



Pernambucano Adventist Academy, 2014.

Photo courtesy of Pernambuco Adventist Academy Archives.

Pernambucano Adventist Academy

RODOLFO FIGUEIREDO DE SOUSA

Rodolfo Figueiredo de Sousa lives in the State of Goiás, Brazil. He holds a degree in theology, languages and history from Brazil Adventist University. For a time he served as a writing assistant on the editorial team of the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* at the South American Division.

The Pernambuco Adventist Academy (IAPE from Instituto Adventista Pernambucano de Ensino) is a boarding school for elementary and high school students. It belongs to the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) and is part of the Adventist world education network. It is operating in the territory of NEBUM (Northeast Brazil Union Mission), and is located at the highway Luiz Gonzaga (BR-232), km 91, 55660-000, in the Povoado Insurreição neighborhood, city of Sairé, in the state of Pernambuco, Brazil.

This institution offers education from early childhood education through high school, with boarding school and outside campus students. Today, IAPE has 480 students and 31 teachers. Regarding their physical structure, this educational unit has a school building, both female and male dormitories, music space, a restaurant, an auditorium, a temple, a farm, an amphitheater, a square, and a large natural area.¹

Developments that Led to the Establishment of the Academy

The state of Pernambuco definitely came on the evangelistic radar of the Seventh-day Adventist Church through the East Brazil Mission in 1910.² However, although there were initiatives begun by some missionaries, there

were still no ministers, churches, schools, or administration in this region. The work of evangelization began through literature canvassers.³ One of them was Luís Calebe Rodrigues, one of the pioneers of Adventist work in the states of Pernambuco, Paraíba, and Rio Grande do Norte. He won many souls to Christ and founded Adventist groups wherever he went.⁴

It wasn't long before denominational education programs also reached the country and the region of Pernambuco. The history of this missionary branch of the SDA Church in the Brazilian territory began more than a century ago, on July 1st, 1896. However, it was only in 1936 that the first Adventist school in the Northeast was founded, in Recife.⁵

The 1930s were marked by three important historical facts: (1) the end of the period known as the “Política Café com Leite [coffee with milk politics]” (1889-1930);⁶ (2) the beginning of a new era for Brazilian politics with the ascension of Getúlio Vargas to power; (3) and the various political institutions created by the Brazilian government, such as the Ministry of Education and Public Health (MEC). MEC was organized to develop activities related to sectors such as health, sport, education, and environment. Among the MEC's achievements, the 1932 educational plan stands out, which standardized the teaching of all schools in the state in order to unify public, secular, compulsory, and free education. In 1934, with the new Federal Constitution, education came to be seen as a right of all and was to be provided by the family and public authorities.⁷

These events, observed with a missionary sense by the leadership of the SDA Church, led Pastor Jerônimo Garcia,⁸ then the president of the Northeast Mission, to include schools in the list of urgent needs of this northeastern mission field. Later, with God's blessing on human efforts, Pastor Jerônimo had the opportunity to build the Arruda Adventist School, which was located in Recife, the capital of Pernambuco. This school started to operate in the same space where the church used to be. Thus, during the week, the building functioned as a school and, on Sabbath, Sundays, and Wednesdays as a temple. The first director of this institution was Ana Garcia (Pastor Jerônimo's wife).⁹

However, it was still essential, in a state with such large dimensions (98,068.021 km²) to organize a school unit with boarding options. Therefore, seven years later in April 1943, the Northeast Brazil Academy (ENA) was founded in the village of Belém de Maria, which at that time belonged to the district of Bonito in the interior of Pernambuco. This new school offered the option of boarding and was inserted in a valley often best known due to the Panelas River.¹⁰ ENA soon became a reference point in education in the Northeastern region of the country and started to receive students from different areas. At that time, the institution offered elementary and high school (or education), technical courses in accounting, nursing, and theology.¹¹

Between 1957 and 1961, the ENA Theological Seminary offered only the first two years of the Theology course. This curriculum was set up in such a way that it allowed, for those who so wished, to complete the remaining years of the course at the Educational Adventist Academy (IAE), these days known as Centro Universitário Adventista de Ensino [Brazil Adventist University]- UNASP, located in the capital of the state of São Paulo. In

1963, the first group of seminarians graduated from ENA. Later, in 1978, the administration of the South America Division (DSA) approved the construction of the Northeast Brazil Academy (IAENE, known as Faculdade Adventista da Bahia [Bahia Adventist College] - FADBA),¹² in the state of Bahia, where the Theology course was transferred from ENA in 1987.¹³

In 1988, ENA celebrated 45 years of existence and the graduation of more than 15,000 students. As part of the celebrations of its 45th anniversary, an auditorium with a recording studio was inaugurated next to the musical conservatory. This was the musical conservatory with the best equipment among all Adventist schools in Brazil at that time. More than five million cruzados (approximately US \$6,610.08) were invested in the purchase of musical instruments imported from the United States and Europe. At that time, ENA was a modern academy with integral education and four high school courses: Nursing Technician, Education, Scientific, and Accounting Technician.¹⁴

In addition to the entire physical and academic structure offered to students, ENA was a place that promoted the preaching of the gospel. Professor Elias Fraga Germanowicz, the general director of ENA in 1991, declared that the institution was “a protective wall for the children of the Church and a significant soul-winning agency.” That year (1991), the academy celebrated the baptism of 40 students who decided to become part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹⁵

The following year, the ENA administration invited all former students from the school to a celebration that would take place on the occasion of the institution's 49th anniversary party, the “Homecoming Party.”¹⁶ When the school completed 50 years of existence (the Golden Jubilee), the institution was “going through one of its best phases in its existence, enjoying a healthy academic, financial and spiritual balance.” On that occasion, the directors of ENA and the association of the former students invited “all students, teachers, principals, and employees who passed through the institution, as well as friends and leaders of the Adventist work” for a festival that took place between October 8 and 10, 1993.¹⁷

That commemorative event featured presentations by the Brazilian Air Force Band, an exhibition of trained dogs, and the unveiling of the commemorative plaque for the 50th anniversary. The music was presented by the ENA Choir, Angelus, Musipaz and Musiena groups. There was also the inauguration of the museum of the former students that received as its first piece a “gibão” (typical clothes of the northeastern cowboy used to protect himself from thorns when he participates in forest races trying to tame an animal).¹⁸

During the festivities, the oldest worker of the school, Professor Sebastião Santana, recalled the turbulent moment of the foundation of the school during World War II. He recalled that the institution “was born in a cradle of war and flourished in a valley of peace... ENA continues, by the grace of God, to be a valley of peace, inspiring in all who know it, optimism and spirit of fighting for the supremacy of good.”¹⁹ A year later, in 1995, ENA celebrated the baptism of 70 students and 20 other members of the same family.²⁰

The following year (1996), the president of Brazil at the time, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, published an official note congratulating the SDA Church on the centenary of education in the country: "This year the Adventist school in Brazil celebrates the centenary of its activities in the country. And in those hundred years, Seventh-day Adventists have done a lot for education in Brazil. [...] Today, there are more than 500 institutions, spread not only in the south of the country [...], but also in states like [...] Pernambuco, where the Northeast Brazil Academy [...] works. Education is an instrument of justice, because it offers opportunities to those who have always been marginalized. The adventist school [...] believes in human development and works seriously to train competent citizens [...] I want, therefore, to compliment adventist education for its centenary in Brazil [...]."²¹

Even after several changes, such as the transference of the theology course to IAENE, ENA remained active in evangelism. In 1999, two churches had already been built in the city of Catende, and two others were under construction in other locations. The missionaries of the school, students and teachers, travelled in a vehicle that was commonly known as the "missionary tractor." With regard to spiritual practices, the ENA calendar offered vigils, the traditional walk in the forest and other youth services on the hills, in addition to evangelistic conferences.²²

Everything was going well at school until 2:00 pm on August 1, 2000 (during a vacation period) when a strong flood destroyed a large part of ENA. The buildings were seriously damaged, causing material losses in excess of R \$1 million (approximately US \$559,284.11). The report by civil engineer Nicanor dos Santos Modesto, sent at the request of pastor Helder Roger Cavalcanti Silva, who was then president of UNeB, stated that the geographical position of ENA contributed to the calamity, as it was located in a valley surrounded by hills and the Panelas River circulated inside as an "U"-like shape²³, surrounding ENA by the waters.

The erosion caused by the strong current extended the old stretch of the river by 150 meters and destroyed three bridges, including one that connected the schoolyard to the teachers' homes; another between the sanitation network and the electrical installations; and one that was among some facilities that simply ceased to exist. The damage was not greater only because the temple building protected the other buildings from the violent water flow. However, the water opened a hole about four meters in diameter in one of the walls of the church, through which all the benches and the piano were dragged downstream. Despite the physical damage to the institution, no one was injured during the incident.²⁴

After the catastrophe, Pastor Enilson Pedreira, the chaplain for the academy, was given the task of coordinating the campus restoration. The floods of the Panelas River were not uncommon, since this has taken place with other rivers in Brazil. But the amount of damage, unimaginable until that day, and the fear that the catastrophe could be repeated made the administration of the SDA Church make the difficult decision of closing ENA. Thus, in November of that year, in a meeting held with all the administrative leadership and the elders of the SDA Church, the plan was approved to transform the Northeast Brazil Academy site into the Adventist Training and Recreation Center (CATRE). That decision ended the 57 anniversaries of history of the school (April 21, 1943-

August 1, 2000).²⁵

Later, in 2019, CATRE land was expropriated by the municipality of Belém de Maria to be transformed into the Centro Educacional Municipal de Tempo Integral [Full-Time Municipal Educational Center] as well as the city hall. On that occasion, the public authorities indemnified the SDA in the amount of R\$100,000 (approximately US\$24,146.42).²⁶

When the doors of ENA were closed, the need for a school that offered elementary and high school education (along with a boarding school), within the state of Pernambuco, reappeared. Unfortunately, the nearest school that could match the services provided by the former academy was located about 700km away, in the state of Bahia.²⁷ This desire was only met with the inauguration of the Pernambucano Adventist Academy in 2014.

School Foundation

The Pernambucano Adventist Academy emerged as a new proposal for boarding school education for the state of Pernambuco. In 2007, pastors Geovani Queiroz (president of UNeB at that time), Ivo Vasconcelos (financial director of UNeB at that time), André Dantas (president of Pernambuco Conference at that time), and Paulo Reis (financial director of Pernambuco Conference at that time), started looking for a place with conditions to receive the new Adventist academy in Pernambuco.²⁸

After some research, they found a farm in a prosperous region named “Vista Alegre,” [Happy View] located on the bank of BR-232, km 91, in the city of Sairé, in the state of Pernambuco. The negotiation process was soon started and, after a meeting between the directors of UNeB and SAD, the purchase of the 184,955.79m² farm was made for the amount of R\$1,721,000.00 (about US\$907,700.42).²⁹ After the purchase, that farm was renamed “Nova ENA” [New ENA]. Then, during a meeting that took place in September 2007, the name “Instituto Adventista Pernambucano de Ensino” [Pernambucano Adventist Academy] was chosen for the boarding school.³⁰ The construction of the facilities of this institution was meticulous and followed the deadlines that had been pre-established.³¹

In March 2008, Pastor Jackson Macedo Pimentel and his family arrived at IAPE. This pastor served as the institution’s first administrative director. Later, on August 3rd of that same year, Mr. Candido Timóteo da Paz Filho and his family also arrived at IAPE. Mr. Candido was one of the first employees of the institution, working as a local caretaker. In the same year, IAPE trained its first employees, with gardeners, caretakers, secretaries, and other professionals. Subsequently, the institute management hired other employees to work in the kitchen, on the farm, and in the area of evangelism.³²

On May 27, 2009, UNeB requested authorization from SAD to start the first stage of the IAPE construction. Thus began the construction of the school buildings, the administration building, the dormitories, the sports square, the church, and their auditoriums. On June 10th of the following year, the construction of the entrance portal of

the school started,³³ and on August 4th of the same year, the dedication ceremony for the foundation stone took place. On this occasion, administrators and representatives from the field and from the entire SAD were present, journalists from Hope Channel Brazil and TV Cultura [Culture TV] from João Pessoa (capital of the state of Paraíba), as well as the presence of the Adventist businessman Milton Afonso who, on that occasion, made a donation of R\$200,000.00 (about US\$113,875.76) for the construction of the classroom building.³⁴

On May 23rd, 2011, the construction work began on the men's dormitory and, on September 5^h of the same year, the construction of a building that would serve as the cafeteria. IAPE was being disseminated at each church event, and on June 5^h, 2012, the 1st environment week promoted by the institution took place. This event included an organic fair that was supported by the city of Gravatá and AMA (Friends of the Environment)³⁵ in the city of Chã Grande, both in Pernambuco. About 800 people participated, including political and ecclesiastical authorities.³⁶

On January 16th, 2012, construction began on the auditorium that would have a capacity to seat 700 people, and in June of that same year, the school building was already in its completion phase. However, on August 3^d, construction was delayed due to financial difficulties which forced the administration to reduce the number of employees working on the construction. In spite of these initial unforeseen events, that same year, the third stage of hiring IAPE employees was carried out, and on March 4^h, 2013, IAPE re-invigorated the pace of the construction. From that date, the building construction was directed by UNeB administration itself (instead of an outsourced construction company which until then had been executing the constructions).³⁷

Those responsible for the construction, from then on, were the engineers: Ivanildo Coutinho and Diogo Carneiro. In addition to this project, two master builders were admitted: José Ramos Firmino and Valdeir Inácio Costa. Luiz Henrique Gomes da Silva (as warehouse manager), Cláudio Cristiano Gomes (as security technician), and a team of 40 men were also admitted. The due date for the completion of the works was set for February 2014, and, still in the year 2013, the construction project for the women's dorm started.³⁸

Subsequently, on July 17th, 2013, Wanderson Fernandes Leal's calling was approved to serve as financial administrator and treasurer³⁹ and, on September 2nd, he was chosen to serve as the institutional administrative director. On 12th of that month, Antônio Ramos de Brito's calling to act as general director was also approved.⁴⁰ Later, on August 31st, the pre-registration and pre-inauguration of the auditorium were launched. This celebration was attended by Pastor Luís Gonçalves and the Arautos do Rei quartet.⁴¹

Pernambucano Adventist Academy started holding classes in 2014, with the following three stages of preschool: Nursery III, Infant IV, and Infant V and Elementary School I, 7th, 8^h, and 9th years of Elementary School II (there were no students enrolled in the 6th year) and High School. All classes ended up bringing 315 students in the initial year of the history of the new Pernambucano boarding school. At present, Pernambucano Adventist Academy has 31 teachers.⁴²

In all these years, the original mission of IAPE has remained the same: "to promote, through Christian education, the integral development of the student, forming autonomous citizens, committed to the well-being of the community, the country and with God." Its vision is "to be an educational system recognized for its excellence based on biblical-Christian principles." Its purpose as an institution is "to promote the recognition of God as the source of all life; encourage the study, protection, and conservation of nature created by God; to promote the acquisition of healthy habits through knowledge of the body and the laws that govern it; to provide opportunities for the development of critical sense, creativity, research and reflective thinking; and promoting autonomy and authenticity anchored in biblical-Christian values."⁴³

History of the School

On October 9th, 2013, IAPE started to operate under the general direction of Antônio de Brito; Israel Elpídio, deputy director and marketing director; Wanderson Leal, managing director; Diego de Lima, accountant; Willian Freitas, head of the Human Resources sector; Tácio Silva, who was responsible for the cash flow; José Afonso Alves in the Information Technology sector; Jovinalda Pimentel, as administrative assistant secretary; Márcia Brania as administrative secretary; Lídia Carvalho Santos, school secretary; Rosália Freitas, assistant school secretary; and Celi Fernandes, general pedagogical coordinator.⁴⁴

The inauguration of the school building took place on February 28, 2014, four days after the end of its construction, as predicted. The building was named after businessman Milton Afonso. For those who had known the Northeast Brazil Academy, the IAPE was the restart of a dream interrupted after that catastrophe that caused the closing of the activities of the school in 2000. For those who did not know ENA, the Pernambuco Adventist Academy was the fulfillment of the old dream of having an Adventist teaching institution in the region.⁴⁵

And the new school has been characterized by its advantages. One of them is its objective of offering a differentiated education, in the manner proposed by Adventist education. For example, IAPE seeks to encourage the conscious use of technologies in the service of education so that they produce more positive effects. The institution provides students with several healthy activities that seek the best development of multiple intelligences. For instance, in addition to sports teams, there are activities developed such as the IAPE choir.⁴⁶

Another example is the investment in the continuous development of teachers. Being a teacher means, in a practical way, to never stop learning, especially when it comes to new teaching methodologies. An example of this is the project "Domus: it is playing that you learn," which was one of the highlights of the CPBedu 2018 Award,⁴⁷ organized by the Brazil Publishing House (CPB) and the Adventist Education Network. Ângelo Bernardes, teacher of philosophy and religious education for high school at IAPE, in partnership with teachers from other disciplines, developed pedagogical games to teach sociology, philosophy, history, and geography. With the use of this project, it was possible to decrease "the recovery rate by 75% and [increase] up to 36% [students' performance] in the subjects."⁴⁸

The physical structure and teaching proposal that exists at IAPE attract students from cities across the Northeast and from states like São Paulo and Mato Grosso, as well as the Federal District.⁴⁹ These and other factors have contributed to the number of enrollments growing over the years in such a way that, in 2015, the school had 358 students enrolled; in 2016, there were 402 enrollments; the following year, 430 students studied at the institute; in 2018, there were 483; and in 2019, 443 students were enrolled.⁵⁰

On May 23, 2019, the Institute Central Square was inaugurated with an area of 23 thousand m². This construction included a football field society, a tennis court, an amphitheater, a water mirror, and a 600-meter running and cycling track. The inauguration was attended by leaders of the South America Division of SDA, Hope Channel Brazil, and the Northeast Brazil Union in addition to several authorities from the state of Pernambuco and the municipality of Sairé, where the school is located.⁵¹

Nowadays, IAPE has both female and male dormitories, a music space, a school building, a restaurant, an auditorium, a temple, a farm, an amphitheater, and a square. The institute has a partnership with the Brazil Adventist University and is used as a site for postgraduate distance education courses as personal and ecclesiastical leadership (MBA) and family counseling and psychosocial intervention.⁵²

Historical Role of the School

IAPE maintains a healthy relationship with the municipality of Sairé. The school received a motion of recognition from the city council on September 1st, 2015 and received an honorable mention by the city council of the city of Gravatá at the end of the legislative year that took place on December 12, 2018. A school like IAPE, when installed in a municipality, attracts several investors. In this context, the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), a study that synthesized the behavior of the economy of the city where the institute is located, indicated a leap in the economy of the municipality that has happened since the school was inaugurated.⁵³

The direction of IAPE promotes annual presentations such as “Esperança e Paixão” [Hope and Passion], which dramatizes biblical narratives. Between March 18 and 20, 2016, a free play with the theme of the Passion of Christ was presented. This event had an audience of more than six thousand people from all over the region.⁵⁴ Several SDA events are also held at IAPE, since its structure can hold large numbers of people. There are, for example, the trainings of the project A Year In Mission⁵⁵ developed by DSA.⁵⁶ However, the last of these events held there was the 1st Communication Meeting in the Northeast - Global Adventist Internet Network, which brought together experts in technology and social communication to discuss the use of technology in evangelization. The program aimed to train the communication leaders of Adventist churches across the Northeast of Brazil.⁵⁷

In addition to ecclesiastical activities, IAPE organizes several social actions. On World Environment Day (June 5th), several civil organizations have launched manifestos and taken measures to raise public awareness of the need

to preserve the environment. The Adventist Education Network and its school institutions have developed projects that bring students and their families closer to nature.⁵⁸ It was with this in mind that IAPE administration built the Little Farm. In this space, which was inaugurated on June 2nd, 2017, science classes in early childhood education are held in the 5th year of elementary school. In other periods, there are leisure activities for students, for families, and members of the local community. In addition to conventional classes, children also study fish farming and organic poultry. Among the benefits of this contact with nature the quality of sleep and the key to a faster learning have been discovered.⁵⁹

Future Outlook

The desire of IAPE administration for the school is to make it a model for adolescent boarding schools throughout South America. Because of this, several investments have been made in the scope of prevention and safety, training of preceptors to deal with students in situations of bullying and/or with signs of depression. In addition, the management aims to make the school environment increasingly Christian. The administration also intends to invest in the training of employees, to develop a plan for the valorization and recognition of the faculty, and to expand the physical structure of the institution.⁶⁰

Geographical and structural issues are also part of the IAPE improvement planning agenda. The historical heritage that was lost at ENA is a warning about the unpredictability of climate cycles. Another point of great importance to highlight is the agreement of the school to the laws and to the governmental bodies that govern Brazilian education. Compliance with legal requirements has resulted in the recognition already received, with benefits for the school and students, motivating the improvements and new recognitions that are still to be achieved.⁶¹

The IAPE administration understands that it is essential to solidify the base in preschool, elementary, and high school education before installing the presential higher education. Therefore, IAPE commitment to the education of children and adolescents, in accordance with the holistic philosophy of the Adventist education, is also extended to the spiritual realm. The legacy that was initiated by Northeast Brazil Academy recalls that people who pass through IAPE need to be prepared not only for secular professional activities, but also to be citizens of the kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, special attention is given to the role of teachers who share the same missionary ideas and goals as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁶²

Chronology of Directors⁶³

Antônio de Brito (2013-2014); Israel Elpídio (2015-2018); Fabiano Capeleti (2018- present).

More information about IAPE can be accessed on the websites: iape.educacaoadventista.org.br/ and or on social networks - Facebook: @IAPEGRAVATA and Instagram: @iapenordeste.

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NOTES

1. Fábio Costa, IAPE managing director, email message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira, associate editor of ESDA, July 9, 2019.
2. "East Brazil Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1911), 126.
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4. Gustavo S. Storch, "Um Homem de Deus" ["A Man of God"], *Revista Adventista [Adventist Review]* 61, no. 7 (July 1966): 27.
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