

Levels of Role and Responsibility Coordination among Pastors and Church Elders in the SDA Church, Kenya

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Abstract: The church's growth rate is simply not keeping pace with world's burgeoning population, especially in East and West Sub-counties of Nakuru County. An honest evaluation of church membership verses the population of the area will lead one to conclude that unless there is a dramatic change in the way the church is growing, then the church will not complete Heaven's assignment. This study examined levels of role and responsibility coordination among pastors and church elders in the SDA church. The researcher employed descriptive research designs with both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The results indicated that believers indeed had spiritual challenges that hindered the church to grow. It was found out that with commitment and education in the word of God members have the potential to reach the masses with the word of God. The researcher conducted a survey to determine the challenges facing spiritual growth and development in this locality. This was to help discover the challenges and strategize on ways that the church can use to grow. It was meant also to help the church leadership address those issues that will make the church stagnant without fulfilling its mission. The study concluded that nomination process was not transparent since some posts were reserved for specific persons; it was found that such exercise was influenced negatively by the leadership. The findings also ascertained that church elders and pastors imposed persons of their choice in specific posts and influencing the election process. The leaders of the churches in this locality will need to work together with the laity in addressing the spiritual challenges. When they work together results will be a spiritual people and a church ready to fulfill God's mission. The spiritual leaders need to take a front lead.

Keywords: Role and Responsibility, Coordination, Pastors, Church Elders, SDA Church.

INTRODUCTION

A Christian church flourishes when it is spiritually strong. The early church grew from strength to strength. A church consisting of mature members who have a firm spiritual experience and whose character reflects the image of God are great instruments in advancing the cause of God. The spiritual maturity results from the daily activity of the Holy Spirit and happens through communion with God, through the study of His Word, and through prayer and witnessing.

In Christ's great commission found in Matt 28:19, 20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (NRSV) The command "Go and make disciples" implies that Christ was interested not just in numerical growth alone important as this is but also that the disciples can develop faith-filled, praying Christians who are daily growing in grace (2 Pet 3:18), studying

His word (Acts 2:42), worshipping with His people, and witnessing to the glory of His name. Mark Finley observes in "Evangelism's big picture: From baptism to discipleship" *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors*, "The church grew so rapidly that new churches were planted throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria (Acts 9:31), and within a few short years, the Christian church grew from a small band of believers to tens of thousands. This rapid evangelistic growth necessitated a carefully thought-through process of nurture to enable new believers to become strong disciples [1].

The mandate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to ensure that its members are spiritual and to win many others to the kingdom of God. In trying to achieve its mission the Nakuru East and West sub-counties representative sample of the Nakuru County churches face a lot of challenges that include retention of new converts and members' involvement in evangelism programmes. The research therefore sought to establish challenges facing spiritual growth and development in this locality, and find out strategies to

address the challenges in order for the church to fulfill its mandate.

Church Growth

This research brings forth a brief excursion into the history of the church growth movement. The term church growth as it is used by the proponents and practitioners of church growth is important to note. Charles Peter Wagner, writes, "Church growth is not some magic formula which can produce growth in any church at any time [2]. Sayana Roman puts it, "The spiritual path can be one of immense play and deeper inner joy [3]. Putting this more precisely, Wagner defines church growth as all that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and into responsible church membership. The researcher wanted to find the challenges facing the growth of churches in the locality of study in the perspective that Wagner defines growth.

Wagner indicates that Donald Anderson McGavran had examined the numerical growth within the mission stations of his Disciples of Christ denomination in mid-India and the growth rate of the mission stations of all the denomination in the same region, and then he discovered that fewer than 10% of them were experiencing any significant growth. The growth rate of the congregations of his own Disciples of Christ denomination, in fact, was only 1% in ten years. A few congregations in mid-India, however, were growing at a rapid pace, some as much as 100% a year [4]. In other words growth doesn't just happen because some other congregations will find it difficult to make any reasonable progress while others will flourish.

The church will therefore have the responsibility of building bridges between people and God, making their relationship with their Maker mutual. The unity of the church is paramount in accomplishing the mission of Jesus Christ. The mission of the church is clear and as Angel Manuel Rodriguez, reports,

The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," the final and full display of the love of God, Ephesians 3:10 [5].

Spiritual growth and development are ideal and true expectations of any believer and this is what will bring about church growth. When an individual believer

grows spiritually then the congregation in which they come together must grow spiritually. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith and Justice Anderson in their book, *Missiology* define church growth as "a discipline which investigates the nature, expansion, planting, multiplication, function and health of Christian churches as they relate to the effective implementation of God's commission to "make disciples of all peoples (Matt 28:18-20) [6].

Church growth like spiritual growth is a discipline with distinct characteristics. A spiritual person has a particular way of life to follow as written in the word of God and hence the researcher was finding out the challenges that hinder believers not to live as it is expected from the word of God. Spiritual growth focuses on disciple making. Evangelism should be deemed as bearing fruit only if new Christians develop into fruit-bearing disciples of Jesus Christ. In the Christian church today many are ignorant of the Holy Spirit's work upon the heart. By one yielding to the power of the Holy Spirit the mind is changed and the character transformed too. Ellen White in her book, *The Acts of the Apostles* points out, "Christ Himself calls our attention to the growth of the vegetable world as an illustration of the agency of His Spirit in sustaining spiritual life. The sap of the vine, ascending from the root, is diffused to the branches, sustaining growth and producing blossoms and fruit [6]. In this manner observation will tell the whole story. She continues to further state, "So the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Savior, pervades the soul, renews the motives and affections, and brings even the thoughts into obedience to the will of God, enabling the receiver to bear the precious fruit of the holy deeds [6].

The early church grew rapidly because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The record says that in a single day three thousand were added to the church, "So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added" (Acts 2:41). What a growth! The record further states, "And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:47)." If the growth in the early church was daily, what has changed that the church today cannot receive into its membership believers daily? What is the church now doing differently that was not done by the early church or what challenges is the church facing in its spiritual growth?

No one can be able to use say a thermometer to know how much of the Holy Spirit a believer or a church possesses. But like the vegetation world one can tell the growth by what is observed. How the plant grows and the power behind its growth may be a mystery but growth is experienced. Likewise one can be able to say that the spiritual growth of Christians is

happening by observing what they do. Ellen White further declares, "The Author of this spiritual life is unseen, and the exact method by which that life is imparted and sustained, it is beyond the power of human philosophy to explain. Yet the operations of the Spirit are always in harmony with the written word. As in the natural, so is in the spiritual world [6]. The naked eye cannot comprehend how growth has occurred but indeed it is evident that if it is trees they are growing taller. She further states that the natural life is preserved moment by moment by divine power, yet it is not sustained by a direct miracle, but through the use of blessings placed within man's reach. So the spiritual life is sustained by the use of those means that providence has supplied. If the follower of Christ would grow up "unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13), he must eat of the bread of life and drink of the water of salvation. He must watch and pray and work, in all things giving heed to the instructions of God in His word [6].

The natural expectation for a Christian is to grow unto full stature and perfection. People whose lives will be a testimony to others and whose influence will be unstoppable in the community are daily growing in Christ. This takes place when the believers are eating the bread of life and drinking the water of salvation daily. They will be able to work for the community and indeed they will prosper spiritually hence their spiritual lives will be a light in the society. When others will observe them and inquire why they live as they live, do as they do, the secret will be found in their spiritual connection with the divine power.

The importance of time alone with God cannot be overemphasized since allowing God to ever freshen the believers' faith will strengthen the believer. Being spiritually healthy involves the practice of disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, confession etc. Lawrence L. Lapierre in his article, *deepening your spiritual life* states that "spirituality seeks to express...the conscious human response to God that is both personal and ecclesial. In short, "life in the Spirit" [7]. Indeed life in the Spirit is a life lived in dialogue with God with increasing openness to God's loving presence, and in a life lived consciously as God's servants along journeys guided and empowered by God.

Since man fell into sin it has been God's desire to have him at his bosom and enjoy fellowship with him. God purposed to have man prosper but sin interrupted the plan. The enemy did not want human beings to grow together as God intended but God intervened to bring salvation and create a climate that will enable man to flourish again. In as much as God wills the salvation of men (John 3:16) it follows that God wills his church to grow. McGavran and George G. Hunter in their book *Church Growth: Strategies That Work*, believe, "Since God wants his lost children

found, and since the church is ideally the company of those who have been found, the evangelical church that grows in membership is providing an irresistible demonstration of the will of God being accomplished in its midst. Indeed, church growth is a test of the faithfulness of the people of God to the ministry to which he has called them [8].

This is not true only to evangelical churches but to Adventism also. However the church needs to ascertain if indeed growth is taking place. How can one know that the church has grown? Many times some have mistakenly thought that church growth is about numbers only, but as McGavran observes, "But the goal of added numbers must not be absolute. They are not the only valid measurement of church growth. The response of the churches to the total covenant task of the evangelistic, ecclesiastical, and educational stipulations of Christ is a far more complete biblical intention for evaluation of church growth [8]. Together with what McGavran mentions growth will also entail church administration, church attendance, evangelism and witnessing, how members return their tithes and give offerings, how they run their church programs, whether they have any church acquiring land and building churches' challenges, and if establishing educational and health institutions have any challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study was based on mixed methods of research design. It utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. The researcher employed qualitative approach in form of structured and semi-structured questions in order to include the respondents' views and opinions concerning the study as the situation were in the time of study. The quantitative research approach was used in form of structured questions (closed ended questions) in a five Likert scale as the study included numbers. This helped the researcher to obtain a clear picture of the situation from the respondents concerning the topic under study. Descriptive research design was used since it measured the overall descriptions of situations or phenomenon in a systematic way conceptualizing the reality in terms of variables. It also investigated the current status and nature of the phenomenon under the study. Integration of these methods facilitated the extraction of as much information and data as possible through SPSS (Statistical Package of Social Sciences).

The population of study comprised of 220 church board members from the ten selected churches in Nakuru East and West sub-Counties. These churches includes Crater, Nakuru central (Bondeni), Great News, Racetrack and Langalanga from Nakuru East Sub-County. Others were Nakuru West, Kaptembwa Angaza, Abundant life, Kiamunyi East and California from Nakuru West Sub-County. These target population

of churches are found within the range of 1-10km apart.

The population is as presented in Table-2 below.

Table-1: The Population and Sample Size

Church	Population	Target Population/ Church board members
Crater	575	29
Nakuru Central	577	25
Great News	324	19
Langalanga	287	17
Racetrack	141	17
Nakuru West	1407	37
KaptembwaAngaza	505	23
Abundant life	225	19
Kiamunyi East	230	17
California	117	17
TOTAL	4388	220

The researcher purposively targeted all church board members from the 10 selected churches. This was because church board members are mandated to oversee the spiritual growth and development of the churches [9]. The statistics were gathered from the church board minute book as shown and presented in table-2 above. The researcher also accessed seven pastors from those churches who acted as key informants of the study. This sample was used to determine the sample that represented members from various areas and also ensured that each unit of population got equal chances of being represented in all groups.

The sample size is the portion of population which represents the total population under study and as the sample was properly selected, the information collected would be used to make statements on the

whole population. According to Morgan, “formula for determining sample size calculation [10] as seen in the table in the appendices, the sample size of the total target population (220) was 137 respondents. The proportionate allocation sampling formula by Knowles [10] was used in order to obtain the correct sample size of members in each cluster (church) in collaboration with the sample size of the target population derived by Morgan.

$$n_i = n \times n_j$$

n_i = Sample size of the cluster (church).

n = Sample size of target population derived by Morgan

n_j = Population of each cluster (church)

N = Target population

Table-2: Showing Sample Size

Church	Population	Target Population (Church board members)	Sample size
Crater	575	29	18
Nakuru Central	577	25	15
Great News	324	19	12
Langalanga	287	17	11
Racetrack	141	17	11
Nakuru West	1407	37	23
KaptembwaAngaza	505	23	15
Abundant life	225	19	12
Kiamunyi East	230	17	11
California	117	17	11
	4388	220	137

An interview guide was constructed and administered in form of self-administered questionnaires. The nature of the questions was discussed with the sampled members of the church boards from selected churches. It was explained to them why the researcher targeted them, that they hold a very important place in the church as spiritual guardian and sought for their cooperation. The questionnaires were constructed and administered. The nature of the

questions were in form of structured and close ended questions where by a 5 Likert scale of measurement was used on closed ended questions as illustrated: The instruments of research were divided into three sections: A, B and C. Section A dealt with demographic background on issues such as gender, age, county and years in Adventism. Section B comprised of variables of church structures and Programs while section C was

an interview guide where church board members gave their opinions.

Table-3: Likert Scale Coding Interpretation

Description	Mean Range	Scale Coding	Interpretation
Strongly Agree	4.20 – 5.00	5	Very high
Agree	3.40 – 4.19	4	High
At times	2.60 - 3.39	3	Moderate
Disagree	1.80- 2.59	2	Low
Strongly Disagree	1.00 – 1.79	1	Very low

After the data collection, the raw data was fed into the computer for the purpose of analyzing it through the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The data collected from the interview guide were analyzed using coding through themes to back up the primary data. The quantitative data that could not be coded was synthesized with critical analysis and back up of the primary data. Response patterns were categorized into meaningful units or segments. The codes were used in order to construct and interpret common themes or patterns. Data from other sources were recorded manually in field diary and note books were systematically coded and analyzed. Recurrent and

emerging themes were identified and organized into meaning full categories and sub - categories. Some quotations were extracted and presented in verbatim. For comprehensiveness, data from the different data collections techniques were triangulated to validate and complement the findings from each of the sources.

RESULTS

The study identified levels of role, responsibility and coordination among pastors and church elders in Nakuru East and West Sub Counties. The results are as indicated in the pie chart below.

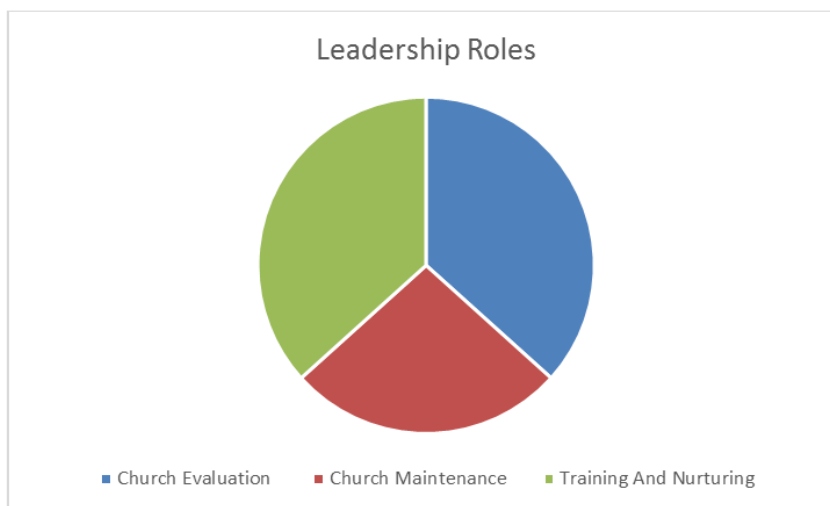


Fig-1: Showing the leadership roles

DISCUSSION

On evaluation, an average majority of 79(57.7%) agreed that the church evaluates its services and Sabbath school attendance as a monitor of church growth. Nevertheless, 58(42.3%) disagreed. The results indicate that though a higher number of churches in Nakuru East and West Sub-Counties maintained a consistent system of membership evaluation, it also indicates that almost a third of the churches did not have a system of evaluating members which could pose a challenge to church membership, nurture and growth. Examining secondary data on the need for documentation, a document published by the National Council of Social Services [11] asserts that organizations are expected to develop and customize their documentation policies and procedures using

pointers from this guide. Up-to-date client records, including details of assessment, reassessment, care and discharge planning are maintained for at least three years; and the program ensures that service user records are kept in a secure manner, so that the privacy and confidentiality of service users are protected. This therefore implies that documentation is very important in church setting [12].

On the issue of the keenness of the church in maintaining a vital list of potential converts and former Adventists a majority 81 (59.2%) noted that this is never done while 56 (40.08%) observed that it took place. These happened mainly because the leaders have not impressed technology and seen a reason of maintaining an up to date register. The church exists

just for mission. The way to grow numerically is when an organization is keen in its upward trend of numbers and more especially when dealing with a church. The researcher contends that if a list of potential members is not kept and followed up and visited with an aim of teaching the scriptures then the church will be stagnant forever. When no one cares about former members to reclaim them back, growth will not be realized. The only way to know that a decline is occurring is when a church will maintain a list of these members.

On whether every church officer and most members are trained in nurturing new members, minority 55(40.1%) agreed on the statement while a majority of 82(59.9%) refuted having received any training on nurturing of new members. The result indicate that the capability of members to guide, keep and also develop new members into full spiritual growth among churches in Nakuru East and West sub-counties is below the standards. A non-caring attitude among many members seemed to be rampant. Hence whether a new person came in or not is not their business. Such an attitude that seems to come out from the congregations will not give room for growth.

On the suggestions and opinions respondents were required to give their views on whether nominations and elections were conducted transparently, the outcome indicated that most depicted the nomination process as not transparent. The major reasons given were varying. However, some respondents felt that some posts were reserved for specific persons; others asserted that such exercise was influenced negatively by the leadership. However, those who felt that the exercise was free, fair and transparent indicated that it was so because all members are being involved at all stages.

They also suggested that measures for improvement of nominations should involve, pastors who chair such committees to stop imposing persons of their choice in specific posts, appoint upcoming new members to specific posts, vet character and examine behavior of leaders before nominating them. Many also were of the view that pastors and or church elders influence the election process. The reasons given suggested that because of their knowledge on some members, they wish to have people who they can easily work with in specific but sensitive positions such as the elders, treasurers, among others. However, those who felt that they do not directly influence the process said that they only participate as members.

For those who refuted, they suggested that there should be free and transparent membership participation in the process, bring such exercise openly to the members, pray for God's guidance, pastors to be non-partisan and neutral, as well as focus on spiritual growth than popularity and mass influence.

The study desired to ascertain whether the transfer of ministers affected their spiritual growth, and on this, there are those who felt that the transfer of ministers does not in any way affect their spiritual growth while others suggested that such transfers have adverse effect on spiritual growth. Those who said that the transfers have no effect suggested that it is an opportunity to mingle with new personalities hence growing. Those who felt that the effect is adverse attributed it to disorientation and the time that has to be taken before understanding such new ministers.

Human resource capacity defined in terms of the expansion of peoples' capabilities, has several aspects. Foremost among these are to lead an effective program, to acquire knowledge and to enjoy a decent standard effectiveness especially in regard to workplace. These, in turn, raise such dimensions as access to basic social services, expansion of income-earning opportunities; and participation - social, political and economic.

A high degree of quality of work life in the organization results in increased profits, higher employments and accentuating demands in the market. Improving the quality of work life is a continuous and progressive process of the organization. Quality of work life concerns with the requirements, needs, working environment and job design of the employees at workplace. Human Capacity Training is therefore argued as the most crucial practice in regard to equipping the human resource for effective program implementation.

However, training without practice and implementation of learned experiences is a waste of resources which should have been otherwise converted to something else which would benefit the institution or program. Usefulness of training program is possible only when the trainee is able to practice the theoretical aspects learned in training program in actual work environment. They highlighted the use of role playing, cases, simulation, mediated exercises, and computer based learning to provide exposure to a current and relevant body of knowledge and real world situations.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that nomination process was not transparent since some posts were reserved for specific persons; it was found that such exercise was influenced negatively by the leadership. The findings also ascertained that church elders and pastors imposed persons of their choice in specific posts and influencing the election process. The focus of Human Resource Capacity Development is on developing the most superior workforce which helps the organization for successive growth. All employees are needed to be valued and they should apply collective efforts in the labor market every time. This can only be achieved

through proper and systematic implementation of employee training and development programs. Employees are always regarded with development in career-enhancing skills which leads to employee motivation and retention. There is no doubt that a well-trained and developed staff will be a valuable asset to the company and thereby will increase the chances of their efficiency and effectiveness in discharging their duties.

Training is a learning experience which has a capacity to make positive changes and reach up to the desired objectives of the organization. It improves the ability of the employee to perform the job efficiently and with excellence. Training and development programs are the basic structural and functional foundations for the development of the employees. These foundations are important for guiding the employees through different situations. Training and Development programs are the framework for helping employees to develop their personal and professional skills, knowledge, and abilities. Training imparts knowledge to the employees regarding different issues in the organization and the proper execution of these programs result in number of benefits such as development of profitable, adaptable as well as efficient organization and productive and contented employees.

According to Oatey [13], "training improves a person's skill at a task. Training helps in socially, intellectually and mentally developing an employee, which is very essential in facilitating not only the level of productivity but also the development of personnel in any organization [13]. Training cannot be underestimated if a church has to catch up her vision and mission. The process of training and development is a continuous one. The need to perform one's job efficiently and the need to know how to lead others are sufficient reasons for training and development and the desire to meet organizations objectives of higher productivity, makes it absolutely compulsory.

RECOMMENDATION

The researcher recommends that Pastors and church elders should lead members without necessarily imposing their ideas on them.

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