Perceptions of Mission Education in South Africa from a Historical-educational Perspective

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Samevatting

Sendingstrewe en -onderwys is 'n honderd en vyftig jaar lank 'n instelling in Suid-Afrikaanse onderwys. Alhoewel sendelinge baie ondervinding as opvoeders opgedoen het, het verskeie groeperinge in Suid-Afrika verskillende, meestal negatiewe opvattings oor hulle gevorm. In historiese skrywes heers daar verskeie denkskole met hul eie interpretasies van sendingonderwys, gewoonlik binne 'n beperkte verwysingsraamwerk. Waarneming is 'n komplekse fenomeen en moet verstaan word om die redes vir opvoedkundige geskiedkundiges se historiese en huidige siening van sendingonderwys te begryp. Die doel van hierdie artikel is eerstens om kortliks die rede vir waarnemingsverskille te bespreek en tweedens om hierdie kennis te gebruik om perseptuele verskille binne historiografies-opvoedkundige skrywes rakende sendingonderwys te verduidelik.

1. Introduction

For about one hundred and fifty years, Christian missionaries contributed towards the education of predominantly Black people in South Africa (Van der Walt, 1992a:221). Although mission education provision in South Africa started with the endeavours of Georg Schmidt of the Moravian

Brethren during the 1730's, it was only towards the end of the 18th century that mission education expanded (Du Plessis, 1911:54, 99-102) due to missionary efforts which followed in the wake of colonial expansion (Van der Walt, 1992a:223). The Nationalist-led government brought about a signficant change with the promulgation of the 1953 Bantu Education Act (South Africa [Union], 1953). This Act made the practice of mission education practically impossible due to financial and political constraints.

Over time, missionaries and the education that they provided have been the subject of diverse perceptions and interpretations both by individuals and groups alike (cf. Cross, 1987:550-551; Kritzinger, 1988:33; MacKenzie, 1993:45; Bikitsha, 1996:4), usually in a negative light. Since mission education is a human act, it is inevitable that individuals and groups will perceive the thinking and conduct of those involved in mission education differently. What happened or was said a century ago can easily be interpreted inaccurately today, thus giving rise to incorrect perceptions (Kritzinger, 1988:33; Christie, 1991:67) among academics, politicians and journalists (MacKenzie, 1993:45; Van der Walt, 1992a:221). Given Wiehahn's (1987:12) observation that many commonly held perceptions are selective and limited, the issue may be raised as to why so many perceptions surrounding mission education are so contentious.

From the aforesaid, the question arises: What causes individuals and groups to perceive mission education differently and what perceptions, especially in academic writings, abound? As mission education still plays an important role in current and future academic discourse, especially in the field of the history of education (cf. Mabunda, 1995; Lewis, 1999; Seroto, 1999; Ravhudzulo, 1999; Masumbe & Coetzer, 2001; Ndlovu, 2002; Lewis & Lemmer, 2004; Seroto, 2004) and will continue to do so as long as the history of especially Black people is the focus of research, this question is pertinent and requires clarification. Moreover, an understanding of these historical perceptions is important for education practitioners and learners within the current educational philosophy and practice. According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Education, 2002:4) an important skill to be advocated by educators and learned by learners in Social Sciences is the ability to interact with different historical and educational resources to assess various perspectives and obtain insight into the past thus avoiding a biased and limited perspective. An understanding of why humans perceive differently will go a long way in achieving this outcome: the recognition that no one means is exclusively right when examining the same person, event or object.

In the light of this, the aim of this article is to investigate different perceptions and the reasons for several markedly diverse perceptions surrounding missionaries and mission education evident in historio-graphical literature.

2. Defining of concepts

History of Education

History of Education deals with the human phenomenon of teaching and education in its historical perspective, determined by time and space (Kruger, 1990:85). It has its starting point in the problems that come to light in contemporary education by traversing back into the past so that guidelines can be provided for the future. Applied to this article, present generally-held (often negative) academic perceptions of missionaries and the education that they provided are critiqued from a spatio-temporal perspective so that future researchers in the field will obtain a better understanding of prevalent and frequently held perceptions and will be enabled to analyse critically any literature pertaining to mission education within this framework of time and space.

Perception

Individuals and/or groups experience stimuli from the outside world to which they attribute meaning. Although in many instances these stimuli are experienced similarly, they may often be interpreted diversely (Kearney, 1984:41) due to a host of factors (e.g. past and present experiences, personality, age and gender).

Derived directly from the Latin *perceptio*, literally meaning "to take possession of or to seize", the contemporary meaning refers to the gathering (seizing) of information about the world via the senses and the eventual 'colouring in' thereof, which subsequently influences human thinking and behaviour. Definitions and theories of the term have for centuries been the topic of debate among philosophers and psychologists (Lewis, 1999:29-30). However, it is not within the scope of this article to debate the issue further; nor is it the aim to simplify an extremely complex phenomenon. In this article, the concept perception is broadly defined as an understanding of the world constructed from information obtained via the senses (Shaver in Johnson, 1994:476). This general definition acknowledges that several factors within the perceiver, the perceived object or situation and the perceiver's actual experience of the object, situation or relationship shape human perception and may give rise to varied interpretations. This definition also recognises the complex nature of the perceptual process (Matlin & Foley, 1992:2) and varied techniques in perceiving (e.g. selective perceptions, generalisations and stereotyping) as a means of making sense of a mass of information gained via the senses and subjected through the perceptual schemata (Robbins, 1991:131-133).

Perceptions of mission education

Perceptions of missionaries and mission education in South Africa tend to hinge on several theoretical tenets in academic writings. Although often reflected upon in academic discourse one by one (cf. Van der Walt, 1992a:221), they are in instances discussed collectively. One such example is the monograph of Saunders (1988), entitled: *The making of the South African past: Major historians on race and class.* Saunders, in his critique of literature surrounding race, identifies several prevalent schools of thought in South African historiographical literature. Although not original in its categorisation (cf. Cross, 1987; Wolhuter, 1996), it provides a basis for discussing several prevalent groupings' perceptions surrounding mission education in South Africa.

In this article, the focus is on the Settler, Liberal, Afrikaner-Nationalist and Revisionist schools. Although the Afrikaner-Nationalist school does not feature as a separate category in Saunders's work, it is discussed as such in this article as a means of giving a more comprehensive reflection of South African educational historiography.

The Settler school of thought

The Settler (or Colonial) school interpreted history predominantly from a European (predominantly British and Dutch) settler's point of view. Generally, these historical authors were very critical of the British government, Black people and missionaries as they all stood in the way of the White colonists's interests (Malan, Caruthers & Theron, 1996:vii). Several historical writers fell within this category and included George McCall Theal, FC Cana and George E Cory (Saunders, 1988:9-31).

Theal's writings were influenced by prevalent nineteenth century racist thinking and several authors, such as the ethnologist, George W. Stow (1822-1882). Theal made great use of Stow's works, but gave them a pro-settler slant, a view, according to Dubow (1995:68) "to which its original author did not necessarily subscribe." Generally, this period rationalized the superiority of Europeans, in particular. Europeans were seen as the dominant culture with Black people as part of the conquered. This was the age of reason and progress (Bosch, 1991:264-267) and science and its laws aimed to answer questions of cultural dominance and generally departed from the notion of Western civilization's superiority resulting in the development of several racial theories (Bauer, 2002:8-9). Among these was the prevalent belief of the "Great Chain of Being", a notion of racial and cultural superiority, placing Europeans at the top of the proverbial racial ladder and non-Europeans at the bottom (De Kock, 1996:39). This context invariably influenced the cognitive schemas and behaviour of many people during this time-frame.

Missionaries and the subsequent education that they provided figured in Stow's and Theal's literature and were seen primarily in a negative light

(cf. Stow, 1905:viii). Although in several excerpts in Stow's monograph, *The Native Races of South Africa: a history of the intrusion of the Hottentots and Bantu into the hunting grounds of the Bushmen, the aborigines of the country* he does not fall into the trap of outright generalisation, however, he generally fails to give examples of where missionaries contributed greatly to Black ethnology, philosophy and lingual discourse in their subsequent educational endeavour. This would have made for a more balanced perspective. His perceptions are therefore limiting due to their selective nature. One cannot doubt that many missionaries were at times guilty of biased and distorted views, but reference should be made to those who made a reasonable educational contribution towards the philosophical, lingual and ethnological inquiry of their converts such as the missionary works of Campbell, Holden, Callaway and Boyce (cf. Campbell, 1815; Holden, 1866; Benham 1896; Boyce, 1838).

Theal and other colonial writers were at times both negative and erroneous in their endeavours. Observing the latter, it is interesting to note Theal's (1900:2) inaccurate perception of the state of education in the colony in 1800, when he remarks that "the London Missionary Society was just beginning to send its agents to South Africa, and they had not yet fixed upon a locality for a permanent settlement. *There was not a single individual attempting to instruct any section of the Bantu*" (Author's italics). Formal education during the Dutch colonial period for Black people up until the end of the eighteenth century was on a very small (Behr & Macmillan 1971:359) scale, but not non-existent as perceived by Theal, with the large majority still being educated informally within their own cultural setting. His negativity towards the ability of Blacks to be educated in Western pedagogies, obviously by missionaries in mission schools, is reflected succinctly in *Ethnography and condition of South Africa before A.D. 1505* (Theal, 1918:310-311). In this work he sees them globally as unable to adapt to the European culture, more specifically to their education. Whereas the European child's intellect could be improved, the intellect of the Black child was, in most instances, generally incapable of improvement according to Theal. Those who did possess a sharp intellect were more the exception than the rule. These differences therefore required a different type of education for Black people and White people. Regarding these differences, Theal (1900:128) notes that "very great efforts are being made to train the coloured people in habits of industry and thriftiness, for idleness and absence of care for anything but present wants are their chief failings." Black pupils, according to him, were more suited to industrial training and education in an agricultural direction than an academic education that was more suited to European children. This biased attitude is reflected in an excerpt written in 1902 in his monograph, *Progress of South Africa in the Century*, where, on commenting on Lovedale and Healdtown mission schools, he notes

several instances where Black people excelled intellectually (e.g. Tengo Jabavu, William Seti and John Knox Bokwe) as the exception rather than the rule (Theal, 1902:468). Of the stereotypical mission educated Black person, however, Theal wrote:

> With abundance of conceit, but devoid of perseverance, he does not attempt to qualify himself for some useful qualification, but goes about discontented or gives way to intemperance. It is possible that this class of man may prove troublesome in the future. They are certainly neither so useful to their race nor so comfortable and cheerful in their own lives as those who have had a good training in manual labour on a farm (Theal, 1902:469).

Theal's books, such as his *Compendium of South African History and Geography* (1876) and his *Korte Geschiedenis van Zuid-Afrika 1486-1835* (1891) were very often used in formal school settings thereby influencing the mindset of those being taught. Malan *et al.* (1996:vii) remark that these Colonial writers of historiography had a good following until the 1950's. Thereby, they influenced the perceptions of especially White people of past politics, history and even education (cf. Babrow 1962:4; Dubow, 1995:71-74). Babrow (1962:4) even notes that, to many, Theal's works were the one and only source to consult and were readily used even so in more recent publications and research.

Liberal historians

Liberal historians argued from the premise that all humans had basic fundamental rights, irrespective of race, colour or creed, which consequently characterised their works as sympathetic towards the indigenous peoples of South Africa. These historians were found mainly at English-medium universities in South Africa and interpreted historical-educational writings from a liberal value system which included individual freedom and a *laissez-faire* economy (Wolhuter, 1996:181). Legassick (in Cross, 1987:188) notes that in South Africa, this term has acquired another specific meaning, namely "friend of the native".

Early liberal writers included William Miller Macmillan (1885-1974) and Cornelis Willem de Kiewiet (1902-1986) who attempted to study South African history from a social point of view and not just politically. These early Liberal historians were highly critical of the prevalent Theal paradigm of historiography (Saunders, 1988:77, 94). This is noted in the preface of De Kiewiet's monologue, *The Imperial Factor in South Africa*, were he states that colonial historians "[were] already unhappily skilled in the game of make-believe, and versed in the pretense that a dangerous native problem was unrelated to the fortunes of the white population".

Although early Liberals were especially criticised by Revisionists as paternalistic and short-sighted in their arguments surrounding economic

growth and segregation (cf. Atmore & Marks, 1974:106-107), they should be seen in the context of the era in which they lived. They were very critical of common perceptions of Black inferiority so they were seen to be 'radicals'. Such criticism in those days was very rare (Saunders, 1988:47-65, 98,101,131).

Missionaries, generally seen as protagonists of the Black people in South Africa, were frequently viewed by Liberal historians positively. In Macmillan's case, several past and present life experiences could have influenced his generally positive perception of missionaries. Macmillan's father was a Church of Scotland missionary in India and Macmillan studied religion for a while. The endeavours of the missionary, Dr John Philip, also featured extensively in the writings of Macmillan who perceived Philip as "a great South African" (Saunders, 1988:47-49, 71) with regard to his general attitude towards non-Whites.

Although to Saunders (1988:62-75) some of Macmillan's earlier writings could be seen (and subsequently misused) as advocating racial superiority (cf. Macmillan, 1927:289; Macmillan, 1929:317), Macmillan was an avid champion for racial equality in a time when such a stance was not the norm. This latter aspect should be viewed contextually because utterances of this kind at a time when racist thinking and behaviour generally prevailed (during the start of the 20th century) were indeed uncommon.

Afrikaner-Nationalist writers

These writers presented an Afrikaner perspective on historiography especially from the beginning of the twentieth century and were sympathetic towards the Afrikaner cause and generally antagonistic towards the British, Black people and invariably missionaries. Afrikaner-nationalist historiography was rooted in the conservative Calvinistic doctrine of Christian National Education (CNE) and tended to extol traditional Afrikaner values and to further Afrikaner nationalism (Cross, 1987:186; Lewis, 1992:49). Having its roots in resistance to the second British occupation of the Cape, it flared up after the Anglo-Boer War and grew during the 1930's and 1940's as a result of increased Afrikaner nationalism, spurred on by political (divisions within the coalition government), economic (the depression) and social (poor Whites and urbanisation) factors, in an attempt to protect Afrikaner religious and cultural heritage (Lewis, 1992:49-50; Lewis, 1999:168-170).

Here, the works of JC Coetzee (1941), Du Plessis (1935), CFJ Muller and FA van Jaarsveld (Malan *et al.*, 1996:vii-viii) extolled the struggle for Afrikaner preservation. Historical-educationalists, such as JC Coetzee and LG du Plessis, wrote from the conviction that every cultural group in South Africa should have their own exclusive schools (Wolhuter, 1996:181). The Dutch Reformed Church missionary, H. Du Plessis

(1935), propagated that Black people should acquire a Christian character while retaining their own cultural identity (Cross, 1987:187).

Generally British missionaries, including Dr Philip and the education that they provided were spared no condemnation by these historians, while the Dutch Reformed missionaries and other Calvinistic missionaries were praised for their efforts (cf. Bot, 1951:155-157). Several Afrikaner nationalist writers tended to view and portray Philip and other missionaries (cf. Die Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners, 1877:75-77) in a negative light in their works, since they ran contrary to Afrikaner nationalistic ideals. This is expressed in the words of the Liberal historian, L.M. Thompson (1962:138):

> Dr Philip and other missionaries are castigated with adjectives and quotations in the traditional manner, without any attempt being made to present the facts fairly and draw valid deductions from them. Their influence is sweepingly labelled as 'iniquitous and demoralizing'; they are said to have been provokers of native wars and Anglo-Boer hostility; their reputation is a byword in South Africa.

Missionaries in general and mission education in particular did not escape vituperative attack since their task of civilising and Christianising threatened the foundations of 18th and 19th century racial ideology and were perceived as a threat to the Dutch colonists. They were tolerated in the Transvaal as long as they did not meddle in the political situation. Phrases and sentences such "*bitterder ervaring met dr Phillip, ook van die Londense Sendinggenootskap*" and "*Die houding van die Boere was heeltemal redelik, want solank as die sendelinge hulle nie ingemeng het met politieke aangeleenthede nie, het hulle 'n eervolle posisie in die Republiek beklee*" reflected resentment and, at times, conditional tolerance. These perceptions were especially evident in Nationalist writings and political rhetoric throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, for example, in the book *Die Geskiedenis van Ons land in die Taal van Ons Volk* (Die Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners, 1877). Although this work gives what appears to be a naive account of events in South African historiography, it depicts the Dutch *Boer* as a hero, and not as a villain as was so often portrayed in other popular literature. Missionaries were characterised negatively, for example, as contributing to the death of several *Boers* in the 1812 Circuit Court proceedings, by giving "unfounded" evidence and were perceived as "misguided meddlers in South African affairs" (Thompson, 1962:127,132). These negative perceptions of missionaries were later to re-emerge during the 1958 celebrations of the Day of the Covenant, when the then Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Dr Albert Hertzog, noted in derogatory nationalistic terms the detrimental effect of missionaries on the Afrikaner culture:

> The history of a nation was its mightiest weapon. ... It teaches you who the enemies of your forefathers were as well as their problems. ... The history of the Afrikaner always repeats itself because the same enemies of our

> forefathers – before the Great Trek – are again our enemies today. … In the days before the trek, missionaries from England, mostly from the lowest classes, made it impossible for the farmers to live where they were settled. ... Today we are fighting the same people – the Huddlestons, the Collinses and the Michael Scotts who are besmirching our name in the world (*The Star*, 1958:3).

Herzog's use of fanciful imagery not only portrayed missionaries in a negative light by making use of class comparisons, but these utterances were made at an important Afrikaner heritage day, where emotions could have been easily incited and impacted profoundly on the psyche of those attending the celebrations. These and other mythological statements – used mainly for political reasons, at a time of political change which bolstered institutionalised racism – almost invariably led to and strengthened racial attitudes and stereotypical images which were carried over from one generation to the next, thereby reinforcing such perceptions.

Furthermore, it was in the field of intellectual testing where Nationalist perceptions were furthered. Intellectual testing, as a way of quantifying White superiority, began to surface after 1910, and led to prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviour which were continually reflected in the education system, especially provided to Black people. In 1939 the Nationalist scholar, M.L. Fick, published the monograph, *The educatability of the South African Native*, where he made use of "available objective data" and came to the conclusion that Black people, educated especially by Christian missionaries, had an innate inferior intelligence, compared to White people (Fick,1939:1-2). Of note is the Foreword, written by another Nationalist, Werner Eiselen, the then Chief Inspector of Native Education, and future chairman of the National Party's inquiry into Bantu Education. Eiselen (1939:iii-iv) approved both the intellectual superiority of White people, as well as the need for a different education system to that of the White people. More or less the same conclusion was reached by another Nationalist scholar, J.A. Jansen van Rensburg, in the study, *The learning ability of the South African Native* (Jansen van Rensburg, 1938:17-43) which confirmed the widespread "scientifically proven" perception, that Black people were only fit to carry out physical, monotonous jobs (Louw-Potgieter & Foster, 1991:63) thus necessitating an education system that would suit such a mental capacity. These tests were contested (*South African Outlook* 1 July, 1939:167-168) and were that the investigators who made these "objective" observations were White and were endorsing a specific superior attitude. Specific criticism directed at Van Rensburg's investigations, included questioning the validity and reliability of the tests. Although these points of criticism were dealt with by Jansen van Rensburg (1938:1-43) in his study, he still concluded White (in other words, Afrikaner) superiority.

Revisionist historians

The Revisionist (mainly Neo-Marxist and Radical) school understands history within the Marxist paradigm framework in terms of political and economic forces, specifically within the class struggle between bourgeois capitalists and the proletariat. These theorists see education as an instrument of power in the hands of the state and the ruling class (Wolhuter, 1996:181).

This historical interpretation mainly contested the political interpretations of Liberal and Nationalist historians (Malan *et al.*, 1996:viii), yet in several instances theorists in this school selectively attributed capitalistic motives to historical developments in South Africa, without due consideration to other causal factors. For example, Majeke (1952:18) considers Dr John Philip's (and other missionaries') colonial motives as being spurred on solely by the expansion of capitalism, thus stating:

> Here he [Philip] states both an aim and a method. The method is christianization, which involves much more than the simple question of religion. The aim is the destruction of one culture, tribalism, and replacing it by capitalism. By "civilization" he means the Christian capitalist civilization ... an industrial civilization that is insatiable in its need for raw materials – grown in new lands that must be confiscated; raw materials that must be procured by the labour of the conquered. It is an industrial civilization that cannot exist without trade and is therefore in constant need of new markets, which are supplied by the conquered and christianized people of new lands.

This perception of Majeke reflects a 'conspiracy theory' on the part of missionaries and the colonial authorities (De Kock, 1996:41) attainable by the missionaries's educational endeavours. This implies a strong working relationship between the two; all in the name of capitalism. Atmore and Marks (1974:118) share this perception of Majeke and see missionaries all over South Africa as being at the forefront of the territorial and material expansion of colonial territory, thus leading to "the end of African independence in the interest of 'progress' and civilization". Ross (1986:11,27,36) disagrees with this selective perception of Majeke, Atmore and Marks, and assesses missionaries contextually. Ross believes that the period prior to 1850 saw very little of importance in the line of policy regarding the affairs between South Africa and Great Britain to cause any interest in Great Britain. South Africa prior to 1850 thus held very little interest for the British public. Tory governors also had far too little in common with the liberal humanitarians regarding ideology and class to even suggest any form of 'conspiracy' between the two (cf. Gensichen, 1982:181). Van der Walt (1992[b]:76) also disagrees with these selective perceptions of the function of missionaries's educational endeavours, that is, that mission education only meant labour reproduction. He remarks that authors who perceive this do not view the whole endeavour contextually and use history to prove a point.

These and other writers often perceived missionaries as enriching themselves by advancing their own private interests by promoting and using Black labour in their educative act (Van der Walt, 1992a:221). In this regard it should be noted that prior to 1841 mission schools were by no means financed by colonial sources (Cook, 1949:350; Scholtz 1975:209). The establishment of a mission station and the subsequent education that it provided was a costly endeavour. It necessitated capital building costs, regular expenditure for school establishments and the cost involved in training of prospective missionaries (Van der Walt, 1992b:81). These all presented added financial burdens. For just over forty years, missionaries had absorbed the costs of providing education to Black people by being self-sufficient and (semi-) independent of their mother societies, a practice in line with Henry Venn's "Three-Self" missiological theory (*self*-supporting, *self*-governing and *self*-propagating). This is reflected in the selecting of a new site and resultant building of the Lovedale mission institution during the 1840's when it was declared that:

> From the commencement of the project it was decided to have agricultural operations connected with the institution. It was declared that it was intended that students should labour on the land, partly for their sustenance, partly for their health while otherwise engaged in sedentary pursuits, and more than either that they might be able afterwards to instruct their countrymen in the art of cultivating their own soil as well as the things of religion (Shepherd, 1971:12).

This idea of being self-sufficient was a reason why missionaries employed converts to labour at the mission station, as well as educating them in trades and skills, a phenomenon very often perceived by Revisionist historians (cf. Collins 1980:8) as contributing to Western capitalism (Van der Walt, 1992b:81). These reproduction theories were influenced by, among others, Althusser (1972:242-280) and Bowles and Gintis (1976). This to Cross (1987:550-551) is "an overly simplified way to explain the function of education in colonial processes", therefore giving rise to a selective perception due to a specific world-view adopted to explain a certain phenomena. Again, the impression is not implied that these historians' perception is incorrect, but should be rather seen as limiting and selective in its application.

With the discovery of minerals in South Africa in the second half of the 19th century, a more aggressive imperialistic movement got under way with the British government annexing large mineral rich areas of South Africa (Lewis, 1999:236,241). With the so-called mineral revolution and rise of capitalism came the demand for an inexpensive and easily available workforce (Malan *et al.,* 1997:18-19). This led to what is known as the process of proletarianisation – the breaking down of societies to provide a supply of labourers without rights – with missionaries and the education that they provided being perceived as contributing greatly to this process. Revisionists, such as Ross (1976), Etherington (1978) and Lambert

(1995), perceive the role of missionaries, and the education that they provided among traditional societies, as undermining this type of lifestyle, making it possible for British annexation and proletarianisation. Bundy (1988:37-38) views the role of missionaries as twofold: they introduced "capitalist social norms and the market economy", as well as contributed to class formation in African society. This evaluation of the process fails to do justice to the education endeavour of missionaries due to its selective interpretation of historical data. Although one can argue that they inadvertently introduced Western capitalism to Black people in South Africa, it must be seen as a secondary outcome of the type of culture that they maintained. Capitalist propagation was not their primary concern; evangelisation was. An example of this primary task is reflected in a remark by the Cape Colony's Superintendent-General for Education, Sir Langham Dale, who, in 1868 stated:

> The ministers of religion are apt to regard education from a narrow and exclusively religious point of view, so that the training of children for the occupations of practical life is made in many cases subordinate to that instruction in the catechism and the tenets and services of religious bodies which is likely to influence them in after life and keep them within the pale of the church (Collins, 1980:9).

Agreement is sought with Cross (1987:550) who states that these theorists have:

> …frequently tended to reduce colonial education, including mission education, into little more than a mere appendix of state apparatuses and schools into simple instruments of colonialism. The application of this theory in a general way, without reference to specific colonial policies, social context, and practices, has led to an *oversimplification* of the role played by colonial education in different and particular situations (Author's italics).

That some missionaries did use and misuse Black labour for their own and missiological endeavours is, in instances, a given due to the very nature of human beings; however this cannot be seen as the generalised norm.

These authors also saw missionaries as purposefully incorporating Black people into the Western mode of culture via the education provided at mission stations. Keto (1976:601) points out that the perception that Black South Africans passively subordinated themselves to Western culture has either been "overdrawn or completely neglected in previous studies." Although the writings of missionaries aiming to dispel certain cultural beliefs of the Black people (e.g., the worship of ancestors and polygamy) is referred to in many ways, (e.g., the writings of the missionary, Henry Callaway [Benham 1896:223,298,331-332]), many contemporary writers fail to elaborate on missionaries's aim of preserving the culture of the Black people. The "breaking down" perceptions are thus selective and biased. Callaway might have evidenced cultural chauvinism: "Whatever is

evil among them try to correct; whatever is good try to retain." However, he and other missionaries successfully preserved certain cultural traditions of the Black people which would have been lost if it were not for these missionaries. What is necessary is to contextualise these perceptions in order to view the perception from different angles. Enlightenment ideas invariably influenced missionary thinking and practice, thereby impinging on missionaries's perceptions of reality (Ashley, 1980:28-30). In the words of Bosch (1991:274), "It was inevitable that the Enlightenment movement would profoundly influence mission thinking and practice, the more so since the entire missionary enterprise is, to a very real extent, a child of the Enlightenment." However, that certain missionary societies propagated cultural transmission and transfer is evident from the literature. The German theologian and philosopher, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), believed that it was the task of missionaries to transmit and transplant their culture onto the culture of the indigenous populace. Although he was trained in a school run by Herrnhutters, who propagated cultural relativism, he maintained his stance on cultural dominance (Lewis, 1999:267). However, one cannot generalise and stereotype all missionaries in this regard. Verkuyl (1978:171) observes that a notion of cultural relativism was also propagated by several missionaries. However, Schleiermacher had a profound influence on many missionaries, who read his works. Moreover, his views obviously helped to form their perceptions by means of the learning process, thus impacting on their experience of the phenomena.

3. Concluding remarks

In this article, an attempt was made to understand mission education in South Africa according to several prevalent historiographical schools. What can be concluded from this critical analysis of various perceptions surrounding mission education, is that no single simplistic judgement can be made that would do justice to the whole mission endeavour of the education of Black people. The perceptual process has shown itself to be complex, giving rise to various interpretations of reality: various factors contributing to the final perception. However, one must note that although these perceptions have certain intersubjective agreement amongst academics, which has been demonstrated in this article, in cases they may be incorrect, or partially correct, since they only reflect one perspective from which the writer works. Academics, mentioned in this article, in many instances, perceive mission education from their own perceptual framework giving rise to selective perceptions, stereotypes and simplistic generalisations, and very often do not place mission education in a balanced perspective. Very often writers taking a specific stance tend to criticise others's points of view by superimposing their perceptual

framework onto another perspective, simply replacing one point of view with their own.

The history of science provides numerous examples of the fact that "what a man sees depends both upon what he looks at and also upon what his previous visual-conceptual experience has taught him to see" (Kuhn, 1970:113). In historical-educational writing, each story represents reality to the "teller of the story". Differences in the portrayal and the contribution of missionaries to the education process in South Africa can be attributed to the different and changing historical eras during which these studies or utterances were carried out or made. The motives and personalities of the perceiver and the perceived, as well as differences in the cultural background, also contribute to this. Various writers may perceive the situation or perceived object in what they term 'objective' frameworks. It should be remembered that each story represents reality to the storyteller. Even the most "objective" written presentation is comprehended only by virtue of a process of instruction that conditions the reader to interpret standard phrases in set ways that would collapse without a community of thinkers arguing in this manner (Feyerabend, 1987:111). This does not, however, excuse writers from not exploring other perspectives.

From these conclusions, the following guidelines are proposed:

> Historiographical-educational literature abounds with stereotypes, generalisations and selective perceptions imposed on mission endeavours. This poses unending problems to those doing research on the role of missionaries in education. By keeping in mind how the perceptual process works and its multifaceted nature, as well as taking influencing factors into account, other peoples's or groups's perspectives can be better understood and perceptual errors may be minimised through an improved openness to further information.
>
> Researchers should be aware of and be receptive to other points of view and not argue from the basis that their perceptions are the only accurate ones. This aspect revealed itself in the study of diverse perceptions surrounding mission education and implies that researchers should show not only academic sensitivity, but also maturity in assessing sources not only in issues of the history of education, but also in other educational disciplines. How to depict all realities in an unbiased manner is a constant challenge to present-day researchers.
>
> Although intersubjectivity of like thinking can give rise to a higher degree of consensual verification, it should be borne in mind that intersubjectivity only leads to *limited* consensual validation and not *overall* validation. Perceptual errors can be minimised and differences determined by discussion with people of different cultures, backgrounds and training to get an idea of other viewpoints. The significance of intersubjectivity lies in knowing what sort of intersubjective categories directs the behaviour of

an individual or a group. Thus, an understanding of the reality that people perceive can be gained.

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