

Women Leading Education across the Continents
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**BLOOMING AFTER THE STORM:
TRANSFORMING WOMEN'S LIVES
THROUGH EDUCATION**



Presented
by
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ADVENTIST INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

Administrative Building



Graduate School



INTRODUCTION

Communism hindered the education of Adventists young people in Romania by

- a. restricting their freedom of conscience;
- b. obstructing their access to higher education (inherent conflict between religious beliefs and political stipulations).



PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1. To explore the experiences of Adventist women before and after the fall of communism;
2. To discover
 - a. why they wanted to go back to school at an adult age;
 - b. what challenges they encountered while they were in school;
 - c. how their lives were transformed after they had obtained their higher education degrees.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Empowerment education philosophical framework of Freire (1970);
2. Transformative learning theory (Mezirow 1978).



METHODOLOGY

**Research
design:**

Narrative
Inquiry

**Data
collection:**

In-depth
interviews

Transcribing and translating into
English (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

**Data
Analysis:**

Muccio, Reybold,
and Kidd (2015)

Data metamorphosis
Data representation



RESEARCH SETTINGS AND SAMPLING

Southern and Eastern part of Romania

Purposive sampling – snowball

6 participants

May, 2018



	Finished grade 8/10	High school	Higher education	Actual situation/ preparing for...
P1	1989 grade 10	2008-2011 High school	2011-2014 Ed; 2014-2016 MA in Ed.	PhD in Ed. Took national exams
P2	1985 grade 10	2006-2009 High school	2009-2012 Ed.	Ma in Educational Psychology Took national exams
P3	1994 grade 8	1994-1998 High school	2015-2018 Ed.	Took national exams; MA in Ed.
P4	1991 grade 8	2011-2015 High school	2015-2018 Ed.	Taking France classes; MA in Ed.
P5	1978 finished grade 10	2004-2008 High school	2008-2011 Education;	MA in education; Writing a book
P6	1989 Grade 8	2000-2006 High school	2006-2009 Educational psychology	Working in the school in her village



FINDINGS

DOMINANT AND RECURRENT METAPHORS AND MOTIFS

**Real world
vs.
Desired world**

**Emptiness
vs.
Completeness**

**Internal storm
vs.
External storm**

**Opposing forces
vs.
Supporting forces**

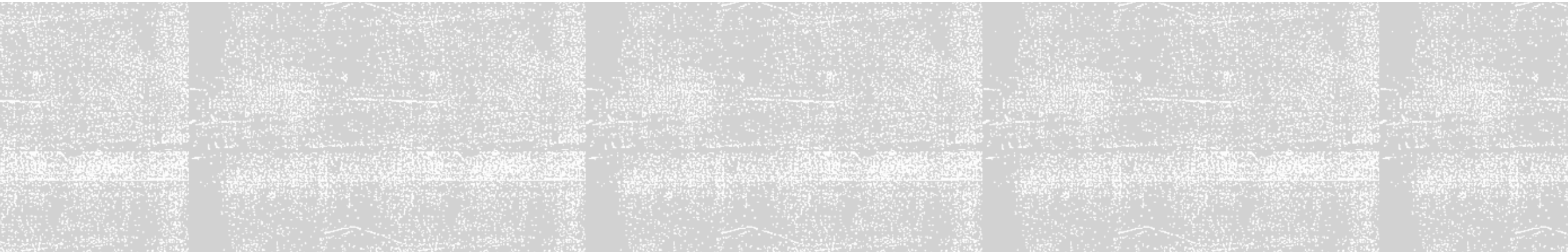
**Fire
vs.
Serenity**

**Transformation
vs.
Stagnation**





SELECTED FINDINGS



RQ1 What were the Adventist women's experiences before the fall of communism, specifically when they dropped out of school?

Real world vs. Desired world

- When I was in the seventh and eighth grades, I had a very difficult time. There were classes on Saturdays. I had Biology only on Saturdays and on Mondays... I almost failed the class. She (the professor) told my classmates not to share any class notes to Adventists. (P1)
- I stopped attending school, and not long after that, I met a boy in the church, who was faithful and I got married. My dream regarding school was . . . hidden from everybody. Nobody knew that there, in my soul, it was a desire, there was a feeling of unfulfillment. (P2)
- I do not know how other people looked on me, but I had the impression that they considered me inferior. I did not want to speak about school. I did not want to be asked about my education. A question which was stirring in me was: *What do you study? Which college do you attend? I was ashamed to say that I didn't even start high school.* (P6)
- I was dreaming this, to study. . . . I was dreaming it during night time. It was not only in my mind but also in the night dreams. Now, I don't dream about this anymore. (P5)



RQ2 Why did Adventist women decide to attend school after dropping out for several years?

Emptiness vs. Completeness

- There was an internal unfulfillment that did not diminish as the years passed by. . . which transformed into a silent, unexpressed suffering. (P2)
- I still remember two situations when I went into a camp and there, I had a feeling of inferiority. . . . There was a discussion about high school. . . . The coordinator asked every participant their experiences in the high school. . . . I did not have this experience. So I kept quiet. (P4)
- I wanted to experience . . . internal fulfillment. I think somewhere there was a frustration that I am not well educated. (P1)
- I had three or four times a dream. It was the same dream. It repeated once in one or two years. In the dream I was facing a blackboard in a big classroom and I was writing with chalk, I was writing a lot, and then I was turning towards the students. I was telling my husband, “What can this mean, because I always dream that I am a teacher. But how can I be a teacher given that I did not finish high school?” (P2)



RQ3 What were the Adventist women's experiences when they went back to school?

Internal storm vs. External storm

- The most difficult thing was when I left my family. I left my children. Many times I felt guilty. (P4)
- “Whether you agree or not, I will go. I want to continue my studies and you will see it will help us.” He didn’t say a word. He drove me to the bus station, 25 km away, to take the minibus to Bucharest. It was very, very difficult for me, and I was also very sorry that he was upset. (P1)
- My parents said, “Have you nothing else to do? Why did you not go to school at the proper moment?” But my husband supported me, “Go, you can do it. You have the possibility to become someone and to do what you want to do.” (P3)
- “Madam, I would recommend you renounce being a subject teacher. Instead be a kindergarten or primary school teacher.” I replied, “No, no, I like being a teacher.” “Yes, but being a Romanian-English teacher is such a high challenge, because some subjects are very hard and demanding.” (P2)



RQ4 How did Adventist women's lives change after they have earned their degrees?

Transformation vs. Stagnation

- I became practically a different person. It came with the change of vision and career. Professionally, I am now a fulfilled woman. (P2)
- My self-confidence grew pretty much. I had the courage to register for the national exam for teaching. I feel I am capable to do whatever I decide to do. If I really want to do something I know I can do it, even if this means sacrifice. I feel that now I live. . . . It is like a new start. (P3)
- I feel that my degree, whether I work or not, counts. It is what helps you develop and feel fulfilled. (P1)
- I feel fulfilled, valuable. I finished a difficult path. It is a beautiful experience. I began realizing how God helped me in all situations and how He helped me to reach the finish line. I feel joy, a joy which makes me feel fulfilled. (P4)



CONCLUSIONS

Transformative learning

- recognition that an alternative way of understanding may provide new insights into a problem;
- critical reflection of the established belief;
- coping with anxiety over the consequences of taking action;
- taking reflective action on the validated belief.

Education empowers:

P6 quoted this: “God, give me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can change, and the wisdom to make the difference between them.” (Reinhold Niebuhr)





THANK YOU!

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