



TED

Good News in Difficult Places

BY DANIEL DUDA

During this past quinquennium, Seventh-day Adventist education in the Trans-European Division (TED) achieved modest but significant progress in spite of difficult challenges.

The TED is the smallest of the 13 world divisions, yet the most diverse. It stretches from Greenland in the north through Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark); the British Isles, Netherlands, Poland, and the three Baltic countries; southward to Hungary, the Adriatic countries, and all the way to Israel; and then farther southward to Egypt and Sudan in Africa. It stretches over six time zones from the west in Iceland, through Greece to the Islamic countries of the Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula, and all the way to Pakistan. The 616 million inhabitants of these territories speak 60 languages and numerous

dialects in secular, Islamic, and animist cultures.

Delivering Adventist education throughout the 40 countries in the TED is no small task. These countries are organized into 13 unions and three attached fields. Because of the diversity, there is no unified recipe that will work everywhere. Administrators, educators, and students are committed to the foundational belief that our educational system must prepare people not only for useful service in the specific conditions of this world in which they live and work, but also for the world to come.

Adventist education in the TED aims to provide excellent academic training and intellectual development, but also seeks to nurture spiritual growth and to provide students with a solid grounding in Christian discipleship. Thus, our schools continue to fulfill a key role in the life and witness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church throughout the vast region of our division.

Difficult Odds

In achieving these lofty goals, our 106 educational institutions battle against almost overwhelming odds. High on the list of difficulties are the perennial problems of trying to attract paying students in countries with a wide availability of free and government-subsidized education; declining birthrates; lack of available subsidies, difficulty in promoting and nurturing biblical standards and values in the midst of secularism and moral decline; lack of diversity in study options and majors; and the difficulty of staffing institutions with godly, motivated, adequately qualified, and decently paid professionals in a time of global credit crunch. Small churches and unions of a few thousand members struggle to sustain secondary boarding schools. Yet, in spite of these daunting challenges, by the grace of God our schools continue to prevail, celebrate success, and flourish in amazing and innovative ways.

Enrollment Gains

During the past quinquennium, we have seen an overall increase in the number of students enrolled in our schools. Because of the conditions, the gains have not been evenly spread across the division. However, some schools have had outstanding success in attracting students. For example, in 2000, our Polish Spiritual Seminary had 15 full-time tertiary students. In 2010, the school celebrates 10 years of offering a B.A. degree program called “Tourism in Bible Lands,” which is now offered in 10 centers around Poland. In the past quinquennium, it began programs in journalism and media communication, and promotion of healthful lifestyle, for a total of five departments. The institution obviously found a niche in the Polish educational market—incorporating Bible knowledge and Christian values—and today, the Polish Seventh-

day Adventist College of Theology and Humanities is the largest Adventist school in Europe! Its enrollment has grown from 15 to 2,137 students since 2000, a huge increase!

The Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (Philippines) has begun to offer a new Master's-level extension program in Qatar, where we had no educational

presence before and would be hard pressed to open one with TED's academic and financial resources only. For this type of cross-divisional cooperation, we are truly thankful.

Throughout the system, mere numbers fail to reveal some exciting and important aspects of school life. High on this list is the enthusiasm of students engaged in the life-changing educational ex-

periences that are daily offered in our schools. To hear their testimonies, and to see the energy, vitality, and potential of children and youth is always heart-warming for the visiting accrediting teams, church and school administrators, and teachers alike.

Higher Education Achievements

Newbold College in southern England, the TED flagship institution, went through a difficult restructuring period during the past quinquennium. A new Department of Management, Art, and Social Studies was created to offer new degrees in media and diversity studies. By adding British-style Master of Philosophy and Ph.D. research degrees in theology and new D.Min. degrees introduced in 2005, Newbold now offers all aspects of university training from one-semester undergraduate courses to doctoral level.

Recently, the Middle East University in Beirut, Lebanon, which celebrated its 70-year anniversary in 2009, began offering undergraduate degrees in elementary education, computer science, information systems, and graphic design and digital media. It also offers five postgraduate degrees in a variety of specialties. We praise God for an excellent university



Pakistan Adventist Seminary and College graduates, 2008



Moor Close (residence hall), Newbold College, in southern England

in a country where the Adventist membership is around 300.

In the Baltics, the final graduation of 30 pastors with a Griggs University B.A. degree in religion took place in Riga, Latvia, in June 2007. More than 60 pastors have earned this degree since 2002.

In Arua (Uganda) a graduation of 42 pastors from South Sudan took place in March 2010, completing many years of off-campus training. Middle East University offered this degree to these gospel workers using their own faculty and other guest lecturers.

In Croatia, Hungary, Poland, and Serbia, excellent work has been done in correspondence training of religious education teachers in secondary schools. These motivated and committed people attend intensive classes one weekend each month in order to earn their degrees.

In Hungary and Serbia, our schools have had amazing success with the Bible Open University, where each book of the Bible was presented to the general public from the point of history, art, and literature. A great deal of interest has been generated by the work of our teachers and as a result, a number of people have been baptized.

Major financial support was provided to enable students from economically challenged countries of the TED to attend Newbold College for ministerial training, as well as business education for church treasurers and financial workers. The TED continues to invest significant resources in contract sponsorships (more than £130,000 [U.S.\$186,000] yearly). In exchange for sponsorship, the students agree to work for the church for a number of years. The TED also began to offer grants (£113,000 [U.S.\$162,000] yearly) to help young people who would not otherwise have a chance to attend a Seventh-day Adventist educational institution to study in areas other than theology. These students spend a year on the

campus of an Adventist institution, where their lives are shaped intellectually, educationally, and spiritually.

In-Service for Educators

The success of our system relies on and is powered by our teachers' faith in God and their dedication to delivering high-quality education. The TED supports them by providing a variety of in-service training and nurturing events; for example, regional and division education conventions. Three biennial inter-division European theology teachers' conventions took place during this quinquennium. Each provided significant encouragement, networking, and professional development for the attendees from



Belgrade Seminary in winter



Adventist elementary school classroom in Iceland



Middle East University Administration Building, Beirut, Lebanon



Graduation of pastors, Griggs University program in Riga, Latvia, 2007

Britain, Scandinavia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Pakistan.

To support teacher development, the division held its quinquennial education convention from July 7 to 11, 2009, in the beautiful Adriatic spa town of Rogaška Slatina, Slovenia. On the opening day, the almost 150 participants heard C. Garland Dulan, General Conference director of education, deliver a challenging

keynote address, “Producing Global Christian Leaders in the 21st Century.” Other lecturers and workshop presenters provided high-quality sessions during the ensuing days. A similar event in March 2009 took place at Middle East University in Beirut, Lebanon, under the leadership of Lisa Beardsley, General Conference associate director of education.



Graduation for high school and nursing program students, Adriatic Union College, Marusevec, Croatia, 2007

Winning Students to Christ

Finally, while we rejoice in numerical growth, statistics reveal little about the dedication of faculty and staff who win many people to Christ through our schools. From Finland to Sudan to Pakistan, Adventist schools are igniting students’ spiritual interests and aspirations and pointing them toward eternal realities. One indication of their success is that during this quinquennium (between 2005 and 2009), our schools accounted for 1,862 baptisms. While we give God the glory for this, we also acknowledge an enormous debt of gratitude to our 1,475 teachers who inspire the 13,308 students in our schools and worker-training institutions.

Because 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), we can claim the promise that “God will meet all [our] needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, NIV). Therefore, the team of educators in the TED seeks to maintain a burning passion for the mission of Adventist education. As followers of Christ, they have been changed in their personal lives. As leaders, they embrace change in our institutions. As educators, they are the catalyst of change in our schools. And they envision an even more exciting and challenging future as their work continues to deliver Adventist education through the grace and empowerment of our Lord Jesus Christ. ✍



Daniel Duda is Director of Education for the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists in St. Albans, England.