



Breaking New Ground

BY ORVILLE WOOLFORD

During this past quinquennium, the work of Seventh-day Adventist education in the Trans-European Division (TED) has broken new ground in many ways, achieving modest but significant progress in spite of difficult challenges.

TED is a huge and very diverse division. It stretches from the north Atlantic (Iceland, Greenland, and the British Isles) through Scandinavia, Poland, and the Baltics, southward to Hungary, the Adriatic countries, and Greece, and all the way to Israel, the Islamic countries of the Middle East and northern Africa, and Pakistan. Citizens of these territories speak 62 languages and numerous dialects and are part of many different cultures.

In TED, as in the world church, we are committed to the foundational belief that our educational system is designed to prepare persons, not only for useful service in the world in which we live and work, but also for the world to come. As a consequence, we firmly believe that Adventist education should not only provide excellent academic training and intellectual development, but also intentionally nurture spiritual growth and provide students with a good grounding in biblical knowledge. As we seek to achieve these goals, our schools will continue to fulfill a key role in the life and witness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the regions of our division.

Difficult Odds

In achieving these lofty goals, our 118 educational institutions battle against almost overwhelming odds. Highest on the list of difficulties are the perennial problems of trying to attract paying students in times of falling exchange rates and declining birthrates; of promoting and nurturing standards and traditional values in the midst of moral decline; of staffing institutions efficiently with godly, motivated, adequately qualified, and decently paid professionals, in times of declining finances. Yet, in spite of these daunting challenges, by the grace of God, our schools continue to prevail, and have even “broken new ground” and flourished in amazing and innovative ways.

New buildings were built on several of our school campuses during the past quinquennium (2000-2005). On June 9, 2001, ground was broken for a church on the campus of Newbold College in England, reinforcing the institution’s

commitment to spiritual values and pastoral training. The church, dedicated on September 14, 2002, has expanded the college’s ability to showcase a variety of worship services.

Other important additions were the new secondary school in Novi Sad, Serbia; the new educational centre for South Sudan in Arua, Uganda; the rebuilding of the administrative building at Middle East University in Beirut, Lebanon; the building of a new gymnasium at Danish Junior College; a major extension of our elementary school in the Netherlands; and the building of new science buildings at John Loughborough School in England and at Pakistan Adventist Seminary.

Enrollment Gains

During the past quinquennium, we have seen a steady increase in the number of students enrolled in our schools. Although the gains have not been evenly spread across the system, many schools



Breaking ground for the new church at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.



A Pakistani student demonstrates her reading skills.

have had outstanding success in attracting students. For example, in 2000, our Polish Spiritual Seminary had 15 full-time tertiary students. To succeed, it clearly needed to break new ground. Our leaders spotted a niche in the Polish educational market—incorporating Bible knowledge and Christian values naturally and appropriately in a B.A. degree program. So under the leadership of school principal Bernard Kozirog, the



Students line up at Zatoni School in Egypt.

school redesigned its curriculum to include “Tourism in Bible Lands” and changed its name to the “Polish Seventh-day Adventist College of Theology and Humanities.” Since that time, the school has increased its enrollment to 1,500 students!

Throughout the system, mere numbers fail to reveal some aspects of school life that are infinitely more exciting and important. High on this list is the enthusiasm of students engaged in the life-changing experiences that are daily offered in our school system. The energy, vitality, and potential of children and youth provide our schools with a world of possibilities, which are just waiting to be channeled and liberated.

Accordingly, our teachers, driven by core Adventist educational philosophical

ideals such as “Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children,” seek to open before their students “a path of continual progress,” encouraging them to “advance as fast and as far as possible in every branch of true knowledge” (Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 18). The many graduation services held each year testify to TED’s success in attaining these goals.

Higher Education Achievements

New ground was broken in other ways during the most recent five-year period. Middle East College in Lebanon became the first institution in our division to achieve university status, and Newbold College forged a partnership with the University of Wales, Lampeter, to offer a British-style Ph.D. research degree in theology. In Serbia, work has begun to adapt the church’s elementary Bible curriculum to use in the new Novi Sad secondary school. Similar adaptation is also in process in Poland.

In the Baltics, the first post-war graduation of pastors with a Griggs University B.A. degree in theology took place in 2002. Major financial groundbreaking support was required to enable students from economically challenged countries of TED to attend Newbold College for ministerial training. This problem was virtually solved by the introduction of a new formula for division support, based on the local monthly



At the Hungarian Theological Seminary in Pecel, Hungary, their motto is “One Goal in Mind—Service!”

wage factors of the workers.

The success of our system is heavily reliant on and powered by our teachers' faith in God and their dedication to delivering high-quality education. TED supports them by providing a variety of in-service training and nurture events; for example, regional and division education conventions and inter-division religion teachers' meetings. Such conventions provided significant encouragement, networking, and professional development for the teachers



Adventist leaders attend a graduation service in Latvia.

from Britain, Scandinavia, the Middle East, Hungary, and Pakistan.

In-Service for Educators

To support teacher development, the division held its quinquennial education convention July 30 to August 3, 2003, in the beautiful Adriatic coastal town of Portoroz, Slovenia. On the opening day, the 215 registrants heard Niels-Erik Andreasen, president of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, deliver a challenging keynote address, "Adventist Education: Delivering the Promise Today." Ten guest lecturers and workshop presenters provided high-quality sessions during the ensuing days.

Winning Students to Christ

Finally, while we rejoice in numerical growth, statistics reveal little about the "breaking of new ground" in the sense of tilling the "fallow ground" of students' hearts, with many being won to Christ in our schools. From Finland to Pakistan, Adventist schools are igniting students' interest and their aspirations and pointing them toward long-term betterment. One indication of their success is that during this quinquennium (between 2000 and 2004), our schools accounted for 533 baptisms. While we give God the glory for this, we acknowledge an enormous debt of gratitude to our 1,280 teachers who inspire the 17,665 students in our schools.

Ultimately, we believe that God "is just as willing to work with the efforts of His people now" as He was in the past (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 554). Therefore, confident that our God is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20, KJV), our team of educators in TED seeks to maintain a burning passion for the mission of Adventist education. They envision an even more exciting and challenging future as, increasingly, their work continues to deliver on its holy promise through the grace and empowerment of our loving

Lord. /



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Nordic teachers' convention in Denmark.



Teachers take a break for lunch and conversation during an Adventist education convention in Lebanon.