

IAD

Adventist Education... More Than Mere Instruction

BY MOISÉS VELÁZQUEZ

In Proverbs 29:18, King Solomon tells us, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (KJV). Can we apply these words to the Adventist educational system in the 21st century? Certainly! We need to have clear vision and wise discernment to accomplish the task before us. The only solution is to do as King Solomon did—ask for wisdom from our Heavenly Father to do what must be done. “The world has had its great teachers, men of giant intellect, . . . but there is One who stands higher than they. . . . As the moon. . . shine[s] by the reflected light of the sun, so, as far as their teaching is true, do the world’s greatest thinkers reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness” (Ellen G. White, *Education*, pp. 13, 14).

The Inter-American Division (IAD) is blessed with 12 universities,

the Inter-American Theological Seminary, and the Inter-American Educational Center, an institution that offers college-level study programs online. We also have 1,000 elementary and secondary schools, more than 168,000 students in the three levels of education, and 10,000 teachers.

Following is a summary of the events and projects during the past five years that will set the stage for the “Quinquennium of Adventist Education” planned for our division (2010-2015).

IAD Education Summits

We held three summits—in Panama (October 2005) and Miami, Florida, U.S.A. (January 2007 and October 2009)—to integrate the division’s three educational levels—primary, secondary, and tertiary. Union administrators and education directors, university presidents, and

division officers met together to vote on important events and projects.

Bible Textbooks for Grades K-6

Thanks to the Education Department of the General Conference, Montemorelos University (Mexico), and the Inter-American Division, books for grades K-6 are now available. Montemorelos University has



been authorized to begin the second phase of the project to prepare Bible textbooks for the secondary level (grades 7-12). We hope to have the first books in the summer of 2011.

Textbooks for Various K-12 Subjects

A difficult challenge for Adventist educators is to teach from textbooks

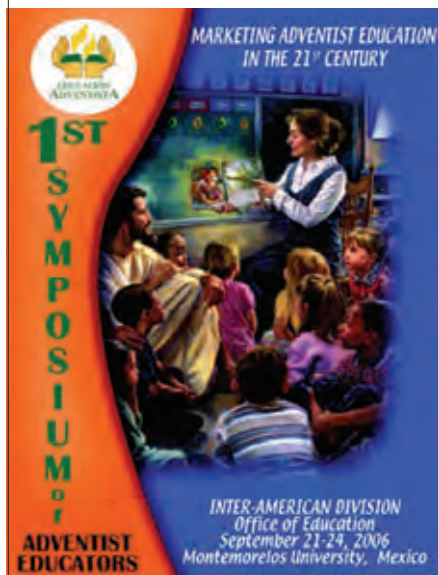
that do not contain the principles or philosophy of our church. For that reason, we have started to work on a series of textbooks for English, Spanish, mathematics, and science (biology, chemistry, and physics) with a group of teachers from Montemorelos and Antillean Adventist universities (Spanish), Northern Caribbean University and the University of Southern Caribbean (English), and from the University of Haiti (French). We hope to have the first series of books for grades K-6 in the summer of 2011 and the ones for grades 7-12 in 2012.

French Bible Textbooks for Grades K-6

The Inter-American Division Publishing Association and the French Antilles-Guyana Union have begun to translate the Bible textbooks into French for grades K-6.

New Educational Institutions

During this quinquennium, in the IAD territory, four new university extension programs were initiated (in Villa Hermosa, Mexico; San Juan, Puerto Rico; San Cristóbal and La Romana, Dominican Republic).



Education Symposium

Union and local field directors of education met at Montemorelos University in September 2007 to develop and integrate a division-wide program with a twofold emphasis: educational evangelism and recruitment of Adventist students. We have seen a moderate increase in our K-12 enrollment, and we are delighted with this growth. However, there is still room for improvement because it has not reached the same proportion as the growth of church membership.

Educational Evangelism

We firmly believe that educational evangelism is an important aspect of our church. We are consolidating a strategic plan for soul winning that will be integrated into the division plans for evangelism.



Page 24: Spanish and French grades K-6 textbooks. This page: Center: Poster for Education Symposium. Above: Staff at the Inter-American Division headquarters.

Secondary Level Evaluation and Accreditation Training Program

One of the achievements of the IAD's second education summit was delegating accreditation for the K-12 grades to the union offices of education. The division will do the accreditation visits for the secondary schools belonging to our universities. Presently, more than 80 percent of the unions have been trained and certified by our office, following the guidelines of the Adventist Accrediting Association.

Choir and Band Festival

The IAD's first Choir and Band Festival occurred at the Central American Adventist University in Costa Rica, on March 28-April 1, 2007. Participating students from 12 unions and eight universities produced high-quality music performances. The second choir festival will be held in Jamaica during the next quinquennium, with the participation of all the IAD unions and universities.

Adventist Virtual Library

In May 2007, the division committee authorized the Office of Education to develop the Adventist Virtual Library (AVL) so that our students, teachers, and church employees will have trustworthy research resources at minimal cost (<http://www.bva.interamerica.org/>).

Training Seminars for Library Personnel

The inception of the AVL also created the need for training. Three training seminars were held (one in 2007, and two in 2009) for university librarians and union representatives. Presently, the AVL offers 18 databases in three languages (Spanish, English, and French) and contains more than three million items.

Ellen G. White Medal

The IAD authorized the offering of the Ellen G. White Medal to recog-



Evaluation and accreditation training program for secondary-level participants

nize educational excellence and philanthropy by teachers, leaders, and lay persons who have made significant contributions on behalf of our educational institutions. The first medals were conferred during the First Inter-American Teachers Congress in Cancun, Mexico (September 2009).

International Educational Trips and Events

In 2008, the division organized an educational trip to Israel, Egypt, and Jordan. Efrain Velazquez and Eric del Valle, theology specialists, shared their knowledge with the more than 90 participants. In February 2010, a second tour was scheduled for IAD university Bible teachers.

Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL) Seminars and Guidelines

IFL seminars have been held throughout the division, including one abroad for the French-speaking fields. We commend the great work carried out in this area by Humberto Rasi, former General Conference director of education. The IAD Office of Education is publishing a guide on the Integration of Faith and

Learning for grades K-12 prepared by Xenia Gamboa and her team from Central America in French, Spanish, and English.

The Inter-American Educational Center

This center was created in January 2007 to enable our church members who cannot afford to study full time or to attend one of our institutions an online study alternative to enable them to complete a career or grow professionally. The center functions under the leadership of Myrna Costa and is seeking to establish new sites in Honduras and Colombia.

Scholarship Plan

This plan took off in January 2006 with the help of some faithful laymen who enjoy donating funds for education. Even though the fund has increased and many students have been helped, there is never enough to supply the needs of all those enrolled, especially our future pastors, teachers, and doctors. We urge our members to support this noble cause.



Fund Raising for University Projects

In 2008, we began to raise funds for specific university projects. The Haitian University received the largest donation for their library and computer lab. Other projects will provide furniture for the Cuban Adventist Seminary and secondary schools in Merida, South Mexico, and Bucaramanga, Colombia. We especially recognize Denis Soto and Norman Gonzalez, together with other donors, for their gifts, which have helped fund various educational projects in several countries.

University Presidents Councils

These events, for university presi-



First Inter-American Division Teachers' Congress, 2009

dents and vice presidents, highlight cooperation in different areas such as academic, financial, personnel support, and integration of graduate programs. The first council met in Medellin, Colombia, in 2008, the second in Jamaica in March 2010.

University Consortium

The Consortium of Adventist Universities of Inter-America was created in 2007 to improve our tertiary programs. Herbert J. Thompson, president of the largest university in our division, was its first president. The current president is Ismael

Castillo, president of Montemorelos University.

First Inter-American Teachers' Congress

This event took place September 6-10, 2009, in Cancun, Mexico, with the theme *"Let Your Light So Shine,"* highlighting the work and influence of teachers in preparing students for service in this world and for the world to come.

The congress included approximately 1,000 K-16 teachers, principals, university presidents, administrators, representatives from La Sierra and Loma Linda universities and the General Conference, as well as civic

leaders from the region, who participated in seven general assemblies and 90 concurrent workshops/seminars in three languages.

Awards for academic excellence were conferred by the General Conference, and the IAD presented the Ellen G. White Medal to a select group of people. Each night, the unions took turns presenting a cultural program filled with music and colorful clothing.

Church Leaders Focus on New Education Strategy

Given the rapid growth of the

membership in IAD (currently more than 3.2 million members), the division administrators are studying how this will impact the quality of education in our territory. An action was taken to channel almost all of the strategic planning budget for the 2010-2015 quinquennium toward education (more than U.S.\$8 million), according to Israel Leito, IAD president, who points out that 2010-2015 has been designed as the "Quinquennium of Adventist Education."

These resources will be directed toward financing teachers' continuing education, student scholarships and loans, improvement of university libraries, and the reorganizing and coordinating of academic degrees. Model elementary and secondary schools will be selected, with focus on formal as well as non-traditional education. Several committees are working to gather the necessary information to design a strategic plan for the next quinquennium.

An important new policy is the redesign of the selection process for local- and union-level educational administrators. These leaders must have experience in the Adventist system plus an appropriate combination of teaching and administrative experience. "We want to show respect for the selection of our educators as we do when we employ our pastors," declares IAD President Leito.

As IAD education director, I would like to thank God, the IAD officers, university presidents, union administrators, directors of education, and teachers and staff of our educational system for the successes achieved during this quinquennium. To God be the glory! ✍



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