

Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

**Adventist Education in the Euro-Asia Division:
Present and Future**

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INTRODUCTION

The Euro-Asia Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the largest Adventist division territory in the world. Our region stretches across 11 time zones and 12 countries from Eastern Europe to the Pacific Ocean.

Our territory includes all former Soviet nations except the three Baltic nations. Current Adventist membership is more than 140,000. By church membership, we remain one of the smallest divisions in the Adventist world church, but we have grown significantly since 1990 when our membership was about 36,000.

The fall of Communism brought new personal and religious freedoms to our region, but it also brought political chaos, militant nationalism, growing materialism, economic hardship, and the inheritance of a educational system based on the state as the only responsible.

The challenge for the Church in this uncertain environment is to grow healthy and strong based on a educational system that will be provided *“an education that is as high as heaven and as broad as the universe; an education that cannot be completed in this life, but that will be continued in the life to come; an education that secures to the successful student his passport from the preparatory school of earth to the higher grade, the school above”*. – E. G. White, Education, pages 18, 19.

The ESD Education Department are working on a strategy to provide stability to the Church that had faced almost 80 years of depression and suffering as a result of a lack of freedom.

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM

The Education Communist system that put a stamp on several generation of people in the Ex-soviet union has still a big influence in the society that is living in freedom but don't realize it. In an environment where the State was more interested in providing employment as much as they could and not look for financial efficiency; today is very difficult to work on a private educational system where the mayor problem is the financial matter that parents and teacher aren't able to solve in an easy way.

This situation is very deep ingrained in our Adventist community where the majority of the parents are thinking that the education is part of the State's responsibility as it was in the Communist time, this is the reason that they aren't able to even think that the Christian Education have to be played. They are still expecting that the education should be free for everyone.

As we can see we are facing a problem of mentality regarding the importance of the Christian education in every level, starting with the parents, Ministers and the Church structure.

Taking in consideration this situation, I want to direct this essay not to scholars of our SDA Educational System but rather to the Adventist Folk of the Euro Asia Division.

I. EDUCATION IN GOD'S PLAN

God, as a "God of order" have provided a specific plan for the education of His people. From the very beginning He, himself was the teacher of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. *"He who taught Adam and Eve in Eden how to tend the garden would instruct men today. There is wisdom for him who holds the plow and plants and sows the seed . . . The children who are with parents that love and fear God are in every way much better situated to learn of the Great Teacher, who is the source and fountain of wisdom. They have a much more favorable opportunity to gain a fitness for the kingdom of heaven"*. (E.G White, 'The Adventist Home", page. 143)

God give us a particular instruction about the plan that He has for His children through the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.

1. In the Bible

The Bible provides us the fundament of the Christian Education. I'll mention only two text that will give us a clear idea about God's expectation.

"All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children." Isaiah 54:13

"If a child is trained up in the right way, even when he is old he will not be turned away from it." Proverb 22:6 BBE

These are clear messages that God have given to his people as a mandatory to carry on while we are on this world. There is not an option or a choice; it is an command that we have to fulfill as His followers.

2. In Helen White's writings

The writings of Helen G. White are rich in advice and guidance for those who are responsible for the education of the Church's children.

“Wherever there are a few Sabbath keepers, the parents should unite in providing a place for a day school where their children and youth can be instructed. They (Church) should employ a Christian teacher who, as a consecrated missionary, shall educate the children in such a way as to lead them to become missionaries. Let teachers be employed who will give a thorough education in the common branches, the Bible being made the foundation and the life of all study. Parents should gird on the armor and by their own example teach their children to be missionaries. They should work while it is day, for “the night cometh, when no man can work.” {John 9:4} If they will put forth unselfish efforts, perseveringly teaching their children to bear responsibilities, the Lord will work with them.” (E.G White – Testimonies of the Church Volume 6, page 198)

a. For Parents

The Lord has placed great responsibilities upon the parents to take care of the education of their children as much in the first years of life as in the schools age.

“... The parents receive the child a helpless burden in their arms; he knows nothing, and he is to be taught to love God, is to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He is to be fashioned after the divine model”. (E.G White Special Testimonies Series, March 16, 1891 par. 7)

“If parents would have their children come up with pure morals and firm integrity of purpose, with power to sway rather than to be swayed, they must have a full sense of their own responsibilities, and ever stand for the right. The education and training of their children must commence in infancy if they would qualify them for usefulness in this life, and give them a fitness for the immortal life.” (E.G White HR Good Health, February 1, 1880 par. 19)

“Parents, help your children. Arouse from the lethargy that has been upon you. Watch continually to cut off the current, and roll back the weight of evil Satan is pressing in upon your children. The children cannot do this of themselves. Parents can do much. Earnest prayer and living faith will gain great victories. Some parents have not realized the responsibilities resting upon them, and have neglected the religious education of their children”. (E.G White, ‘Spiritual Gifts’ Volume 4b, page140)

b. For the Church

There is a clear message for our church regarding the responsibility we have as members collectively. We have an individual compromise but also a collective domain because there is no work that is more important than the education of our children and youth.

“ . . . All our youth should be permitted to have the blessings and privileges of an education at our schools, that they may be inspired to become laborers together with God. They all need an education, that they may be fitted for usefulness, qualified for places of responsibility in both private and public life.” (E.G White ‘Child Guidance’ page 332).

“In all our churches, and wherever there is a company of believers, church schools should be established, and in these schools there should be teachers with a true missionary spirit, for the children are to be trained to become missionaries. It is essential that the teachers be educated to act their part in instructing children of Sabbath-keepers not only in the sciences, but in the Scriptures. These schools, established in different localities, and conducted by God-fearing men and women, as the case demands, should be built upon the same principles as were the schools of the prophets.” ((E.G White ‘Need of Church Schools’ - PH140 23– 1900)

“The churches in different localities should feel that a solemn responsibility rests upon them to train youth and educate talent to engage in missionary work. When they see those in the church who give promise of making useful workers, but who are not able to support themselves in the school, they should assume the responsibility of sending them to one of our training schools. There is excellent ability in the churches that needs to be brought into service. There are persons who would do good service in the Lord's vineyard, but many are too poor to obtain without assistance the education that they require. The churches should feel it a privilege to take a part in defraying the expenses of such.” (E.G White, ‘Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students’, page 69)

c. For the Teachers

I want to remark in bold letters at the following statements some of the main characteristics of the Christian teachers that are indispensable for fulfilling God's instruction regarding the Christian Education.

“God wants the teachers in our schools to be efficient. If they are advanced in spiritual understanding, they will feel that it is important that they should not be deficient in the knowledge of the sciences. Piety and a religious experience lie at the very foundation of true education”. (E.G White ‘Christian Education’ page 51)

“ . . . Wise teachers should be chosen for our schools. Teachers have to deal with human minds, and they are responsible to God to impress upon those minds the necessity of knowing Christ as a personal Savior. But no one can truly educate God's purchased possession unless he himself has learned in the school of Christ how to teach.” (E.G White ‘Christian Educator’, August 1, 1897 par. 1)

“ . . . Let every teacher take hold heartily with a group of students, working with them, and teaching them to work. As the teachers do this, they will gain a valuable

experience. Their hearts will be bound up with the hearts of the students, and this will open the way for successful teaching.” (E.G White, ‘Christian Education’, September 1, 1909 par. 3}

d. For the School

Because our schools should be established for a high and holy a purpose, through a few statements we can appreciate the importance of a special kind of institutions that God wants for His children.

“ . . .The Word of God is to lie at the foundation of all the work done in these schools. And the students are to be taught the true dignity of labor. They are to be shown that God is a constant worker . . . ” (E.G White, ‘Review & Herald’, July 25, 1907 par. 13)

“ . . . The education that is needed now is one that will qualify the students for practical missionary work, by teaching them to bring every faculty under the control of the Spirit of God. The study book which is of the highest value is that which contains the instruction of Christ, the Teacher of teachers.” (E.G White, ‘Fundamentals of Christian Education’ page 516)

“ . . .The work of our schools must bear a different stamp than that borne by some of our most popular schools . . . ” (E.G White, ‘Review & Herald’, November 7, 1907 par. 4)

“The well-being, the happiness, the religious life, of the families with which the youth are connected, the prosperity and piety of the church of which they are members, are largely dependent upon the religious education that they receive in our schools. Because our schools have been established for so high and holy a purpose, the teachers should be men and women whose lives are purified by the grace of Christ, who are cultured in mind and refined in manners. And they should have a vivid sense of the perils of this time, and the work that must be accomplished to prepare a people to stand in the day of God. They should ever pursue a course that will command the respect of their students. The youth have a right to expect that a Christian teacher will reach a high standard, and they will pass severe judgment upon him if he does not.” (E.G White, ‘Counsels of Parents, Teachers, and Students’, page 497)

3. GC Education structure

The Education Department of the General Conference is responsible for the supervision, coordination, promotion, training, and quality control of the global Seventh-day Adventist educational system around the World for the different levels of Education.

a. Primary Education

This level of education is administrated by the local church and supervised by the Mission or Conference.

b. Secondary Education

In general the middle educational level is under the administration of a Mission or Conference but it is supervised by the Union.

c. Tertiary Education

The Colleges and Universities are administrated by the Unions or Divisions, and supervised by the General Conference Education Department.

d. Statistics

As an overview of the success of the Adventist Educational System I like to show the last statistic, January 2001

	Schools	Teachers	Students
Elementary	4,598	32,816	747,237
Secondary	1,115	15,703	241,441

Worker Training	38	421	4,163
Colleges/Universities	95	5,049	62,348
Totals	5,846	53,989	1,055,189

II. THE EDUCATION'S REALITY IN THE TERRITORY OF THE ESD

1. Actual Educational public System in ESD

As I have mentioned before, the political situation of the Ex-soviet Union countries had experienced almost a century of a Communist environment which had left a culture of State dependency that also include the Educational System of their countries.

Although post-Soviet Russia is in the process of working out a restructuring of the educational system, much remains the same, and probably will for some time to come.

The system, since 1965, has included eight years of mandatory primary education from age seven. There are two basic paths that lead to about the equivalent of an American high school diploma. One involves a ten-year track leading to an *attestat zrelosti*, or certificate of maturity. The other involves eight years of primary education, followed by four years of specialized secondary education.

Higher education usually begins with a four- to six-year track, depending on the field of specialization, which ends in a diploma in the area of specialization. The graduate level in higher education involves two to three years of study after the diploma, during which one is an aspirant. The acknowledgement of completion of graduate-level work, similar to the master's level in the United States, is the certificate of *Kandidat nauk*, by which one is named a candidate to become a *Doktor Nauk*, the rough equivalent to a Ph.D. in the United States.

Adult education and night schools have traditionally been an important component of the Soviet educational system. Hence, many people earn degrees while working and often work for an interim period during the course of earning successive degrees. Practicum's and practical training have also been important components of the educational process.

Russia's educational system has produced nearly 100% literacy. About 3 million students attend Russia's 519 institutions of higher education and 48 universities. As a result of great emphasis on science and technology in education, Russian medical,

mathematical, scientific, and space and aviation research is generally of a high order. The number of doctors in relation to the population is high by American standards, although medical care in Russia, even in major cities, is far below Western standards.

2. Educational Program in the Church

a. Actual reality

In the environment that is described above is very difficult to put in place the Adventist Educational System that is based in a private self-support structure. In consequence the reality that we living regarding of our educational organization are very poor. We have only 7 primary and incomplete secondary schools; one college and one seminar that are functioning in the whole territory of the ESD.

The biggest problem is that in every level of the SDA organization there is no sense of the need for a stronger Christian Education.

Most of the Leadership of the Church considers the Education as expenses that are not necessary. They don't realize that it is an investment that will provide strength and stability to the future of the Organization.

b. Educational Institution: brief summary

Bellow are a summary of the reality in numbers of our educational institution that will give you a clear picture of our weakness in this area.

Primary/ Secondary Schools 2001-2002

<i>City</i>	<i>Starts</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Adv. Students</i>		<i>Total Stud</i>	<i>Adv. Teachers</i>		<i>Total Teachers</i>
Tula Russia	09/1/91	1 to 11	30	16%	184	12	50%	23
Zaokski Russia	09/1/93	1 to 11	99	77%	128	24	96%	25
Ryazan Russia	09/1/92	1 to 9	22	25%	87	6	30%	20
Kiev Ukraine	11/1/93	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7	31	62%	50	7	67%	11

Turaspol Moldova	09/1/95	1 to 6 8;10	33	94%	35	5	71%	7
Syhum Russia	09/9/96	1 to 11	2	1%	200	6	22%	27
Tokmok Kyrgystan	09/1/98	1 to 6	31	27%	113	5	45%	11
TOTAL			248	31%	797	65	53%	124

**Zaokski Theological Seminary
2001-2002**

- 29 teachers (all Adventist)
- 1065 Undergraduate Students (in and off campus) 11 non Adventist
 - 110 women
 - 955 men
 - 320 Russian
 - 745 Foreign
- 47 Graduate Students (in campus) all Adventist
 - 6 women
 - 41 men
 - 19 Russian
 - 28 Foreign
- Undergraduate programs
 - BTh - 954 students - 66 graduates
 - BA in Music - 28 students - 6 graduates
 - BA in Religion - 46 students - 7 graduates
 - Intensive Music Course - 5 students - 5 graduates
 - Secretarial Course - 20 students - 17 graduates
 - Accounting - 12 students - 9 graduates
- Graduate programs
 - MA in Religion - 46 students - 12 graduates
 - MA in Music - 1 student - 3 graduates

**Ukrainian College of Arts and Sciences
2001-2002**

- 25 teachers
- 223 Undergraduate Students
- Teaching staff of 6 departments:

- The Department of General Economics;
- The Department of Management;
- The Department of Computer Science and Mathematics;
- The Department of the Arts;
- The Department of Finance;
- The Department of Philology

III. ESD EDUCATIONAL STRATEGY

"The necessity of establishing Christian schools is urged upon me very strongly. In the schools of today many things are taught that are a hindrance rather than a blessing. Schools are needed where the Word of God is made the basis of education. Satan is the great enemy of God, and it is his constant aim to lead souls away from their allegiance to the King of heaven. He would have minds so trained that men and women will exert their influence on the side of error and moral corruption, instead of using their talents in the service of God. His object is effectually gained, when, by perverting their ideas of education, he succeeds in enlisting parents and teachers on his side; for a wrong education often starts the mind on the road to infidelity." (E.G White, 'Review & Herald, August 22, 1912 par. 3)

Strength awareness

"To educate and develop the best and highest faculties of your children's minds is to do a work that will have a molding influence upon society . . ." (E.G White, 'The Sings of the Times', May 20, 1889 par. 2)

"Now as never before we need to understand the true science of education. 'If we fail to understand this, we shall never have a place in the kingdom of God. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' If this is the price of heaven, shall not our education be given on these lines?" (E.G White, PH140 'Home and Church School Manual', page 6.2)

It will demand a structural approach to the different levels of the organize church to strength awareness in each one, beginning with the Adventist parents in local churches, teachers, and Church leadership.

The key point in strength awareness will be based in an aggressive training program for each level of Church organization. Sister White said: *"If you have educated*

one in the fear of the Lord, you may say you have educated one hundred." (E.G White, 'Sings of the Times', May 20, 1889 par. 2)

1. Parents

The awareness program should start with the families of the Churches. It will be the first step in the process to let the parents know that over their shoulders rests the final responsibility regarding the future and salvation of their children.

Parents are responsible for the gift that they got from God, especially the work of the mother is fraught with tremendous responsibility; *"but when her influence is for truth, for virtue, when she is guided by divine wisdom, what a power for Christ will be her life! Her influence will reach on through time into eternity. What a thought is this,--that the mother's looks and words and actions bear fruit in eternity, and the salvation or ruin of many will be the result of her influence."* (E.G White, 'Sings of the Times', March 16, 1891 par. 6)

The Bible gives us clear example how the parents have to give attention to the education of their children. We have a very illustrative one when God was blessing Manoah and his wife with the birth of Samson. He asked for wisdom: *"O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born."* (Judge 13:8)

When parents are conscientious of their responsibility to educate the children in the way that God want, it will be easy to open primary schools in every city where the Church are well established. Pastors and teacher will be responsible to manage educational seminars based on book "The Education" from E.G. White, that already is translated to Russian, for the parents in each pastoral district to get account of the highest responsibility that lay on them.

2. Teachers

In the territory of the ESD we have a good representation of teachers in our Churches. They are working in public's schools. Each Mission and Conferences will provide summer training about the Christian Principles of Education. The training material will be providing by the Education Department of the Euro Asia Division.

3. Church Leaders

The leadership of the Church in the whole territory of the ESD should be aware of the tremendous benefit of Christian education for the children and the youth as an integrated growing evangelistic plan.

The ESD is the youngest Division in the world. To build on a solid base the Church's leaders have to be conscience about the benefit and the importance of Christian Education. A strong Church rests on a strong Education System and in well-trained leaders.

IV. ESD EDUCATIONAL PLAN

The education department of the ESD is working in a strategic plan to provide an educational system that will benefit the young generation of Adventist in the whole territory of this new Division.

The plan will attend the different levels of the church's structure, starting on the local Church until the highest Administrative level.

In the following part are listing the main activities that the plan will develop.

1. At the local Church
 - a. Create an Education department in each local church that will take care of education matters for the children and young students in the church.
 - b. Maintain a non-official Christian educational program for students that don't have the possibility of Christian education. The basis subjects should include: Doctrine, Church History and Bible studies.
 - c. Each Church should work on a plan to have a primary school to provide Christian education to all the church children.

2. At the Mission / Conference
 - a. Appoint the Education Committee in each Mission / Conference
 - b. Should have a full time Education Department Director to take care of the educational issues.
 - c. Promote the creation of primary and secondary schools in their territory.
 - d. Create a training program to update Adventist teachers in Integration of Faith and Learning.
 - e. Have a plan of awareness about the importance of the Christian education as a important way to keep a healthy church.
 - f. To have a finance plan to support the Christian Education.

3. At the Unions
 - a. Appoint the Education Committee for each union.
 - b. Should appoint a full time Education Department Director
 - c. Plan to have at list one Colleague in each Union.
 - d. Have a plan of awareness about the importance of the Christian education as an important way to keep a healthy church.
 - e. To have a finance plan to support the Christian Education.

4. At the Division
 - a. Appoint a full time Education Department Director.
 - b. Organize Seminars and Workshops for teachers.
 - c. Have a strategic plan for the whole Division.
 - d. Have a Educational Policy for the Division

CONCLUSION

I pretend in this essay to facilitate the process of strength awareness in all the Adventists community of the ESD territory and in all their levels.

The importance that the Christian Education transcends the familiar nucleus (knowing that the parents are the first responsible) to all the ecclesiastical structure because we assume the truth that "education is redemption."

The redemption of the human being is the heart of the Salvation's Plan, and we as Christian's should not avoid the sacred responsibility of transmitting the "good new." We as educators acknowledge that the most effective time for learning, especially for the reception of the eternal truth, are the first years of life of the children. "What we have to do for man and women, must be done for them before they becomes a mature persons" (Martin Luther)

The future of our Church is in hands of the children and youth that the Church has today. What we don't make for them today, tomorrow it will be too late.

Today it is the opportunity of beginning the change.