



Daniel Duda

Inspiring News

From Challenging Places

During this past quinquennium (2015-2020), Seventh-day Adventist education in the Trans-European Division (TED) achieved modest but inspiring progress in spite of numerous demanding challenges.

The TED has the smallest membership of the 13 world divisions, and yet is very diverse. It stretches

20 official languages and numerous dialects.

Delivering Adventist education throughout the 22 countries of the TED is no small task. These countries are organized into 11 unions and three attached fields. Because of the cultural diversity, there is no unified recipe that will work successfully everywhere. Administrators, educators, and students are committed to making

sure that our educational system prepares people for useful service in the specific conditions of the country in which they live and work and for the larger world and 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 so that they can become fully committed followers of Jesus Christ. Thus, our schools continue to fulfill a key role in the life and witness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church throughout our division, and because not all of the TED pupils, students, and teachers are Seventh-day Adventists, they also have an evangelistic potential.



More than 170 primary and secondary school teachers attended the quinquennial education convention in Arandjelovac, Serbia, in July 2019. Photo courtesy of the TED Education Department.

from Greenland in the north through Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark); from Iceland in the west through the British Isles, Netherlands, Poland, and to the three Baltic countries in the east; southward to Hungary, the Adriatic countries, and all the way to Greece and Cyprus. The 207 million inhabitants of these territories live in secular, postmodern, Catholic, and Orthodox cultures and speak more than

Challenging Odds

In achieving the noble goals set for the division, our 61 elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions battle against almost overwhelming odds. High on the list of difficulties are the perennial problems of trying to attract fee-paying students in countries with widely available free and government-subsidized education; declining birthrates; shortage of church subsidies, difficulty in promoting and nurturing biblical standards and values amid secular and post-

Christian societies; lack of diversity in study options and majors; the difficulty of staffing institutions with devout, motivated, and qualified professionals; and the challenge of paying salaries that are close to market rates. Small churches and unions with a few thousand members struggle to sustain secondary boarding schools. Currently, very few parents are willing to send their young children to a faraway boarding school. Yet, despite these daunting challenges, by the grace of God, our schools continue to prevail, grow, and flourish in unique and innovative ways.

Enrollment Gains

During the past quinquennium, we saw a modest increase in the number of students enrolled in our schools. Because of the conditions listed above, the gains were not evenly spread across the division. However, some schools have had outstanding success in attracting students despite the challenges. For example, in 2000, our Polish Spiritual Seminary in Podkowa Leśna had just 15 full-time tertiary theology students. Today, renamed as the Polish College of Theology and Humanities (PCTH), the college offers programs in six departments, with health promotion and management being the latest additions. The institution found a niche in the Polish educational market—incorporating Bible knowledge and Christian values—and is now the largest Adventist school in Europe, with more than 1,000 students! Although its current enrollment is down from 2016, it still can boast an impressive 6,887 percent increase since 2000!

Friedensau Adventist University in Friedensau, Germany, offers an accredited part-time Master of Theological Studies at the Adriatic Union College in Maruševec, Croatia, where annually 30 pastors from Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia can earn a postgraduate degree that they could not obtain elsewhere.

Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.) is offering an MA in religion on the campus of PCTH, which is attended by 34 students eager to improve their education (20 sponsored by the church; 14 self-paying). We are truly thankful for this type of cross-divisional cooperation.

To illustrate the growth of our secondary schools, consider the example of Adventist Secondary School Maruševec in Croatia, which had 250 students in 2020, in contrast with 126 in 2010—a 198 percent increase (located in a village of 460 people; 6,400 in the local vicinity)! This past quinquennium, a new dormitory was built on its campus thanks to the 13th Sabbath Offering.



Polish Spiritual Seminary in Podkowa Leśna, Poland, is now the largest Adventist school in Europe, with more than 1,000 students.
Photo courtesy of the TED Education Department.



Adriatic Union College in Maruševec, Croatia, annually hosts 30 pastors from Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia, who earn a postgraduate degree in theology.
Photo courtesy of the TED Education Department.

However, mere numbers fail to reveal some exciting and important aspects of school life in the TED. High on this list is the enthusiasm of students engaged in the life-changing educational experiences that are daily offered in our schools. To hear their testimonies and to see the enthusiasm, energy, vitality, and the 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 of Higher Education, a few miles from London, England, is the TED's flagship tertiary institution. It went through a difficult restructuring period during the 2010-2015 quinquennium. Newbold has been a member of the Adventist Colleges Abroad consortium since 2012; thus, 2020 benefitted from 14 American students. The school inaugurated a new MA in leadership degree in 2016. As of 2020, they had 30 students in two cohorts in addition to some who have already graduated. In 2018, a new cohort of 20 DMin students started the program. The MA in leadership and DMin programs have also enrolled some students from the Inter-European Division.

Newbold's Department of Theological Studies, with 74 students, is the largest Adventist theology program in Europe. The school successfully passed the Quality Assurance Agency review to function at the university level in the U.K. The church's accrediting agency (Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities) upgraded Newbold to a "Form B" institution, thus making it the first Adventist institution in Europe to achieve this status.

In Croatia, Hungary, Poland, and Serbia, excellent work has been done in weekend classes and correspondence training of secondary-level religious-education teachers. To earn their degrees, these motivated and committed people attend intensive classes one weekend

each month, thus fulfilling their requirements through distance training.

Major financial support has been provided to enable students from economically challenged countries of the TED to attend Newbold College of Higher Education for ministerial training, and for business education for church treasurers and financial workers. The TED continues to invest significant resources into contract sponsorships (more than £250,000 [US\$325,000] yearly). This was 1.5 times more than during the previous quinquennium. In exchange for sponsorship, the students agree to work for the church for a specified number of years.

In 2009, the TED also began to offer grants (£125,000 [US\$160,000] yearly) in areas other than theology to help young people who would not otherwise have a chance to attend a Seventh-day Adventist educational institution. These students spend a year on the campus of an Adventist institution, where their lives are shaped intellectually, educationally, and spiritually. During the past quinquennium, 133 young people benefitted from this plan, making a total of more than 300 between 2010 and 2020. Besides that, more than 20 students received a scholarship for the new Year in Mission and Service program between 2017 and 2020. Committing almost US\$2 million in five years to helping young people attend an Adventist school shows the momentous commitment of the TED to Adventist education.



Adventist Secondary School Maruševac in Croatia had 250 students in 2020, in contrast with 126 in 2010—a 198 percent increase (located in a village of 460 people; 6,400 in the local vicinity)! Photo courtesy of the TED Education Department.

In-Service Training for Educators

To a large extent, 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 bi-annual inter-division European theology teacher conventions took place during this past quinquennium (at Newbold in England, Friedensau in Germany, and Collonges in France). Each provided significant encouragement, networking, and professional development for the attendees—not only from the TED, but also from the Inter-European and Euro-Asia divisions. All three European divisions jointly organize this event on the campus of one of our colleges.

The TED Bible conference organized together with Newbold College, the General Conference Biblical Research Institute, and Andrews University in June 2019 proved to be a significant event in exploring and shaping the Adventist identity in contemporary Europe for church leaders, theology professors, church planters, and frontline movers and shakers who have the opportunity to influence the direction of our church and its institutions in the coming years.

To support the professional development of (mainly) primary and secondary school teachers, the division held its quinquennial education convention in July 2019 in the beautiful Serbian town of Arandjelovac. The more-than-170 attendees heard challenging presentations and lectures and participated in workshops during the convention's high-quality sessions.

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 Norway to Croatia, Adventist schools are igniting students' spiritual interests and aspirations and pointing them toward eternal realities. One indication of their success is that between 2015 and 2018, our schools accounted for 271 baptisms. While we give God the glory for this, we also acknowledge an enormous debt of gratitude to our more than 700 teachers who inspire the nearly 5,000 students in our schools. We rejoice about every young person who commits his or her life to Jesus. All of these young people are precious in God's sight.

Because we believe that God “is just as willing to work with the efforts of His people now”¹ as He was in the past, we have experienced the fulfillment of the promise that “God will meet all [our] needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, NIV).² 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 had their personal lives changed. As leaders, they embrace change in our institutions. As educators, they are the catalyst of change in our schools. 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. ✍



Attendees at the June 2019 TED Bible conference organized by Newbold College, the General Conference Biblical Research Institute, and Andrews University. Photo courtesy of the TED Education Department.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1913), 554.
2. Scripture quotations credited to NIV are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.