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
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 metamorphosis
Data representation
RESEARCH SETTINGS AND SAMPLING

Southern and Eastern part of Romania

Purposive sampling – snowball

6 participants

May, 2018
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Finished grade 8/10</th>
<th>High school</th>
<th>Higher education</th>
<th>Actual situation/preparing for...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>1985 grade 10</td>
<td>2006-2009 High school</td>
<td>2009-2012 Ed.</td>
<td>Ma in Educational Psychology Took national exams</td>
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<td>P5</td>
<td>1978 finished grade 10</td>
<td>2004-2008 High school</td>
<td>2008-2011 Education;</td>
<td>MA in education; Writing a book</td>
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<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>1989 Grade 8</td>
<td>2000-2006 High school</td>
<td>2006-2009 Educational psychology</td>
<td>Working in the school in her village</td>
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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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