

# Celebrating a Century of Adventist Education

By Orville Woolford

This year, 1990, is a special one for the Trans-European Division, as it marks 100 years of church school operation. The Lord has abundantly blessed the vision of those Danish parents in the Jerslev-Hellum neighborhood, who in 1890 started the first Seventh-day Adventist church school outside of the United States. Today, by the grace of God, the number of educational institutions in the division has reached 75. In 1985, the division territory was enlarged to include Israel, Greece, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Pakistan. Our schools are now distributed throughout 12 countries, with 11 languages being used for classroom instruction.

## **New Buildings**

The quinquennial growth in number of schools from 46 to 75 is mainly due to the addition of new countries to the division territory. However, new schools were opened in England and Pakistan. In other countries new buildings were constructed on existing campuses. Examples are the dormitory and library extension at Newbold College in England, the elementary school buildings at Oud Zandbergen in the Netherlands, the new dormitory with chapel and classrooms in Poland, the gymnasium at Ekebyholm in Sweden, a center incorporating the elementary school in Reykjavik, Iceland, and the dining room, chapel, and library complex in Yugoslavia.

## **Doubling the Enrollment**

During the quinquennium the number of students enrolled in our schools has nearly doubled, going from 3,101 in 1985 to 5,543 at present. Even though about 40 percent of the increase resulted from the addition of the new territories in 1986, the accompanying graph indicates encouraging growth each year. This suggests that Adventist education has maintained its appeal to parents inside and outside the church.

In addition to our schools, the division offers distance learning through

a branch of Home Study International. This program has thrived, with 590 students completing courses during the quinquennium.

A further positive note is the continuing growth in Seventh-day Adventist enrollment. This shows clearly the continued parental support for Adventist education. The goal of having most of our children and youth in Adventist schools is still far from being reached, but it is a joy to see many schools operating at capacity enrollment.

## **Members' Commitment to Education**

In June 1989, the membership of the division stood at 65,597. The member-per-student ratio is therefore now 12:1. This ratio has shrunk each year since 1986. Apparently, evangelism or church growth is not keeping up with student growth. This highlights some interesting challenges and opportunities for the 1990s.

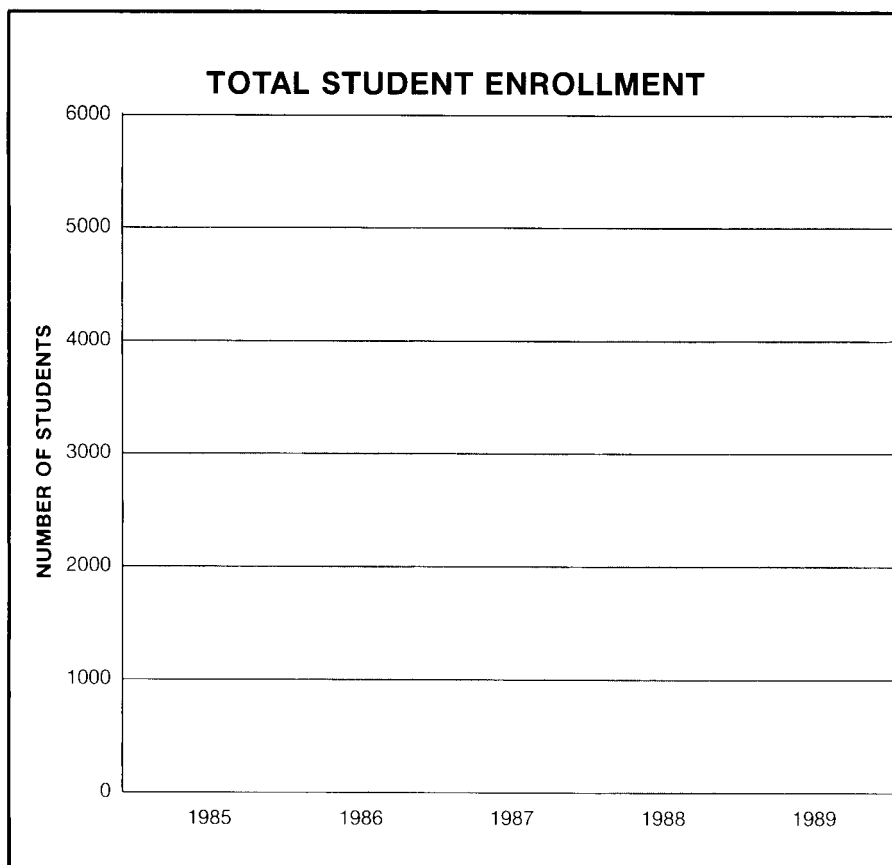
Twelve members per student is indeed a relatively small support base for our educational work. Therefore, much faith, commitment, and sacrifice is needed to maintain the growing program. From another perspective, the Trans-European Division has 1.2 percent of the world Seventh-day Adventist membership, while it operates 1.3 percent of the Adventist schools of the world.

## **Evangelistic Potential**

Our schools continue overall to maintain their attractiveness to non-Adventist parents. The number of non-Adventists enrolled rose to a peak in 1988, but the Adventist to non-Adventist ratio is now approximately 2 to 1. These figures indicate that many of our schools have a wonderful opportunity to evangelize. It is our goal, however, to achieve a higher ratio in favor of Adventists, to give our schools the best possible opportunity of realizing their evangelistic potential. Over the quinquennium, 500 students were baptized, and we thank the Lord for these "first fruits."

## **Curriculum Initiatives**

*Teacher Resource Materials.* The absence of a common language in this division is one of the major difficulties to be resolved before any breakthrough can be achieved in



curriculum development. Whatever is conceived for one country is often unsuitable for students in the other countries due to differences in language, culture, and educational syllabi. Economics of scale are not possible, so it is difficult to produce materials similar in quality to those that are available on the market. To cope with this problem, we have focused on small teaching units in areas that especially need to be presented with a Christian perspective.

Financing has been voted to help projects attain commercial quality standards. The teaching units considered most in need of attention were in science and the language arts. A curriculum development model was adopted and committees set to work. Eight science booklets with worksheets have been produced in the West Nordic Union, and in Pakistan the General Conference Life Series readers are being translated and adapted for elementary students.

**Bible Textbooks.** In most of our schools Bible is integrated into the daily program. This is generally accomplished by using denominationally produced Bible textbooks. Our goal is 100 percent usage of this curriculum in our schools. Translations have therefore continued dur-

ing the quinquennium. The latest book to be translated was distributed in our Danish church schools last year.

**Teaching the Dignity of Labor.** Our schools increasingly seek to incorporate in our curriculum the distinctives of the Adventist education philosophy. At Ekebyholmsskolan in Sweden, a bold initiative has been taken to weave the dimension of work and service into the mainly academic school curriculum. Major projects in this area rely mainly on the skills of staff and faculty. For example, students set out to make an item from wool fabric. The journey to the finished product began with actually caring for sheep. At each stage students were tangibly involved in the work required. This means increased demand on teachers, in terms of time and effort, but the effects on the students and on the school atmosphere are most rewarding.

#### **Faculty Development**

**Conventions.** More than 300 teachers attended a division education convention held in 1987. The theme "Keeping Christ in the Curriculum," has been the major focus of teaching during the past five years. Other

union conventions and gatherings were held in England, Denmark, Holland, and Pakistan. We are especially grateful to the many speakers at these events who came from outside our division, for they made a significant contribution to the professional growth of our teachers.

**Master of Arts in Education Degree at Newbold College.** The expanding education system needs teachers who have been graduated from an Adventist teacher education program. Accordingly, arrangements have been made to offer a Master of Arts degree in education at Newbold College. Teachers will receive financial sponsorship to study there. The college's education department now graduates about eight persons each year. Newbold College also plans to conduct intensive summer courses for teachers in the various countries. These will help teachers earn their denominational certification more quickly.

#### **Witnessing Activities**

One way to measure the value of Christian education is by the life and witness of the staff and students in our schools. It is therefore a joy to report that students in Poland are selling our literature on the streets of Warsaw; that students in Scandinavia are enthusiastically participating in the Harvest Ingathering collection; that students in England are delivering food parcels to the old and needy at the harvest and Christmas time; and that students are initiating and conducting prayer and Bible study sessions in Norway. Weeks of Prayer are alive and well, and in many cases are organized by students with a staff sponsor. In these and many other ways, it is abundantly clear that Adventist education makes a world of difference.

Teachers function with pastors and parents as partners in ministry. We owe them an enormous debt of gratitude for their dedicated service. The division continues to acknowledge this in many different ways. Scores of service pins have been presented and awards conferred. Derrick Mason of Stanborough School received a Citation of Merit certificate in 1989, and Ole Christian Bjerkan, then academic dean of Newbold College, was awarded the Medallion of Merit in 1987. We are grateful to God for what He has been able to accomplish through the endeavors of His faithful educational workers in the Trans-European Division. □