

An Ecclesiological Overview of Theological Training at the Stofberg Theological Schools from 1960 to 1994

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Abstract

This article is an attempt to fill the gaps regarding the systematisation of the theological thoughts on theological training in the former Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA). However, the article indicates a discontinuity in the story line regarding the development of theological training in the former DRCA. As a result of the fear of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) for equality between blacks and whites, separate churches had to be established for the four ethnic groups. The DRC was against “social equality” between blacks and whites and promoted “social differentiation and cultural segregation”. People of colour had to be led to independence under the guardianship of the DRC. This means that the DRC’s missionary policy was indeed a racial policy which influenced the training of ministers of colour. The effect was that missionary work became a movement from the white church to the church of the people of colour. In the fifties and sixties, the coloured churches became more independent, but the DRC wanted to maintain its control.

Keywords: Stofberg Theological Schools; General Synods; Central Management; theological training; acts; agendas

Introduction

In this article, the author does an ecclesiological theological inquiry into the theological training and ministerial formation practice in the former Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA). The author posits that a lack of awareness of power and where it is situated, as well as how it influences the discourse regarding theological education and ministry, makes it difficult for the former DRCA to make informed decisions regarding ministry formation. The article indicates a discontinuity in the story line regarding the development of theological training in the former DRCA.

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The article is essentially a literature review. Primary and secondary sources were studied in the investigation. Primary sources refer to archival sources, namely, acta, schemes of operations, decisions registers, minutes, church polity and agreements. Secondary sources refer to books and articles in scholarly journals that deal with the theme at hand. The author studied, among other things, books, texts, documents, acta and scholarly articles. The author did not conduct any empirical investigation, for example, to test information as articulated in archival sources, especially regarding the closure of the four Stofberg Theological Schools (Turfloop, Dingaanstat, Decoligny and Witsieshoek) of the former DRCA. The value of the article lies, among other things, in the fact that it indicates the discontinuity about theological training and ministry formation and that the challenges with regard to theological training and ministerial formation that threaten the former DRCA are ultimately systemically addressed.

On 1 October 1908, the original Stofberg Theological School was established on the farm Elandsfontein in the Northern Free State.¹ It was named after Pieter Stofberg, a Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) missionary at Mochudi in Botswana from 1898 to 1907. His ministry included a campaign for the establishment of a theological school for DRC missionary work, but he passed away in 1907 before he was able to make the dream come true. H. M. Hofmeyr (Harry) was called as the successor to his father, Rev. A. M. Hofmeyr, to serve as the director of the Stofberg Theological School, a position he held up to 1955.

The Stofberg Theological School received a financial grant from the government for a normal school. The year 1959 marked a new era for the Stofberg Theological School when the Department of Native Affairs, in accordance with the Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953,² transformed the normal school to a “training school”. Only the boarding houses remained the responsibility of the Stofberg Theological School. According to the Group Areas Act No. 41 of 1950, the area where the school was located, was declared a “white area” and the school had to be moved to another area, leading to a decision by the management of the Stofberg Theological School to divide the seminary into four separate ethnical units.

In 1955, when delegates of the Stofberg Theological School visited the then Minister of Native Affairs, Dr H. F. Verwoerd, he told them:

It is a *sine quo non* that the Stofberg Memorial School is in a place where the good work will bear fruit in future within the framework of the development that the government is planning for the Bantu. I humbly recommend that the churches

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- 1 Democratic South Africa has nine provinces, namely: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape; however, the article refers to the names of the original four provinces.
 - 2 The Department of Native Affairs was renamed the Department of Bantu Administration and Development in 1960.

provide theological training to ethnical groups in their languages, in other words, there should be more than one Stofberg. (De Villiers 1975, 335)

The delegates at the meeting with Dr Verwoerd agreed with these recommendations and the management of the Stofberg Theological School unanimously accepted a resolution for the institution to be divided into four separate ethnical units with a joint Central Management (De Villiers 1975, 335). The management received permission from the federated DRC to establish the four Stofberg Theological Schools at Turfloop (Northern Transvaal), Witsieshoek (Qwaqwa), Dingaanstat (Natal) and Decoligny (Transkei), within the “homelands” determined by the government. It was decided that the lecturers, the library and other resources would be moved to Turfloop and that the schools would cooperate with the planned “homeland universities” (De Villiers 1975, 336).

The Central Management of the Stofberg Theological Schools

The Stofberg Theological Schools each had its own management, but the financial statements and budgets were under the Central Management. The Central Management was also responsible for reporting to the General Synod Missionary Commission (ASSK) of the DRC, compiled in the following way since 1967:

Art. 8: The Central Management is compiled in the following way:

8.1. One representative with a secundus from each of the participating synods of the DRC, as appointed by the different synods.

8.2. A corresponding number of representatives with secundi from the DRCA must be appointed by the General Synod to ensure representation by each of the regional synods.

8.3. The principal of the theological schools in accordance with Art. 4.

Art. 9: Travel and accommodation expenses of representatives on the Central Management are covered by the institutions that they represent. Travel and accommodation costs of principals are covered by the schools that they represent.

Art.10: The Central Management meets once a year on a date and place determined by himself.

Art. 11: A chairperson and vice-chairperson are elected yearly at the first meeting.

Art. 12: The Central Management appoints one of his principals as scribe of the Central Management.

Art. 13: The chairperson, vice-chairperson, scribe, and one additional member appointed by the Central Management, forms the Executive Committee, compiled in such a way

that no more than one of his members represents the same institution on the Central Management.

Art. 14: In urgent matters, the Executive Committee is allowed to act on behalf of the Central Management, with reporting at a later stage. (Refer to Addendum 2: *Reglement vir die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Skole Stofberg vir die Opleiding van Bantoeleraars en -Evangeliste Beheer*; NGKA 1967, 234.)

The Report of the Central Management

The report of the Central Management mentioned that the Central Management supported gradually doing away with the training of evangelists, but more evangelists than ministers were trained in the period from 1962–1966 (NGKA 1967, 235). The report indicated the number of trained ministers (1962–1966) as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: The number of trained ministers (1962–1966)

Theological School	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966
Pietersburg/Turfloop	9	15	7	8	9
Witsieshoek	1	4	7	6	5
Decoligny	2	0	1	1	7
Dingaanstat	3	1	3	5	0
Total	15	20	18	20	21

The report indicated the number of trained evangelists (1962–1966) as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: The number of trained evangelists (1962–1966)

Theological School	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966
Pietersburg/Turfloop	26	15	18	11	12
Witsieshoek	19	27	11	16	4
Decoligny	8	11	6	4	6
Dingaanstat	3	10	11	9	11
Total	61	63	46	50	31

Although the number of trained evangelists gradually decreased, and the number of trained ministers remained constant, more evangelists than ministers were trained (NGKA 1967, 235). The comprehensive investigation into the staff requirements of the DRCA was placed on the Synod agenda (NGKA 1967, 235). There were 16 lecturers from the DRC and one from the Reformed Church of Africa in employment at the Stofberg Theological Schools. Four lecturers accepted other positions at congregations, namely, Rev O. D. Scheuer (Dingaanstat), Rev J. L. Strydom (Decoligny), Dr J. H. Smit

(Dingaanstat) and Dr J. H. Scheepers (Witsieshoek), respectively, to the University Colleges of Zululand and the North (Pietersburg). The vacancies were filled by Rev. W. de W van Velden (Witsieshoek), Rev J. H. Kritzinger, Dr P. P. Kamfer (Dingaanstat) and Dr D. J. Bosch (Decoligny) (NGKA 1967, 235). The report also mentioned that Dr D. H. Odendaal (Decoligny) obtained the Doctor of Theology (DTh) degree *cum laude* following his studies at the Westminster Theological Seminary in America for two years and three months. Temporary lecturers, Rev. M. M. Smit and Rev. A. Phipson, were employed in his absence.

The report further mentioned that expansion of the staff was seriously considered, but not possible financially (NGKA 1967, 235). The report also referred to the request of the ASSK to the General Synod of the DRC that lecturers of the Stofberg Theological Schools should be addressed as “professor” in the same way that lecturers were addressed at the Theological School for the NG Sendingkerk in Bellville-South, Western Cape, and the Theological School of the Reformed Church in South Africa in Hammanskraal near Pretoria, Transvaal.

However, this request was not granted (NGKA 1967, 235). The report also mentioned that the *Vrouesendingbond* at Decoligny paid the salaries and grants of the female lecturers and provided a matron for the unmarried female staff. At the other theological schools, the classes for the wives of the evangelists and students in Theology were presented by the wives of the lecturers (NGKA 1967, 235).

The Central Management of the Stofberg Theological Schools (hereafter the Central Management) proposed to perform an assessment of needs regarding the training, placement and distribution of labourers from the DRCA, provided that the Synods of the DRCA were included in the process (NGKA 1967, 235). The report mentioned that ministers of the other Reformed Churches from African countries (the former Rhodesia, Malawi, Central Africa and Zambia) presented courses at these schools (NGKA 1967, 235). Although it was planned, until that stage there had been no progress about a theological school for Tswana speakers (NGKA 1967, 236).

The report provided insight into the assumptions of the DRC about the theological training of the black workforce. For example, the report mentioned “advanced theological training for black ministers”, as if implying that the training for black ministers at the Stofberg Theological Schools was inferior compared to the training of the theological schools of the DRC (NGKA 1967, 236). Black ministers were able to study at certain universities, with ministerial approval, namely, the University of South Africa (UNISA) as well as the so-called university colleges of Zululand, the North, and Fort Hare. According to the terms of the Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953, black students were not allowed to study at the universities of Pretoria, Bloemfontein and Stellenbosch (NGKA 1967, 236). The DRC was primarily responsible for the financial management of the Stofberg Theological Schools, but the General Synod of the DRCA also contributed (NGKA 1967, 236).

The financial management would eventually become the sole responsibility of the DRCA (NGKA 1967, 237). Persons from denominations outside of the reformed doctrine were also allowed to study at the Stofberg Theological Schools. The Central Management had different views on the incident when the sectarian leader, Edward Lekganyane, was allowed to study at the Stofberg Theological School (NGKA 1967, 237). The local management of the Theological School at Pietersburg/Turfloop obtained almost unanimous approval from the Bantu Synod Transvaal³ for the admission of Edward Lekganyane to the evangelist course of three years. The conflicting opinions of Central Management (NGKA 1967, 237) were based on two different points of view, namely that sectarian leaders (and/or members of sects) should be admitted to the course, subject to certain stringent measures, because it would provide the church the opportunity to minister in an area that was previously inaccessible (NGKA 1967, 237). The other point of view was that ministry to the sectarian leader (as well as his members) should take place outside of the church and not on the same conditions as congregants (NGKA 1967, 237). The General Synod of the DRC referred this matter with proxy to the wider *Moderatuur*, to decide if there would be reporting in this regard to the ASSK (NGKA 1967, 237).

The Central Management decided as follows in March 1967:

- i. To consider the training of members of sects, in consultation with the General Synod of the daughter churches,
- ii. Recommend that the *bona fide* application addressed to a local management and presented to the Central Management by this management be referred to the assembly of lecturers of the four Theological Schools,
- iii. Every case must be dealt with strictly according to merit,
- iv. Leaders and members of sects may under no circumstances propagate their doctrine under students,
- v. Their conduct must be in accordance with the regulations for students of the School,
- vi. All the conditions of the school, including academic qualifications, will apply to them as well,
- vii. The number of students from the group above will be determined by the school, in consideration of available space. (NGKA 1967, 237)

Students from the so-called sectarian churches would only be admitted to the Stofberg Theological Schools under stringent measures. The students could not be admitted under the same conditions as the congregants of the DRCA (NGKA 1967, 237). It is

3 The article uses historical references, such as the Bantu Synod Transvaal.

clear from the report that the opinions of the ASSK were considered as well (NGKA 1967, 237). The DRCA added the following to Art. 24 of the *Reglement vir die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Skole Stofberg vir die Opleiding van Bantoeleraars en -Evangeliste Beheer* (hereafter *Reglement vir die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Skole Stofberg*):

Each of the churches may appoint one representative with full voting rights on the Central Management. Should the representatives of the DRC exceed the amount of ten, named churches may each appoint a second representative.

In addition, the DRCA expanded Art. 37 of the *Reglement vir die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Skole Stofberg* as follows: "Each of the other churches has the right to one lecturer on the lecturing staff of each of the schools involved." Regarding the financial accountability of the participating churches, the 1967 DRCA Synod determined that all emoluments and grants of lecturers from other churches should be determined by the specific churches, who would cover the costs as well. The DRC accepted responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of all buildings, except for housing for lecturers and married students from other churches. Also, for the use of the classrooms, the other churches would pay a yearly fee to the local management of R15,00 for each of their students, and for the use of the library, a yearly amount of R2,00 per student. Students from other churches would be allowed to board in the boarding houses if there were rooms available, at a rate to be determined mutually from time to time. The administration costs of the school would be covered on a pro rata base by the churches involved, calculated according to the number of students of each church.

Representatives on the Central Management of the Stofberg Theological Schools

Prof. P. J. J. S. Els represented the Cape Synod on the Central Management (NGKA 1971, 224). In 1967, Prof. Els was the lecturer for Old Testament and Hebrew at the University of Fort Hare in Alice, Eastern Cape, and in this capacity, he was appointed as representative of the Cape DRCA (Kriel 1981, 93). The Central Management comprised the following members:

- i. General Synod of DRCA: Rev. P. E. S. Smith,
- ii. General Synod Cape DRCA: Rev. L. T. Buso,
- iii. DRCA Phororo: Rev. V. du Plessis,
- iv. NGKA Orange Free State: Rev. C. J. J. van Rensburg,
- v. DRCA Southern Transvaal: Rev. S. G. S. Ntoane,
- vi. DRCA Natal: Rev. O. Scheuer,

- vii. DRCA Cape: Rev. P. J. J. S. Els, Rev. J. J. Sieberhagen, Rev. P. de V. Muller,
- viii. DRC Natal: Rev. I. J. Haasbroek,
- ix. DRC Orange Free State: Rev. D. S. Snyman,
- x. DRC Southern Transvaal: Rev. C .H. Badenhorst,
- xi. DRC Northern Transvaal Dr J. P. Theron. (NGKA 1971, 224)

The administrators, namely, Mr J. C. van Graan, Dr J. J. de Beer, Rev. A. J. van Wyk and Rev. J. H. Roos, and the principals of the four Stofberg Theological Schools, namely, Drs A. A. Odendaal, P. R. van Dyk, J. du Preez and Rev. A. S. van Niekerk also served on the Central Management (NGKA 1971, 224). Following the unexpected death of Rev. V. du Plessis, evangelist S. Sello replaced him in the Central Management. Following the departure of Rev. O. Scheuer from Natal, he was replaced by Rev. A. T. Zondi. However, due to illness, Rev Zondi was unable to attend the meeting (NGKA 1971, 225).

During the recess, Rev. H. M. Hofmeyr, principal of Turfloop Theological School, accepted that his emirate Rev. P. P. Stander had to resign as principal of Dingaanstat due to health reasons, but he continued to work as a lecturer (NGKA 1971, 225). The Synod expressed recognition and gratitude towards Rev. Stander,

who proved himself with courage in faith and distinction in his pioneer work, as well as enthusiasm for the establishment, building, and expansion of the Dingaanstat training school and may he be blessed by the Lord. (NGKA 1971, 225)

The Central Management met four times during the recess (1976–1971). The representatives of the Central Management never met separately and the meetings were attended by all the representatives. There were four theological schools under the leadership of the Central Management, namely, Turfloop, Decoligny Dingaanstat and Witsieshoek. The number of lecturing staff members at each theological school was as follows:

- i. Turfloop: 4 lecturers plus 1 from the Reformed Church
- ii. Decoligny: 4
- iii. Dingaanstat: 4
- iv. Witsieshoek: 4. Of the 38 students in Theology at Turfloop who were admitted to the ministry, 6 were from the Reformed Church. Of the 16 students in Evangelism admitted to the ministry, 2 were from the Reformed Church.

- v. During 1967–1971, 73 ministers and 86 evangelists who completed their studies at the schools, were admitted to the ministry in the DRCA. At the end of 1970, 81 students in Theology and 73 students in Evangelism were registered at the different theological schools. (NGKA 1971, 225).

The Number of Students (1967–1970)

The number of students from 1967–1970 (NGKA 1971, 225) is shown in Table 3:

Table 3: The number of students (1967–1970)

Theological School	1967			1968			1969			1970		
	R		A	R		A	R		A	R		A
	T	E	T	T	E	T	T	E	T	T	E	T
Turfloop	38	22	5	39	16	7	31	15	15	37	11	11
Decoligny	11	26	2	8	30	1	8	28	3	5	19	3
Dingaanstat	9	17	0	10	16	0	10	17	1	9	15	8
Witsieshoek	21	32	5	24	29	4	33	28	8	30	28	6
Total	79	97	12	81	91	12	82	88	27	81	73	28

Key: R = Registered; A = Admitted to the Ministry; T = Students in Theology; E = Students in Evangelism

The Future Financing of the Four Stofberg Theological Schools from the DRC General Synod

Regarding the future financing of the four Theological Schools, the DRC General Synod, on recommendation of the Central Management, decided as follows:

That each of the churches involved will be responsible for the day-to-day expenses of the school within his area, that is the Cape Church for Decoligny, the Natal Church for Dingaanstat, the Free State Church for Witsieshoek and Southern and Northern Transvaal for Turfloop. Regarding the day-to-day expenses for Dingaanstat, the Natal Church will contribute according to the Church's available funds. The rest of the expenses will be covered by the Cape and Transvaal – half each – following presentation and pro-rata of the budget for Dingaanstat by the Central Management. The day-to-day expenses of the Central Management will be covered by the churches involved, on a pro rata basis. The day-to-day expenses of the Central Management will be covered by the churches involved. These pro rata amounts, determined by the Central Management, following instruction of Synod, were as follows: Cape 40.5%; Natal 4.0%; O.F.S. 14%; S-Tvl. 24%; N-Tvl. Contributions by the DR Church in Africa (R3 000,00 per year) they will be divided between named churches on the pro rata basis above. (NGKA 1971, 225)

The DRC General Synod further decided, on recommendation of the Central Management, that the regional synod(s) of the DRC, in accordance with the conditions above, enter an agreement with the corresponding regional synod(s) of the DRCA on contributions for financing the Theological Schools within their area (NGKA 1971, 225). The local managements of Decoligny and Dingaanstat requested permission from the Central Management to admit persons to the course in Theology who did not comply to the required qualifications for admission (NGKA 1971, 227). In some cases, the Central Management was requested to admit to Management History persons who had not completed their theological training (NGKA 1971, 227). The Central Management granted the requests of the local managements, but on condition that such persons would only be called in the regional synods who sent them for training and admitted them to the ministry (NGKA 1971, 227). This decision was approved by the ASSK (NGKA 1971, 224). The Central Management further decided:

That if such persons obtained the admission requirements that applied on the day of their admission at a later stage, and if they reach the required standard during their period of study, they will be allowed to be called to any congregation in the Dutch Reformed Church of Africa. (NGKA 1971, 227)

Permission Granted for Training by the General Synod of the DRCA

The General Synod of the DRCA granted permission that: (i) a person who is admitted to a theological school on request of a certain regional synod without complying with the required qualifications for admission, or without completing the required course in Theology, may only be called in that specific regional synod; and (ii) that a person who is admitted to the ministry in the DRCA may be called after proving to an examination commission that he complies to the requirements that applied with his admission (NGKA 1971, 227).

The General Synod took note of the propaedeutic course through which the Central Management would try to better equip students who were interested in training in Theology, to enable them to continue their studies in Theology at consists university at a later date. Special the four-year course was extended by one year (NGKA 1971, 227). During the first year, the propaedeutic course consisted of three courses, namely, Greek special, Hebrew I and a choice of one subject of the subjects presented by the institution. This third subject could be a theological subject like *Bybelkunde I* or *Kerkgeskiedenis I* (NGKA 1971, 227). A student had to pass these three subjects for admission to the course in Theology. The pass mark per subject, for scholarly purposes, was determined at 33%.

Local managements decided that decisions could be implemented practically (NGKA 1971, 227). The General Synod of the DRCA also took note of the availability of the refresher course. According to decision 150 of 1967, the General Synod of the DRCA decided that the above courses would be presented on a yearly rotational basis at the different institutions (NGKA 1971, 224). However, local managements of the

institutions pointed out that this decision had practical implications, because it would place a financial burden on the congregations and would cause long-term absence of ministers from their congregations (NGKA 1971, 224). The Central Management was of opinion that it would be a better idea if such courses could be arranged every three years for each language group (NGKA 1971, 227). The General Synod granted approval for this recommendation of a refresher course to be arranged by the theological schools every three years for the different language groups and provided advice to the schools on which language groups should be grouped together (NGKA 1971, 227). The General Synod took note of the Central Management's decision to issue a diploma to students who completed the extended five-year course for ministers, including those who did not have to complete an extra year (NGKA 1971, 227).

The General Synod also took note of the fact that evangelists about to study an extra year: "At this stage, evangelists who comply with the necessary admission qualifications, may be given a year discount on their course in Theology" (NGKA 1971, 228). With regard to the above-mentioned discount, the Central Management made the following decision:

Up to a date determined by the Central Management, previous evangelists will receive one year discount on their course in Theology. Each institution determines by himself which year it would be. (NGKA 1971, 228)

Should it be decided to withdraw permission for the year discount, the Central Management would provide notification in advance within a reasonable time frame. The ending of this concession would be in consultation with the DRCA (NGKA 1971, 228). The 1967 General Synod of the DRCA approved the above-mentioned decision of the Central Management. The General Synod further took note of the increase in admission requirements:

As a result of the consideration of connection of our theological training with a university, the Central Management is of opinion that increase of admission requirements to matriculation exemption, should be considered as well" (NGKA 1971, 228).

The General Synod expressed itself on the possibility of a matric admission requirement to theological schools (NGKA 1971, 228). The General Synod recommended that the Synod source the necessary funds to assist persons who desired to obtain matric for future theological studies in order to realise this ideal (NGKA 1971, 228). The Central Management took note of a programme designed by the assembly of lecturers through which ministers would be better equipped for their office duty. This programme entailed attending holiday schools of three weeks each to be presented annually at one of the theological schools: Decoligny, Turfloop, Dingaanstat and Witsieshoek. A higher diploma would be awarded after successful completion of the course:

The following conditions apply: A specialized course attendant must complete two courses of two holiday schools with a passing mark of 40%, complete one work assignment satisfactorily, pass the examination on the content of five prescribed works, submit a dissertation of approximately 10 000 words in the subject that the student specialises in, on a subject approved in advance by the lecturers. The holiday schools were arranged as follows: at each holiday school, three courses were presented, each with a duration of 1½ requests day. (NGKA 1971, 228)

The courses were determined in advance by the assembly of lecturers to prevent overlapping and to ensure that all theological disciplines were covered. The lecturers at the different theological schools, as well as the servants in evangelism of the DRC and DRCA, would present the courses.

The Central Management requested that the DRCA cover the travel and accommodation costs of these lecturers for the courses (NGKA 1971, 228). On the grounds of a desire expressed by the Central Management for a conversation in this regard with the DRCA, the Synod expressed itself on the principle and referred it to one of its commissions or an *ad hoc* commission for the necessary discussion (NGKA 1971, 228). A request by the Synodical Ministry Commission (SSK) of Southern Transvaal regarding the training of ministers of separatist churches serves at the Central Management. A big group of separatist churches of the so-called “Reformed Independent Churches Association” approached the DRC to assist them in the training of their ministers (NGKA 1971, 228–229).

The request of the SSK of Southern Transvaal mainly involved the following:

Regarding their current ministers: special classes by ministers, missionaries and Bantu ministers regarding their office duties, Bible study and doctrine of faith. Correspondence courses with approximately the same content as for the course presented to the evangelists. Examinations and diplomas from the DRC in South Africa if they pass. Regarding their future ministers: Admission to our theological schools, with full compliance to the requirements of the church. (NGKA 1971, 229)

A memorandum served at the Central management, compiled by the Moderator of the DRCA, Southern Transvaal, expressed doubts about such training (NGKA 1971, 229). After careful consideration, the Central Management reacted as follows:

We take note of the document received from the DR Church in Africa. We recommend that the SSK of Southern Transvaal advise the ministers to turn to the University of the North. We recommend that the SSK of Southern Transvaal attend to the ministers who requested catechesis training without the issue of diplomas or testimonials that will be an embarrassment to the Dutch Reformed Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. (NGKA 1971, 229)

The Training of Evangelists and Ministers at the Stofberg Theological Schools

The General Synod took note of the training of spiritual workers at Turfloop and granted approval thereof (NGKA 1971, 229). During the meeting, the Central Management took note of the commencement of training for spiritual workers at the beginning of 1972 at Decoligny (NGKA 1971, 228). The Central Management confirmed the following decision that was accepted by the 1967 General Synod of the DRCA: “Synod expresses his approval of the liaison of training of spiritual workers at Turfloop with the Central Management, especially to about administration and discipline” (Besluit 148, NGKA 1971, 229). However, the local management experienced problems with the implementation of this decision. A commission appointed by the Central Management would be responsible for the investigation into the matter (NGKA 1971, 229). The Central Management indicated in their report that the training at Turfloop was coming to an end because of a lack of interest in training. The General Synod consequently made an urgent appeal to the regional synods to bring the training of spiritual workers under the attention of their church councils and to pray for this training, but also to encourage young people to enter training (NGKA 1971, 229).

The Central Management took note with gratitude of the decision of the General Synod regarding the titles of lecturers, namely, that all lecturing staff, as heads of departments, would carry the title of professor in the future (NGKA 1971, 230). At the beginning of 1967, the Central Management appointed a representative commission to launch a comprehensive investigation into theological training at the Stofberg Theological Schools (NGKA 1971, 230). The commission comprised representatives of the DRC and the DRCA. The representatives of the DRCA were chosen to represent each of the regional synods (NGKA 1971, 230). The commission would conduct its investigation in cooperation with the DRCA. Advice on different matters was obtained from the different synods, as well as from the ASSK (NGKA 1971, 230). At the beginning of 1969, the commission presented its report to the Central Management (NGKA 1971, 230). As a result of this report, the Central Management took drastic decisions regarding the training, task and future of the office of evangelist and the training of ministers. Matters with regard to the following aspects were investigated: the purpose, need, planning, selection, admission requirements, the content of training, method of training, standard of training, training of ministers, places of training, the language medium of training, liaison with universities, the staff, continuation of training, financial implications with regard to the existence of the schools and the future expansion of the schools, continued study for degree and non-degree purposes.

The Central Management requested the lecturers of the Stofberg Theological Schools to think about the above-mentioned matters, in cooperation with representatives of the DRCA and to make recommendations in this regard (Refer to Addendum 1: *Besluite Geneem deur die Sentrale Bestuur na Aanleiding van die Verslag van die Kommissie vir Omvattende Ondersoek na Teologiese Opleiding aan die Stofberg Teologiese Skole in die NGKA 1971*). The Central Management indicated, regarding the inclusion of theological training at universities, that interviews were conducted with representatives

of different universities and the Department of Bantu Education, as well as with the Minister of Bantu Education.⁴ At that stage, they were unable to reach a conclusion about the matter (NGKA 1971, 231). The Central Management indicated in their report to the Synod that they were still advocating for church theological faculties at the so-called Bantu universities:

The Central Management is convinced that this alone will enable him to provide sufficient guarantee to the church that the basic theological training of the church will remain in the hands of people who are isolated by the church for this purpose. (NGKA 1971, 230)

For three of these universities, namely, Turfloop, Ngoye and Fort Hare, recommendations were received for the grounds on which the church could cooperate with them. Turfloop University recommended that church training should be introduced at the unattached theological faculties so that a part of the training in theological subjects could be lectured by church lecturers under the supervision and management of a university. Such training by church lecturers should be introduced in such a way that the normal university principles and machines would not be reduced and interrupted and the existence and unattached character of the theological faculty would not be endangered (NGKA 1971, 231). The method of inclusion of church lecturers at the Faculty of Theology was as follows: Church lecturers could be appointed as university lecturers. They would be nominated by the church, but appointed by the university and would have the same duties as university lecturers. They would be included in a department of the faculty, namely, Practical Theology (NGKA 1971, 231). Further recommendations from Turfloop included that a participating church would appoint a maximum of one of its lecturers in this way. Church theological institutions could be included at the Faculty of Theology, but should (qualifications, experience of staff, standard of training, admission requirements, etc.) be on university standard to be recognised as associated institution (NGKA 1971, 231). A maximum of two institutions could form part of the university in this way.

Cooperation with the Ngoye and Fort Hare Universities and Lecturers from Decoligny

More than one church could cooperate with a certain institution. One representative of each institution that was recognised as an associated institution would have voting rights in the Faculty of Theology and the Senate of the university only regarding training matters that affected the associated institution. The minimum core part handled by the university lecturers and the maximum part handled by church lecturers, would be determined (NGKA 1971, 231). Ngoye University offered inclusion of church lecturers, on condition that they would only be responsible for the lecturing of the following subjects: Message of the Old and New Testament and Symbolics, History of the specific church, Church Law and Practical Theology. Other subjects would be lectured by

4 The article uses historical references, such as Bantu Education.

university lecturers. The participating churches would have to present their curricula regarding the subjects lectured by church lecturers, for consideration and approval to the university (NGKA 1971, 231).

Fort Hare University, in cooperation with the members of the Faculty of Theology and the lecturers of Decoligny, presented the following recommendation: Fort Hare would offer a new degree, the Bachelor of Theology (BTh), in the place of the old BA Theology from 1971 that would include, apart from Greek and Hebrew, the following subjects: *Bybelkunde*, *Sistematiese Teologie*, *Kerkgeskiedenis*, *Wysbegeerte van Godsdiens* and *Vergelykende Godsdiens*, as well as *Pastorale Teologie*. This would be a three-year course (NGKA 1971, 231) and could be extended to a doctoral degree. The courses and subjects would be arranged in such a way that students at Fort Hare who successfully completed *Bybelkunde II*, *Sistematiese Teologie II*, *Kerkgeskiedenis II*, *Grieks I*, *Pastorale Teologie I* and *Hebreeus I* could return to Decoligny after the second year for a further three years of theological training. In the three years at Decoligny, the remaining subjects required by the church would be lectured to such students. They would also be assisted by the lecturers of Decoligny in the completion of BTh III. This would be conducted in the following way: The lecturers would be individually selected by Fort Hare. The lecturers of Decoligny would compile and mark the examination papers, while the lecturers of Fort Hare would act as external examiners (NGKA 1971, 231).

However, at the time of the 1971 General Synod of the DRCA, the recommendation was not approved by the senate nor the council. The above-mentioned recommendations would imply that a part of the basic training would be out of the hands of the persons who were isolated by the church for this reason. The Central Management viewed this as a stumbling block. Representatives of the Central Management, accompanied by Dr F. E. O'Brian Geldenhuys and Prof. E. P. Groenewald, would meet with the Minister of Education, Mr M. C. Botha, who offered to have similar discussions with representatives of interested churches (NGKA 1971, 231). The minister undertook to convene a meeting of representatives of the so-called Bantu universities to discuss a foundation for cooperation between these universities and churches. This foundation was subject to the approval of the minister and would serve as the basis for certain agreements between the universities and churches because, according to the previous legislation and regulations, such agreements could not be closed between the minister and churches (NGKA 1971, 231).

The General Synod of the DRC decided as follows in this regard: "The principle that a foundation for cooperation between the theological faculties of universities for the training of Bantu ministers is approved" (NGKA 1971, 232). The following insurance that was requested from Minister Botha in this regard, was approved by the General Synod of the DRCA:

The doctrinal foundation of the faculties of Theology and the training that will be provided. The doctrine and ethics of the lecturers and professors and specifically the appointment and termination of employment will be arranged to the satisfaction of the church. The continuation of the existing ministerial arrangement according to which the theological schools were able to lecture under supervision and leadership of the faculties of Theology of Bantu universities, in view of obtaining degrees from the universities. The interim arrangements according to which church and university professors were able to cooperate in training, and that this “provides for a transitional stage and growth process until the principal point of view can be realised”. (NGKA 1971, 231)

The above-mentioned agreements ensured that church-theological faculties or faculties which trusted the church with the training of their ministers, were insured. The ASSK and the Central Management received instruction to proceed with negotiations and, if this had to be finalised before the next synod, to obtain approval for agreements with the universities from the wider *Moderatuur* (Moderator) (NGKA 1971, 231). Since 1975, the Central Management consisted of an equal number of DRC and DRCA representatives. The *status quo* regarding financial contributions remained the same except that the contributions would be transferred to the regional synods of the DRC, and the DRCA would continue contributing through the regional synods (NGKA 1975, 101). Even though there was an increase in the number of trained ministers at Turfloop and Witsieshoek, it seemed that the bigger picture indicated a decrease in numbers. According to the report of the four theological schools delivered at the DRCA Synod 1975, there was a growing need for ministers. The number of students at the four theological schools under the supervision of the Central Management, namely, Turfloop, Decoligny, Dingaanstat and Witsieshoek (NGKA 1975, 102) is shown in Table 4:

Table 4: The number of students at the four theological schools under the supervision of the Central Management

Theological School	Ministers	Evangelists	Church workers
Turfloop	31	37	15
Decoligny	6	7	4
Dingaanstat	7	12	0
Witsieshoek	27	24	0

The General Synod noted the increasing numbers of ministers and evangelists at Turfloop and Witsieshoek with thanks, but simultaneously mourned the lack of interest in theological training in general. The General Synod urged the church to encourage prospective candidates to theological studies (NGKA 1975, 102). The General Synod investigated the growing need for ministers to attend to the ministry, evangelism, youth work, and similar church activities (NGKA 1975, 102). Regarding the agreements with universities, it was agreed that theological training at universities be offered on condition that the content of the training was supervised by the church. The General

Synod noted with gratitude that all the theological schools of the DRCA had reached agreements with the different universities and that the ideal of the General Synod had been reached, namely, that minister training at the DRCA could take place at universities and that ministers would be able to receive tertiary training and could obtain degrees and diplomas (NGKA 1975, 102).

The theological schools of the DRCA were connected to the different universities as follows: Turfloop with the University of the North; Decoligny with the “removed campus” of the University of Fort Hare; Dingaanstat with the University of Zululand; and Witsieshoek, like Decoligny, with the so-called “removed campus” of the University of Zululand (NGKA 1975, 102). The agreements with the four theological training centres (Turfloop, Decoligny, Dingaanstat and Witsieshoek) were formulated in such a way that the DRCA could have supervision over the content of the curriculum (NGKA 1975, 102). Two previous reports from the Central Management, those of 1967 and 1971, mentioned that lecturers would be able to receive the title “professor”. According to the report of the third meeting of the General Synod of the DRCA, ministers could continue their studies at the universities where such agreements were reached (NGKA 1975, 103). The General Synod of the DRCA requested the DRC to make bursaries available to prospective ministers through its synodical ministry commissions. The General Synod granted approval for the scribe of the Central Management to bring the A. M. Hofmeyer Study Fund under the attention of the presbyteries with the request to encourage congregations to contribute to the fund (NGKA 1975, 103). The General Synod further urged ministers to continue their advanced theological studies through the existing theological training centres and not at other institutions (NGKA 1975, 103).

Regarding training, the following points were deemed important for trainees:

- i. One year discount on their study to evangelists in the minister class.
- ii. Training in home language.
- iii. Connection of the Theological School Orumana, Southwest Africa to the Theological Schools, Stofberg.
- iv. With (iii) the policy and coordination will remain with Central Management.
- v. Recognition of the qualification, B.A. Theology.
- vi. The training of the servants of the Word from his own population is the responsibility of the DRCA.
- vii. Each school will appoint a year end exam commission.

- viii. The evangelist will not be known as servant of the Word. The office is located in the minister. (NGKA 1975, 104)

The General Synod of the DRCA approved amendments to the *Reglement vir die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Skole Stofberg*. The General Synod recommended that Art. 1 be amended to make it clear that the training of servants of the Word from their own population was the responsibility of the DRCA.⁵ The DRCA was of opinion that this responsibility should be shared with the DRC, as determined by the regulation. The DRCA recommended that an equal number of representatives (with *secundi*) representative of each regional synod of the DRCA should serve on the Central Management. The Dutch Reformed Church among the Bantu in South West Africa could appoint their own representatives on the Central Management (NGKA 1975, 104) (Refer to Addendum 2: *Reglement vir die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Skole Stofberg*).

The 1975 General Synod of the DRCA decided as follows regarding theological training in Botswana:

Synod decides that the presbytery of Mochudi is free to cooperate in the named theological training in Botswana, subject to the following conditions: candidates studying at the institute, will appear in front of the Central Management of Stofberg after completing their studies. The Central Management will investigate the doctrine and expertise of the brother and will determine to which requirements the brother still has to comply to be licensed or admitted as an evangelist by the DRCA.

Rev A. T. Barry addressed the Central Management meeting in 1976 about the Botswana Theological Training Program (BTTP) and mentioned the desire of the presbytery of Mochudi in Botswana to connect to the theological programme of the DRCA. He also mentioned that the matter has not served before synod of the Northern Transvaal, DRCA. The Central Management suggested that the presbytery first present the case to synod of Northern Transvaal. The Central Management undertook, if the above-mentioned request were approved by synod of Northern Transvaal, to attend to the matter at the next meeting. At the meeting of 1977, the Central Management took note that synod of Northern Transvaal approved the application of the presbytery of Mochudi. At the Central Management meeting in 1978, the matter was again presented by Rev A.T. Barry on behalf of the presbytery of Mochudi. After careful consideration and discussion, the Central Management approved the commencement of training on a limited scale in Botswana. Initially, one lecturer would be called. He would present classes in cooperation with the lecturers of the Stofberg Theological Schools. At the meeting in 1979, the Central Management took note of the following:

5 The article uses historical references, such as the Dutch Reformed Church among the Bantu.

- i. The presbytery of Mochudi accepts the decision of the Central Management with gratitude. The local arrangements are in process.
- ii. The presbytery of Mochudi again requests the Botswana liaison commission at a later stage to reconsider the matter. At that stage, it seemed that, because of planned church planting in Botswana within the foreseeable future, it would not be practical to start with theological training.
- iii. The presbytery is of opinion that theological training at that stage should not be handled separately from the planting of the planned independent church for Botswana and requests Central Management to find a way in the interim along which prospective students could be assisted.
- iv. Central Management again decides to investigate the possibility to connect students with existing schools in the interim period. Should this be possible, funds would be sourced to assist these students in paying for their studies. (Refer to Addendum 1: Besluite Geneem deur die Sentrale Bestuur na Aanleiding van die Verslag van die Kommissie vir Omvattende Onderzoek na Teologiese Opleiding aan die Stofberg Teologiese Skole van NGKA Sinode 1979).

Equal Representation in the Central Management of Both the Regional Synods of the DRCA and the DRC from 1979–1991

By 1979, equal representation in the Central Management of both the regional synods of the DRC and the DRCA was established. The Central Management was compiled as follows: The representatives of the DRCA:

- i. Cape: Rev. L.T. Buso,
- ii. Natal: Rev. M.A. Dlamini,
- iii. Orange Free State: Rev. N.W. Basson,
- iv. Northern Transvaal: Rev. L.K. Mabusela,
- v. Southern Transvaal: Rev. M.K. Motlhale,
- vi. Phororo: Rev. J.M. Lebone.
- vii. Additional members: Rev. E.T.S. Buti and Rev P.M. Khunong. (NGKA 1979, 125)

When Rev. E. T. S. Buti passed away, he was replaced by Rev. M. J. Ramolahlehi. When Rev. Motlahle resigned, he was replaced by Rev. J. Selamolela. (NGKA 1979, 125). The representatives of the DRC:

- i. General Synod: Rev. P.E.S. Smith,
- ii. Cape: Rev. J.J. Sieberhagen,
- iii. Eastern Cape: Rev. J. Claasen,
- iv. Natal: Rev. I.J. Haasbroek,
- v. Orange Free State: Rev. D.S. Snyman,
- vi. Western Transvaal: Rev. P. van Niekerk,
- vii. Northern Transvaal: Dr. J.P. Theron,
- viii. Southern Transvaal: Dr. C. H. Badenhorst,
- ix. Southwest Africa: Rev. P.D. Strauss. (NGKA 1979, 125)

The principals of the Stofberg Theological Schools also had voting rights on the Central Management, namely: Turfloop: Prof. A. S. van Niekerk (from 1979 meeting; succeeded by Prof. J. A. van Wyk); Decoligny: Prof. J. du Preez (after his retirement succeeded by Prof. P. P. Kamfer); Dingaanstat: Prof. M. S. van Rooyen; Witsieshoek: Prof. A. A. Odendaal; and Orumana: Prof. W. J. van der Merwe (after his retirement succeeded by Rev. J. Veitch) (NGKA 1979, 125). The Central Management also took note that Prof. A. A. Odendaal would retire as principal and scribe of the Central Management at the end of 1979. Prof. D. R. de Villiers was appointed as principal of the Witsieshoek Theological School, and scribe of the Central Management at the beginning of 1979 (NGKA 1979, 125). With the school known as Orumana in the former South West Africa included, five schools were under the supervision of the Central Management. Before Orumana was included in 1976, there were 21 lecturing positions in total (NGKA 1975, 126).

Statistics Regarding the Number of Students at the Stofberg Theological Schools from 1975–1978

The General Synod took note of the following statistics regarding the number of students at the Stofberg Theological Schools from 1975–1978 (NGKA 1975, 126) as shown in Table 5:

Table 5: The number of students at the Stofberg Theological Schools (1975–1978)

Totale van bogenoemde	1975				1976				1978				1977			
	Rol		Toe		Rol		Toe		Rol		Toe		Rol		Toe	
	L	E	L	E	L	E	L	E	L	E	L	E	L	E	L	E
Decoligny	6	8	1	4	6	11	1	1	8	20	1	4	8	11	2	5
Dingaanstad	7	7	0	6	8	8	0	3	5	14	3	1	5	16	1	2
Turfloop	36	29	4	4	35	21	6	6	32	8	1	4	27	5	4	1
Orumana	26	26	6	8	24	23	6	5	20	27	3	10	26	26	1	4
	75	70	11	22	73	63	13	15	65	69	8	19	66	58	8	12
Witsieshoek	3	13			3	7	0	3	3	7	1	5	1	2	1	1
TOTALE	78	83	11	22	76	70	13	18	68	76	9	24	67	60	9	13

Of the students registered at Turfloop, some belonged to the Reformed Church in South Africa:

1975: L: 5, E: 5; **1976:** L: 8, E: 3; **1977:** L: 7, E: 1; **1978:** L: 7, E: 1.

From these statistics, it seems that during the period from 1975–1978, 40 ministers and 68 evangelists were admitted to the theological schools of the DRCA. At the end of 1978, there were 66 minister students and 58 evangelist students in training at the four theological schools (NGKA 1975, 126). The 1975 General Synod of the DRCA took note with gratitude that the theological schools of the DRCA, namely, Turfloop, Witsieshoek, Decoligny and Dingaanstad were connected satisfactorily to the Universities of the North, Zululand and Fort Hare (NGKA 1975, 127).

This connection resulted in four ministers receiving licensing with the qualifications BTeol, BD at the end of 1978; three with the qualification BTeol at Decoligny at the end of 1977; and only one with the qualification BTeol during May 1979. The first two students at Witsieshoek, as enrolled students of the University of Zululand, received their BTeol degrees (NGKA 1975, 127). During the recess, the Central Management again mentioned the matter of connecting the Turfloop Theological School with the University of the North. The University of the North employed a lecturer who was a member of the Roman Catholic Church, who would also be a lecturer for DRCA students (NGKA 1975, 127). The conversations between the Central Management and the university management resulted in interviews with the Minister of Education, which resulted in a new agreement, that the school at Turfloop would be a church department of the Faculty of Theology at the University of the North from the beginning of 1979. The new agreement was a step in the direction of reaching the ideal of the church about theological training, namely, that the training would take place in a church faculty of a university (NGKA 1975, 127). This agreement included the following benefits to the church:

- i. The church obtains full supervision over its students, while the university takes responsibility for the administration and for maintaining the standard of training regarding the degrees offered by the university.
- ii. The church appoints its lecturers, subject to the approval of the university.
- iii. All full-time lecturers enjoy voting rights on the Faculty of Theology at the university.
- iv. The church department were able to determine and compile her own course of study, as well as curriculum, subject to the approval of the university.
- v. The church department could make use of the lecturers of the university, and the other way round as well.
- vi. Students are enrolled by the church department on behalf of the university.
- vii. This means that they are subject to the rules of both the church department and the university.
- viii. According to this new arrangement, an institution of the church that was separate from the university, could also be included as a church department of the Faculty of Theology.
- ix. It would seem as if this new foundation of connection with the university would also be well suited to other schools in their connection with universities.
- x. Since there was a possibility of more benefits to the church, the Central Management instructed the Executive Committee to proceed with negotiations. As soon as the final agreement has been reached, a copy of the agreement would be sent to the legal commission of General Synod for their attention and reporting to the ASK. (NGKA 1975, 126–128)

The Memorandum Presented at the April 1979 Meeting of the Central Management

The memorandum was presented at the April 1979 meeting of the Central Management (Refer to Addendum 2). The Central Management took note of the memorandum and accordingly took the following decision, presented to the General Synod for approval: “The Honourable Synod is requested to, in the light of the findings as explained in the memorandum, reconsider the decision with regard to one theological school.” The situation with the staff and the schools remained as indicated in the previous report. The statistics proved that there was an increase in the number of students qualifying as evangelists. In terms of the training of evangelists, the 1979 General Synod of the DRCA decided as follows:

Synod decides to end the training of evangelists. However, each regional synod will decide for what period they will still proceed with training in their area, with reporting to and approval of General Synod.

From the reports it seems that the training of evangelists ended at Turfloop (1980) and Decoligny (1982) (NGKA 1981, 142) (Refer to Addendum 2: *Reglement vir die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Skole Stofberg*.) For former evangelists who wanted to be trained as ministers, Greek and Hebrew were not compulsory (NGKA 1981, 143). A person had to be a congregant for three years before he could be trained as a minister (NGKA 1981, 144–145). The Stofberg Theological Schools were connected to universities as follows:

- i. Since 1 April 1982 Witsieshoek has been fully included in the University of the North,
- ii. Turfloop was also included in the University of the North,
- iii. Decoligny was included in the University of Fort Hare,
- iv. Dingaanstat was included in the University of Zululand. (NGKA 1981, 145–146)

More Control over Theological Training by the DRC in Africa, the General Synod of the DRCA since 1981

Regarding more control over theological training by the DRC in Africa, the 1981 General Synod of the DRCA decided as follows:

- i. The policy regarding her theological training will be the full responsibility of the General Synod of DRCA.
- ii. The Central Stofberg Management will stop existing as a formal body. The conversation regarding theological training will continue in commissions on which interested synods of the DRC and the DRCA, as well as lecturers, will be represented.
- iii. Governing bodies for Theological Training will be established to take the place of local management Interested churches will be represented on these governing bodies, as mutually agreed. These governing bodies of the different schools will take care of the needs of the church about theological training, with reporting to synods. In light of the above, the Regulation for the Dutch Reformed Theological School Stofberg is provided.
- iv. The accepted Reformed policy guidelines about theological training is entrenched by way of implementation of amendments only allowed if General Synod DRCA and the regional synods approved with a two third majority vote.

- v. Synod provides proxy to the ASSK and the wider *Moderatuur* (DRC) to finalise these matters about control, as contained the recommendations above.
- vi. Synod is requested to maintain the name “Stofberg” regarding theological training in some or other way. (NGKA 1981, 148)

There was an increase in the number of ministers who completed their studies. In terms of the connection of the theological schools with the different universities, the Central Management reported as follows:

- i. The schools at Turfloop and Witsieshoek formed close connections.
- ii. The schools at Decoligny and Dingaanstad did not form close connections and are requested to form closer connections. (NGKA 1987, 172)

The General Synod extended the five-year the minister course to six years. The six-year course was phased in from 1987 at Turfloop and Witsieshoek. By 1987 Dingaanstad and Decoligny were still subject to the five-year course (NGKA 1987, 172–173). By the seventh Synod of DRCA the era of the Central Management had ended (NGKA 1987, 173–176). At the General Synod of the DRCA in 1991, it was reported that the training of ministers at Decoligny was problematic because of financial difficulties (NGKA 1991, 22). In 1960, when it was decided to divide the Stofberg School into four ethnical schools, the question was asked whether it would be a good idea to train the Xhosa-speaking students at Alice (NGKA 1991, 22). However, it was decided that close association with the University of Fort Hare would be damaging to the already negative public view of the DRCA (NGKA 1991, 22).

The financial difficulties at Decoligny were mainly the result of:

- i. increasing costs as experienced by all training institutions,
- ii. the main source of financial aid, namely the DRC in South Africa (Western Cape) informs the governing body for theological training that contributions would be decreased, because of its own financial difficulties since 1988. Contributions would be decreased on a sliding scale and ended in the financial year 1991/1992.

Decoligny, mainly financed by the DRC, received approximately 10% of its budget from the University of Fort Hare (NGKA 1991, 22).

The Evaluation of the Stofberg Theological Schools

According to Kritzinger (2011, 127), the planting of separate churches also had a significant influence on the theological training of the DRCA. The following decision of the DRC in 1857 resulted in the separate serving of holy communion to brown

congregants of the DRC, which eventually resulted in the establishment of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) in South Africa and eventually also separate churches for black and Indian congregants:

De Synode beschouwt het wenschlijk en schriftmatig dat onze ledematen uit de Heidenen, in onze bestaande gemeenten opgenomen en ingelijfd worden, overal waar zulks geschieden kan; maar waar deze maatregel, ten gevolge van de zwakheid van sommigen de bevordering van de zaak van Christus onder de Heidenen, in de weg zoude staan, de gemeenten uit de Heidenen opgerigt, of nog op te rigten, hare Christelijke voorregten in een afzonderlijk gebouw of gesticht genieten zal. (*Acta NGK 1857*: 58, 60, 89, XII (5); *Acta Synodi. DRC 1857*)

The following churches were established for blacks in the four provinces in South Africa, namely: the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in the Orange Free State (1910); the Dutch Reformed Mission Church of the Transvaal (1931); the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church of the Cape (1951); and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church of Natal (1952) (Plaatjies-Van Huffel 2013). In 1963, these synods united as the General Synod of the DRCA.

According to Smith (1972, 386–388), the DRC denounced the reformed Presbyterian principles with the establishment of four separate ethnically based missionary churches:

- i. The DRC in South Africa was biased in her initiative with the establishment of churches for people of colour. There was no participating consent from the coloured congregations in the constitution to a denomination.
- ii. This establishment of a church for people of colour without the actual desire of the people should rather be regarded as a church transplant, as opposed to church planting.
- iii. With the establishment of churches for people of colour, the DRC in South Africa maintained control over the churches, with representatives having voting rights in such church meetings.
- iv. No provision was made for any actual bond between the DRC in South Africa and the churches for people of colour. The churches had to be led to independence by the DRC in South Africa.
- v. In the establishment of separate churches for coloured people, the DRC in South Africa was led by the demands of the practice.

According to Smith (1972, 388–392), the Catholicity of the church provided scope for the DRC for indigenisation of the church under the four ethnic groups. The DRC in South Africa acts from a Western perspective by putting her own stamp on the “daughter churches”. In this way, the DRC in South Africa left little freedom and independence to the churches for the people of colour, to allow them to operate independently. According

to Smith (1972, 381–386), the following factors resulted in separate churches for coloured people: An important factor seems to be the specific labour pattern that developed between whites and people of colour since their first meeting, which directly resulted in the import of slaves. The attitude of whites towards people of colour originated in the view that people of colour were regarded as being descended from Gam, son of Noah (Kritzinger 2011, 127). For this reason, the DRCA was regarded as dependent on the DRC:

Dependency is not merely an unfortunate phenomenon. It is a deadly syndrome, an illness that causes damage in many ways. It goes much deeper and wider than the financial aspect. It becomes a mentality, a culture, a way of thinking. Everything that is said of the culture of poverty, also counts in this regard. In the first place it paralyses. It also prevents the church from becoming a missionary church, living like God intended us to, as a church-for-others. In the second place, it affects relationships. There can't be a healthy relationship between the giver and the receiver. And in this case it affects relationships between the dependent churches and the church (or missionary) that is still keeping the churches financially alive. (Kritzinger 1996, 14)

According to Van Niekerk (1989, 354), the academic standards at Turfloop were a result of the following:

- i. The political war where the slogan: “*liberation before education*” was often heard, caused the country to become ungovernable. The war against apartheid also played a significant role. This led to an increase like the conflict, causing violent conflict with the security forces. Eventually, this ended, but it still resulted in the training and educational culture being greatly undermined and standards were lowered in the process.
- ii. Cultural differences also played a role in widening the cultural gap, especially in the thought patterns and value system of the African world.
- iii. According to Van Niekerk, there was often tension between the students and ministers, which he experienced as unexpected and confusing.
- iv. Students received substandard tuition. Van Niekerk views poor school education as a reason for this.

The above is a fact, simply because South Africans were living in a broken society. It would not be easy to change the theological training. Hendriks (2014, 75) summarises it as follows:

The realities of our continent – its numerous problems and deep pain – confront the church with many challenges. The church is experiencing unprecedented growth which is a mile wide and an inch deep. Theological education is being challenged. Can we train pastors and empower the laity to be the proverbial salt and light to make a difference in society?

Crafford (1982, 590) indicates that, if the DRC would in any way play a role in the future, it would have to complete with certain conditions, namely:

- i. Ensuring that the DRC does not become an isolated white island on a black continent ... The DRC would have to ensure that she enters healthy conversations and contact and fulfil her role in participation with other churches. The DRC may not be a closed church, but instead it a priority to build trust relationships with other churches. We must be one body, of which the members are cooperating in love and harmony.
- ii. A second condition is that the DRC must be very sensitive to the desperate need in Africa on economic, social, cultural, educational and political terrain.

Conclusion

The article has indicated a discontinuity in the story line regarding the development of theological training in the former DRCA. As a result of the fear of the DRC for equality between blacks and whites, separate churches had to be established for the four ethnic groups. The DRC was against “social equality” between blacks and whites and promoted “social differentiation and cultural segregation”. People of colour had to be led to independence under the guardianship of the DRC (Lombard 1985, 321). This meant that the missionary policy of the DRC was indeed a racial policy which influenced the training of ministers of colour. The effect was that missionary work became a movement from the white church to the church of the people of colour. In the fifties and sixties, the coloured churches became more independent, but the DRC wanted to maintain its control. At that stage, the DRC was responsible for eight theological schools, namely: one for the NGSK in Bellville, four Stofberg Theological Schools (Turfloop, Dingaansat, Decoligny and Witsieshoek), and three outside of South Africa (Nkoma, Morgenster and Madzimoyo) (Van der Watt 2003, 214–218).

The narrative of the development of the theological formation of the DRCA clearly showed that for much of its history the theological training of the church was under the control of the DRC. The influence of the DRC on the curriculum, appointment of lecturers, management of theological schools of both the DRC and the DRC, funds, bursaries, even on the relocation of the school, drafting of charters and contracts, reporting to the DRC in relation to theological education, as well as on property are indicative of the power vested in primarily the DRC. The DRC retained controlling share in the Stofberg Memorial Schools. De Villiers (1975, 335) defended the control of the DRC at the Stofberg Memorial Schools by saying that “this is entirely justified because of the lion's share in the financial sphere in respect of the institution”. Thus, finances were indicated as justification for controlling an autonomous church's theological training. Only by 1979 was the equal number representation, of both the DRC and the DRC's various regional synods based on the Central Management of the Stofberg Memorial Schools.

In 1994, the DRMC and the DRCA united to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). A new beginning was made in 1995, when the joint curatorium of the Northern Transvaal and Southern Transvaal Synods reopened the Turfloop Theological Seminary; however, it was closed in 1999 due to lack of financial accountability and disciplinary challenges as reasons (Kritzinger 2008, 7). In February 2003, the Northern Transvaal curatorium reopened the Turfloop Theological Seminary and moved it to Pretoria under the name of the Northern Theological Seminary (NTS). Since 2008, the functioning of theological training at the NTS has stabilised and currently the main centres for theological education with a view of entering the ministry in the URCSA are the NTS and Stellenbosch University. At the Second General Synod of the URCSA in 1997,⁶ a resolution was passed affirming that the training of its ministers of the Word is the responsibility of the URCSA. The General Synod further accepted the principle of one training, one curriculum and one standard and appointed one curatorium to phase this in. Finally it was decided that, while the existing agreements of regional synods with specified universities will be upheld, new agreements must be approved by General Synod, on the recommendation of the Curatorium of the General Synod (URCSA 1997, 148–154).

In September 1998, the University of the Western Cape (UWC) terminated the employment contracts of 51 lecturers, including six lecturers from the URCSA, due to a process of rationalisation. UWC unilaterally suspended the employment contracts of six lecturers, including three church lecturers, namely, Profs P. J. J. S. Els, J. C. Adonis and P. J. Robinson. The year 2000 was significant for the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University. It was the year when the ministerial formation of the URCSA Regional Synod Cape relocated from UWC Bellville to Stellenbosch University. At the 2001 General Synod, the Curatorium was again tasked to seek a solution to firmly develop a unified theological programme that would meet the requirements of the URCSA, both with respect to training and content. The Curatorium was also requested to do a feasibility study which reflected on a theological reformed programme that complied with the traditional standards as well as the contextual needs of the URCSA. Furthermore, it was asked to see to it that theological training programmes be structured to equip students with a good overview of all theological academic disciplines (Biblical languages included); a strong basis of research methods in order to enable the student to engage in continuing theological training and that there should be two programmes available for the training required to be considered for ministry in the URCSA. These should be a basic programme of four years which consists of the fundamental subjects (i.e. Missiology, Practical Theology, Old Testament, New Testament, Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology) followed by a fully accredited fifth year Master of Divinity programme. Secondly, on an advanced level, any student could further their studies beyond the core course through a postgraduate programme.

6 The Second General Synod of the URCSA was the first held after the democratic elections in South Africa in April 1994.

The emphasis was being put on the spiritual, intellectual and practical aspects of the training of future ministers and the role that the local congregation should play in this. Thus, the URCSA was striving for a sound academic education enhanced by spiritual growth as well as practical exposure and leadership development that could truly be termed holistic. It sought to integrate theological knowledge with spiritual values and practical skills. For this reason, the process of equipping URCSA members for the ordained ministry was called “ministerial formation” to give expression to the comprehensive process that it would entail (and not merely theological education). This was confirmed in the guiding principles for the ministerial formation process that formed part of the discussions at the 2005 General Synod. In these principles, the church advocated for upholding university academic standards that would take the social, economic, political and cultural context of the congregations in which the ministry takes place very seriously. In practice this meant that students would enter into dialogue with these different areas of society and develop their theology in relation with them. The goal of ministerial formation in the URCSA then was to shape and equip students spiritually, intellectually and practically for their service in the church of Jesus Christ.

This process was further rooted in a uniting ethos that embraced a diversity of languages and cultures; strived to overcome inequalities in terms of generation, race, class and gender; and strived for a dynamic unity that deals creatively with differentiation. The process also aimed to nurture a Reformed African identity by integrating the realities of Southern Africa with a Reformed theology, and to foster ecumenical openness in a global context while developing a Reformed identity to work for justice and reconciliation in church, society and the environment. The Confession of Belhar was at the heart of the ministerial formation process since it nurtures a ministerial lifestyle characterised by hope, unity, reconciliation, justice and obedience.

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