined goals for their schools according to the following criteria:

0. Does not apply to my organisation
1. Should NOT be a purpose or goal of my school/organisation
2. I feel neutral about this as a purpose or goal of my school/organisation
3. An important purpose/goal of my school, but not one of the top three
4. One of top three purposes/goals of my school (use this in 3 or 4 answers only)

The responses are listed in Tables 1.9 and 1.10, which report on the percentage of teachers that identified a particular goal as being one of the top two or three goals of their school, in rank order, starting with the highest percentage. The table also lists the percentage of participants who suggested that the goal should not be a goal of their school (see Chapter 19 for a fuller discussion of these goals and the responses from participants, and Appendix B for details of frequencies of the responses to the individual items).

Table 1.9

One of Top Three Aims of School According to Teachers in Australian Adventist Schools

	Australia			Solomon Islands		
	One of the top three goals of the school (%)	Should not be a goal of the school (%)	Rank Australia	One of the top three goals of the school (%)	Should not be a goal of the school (%)	Rank Solomon Islands
2b. Physical, psychological, social, and spiritual wellbeing of students	75%	4.8%	1	54%	3.6%	7
2a. Quality	72%	4.2%	2	48%	5.3%	10
2h. Create environment where students more likely to accept Jesus	69%	4.0%	3	68%	2.4%	1
2g. Further teaching and healing ministry of Jesus	61%	3.6%	4	60%	3.0%	4
2f. Create a Christian environment in which to work	58%	4.6%	5	67%	3.3%	2
2e. Meet needs of local community	36%	4.2%	6	45%	3.3%	11
2l. Be an interface between SDA Church and community	30%	3.5%	7	37%	4.0%	13
2c. Promote a healthy lifestyle	29%	3.4%	8	54%	3.0%	6
2m. Put into practice the teachings of the SDA Church	29%	3.7%	9	64%	3.6%	3

	Australia			Solomon Islands		
	One of the top three goals of the school (%)	Should not be a goal of the school (%)	Rank Australia	One of the top three goals of the school (%)	Should not be a goal of the school (%)	Rank Solomon Islands
2n. Make opportunities for students to hear about the Adventist Church	27%	5.4%	10	56%	4.6%	5
2o. Lead students to join SDA Church and be baptised	27%	7.7%	11	38%	11%	12
2i. Create positive perception of Church	27%	4.8%	12	53%	3.3%	8
2j. Further mission of SDA Church	26%	4.8%	13	51%	3.4%	9
2d. Be competitive in sector	21%	5.5%	14	24%	19%	14
2k. Make money to support activities of SDA Church	11%	25%	15	24%	12%	15

It is instructive to compare the rankings of the goals provided in response to Item 2 by Adventist teachers in the Solomon Islands, recorded in Table 1.10, with those of Adventist teachers in Australia, recorded in Table 1.9.

Table 1.10
One of Top Three Aims of Schools According to Teachers in Adventist Schools in the Solomon Islands

	Australia			Solomon Islands		
	One of the top three goals of the school (%)	Should not be a goal of the school (%)	Rank Australia	One of the top three goals of the school (%)	Should not be a goal of the school (%)	Rank Solomon Islands
2h. Create environment where students more likely to accept Jesus	69%	4.0%	3	68%	2.4%	1
2f. Create a Christian environment in which to work	58%	4.6%	5	67%	3.3%	2
2m. Put into practice the teachings of the SDA Church	29%	3.7%	9	64%	3.6%	3
2g. Further teaching and healing ministry of Jesus	61%	3.6%	4	60%	3.0%	4

	Australia			Solomon Islands		
	One of the top three goals of the school (%)	Should not be a goal of the school (%)	Rank Australia	One of the top three goals of the school (%)	Should not be a goal of the school (%)	Rank Solomon Islands
2n. Make opportunities for students to hear about the Adventist Church	27%	5.4%	10	56%	4.6%	5
2c. Promote a healthy lifestyle	29%	3.4%	8	54%	3.0%	6
2b. Physical, psychological, social, and spiritual wellbeing of students	75%	4.8%	1	54%	3.6%	7
2i. Create positive perception of Church	27%	4.8%	12	53%	3.3%	8
2j. Further mission of SDA Church	26%	4.8%	13	51%	3.4%	9
2a. Quality	72%	4.2%	2	48%	5.3%	10
2e. Meet needs of local community	36%	4.2%	6	45%	3.3%	11
2o. Lead students to join SDA Church and be baptised	27%	7.7%	11	38%	11%	12
2l. Be an interface between SDA Church and community	30%	3.5%	7	37%	4.0%	13
2d. Be competitive in sector	21%	5.5%	14	24%	19%	14
2k. Make money to support activities of SDA Church	11%	25%	15	24%	12%	15

Comparing the data in Tables 1.9 and 1.10 reveals that in both Australia and the Solomon Islands, teachers rate last the following two of the possible goals of an Adventist school:

- 2d. Be competitive in sector,
- 2k. Make money to support activities of SDA Church.

Indeed, 25% of the Australian teachers and 12% of the Solomon Islands teachers thought making money to support the activities of the SDA Church should not be a goal of Adventist schools, and 19% of the Solomon Islands teachers thought that being competitive in the sector should not be a goal of Adventist schools.

The two groups of teachers had slightly different priorities. Quality was ranked number two by the Australian teachers, but number 10 for the Solomon Islands teachers (less than half of them thought it should be one of the top three goals of Adventist schools). The Solomon

Islands teachers ranked third the goal of “Put into practice the teachings of the SDA Church”, while Australian teachers ranked this option as ninth. There was broad agreement between the two groups of teachers, though, on “Create an environment where students more likely to accept Jesus” (first in Solomon Islands; third in Australia); and “Further teaching and healing ministry of Jesus” was ranked fourth by both groups.

What Makes an Adventist School Different from Similar but Non-SDA Schools?

In Question 3, participants in the survey conducted in Australian educational institutes were asked to respond to the following:

My organisation is owned by or connected to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. If I were asked what makes it different from similar organisations that are NOT part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I would say [...](A3)

Participants had the opportunity to write their own worded response to the question above. This question asks participants to identify what they believe makes their educational institution different from a similar educational institution. This report presents the responses from the 519 participants who took part in the survey. The table below summarises the significant themes that emerged from the data regarding Question A3.

Table 1.11

Themes Emerging From Australian Responses to Question, “What makes an Adventist school different?”

Theme	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
Christ-centred	79	15%
Special character	74	14%
Seventh-day Adventist focus	58	11%
Nurturing environment	49	9%
Staff commitment to the organisation and mission	43	8%
Biblically based organisation	28	5%
No difference	13	3%
No response	186	36%

The analysis of the open-ended responses made by teachers in Adventist schools in the Solomon Islands may be found in Table 1.12.

Table 1.12

Themes Emerging From Solomon Islands Responses to Question, “What makes an Adventist school different?”

Theme	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
Biblically based organisation	172	55%
Seventh-day Adventist focus	118	38%
Future focused	47	15%
Lifestyle and way of living	32	10%
Nurturing environment	31	10%
Staff commitment to the organisation and mission	28	9%
Private, independent organisation non-government	23	7%
Additional Christian-focused activities	13	4%
No response	12	4%
Nothing really	5	2%

Thirty-six percent of the teachers in the AUC did not attempt to state what they thought might be a difference between at an Adventist school and a similar school that was not run by the SDA Church. Some of the answers from both the AUC and SIM focus on outcomes desirable in themselves, but ones which might fairly be expected to be espoused by other Christian-based schools. One might conclude that further conversations among teachers about what is distinctive about Adventist education would be worth pursuing.

Teachers’ Understanding of the Goals of the SDA Church

Question 4 invited participants to respond in their own words, as follows: “If I were asked, ‘What is the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?’ I would say [write one or two sentences]: ...” The responses have been analysed by Wendy Jackson, who read them through several times to identify common themes, using NVivo as a tool. She reports that the most common themes in answers were as follows (see further discussion in Chapter 10):

Table 1.13

Goals of Church: Themes From the Australian Responses to Open-Ended Question 4

Theme	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
No response/don't know	223	43%
Share the gospel	116	22%
Leading people to Jesus	101	19%
The future	55	11%
Love	37	7%
Reflecting and representing Christ	20	4%
The three angels' messages	20	4%
Teaching biblical truth	20	4%
Increasing church membership	20	4%

Table 1.14

Goals of Church: Themes From the Solomon Islands Responses to Open-Ended Question 4

Theme	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
Share the good news about Jesus/God	120	38%
Preparation for the future	88	28%
Leading people to Jesus	82	26%
No response	31	10%
Reach out/up/across	24	8%
Biblical teaching	16	5%
Service	16	5%
Nurture within the Church	16	5%
Three angels' messages	16	5%
Misunderstood the question	7	2%

It is perhaps worth noting that there is much overlap in the responses from the AUC and SIM teachers. For example, they both prioritise sharing the Gospel and leading people to Jesus.

Differences Between AUC and SIM Responses That Are Statistically Significant

That culture and life experiences result in different attitudes and beliefs is unremarkable. There is little surprise that there are several items in the survey in which the differences between the responses of the AUC and SIM teachers are statistically significant. These items are listed in Table 1.15, which lists the items concerned, the probability that such an outcome might result from random chance, and the chapter in this book in which the differences have been discussed.

Table 1.15

Items in Survey Where Differences Between AUC and SIM Responses Were Statistically Significant

Item	p<	Chapter
Q56a: Pray outside of attending religious services	0.000	20, 26
Q56b: Participate in prayer groups, Scripture study groups, or religious education programs	0.011	20, 26
Q56d: Meditate	0.000	20
Q52: Have you ever experienced or witnessed a divine healing of an illness or injury?	0.000	20
Q62e: Christianity is about Jesus giving me power to live a righteous life	0.005	21
Q62a: I should be all right in the end if I am a morally good person	0.000	21
Q62d: I will make it to heaven only if I have a personal relationship with Jesus	0.000	21
Q62s: I believe the world is millions of years old	0.000	24

Note: A Mann-Whitney Test is the most appropriate test for comparing results of two items using Likert scales such as found in many items in the Institutional Workers' Survey is. The probability listed in the column with the heading, "*p*<", in Table 1.15, is the asymptotic significance (2-tailed), generated by a Mann-Whitney Test in SPSS.

In sociological studies, probabilities that are smaller than 0.050 are considered significant (the level chosen to determine significance is designated α). Sometimes, the stricter level 0.010 is set as the point at which differences are considered to be significant. Each of the items listed in Table 1.15 have probabilities much lower than 0.050, with the possibility exception of Q56b, which has a probability of 0.011 (significant at $\alpha=0.05$ but not at $\alpha=0.01$). Why this item is included in Table 1.15 is explained in Chapter 20.

The natures of the differences in the responses for the items listed in Table 1.15, and the explanation for some of them, is beyond the scope of a highlights chapter such as this. But the discussions of these differences are interesting in their own right, and readers are encouraged to refer to them in Chapters 20, 21, 24, and 26. Comparisons between the survey responses for the three Divisions of the SDA Church reported in Appendix B are discussed in Chapter 26.

Challenges for Administrators

The school systems in the AUC and SIM are undergoing a period of prolonged growth. In both cases this growth is providing challenges for administrators. Within the AUC, the challenge is in recruiting committed Adventists to teach in Adventist schools (this is explored further in Chapters 26 and 27). In the Solomon Islands the challenge is one of upgrading the qualifications of teachers working in Adventist schools (this is explored further in Chapters 3 and 27).

Does What Teachers Think the Church Should Be Doing Correspond to What They Think Their School Should Be Doing?

When asked what their schools should be doing, teachers in Adventist schools in the SPD spontaneously used words that suggested, “share the good news; lead others to Christ; prepare for eternity” (see Tables 1.7 and 1.8) When they were asked the same thing about their church, they used words that would suggest, “share the gospel, leading people to Jesus, prepare for the future, teach biblical truth” (see Tables 1.13 and 1.14).

The overlap between these sets of goals, one for schools, and one for the Church, is impressive. Both schools and churches should be about leading people to Jesus; both should be about preparing for the future. In other words, there is a significant congruence between what teachers in Adventist schools in the SPD think their school should be doing, and how they perceive the wider mission of the SDA Church.

**Education as Preparation for
Eternity: Teachers in Seventh-day
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the Solomon Islands, and Their
Perceptions of Mission**

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Co-published by
Avondale Academic Press
P O Box 19
Cooranbong NSW 2265
Australia

and
Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring MD 20904
United States of America

Cover Design: FreeRange Design (Miriam Kingston)
Layout: FreeRange Design (Miriam Kingston) & Robert K. McIver
Copy Editors: Howard Fisher, Diane Roy
Proofing: Taylor + Foote (Wendy Trim)

A record of this book is held at the National Library of Australia
ISBN: 978-0-6484704-5-8 (Paperback)
ISBN: 978-0-6484704-6-5 (Kindle eBook)

Chapters 5–7, 10, 13–14, 16, and versions of Chapters 9 and 15 of this book have previously appeared in, Robert K. McIver & Peter W. Kilgour, (Eds.). (2017). *Perceptions of mission held by teachers in Seventh-day Adventist schools in Australia and the Solomon Islands*. Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press. Chapters 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, and 12 of that book were refereed (these are equivalent to Chapters 5, 7, 10, 13, 14, and 16 of the current book).

The following chapters, new in the second edition of this book, have been academically refereed: Chapters 8, 11–12, 17–18, 24, and 26. Refereed versions (with North American Data) of Chapters 19–23, and 25 have previously appeared in Robert K. McIver & Sherene J. Hattingh, (Eds.). (2019). *Educating for service and mission: Teachers in Seventh-day Adventist Schools in North America and their perceptions of mission*. Cooranbong, NSW; Silver Spring, MD: Avondale Academic Press and General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.