

Racial Differentiation in Education for the Ministry in the Presbyterian Church of South(ern) Africa

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the process by which the Presbyterian Church of South(ern) Africa (PCSA), conceived of, developed and promoted its programme of theological education, during the twentieth century. This occurred after its yet to be united struggle as a collection of independent congregations and presbyteries in the nineteenth century. The article also examines how the PCSA progressed, in the light of growing racial tensions in South Africa, in a racialised manner. The article is based on archival research and secondary sources and deals with the issue within a predominantly chronological framework.

Keywords: Education for Training and the Ministry Committee; Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa; Livingstone House; Ministry Committee; Presbyterian Church of South Africa; Rhodes University Faculty of Divinity; Theological Training Committee

Intradisciplinary and/or Interdisciplinary Implications

This article has a relevance beyond a denominational historical perspective but is relevant in the wider sphere of theological education and history of Christianity and the wider theological field as well as education.

Introduction

There is little evidence of the situation regarding theological education in settler/colonial Presbyterianism prior to 1987 other than a reference to probationers (PCSA 1897, 18). The issue of theological education became a pressing matter from the



Studia Historiae Ecclesasticae

<https://unisapressjournals.co.za/index.php/SHE/index>

Volume 49 | Issue 1 | 2023 | #13017 | 19 pages

<https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/13017>

ISSN 2412-4265 (Online), ISSN 1017-0499 (Print)

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formation of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa (PCSA) in 1897 as the number of congregations increased rapidly from 1902–1923 (PCSA 1970, 162). Recruitment was to be among “men of all races” (PCSA 1970, 170). The PCSA was a white denomination with a mission to blacks which brought together settler and colonial congregations and presbyteries. Until then, ministers were imported from Scotland to service the growing number of Presbyterian congregations as the denomination expanded throughout southern Africa; however, this could not continue ad infinitum. By receiving ministers from Scotland, the PCSA inherited a strong tradition of academic excellence as a hallmark of the Reforming tradition:

All programmes required a sound basis in the liberal arts no matter what followed. Until late in the 20th century, in Scotland it was required that an Arts degree (MA) precede a ... Bachelor of Divinity (BD) degree. These were by no means light programmes. They required a great deal of self-discipline taught prior to entering university to master the disciplines taught. (Duncan 2017, 4)

Until then, Presbyterian theological education proceeded on an ad hoc basis where each congregation determined which qualifications, if any, were required of its ministers. This was the result of the spirit of independency which arose from the beginning of the arrival of Presbyterianism in South Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Duncan 2022b, 2). The young church agreed on the benefits of a defined theological education programme scheme and even sought financial support to establish a denominational training centre.

In subsequent years, various options became available for theological education. In 1902, it was noted that the University of the Cape of Good Hope’s minimum requirement for ministry was a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree with Latin, Greek, mental and moral philosophy and English literature. A 2-year course in Old and New Testament exegesis and systematic and apologetic theology was also required. At the end of two years, students were licensed with an ongoing reading programme. The probationary period lasted for at least 18 months. Soon afterwards, church history was included in the theological curriculum (PCSA 1905, xxii).

In 1906, it was noted that the University of the Cape of Good Hope had introduced a Bachelor of Divinity (BD) degree. This qualification was the standard qualification in Scotland. The General Assembly Theological Education Committee recommended that suggested amendments to the scheme be sent to the university (PCSA 1906, 53). There was no further progress until 1918, when the General Assembly decided that because of

the great development of University education in South Africa, its Theological Education Committee should look into the opportunities for the development of

theological education programmes which would offer a more appropriate form of training, either on their own or in cooperation with other churches, through engagement with universities and with the provision of hostel accommodation in order to develop an awareness of denominational distinctives. (PCSA 1918)

As a result of no progress having been made, the 1924 General Assembly decided to adopt a full university course for ministers (PCSA 1924) and white students (PCSA 1925).

From these resolutions it became obvious that there was a clear desire to retain and develop the sound tradition inherited from Scotland. Subsequently, the first approach was made to the Transvaal University College (TUK), later named the University of Pretoria, which had opened in 1907.

The Transvaal University College

Two Scotsmen were appointed to the theology department, namely, Prof. Alfred C. Paterson in 1907 (who soon became Rector but left in 1924), and Rev. Ebenezer Macmillan (who was promoted by the PCSA) in 1918. Macmillan was already a member of the Theological Training Committee of the PCSA and expected to enrol nine candidates (Van Nieuwenhuizen 1974, 34).

A theology department was established in 1917. The Faculty of Theology was formally constituted in November 1923 (University of Pretoria 1923). By 1926, there were four professors, three from the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk and one from the PCSA. The Presbyterian post fell vacant in 1933 on the resignation of Macmillan (Duncan 2008, 59).

The PCSA decided to replace its ad hoc training policy and instructed the General Assembly Theological Education Committee to:

Consider the possibilities of the new situation with the object of obtaining either separately, or in conjunction with other denominations, and in close association with the University authorities, a more satisfactory training than is possible at present, with hostels to secure denominational atmosphere. (PCSA 1918)

The ecumenical dimension emerged here. Three years later, with no progress having been made, the General Assembly specifically recommended that possible candidates for the ministry be advised to register at TUK (PCSA 1921). A few years later in 1924, it was further decided to adopt a full university course for ministry requirements (PCSA 1924) “for European candidates” (PCSA 1925). In the event, no Presbyterians ever registered at TUK during Macmillan’s time, despite there being a query from one

Presbyterian. This situation would only be remedied in 2002 when the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa made a renewed decision with a distinct commitment to continue in the tradition of ecumenical theological education (Duncan 2008, 62–63). Yet, from the early days:

Macmillan abhorred a narrow denominationalism, as a lecturer and as a churchman: We must overstep the bounds of our denominationalism, and transcend the limitations of our Protestantism, by seeking to recover the inheritance of the saints. As the nineteenth century felt it was safe to be religious, so the twentieth is going to feel it must be religious, no matter the risk. (Duncan 2008, 63–64; Macmillan in Lang 1945, 21)

In line with his Presbyterian and Reformed background, Macmillan espoused a strong ecumenical approach to theological education; a narrow approach with regard to the non-racial situation. Racism was endemic and growing (Duncan 2022a, 3–4) and had been since the post South African War negotiations leading to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and beyond which disappointed the aspirations of the non-European population (Simpson 2021, 24–27).

What about Black Ministers?

It is noted that these provisions were made for white ministerial training. At the time, no mention was made of the training of black candidates. This left the black mission congregations in a position where they were dependent on the white ministers who had established missions as adjuncts to their own congregations and were rendering necessary services.

There was no urgency with regard to clarifying the approach to African theological education for black candidates. Dr W. Soga described it as being in an “embryonic stage” (PCSA 1900, 214), and it needed to be developed in the face of a lack of candidates (PCSA 1903, 108). This presented the opportunity for development while numbers were growing. In 1910, a clear decision was taken to train Africans for the ministry at the Lovedale Missionary Institution in Eastern Cape (PCSA 1910, 31; 1911, 49; 1912, 136–137). When the South African Native College (later the University of Fort Hare) was established in 1916 in Alice, Eastern Cape, there still appeared to be little interest in the training of black ministers since the PCSA was not a participant in the project to establish theological education there. This involved the Methodists, Anglicans and Church of Scotland Mission (Kerr 1968, 55). This attempt to raise the rather low educational standard of the candidates for the ministry

planted the seed of a future faculty of divinity by means of which the standard of theological training might be raised, a seed that bore fruit some twenty or twenty-five years later. (Kerr 1968, 56)

Initially, “there was little public support for higher education for the African, or indeed any other non-European group” (Kerr 1968, 58). Principal Kerr (a member of the PCSA) commented that he had seen no evidence of disparities in the abilities of black students compared with their white colleagues (Kerr 1968, 89).

In 1925, the PCSA General Assembly decided to send its black students to Fort Hare along with the students of the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa (BPCSA) – which had been formed in 1923 from the constituency of the Church of Scotland Mission:

Uniformity of training for native students as between ourselves and the Bantu [Presbyterian] Church being desirable, the Assembly recommends amalgamation of schemes and the use of facilities provided at Fort Hare. (Denis and Duncan 2011, 15; PCSA 1925, n.p.)

No such “uniformity” was required of white students. However, even prior to the formation of the PCSA, there were aspirations that one Presbyterian denomination might be formed with ensuing negotiations (Duncan 2022b, 3). Among other issues, racism loomed large: “there were problems arising from the white membership concerning the role of making decisions in a context where black people were in the majority” (Duncan 2022b, 3; PCSA 1897, 6–7). This may have been an attempt to draw the BPCSA into union.

Back to the White Context

For the first 30 years of the PCSA, there was no universal system for training ministers. In 1925, the General Assembly re-affirmed

its conviction that, unless exceptionally, a full university course is our rule for European students: “a full university course” did not stipulate where studies were to be undertaken. (PCSA 1925, 21)

It was also noted that there was a lesser need for “trained additions to our ministry from the Old Country”, that is, Scotland (PCSA 1925, 140).

In 1927, the General Assembly agreed that there should be a uniform system of “recognition and qualification” (PCSA 1927, 27) for lay preachers. This matter was

referred to the Theological Training Committee (TTC) which was charged with responding. The General Assembly later agreed:

That it be recommended to each Presbytery to devise, in consultation with the Theological Training Committee some system of training and instruction for the help and guidance of those who may desire it. (PCSA 1927, 40)

There was a distinct lack of structure to early deliberations on ministerial training. This decision was merely a recommendation. No guidance was offered concerning the form or content of training and it was a matter for the individual to decide if they wanted to avail themselves of training provided. In the same Assembly, the TTC had nothing new to offer (PCSA 1927, 41): “it has seldom if ever had so little to engage its attention” (PCSA 1927, 157). This was very strange in a situation where there was no systematic form of training, except a probationer’s examination, after 30 years of existence as a denomination. It was even more strange when the convener stated that the [existing] syllabus needed revision, but, “in the circumstances, there is no urgency” (PCSA 1927, 158). Theological education clearly was not a priority.

At the time, a number of candidates were studying in the United Kingdom (UK) at a variety of theological institutions (PCSA 1934, 126; 1940, 22) and this process would continue until the 1970s. Denominational cooperation was discussed relative to using one centre, one curriculum, linking the theological course with a university degree, and the seconding of lecturers (1934, 127–128). A further obstacle resulted from having two separate committees dealing with “native” and white students. However, one obstacle was that union negotiations were ongoing and an outcome was awaited (PCSA 1936, 155). A syllabus for theological education was provided (PCSA 1934, 128). The 1936 General Assembly lamented the poor state of “native” ministry and agreed “to consider steps to secure a better educated and more highly trained Native ministry, and a recognised standard for the Ministry” (PCSA 1936, 34). This agreement gave a level of attainment to be achieved by black ministerial candidates with the decision made in 1950 that: “The course for training African ministers should be not less than a period of 3 years” (PCSA 1950, 42). With regard to white students, it was agreed that a BA degree was required for students under the age of 30 in addition to the Preliminary Examination (PCSA 1937, 44).

Enter the Scene – Rhodes University

The first intimation of interest in cooperation with Rhodes University, in the former Grahamstown (now known as Makhanda), in Eastern Cape, occurred in 1942 with a communication from the Students’ Christian Association “regarding the establishing of a Chair of Theology at Rhodes University College” (PCSA 1942, 37). In 1946,

discussions took place with a view to establishing the Rhodes University Faculty of Divinity and a Chair of Divinity. The discussions involved the Anglican, Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches and was to be reserved for white students. Rhodes University was considered “to be a very suitable centre for a Faculty of Divinity” and began to make suitable financial arrangements as did the other participating churches (PCSA 1944, 40).

In 1967, it was reported by an ad hoc committee on theological education that “Rhodes University was the most suitable place for the basic training of our students for the Ministry” (PCSA 1967, 133). Consideration was also given to the provision of appropriate hostel facilities (PCSA 1944, 106–107). These facilities were soon afterwards provided at Livingstone House which was developed as a residence and for the purposes of fellowship and devotion. In time it became the centre of practical training in pastoral care, homiletics and speech training (PCSA 1951, 99). The normal course to be completed was a BA degree followed by a BD degree (PCSA 1947, 36).

Although this training did not involve a change in racialised theological education, it is interesting to note that the agreement to train white students was enacted from 1947. This was the year prior to the legalised establishment of apartheid after the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948 and a few years prior to the introduction of Bantu Education in 1953. Apart from the Anglicans, these churches shared in an agreement with the university to establish an interdenominational hostel in 1949 (PCSA 1948, 106–108), Livingstone House, where students would share in devotional and common life (Denis and Duncan 2011, 23). Trinity Presbyterian Church in Grahamstown also provided students with occasional opportunities for preaching (PCSA 1960, 131) and the ministers subsequently became mentors to generations of students.

There was some ambivalence expressed by the Ministry Committee towards a proposal to include a course on “African Studies for candidates for the ministry” (PCSA 1952, 106). Although it did not promote such a course, it “fully recognises the desirability of approving the inclusion of such a course in certain cases where this is possible”. In this case, a course could have been made compulsory at Livingstone House in order to bridge the gap between students’ perceptions and reality and, hopefully to draw students closer together in mutual understanding.

In 1959, it was decided “that a larger proportion of the younger men should undertake the full normal curriculum, namely, BA plus BD and ministerial training. This requires a rather higher-than-average scholastic ability” (PCSA 1959, 100). This decision brought the PCSA into line with the requirements for ordination in the Church of Scotland. It was then that consideration began to be given to the process employed in

the selection of ministerial candidates. However, all was not well within the denomination leading to the appointment of the Commission on Race Relations.

The Commission on Race Relations

In the same year, the Commission on Race Relations brought out a report which concluded that:

a common mind does not exist in the Church on this subject and in view of these circumstances the commission is unable to reduce the various view-points to one common statement. (PCSA 1959, 115)

This issue focussed on the position of black members relative to whites:

The Church should declare that in its policy with regard to its African members, and with regard to existing laws and proposed legislation, it seeks to discover the mind of Christ; and that, as the will of God is revealed to it, will seek to be obedient to that will. (PCSA 1959, 115)

The immediate question that arises here is: Was the mind of Christ not clear? This points to a degree of evasion in order not to divide the denomination. And this was the most liberal of a number of statements presented to the General Assembly. Most of the others appeared to try to defend those who wished to maintain the *status quo*. In a very Presbyterian way, another commission was appointed to consider the matter further. However, theological education had to continue in the meantime and new initiatives were emerging on the ecumenical front.

The Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa

When the apartheid government took over the University of Fort Hare in 1959, the Anglicans, Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians came together to establish the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (FedSem) (De Gruchy 1997, 159) in 1963. The PCSA connection with Fort Hare had been severed on the passing of the University College of Fort Hare Transfer Act in 1959 (Denis and Duncan 2011, 23, 44, 103). The opening of FedSem (a project of the World Council of Churches) marked one of the most significant ecumenical experiments of the twentieth century. The PCSA became a constituent of St Columba's (Presbyterian) College (Denis and Duncan 2011, 45, 47, 48) thus maintaining racial discrimination in theological education. It is of note that "Black Theology was particularly influential" as was Black Consciousness (De Gruchy 1997, 164, 372), which was a distinctive feature of the FedSem curriculum.

Theological Education Continues

By 1965, reporting on students was designated under two headings: Grahamstown Division (white students) and Alice Division (black students) (PCSA 1966, 38–39). An interesting development occurred soon after FedSem was established during a discussion on the necessity of the continued use of Fort Hare. In the report of the Alice Division, it was noted:

We consider that our Church is wise in wishing to make full use of the University College of Fort Hare, but the Church should clarify its own mind and for the sake of its students should state that it does not thereby endorse the policy of ethnic grouping. (PCSA 1965, 139)

However, that was precisely what it did! A paragraph later in the report stated: “for the next year or two there will be few, if any, vacancies for African ministers in our Church” (PCSA 1965, 140, 145). No basis was given for this statement. While the committee was of the opinion that “it must cultivate a mind and spirit that is free and alert to hear and recognise the Spirit as he speaks to the Churches” (PCSA 1967, 135), that same Spirit gave no indication regarding the optimum training venue for black (or all) students. It was also determined that the Grahamstown area was not well placed to offer opportunities for practical training due to its relative size and rural location.

The Committee on Postgraduate Training reported on practical training in 1968 and defined the following guiding principles which were accepted: learning by doing; proper supervision; a minister’s work lies beyond the congregation as well as within it; learning is a church wide responsibility as is life-long learning (PCSA 1968, 214–215). The postgraduate training scheme was to last for two years with full time supervision, and to be centred on the Witwatersrand (also known as the Reef, in the former Transvaal now known as Gauteng). This was also where the tutor who was to become convener of the Education and Training for the Ministry Committee (PCSA 1969, 25) was to be relocated. However, in 1969, questions were raised concerning the low recruitment rate and the high number of ministers resigning their charges (PCSA 1969, 156–157). This resulted in the appointment of a commission to investigate these issues. The commission reported a year later with a substantial number of recommendations (PCSA 1970, 47–62).

In 1971, following an earlier consideration of cooperation with the University of Cape Town, it was noted that a Faculty of Theology was to be established at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The General Assembly did “not at this stage [agree] to assist in the financing of such a faculty” (PCSA 1971, 19). However, this event did present the possibility of introducing another racially differentiated centre of training

for so-called coloured students and the PCSA gave notice that it intended to use UWC (PCSA 1971, 141). It was noted that there was a potential coloured student and it was decided he should train at either the University of South Africa (UNISA) or at FedSem (PCSA 1971, 142). While there appeared to be pressure from the government to promote separate coloured education, the churches reserved the right to decide where to train their ministers.

In 1973, consideration began to be given to the acceptance of a 3-year Diploma in Theology as an acceptable qualification for ordination (PCSA 1973, 134). This was clearly aimed at black candidates especially those being trained at FedSem and who could not fulfil the more stringent requirements required of white students. FedSem was a member of the Joint Board of the Award of the Diploma in Theology in South Africa which was the major award made by the seminary.

The FedSem Crises

In 1974, the Alice campus of FedSem was expropriated by the government on the pretext that Fort Hare needed more land for expansion. The real reason was that the churches would no longer use its Faculty of Divinity (Denis and Duncan 2011, 102). In addition, it had become a political liability particularly during periods of student unrest. FedSem was removed from Alice in 1975, and after an arduous few years in transit, it settled on a new campus at Imbali, Pietermaritzburg, in the former Natal (now known as KwaZulu-Natal) in 1980.

In 1976, it was agreed that the St Columba's (Presbyterian) and Adams United (Congregational) colleges be united to form the Reformed Albert Luthuli College (PCSA 1977, 17). In 1986, there occurred a serious split among the staff and students with the proposal that FedSem affiliate itself with Rhodes University (PCSA 1986, 60–61). This would allow students to be awarded public university degrees, but it also meant that a white university would control the syllabi of an institution mainly for black students which hitherto had set its own syllabi in consultation with the churches. An earlier experiment had seen FedSem students actually study at Rhodes University but it had not been a success (Duncan 2013, 68–70). On the other hand, the FedSem qualifications had achieved international recognition.

In 1992, it was recognised that FedSem was in a critical state. There were reductions in student numbers as churches, primarily the Anglicans and Methodists, admitted fewer or no students. Staff reductions had also not improved the financial situation (PCSA 1992, 17; 1993, 193). Thus, the future looked bleak, which rather resembled the situation at Rhodes University. When a vote was taken regarding the closure of FedSem,

the PCSA joined the Anglicans and Methodists in voting for closure, while the black Presbyterian churches voted with the Congregationalists for FedSem to remain open. They had no alternative institutions for training. Sadly, FedSem closed at the end of 1993 and Presbyterian students were transferred to the University of Fort Hare where the former seminary was symbolically handed back to the churches. This was quite a challenge to the integrity of ecumenical education with inter-denominational trust at an all-time low (PCSA 1996, 245).

Back to “Normal”

Also in an ecumenical context, the difficulties of ecumenical “internship training” were discussed; “focus days” were more successful (PCSA 1977, 17) than other options for ecumenical cooperation. The matter of non-racial ministry continued to be under discussion in a situation where “Circumstances are in constant flux” (PCSA 1977, 18). These circumstances could only refer to the political situation. One such issue that had arisen was the Department of Defence policy regarding military service for theological students at the conclusion of their academic training and their appointment as “theological officers” (PCSA 1977, 18).

In 1980, it was reported that ministerial supply in the “white sector” had improved, but “in the ‘black sector’ the situation is very different” (PCSA 1980, 53). Perhaps this was related to the subject of “multi-racial ministry” or of not devoting sufficient resources to black ministerial training. It was reported that

what is happening in this area of the church’s life leads us, regretfully, to conclude that promotion of this understanding and acceptance is not a high priority on the agenda of the church as a whole. (PCSA 1980, 55)

The advances that had been made were deemed “superficial and tentative” (PCSA 1980, 55). This was certainly disappointing for the Ministry Committee.

During this period, students from Zimbabwe and Zambia were trained at the United Theological College (UTC) (formerly Epworth Theological College) in Harare, and Justo Mwale Theological University College in Lusaka, respectively. The 1985 General Assembly confirmed that all ministry candidates would be required to do a “Pre-Academic Year Course” (PCSA 1985, 238). The same Assembly took note of endemic racism: “Racism and the ideology of apartheid still deeply permeate the psyche of many South Africans, with profoundly destructive social effects on the way on the lives of the majority” (PCSA 1985, 239). Racism was not only endemic among the South African population, but also the membership of the PCSA (Bax 1997, 22). This was a serious indictment of a church that claimed to be for all.

Then in 1986, it was decided to undertake a feasibility study on the possibility of opening a Presbyterian seminary (PCSA 1986, 181, 210). This was not a positive move during a period of increasing tension and unrest in the country that led to the declaration of regular states of emergency from 1985 which marked the beginning of the end of apartheid. Further, it was a denial of the long-term ecumenical commitment which was a mark of Presbyterianism (Duncan 2003, 390). Perhaps it was issues such as these and other matters already mentioned that led to the almost immediate resignation of the newly appointed Ministry Director, Rev. Dr Brian Johanson (PCSA 1987, 117). No reasons were shared with the General Assembly and none were recorded.

By 1989, Rhodes University was experiencing a number of issues which gave concern. Among these was the impending retirement of all of the senior academics in the Faculty of Divinity along with financial issues and decreasing student enrolments (PCSA 1988, 55–56). The problems did not end there, however. A Church Unity Commission (CUC) Theological Education Sub-Committee report highlighted the need for “theological education to take place in a milieu that is self consciously committed to its African context” (PCSA 1997, 363). Clearly this was not so although black students began to be admitted under a quota system where no more than 15% of black students could be admitted. A further issue related to this was the need for revision of the curriculum. There were also staff relationship issues; poor representation of churches in the staff complement; and the need for greater church participation in the selection of staff (PCSA 1997, 363). The faculty was officially closed in 2000 (Rhodes University 2017).

A helpful innovation was introduced in 1989 with the suggestion that Presbyteries organise Fellowships of Vocation where “issues of vocation and preparing for ministry could be discussed ...” (PCSA 1989, 65) through a variety of means that would “help them with their vocational decision and help the Presbytery in its assessment of them” (PCSA 1989, 66). The Black Ministers Consultation suggested a 4-year pre-theological period to empower theologically weaker candidates. This was the first recorded input to the work of the Ministry Committee from a black source, and was followed by a decision that “ministers and probationers, irrespective of colour and gender, have the right to apply for such advertised vacancies” (PCSA 1996 243, 250).

On the Verge of Democracy

By 1993, the PCSA was evaluating seriously its future options for ministerial training. All of the current institutions were facing problems of differing natures. The former University of Natal (now known as the University of KwaZulu-Natal) appeared to offer a novel methodology using the action-reflection model: “to adapt and apply classical ministerial and theological concepts, and so to develop a strategic pastoral plan for the

rapidly changing situation” (PCSA 1993, 140). The Ministry Committee was impressed with this approach and gave it their support. Unfortunately, due to the “rapidly changing situation”, ecclesiastically (the approaching union with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa) and politically (the coming of democracy in 1994), this plan did not attract great student support.

Clinical Pastoral Education was introduced in 1993, following its long established use by the Dutch Reformed Church, with practical work in local hospitals (PCSA 1993, 141). It was then that the PCSA took up ministry to informal settlements as a serious issue and encouraged congregations to do the same (PCSA 1993, 192). This move was followed by extending ministry to inner city areas.

In 1995, the Ministry Committee introduced a competency project using a critical incidents approach “where we have made a response in ministry which has been critical in producing fruit for the Kingdom of God”, promoted by a member of the committee in tandem with research at the Human Sciences Research Council (PCSA 1995, 2–3).

Surprisingly, in 1996, the PCSA opted to convene a meeting to discuss options for future cooperation. The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA) did not attend (PCSA 1996, 245) as the PCSA had been grouped with the Anglicans and Methodists as those who had betrayed the vision of FedSem by voting for its closure. It did, however, agree to participate in a CUC Theological Education Sub-Committee (PCSA 1996, 251).

By 1999, the year of the union with the RPCSA, there were serious problems within the Ministry Committee necessitating the involvement of a commission relating to “relational issues” (PCSA 1999, 28) arising out of a 1996 decision that the convener be a full-time position until 1999 (PCSA 1996, 217). Although no details are given, a 12-page report was prepared and submitted in summary form to the Executive Commission. One revealing fact that emerged was that it was problematic for the ministry secretary to be the convener of the committee. Subsequently, a decision made by the General Assembly indicated a major source of the dissension:

No convener of any Assembly committee may submit a report on behalf of the committee to the Assembly or to the Executive Commission without first giving the committee due opportunity to consider it and without the committee’s approval of what it states and what it proposes; provided that

A convener may submit a proposal on matters which are not of fundamental importance; and

In doing so the convener must inform the Assembly/Executive Commission that he/she is doing so without having had the opportunity to consult the members of the Committee or without having sufficient consensus among members of the Committee. (PCSA 1999, 61–62)

It appeared that the convener/ministry secretary had been acting without the knowledge and support of his committee, which was a very “unPresbyterian” approach to governance.

Theological Training for Women

Women were admitted to the ordained ministry in 1975 (Bax 1997, 19) on the decision that: “The Assembly finds no biblical or theological reason for denying women ordination to the Holy Ministry, and rules that women be eligible for ordination” (PCSA 1973, 133). They were subject to the same requirements as men.

Rev. Ethnie Fourie was the first woman to be ordained within the PCSA. She completed her BD degree (PCSA 1975, 40) and was ordained on 30 January 1976. Rev. Jane Nyirongo was the first Zambian and the first woman from the transnational presbyteries in Zambia and Zimbabwe to be ordained in 1991 (PCSA 1991, C7). Nyirongo was followed a year later by Rev. Sulani Kabala (PCSA 1992, C8). Rev. Jennifer Mutemi (wife of the late Rev. Charles Mutemi), later Jennifer Handitye, was the first woman minister to be ordained in Zimbabwe (PCSA 1999, 229).

Conclusion

This article has shown that during all the progress made in the twentieth century, there were many stages and progressions in the development of theological education in the PCSA in a context of intensifying racial segregation and apartheid. This can be seen in the move from Presbytery to General Assembly control; the multiplicity of training institutions; the length and nature of courses; the entry requirements; the recruitment and selection processes; curriculum development; qualifications for entry to the ministry; the length and nature of probation; the components of practical training; Fellowships of Vocation; relationships with other institutions; and ecumenical cooperation. The only place where a strong consistency can be discerned is in the application of the same racial differentials that were applied in the missionary outreach of the denomination up until the 1960s. It was noted how the spirit of independency was strong in early Presbyterianism but this endured in many aspects of the life of the denomination even following the coming of democracy to South Africa allowing differentials to persist. Sadly, these differences prevented the development of a unified ministry and relationships based on a non-racial basis during the period of training.

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