THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION AT MEDINGEN MISSION STATION SINCE 1881

by

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SUPERVISOR : PROF J.J. BOOYSE

JUNE 2009
DECLARATION

I DECLARE THAT “THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION AT MEDINGEN STATION SINCE 1881”

is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references

.............................................. .............................................
KOENA MASHALE                  DATE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

• I wish to extend my sincere gratitude, first and foremost to God, through Jesus Christ, whose guidance, mercy and compassion made the completion of this research possible.

• I also gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness and wholehearted appreciation to my supervisor, Prof. J. J. Booyse, for his keen commitment, encouragement, suggestions and tolerance throughout the course of this research.

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• Especially, I wish to express my gratitude to Pulane and Maite for their endless efforts in typing the drafts of this investigation.

• I gratefully acknowledge Dr. Carien Wilsenach for editing the draft.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of Lesiba Johannes and Pulane Rahab Lekoloane, my parents, in grateful appreciation of the Christian ideals they set before me, their belief that hard work pays and my husband Matome Elam Mashale.

This dissertation is also truly dedicated to my late daughter Henriette C.M. and sisters Pulane, Maite, Resoketswe, Koena (Jr) and Tebatso, without whose sound support, tolerance and encouragement this research would not have been successfully completed.

In praise of Medingen

Medingen a wonderous place
A place to praise the Almighty
With joy, laughter and songs
To seek all the hidden secrets.

From corner to corner
Are the lights that shine in the sky
May we share the joy
To all people we love
Medingen is the place of love,
The place of joy
And the place for you and me
Medingen is our home
   And you're home
To live the life we want
   With tears dropping
   And with sorrow.

      May we fear no more.
      Because our lives are saved
      From evil that came upon us.

Long live Medingen long live!
May we continue our work and prosper
   And be grateful to all
   Be happy
   And let it shine always.

Let our God Almighty be praised, thanked and glorified for the support, love and care He is always giving us.

AMEN!!!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSA.</td>
<td>Republic of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
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<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Dutch Reformed Church</td>
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<td>BMS</td>
<td>Berlin Missionary Society</td>
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<td>LMS</td>
<td>London Missionary Society</td>
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<td>SAMS-</td>
<td>South African Missionary Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGB</td>
<td>School Governing Body</td>
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<td>SMT</td>
<td>School Management System</td>
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<td>SASA</td>
<td>South African Schools Act</td>
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<td>LPTC</td>
<td>Lower Primary Teachers’ Course</td>
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<td>Higher Primary Teachers’ Course</td>
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<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes Based Education</td>
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<td>C2005-</td>
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SUMMARY

This research report focuses on the origin and development of the Medingen Mission Station, near Ga-Kgapane in the Limpopo Province, and the provision of education at this station since its establishment in 1881. After an account of missionary endeavours in South Africa during the second half of the nineteenth century (with the emphasis on the activities of the Berlin Missionary Society), an explanation is provided of how missionaries became involved in the weal and woes of the Balobedu tribe. This is followed by an indication of how Reverend Fritz Reuter took the initiative to provide basic education to the inhabitants of Ga-Kgapane and how education provision developed at Medingen since then. Reasons are advanced for the prominence Medingen Primary School currently enjoys and the study concludes with the assertion that Medingen Mission Station can be regarded as an important, though not exclusive source of the Balobedu’s present-day identity.

Title of thesis:

THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION AT MEDINGEN MISSION STATION SINCE 1881

Key terms:

Medingen; Missionary education; Balobedu; Berlin Missionary Society; Ga-Kgapane; Fritz Reuter; historical-educational research; educational development; socio-political context; education provision.
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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction

For almost three centuries since the arrival and settlement of Europeans in South Africa, missionaries played a major part in the provision of education to black people in the country. According to Mphahlele (1978:61) they founded, financed and administered missionary schools, often without any financial assistance from the state.

The first missionaries to cross the Vaal River into the area previously known as the Transvaal, from the (then) Cape Colony, were the Methodists, Reverends Samuel Broadbent and Thomas Hodgson, who were instructed by their denomination’s missionary committee in London to establish a missionary station in Bechuanaland, the country which is today known as Botswana (Mphahlele, 1978:91).

The first missionaries to enter the territory in the extreme north of South Africa, later known as the Lebowa Homeland, to the north of Pietersburg (currently known as Polokwane) in 1860, were the Germans, Reverends Alexander Merensky and Heinrich Grutzner. Both belonged to the Berlin Missionary Society. Their brother missionary society, the Hermannsburg Missionary Society, had started work earlier, in 1857, in the southern parts of Transvaal (currently the North-West Province) (Mphahlele, 1978:1).

In the course of time Rev Fritz Reuter and Rev Walter Krause, also attached to the Berlin Missionary Society, not only set up a mission station at the village, originally called Ga-Kgapane, but currently known as Medingen. They also established a primary school. This school was officially opened in 1882. It was the very first school in the region and all the other schools that exists in the area today emerged as a result of the primary school at Medingen (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:23).

If one takes into account that the vernacular of these missionaries were German and that they were in all probability not conversant in Selobedu, a dialect of Balobedu, the local language of the BaRozwi\(^1\) or Balozwi (Motshekga, 2004:42), one may well wonder how

\(^1\) The concept “BaRozwi” refers to the people from Mbire Rozwi who formed the Mwanamutapa dynasty.
they communicated and how it was at all possible for them to provide formal education to the Balobedu. In addition, if one understands the customs of the Balobedu, one also wonders what the relationship between these missionaries and Chief Mohale, the leader of the Balobedu at that stage, was. How did it, on the one hand, happen that he allowed the missionaries to settle in Bolobedu (the place where the Balobedu stay) and, more importantly, why did he agree to provide his people with a (Eurocentric) type of education which must have been quite unfamiliar to them? On the other hand, what was it that drove the missionaries to sacrifice a life in Europe to settle and work amongst, what they must initially have experienced as “complete strangers in an often inhospitable, hostile environment?”

Although the history of many mission endeavors in South Africa such as that of the Swiss at Lemana, the Anglicans at Setotolwane, and the Dutch Reformed at Bethesda and Botshabelo in Middelburg, have been well documented, little information concerning the role played by the above-mentioned missionaries in the provision of education at Medingen Station is readily available. To someone interested in the history of South African education this seems perplexing. It becomes even more so when, after a brief survey of available information on Medingen, one realizes that the Medingen Mission Station is not only the oldest mission station in the Limpopo Province, but has through the ages been an inspiration for neighbouring villages to establish their own schools, churches and clinics. In addition, when speaking to inhabitants of Medingen, one soon gets the impression that this mission station is widely regarded as a spring of knowledge and civilization and as the source from which the identity of the Balobedu has originated. Undoubtedly the legacy of Medingen, in particular the educationally relevant inheritance of Medingen, deserves to be preserved, amongst other things, by having aspects of the Station’s history recorded.

Against this background the problem statement which served as a guide to this study, was formulated.

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2 “Balobedu” are the descendants of the Shona from Zimbabwe, more information in this regard is supplied in section 3.2.2.
1.2 The research problem

The point of departure for this investigation is the following research problem:

How did the provision of education at Medingen Mission Station develop since the establishment of this Station in 1881?

At first sight, this research problem (respectively: research question) appears to be uncomplicated and straightforward. However, if one takes into account that the phrase “provision of education” implies that a researcher has to deal with numerous aspects of education such as, for example, the aims, methods and content of education, staffing, financing and school organization, and that the changes that took place in each of these over a period of 127 years should be investigated, it soon becomes clear that a further analysis of the problem is required. Consequently, this research problem has been broken down into a number of more limited sub-problems or sub-questions:

• How did the Mission Station come into existence?
• How did the Mission Station develop, with specific reference to the provision of education?
• How and why did Medingen gain the educational status and prominence it apparently has?
  ▪ Who were the persons that can be regarded as the “drivers of educational development” at Medingen Mission Station?
  ▪ What were the social, political and economic factors that existed when Medingen was established and in which it developed over the past two centuries?

It is argued that, if all these questions can be answered effectively, it will also be possible to answer the main research question adequately.
1.3 Aims and objectives of the research

Research is costly, both in terms of time and finances. Therefore no researcher should engage in a study such as this before clarifying the aim and objectives of her proposed investigation; if not for herself, then for the reader of the research report.

As, to some extent, suggested by the research questions above, the aim of this study is

- to provide a detailed description of the origin and development of the Medingen Mission Station, focusing on the provision of education.

The specific objectives of the study are

- to ascertain how the mission station came into existence;
- to describe the development of the mission station;
- to determine why and how, over the years, Medingen gained the educational status and prominence it currently seem to have;
- to briefly describe the socio-political context within which Medingen was established and in which it developed over the past 127 years;
- to determine what changes have taken place at Medingen Primary School in the course of time with regard to the school’s curricula, including the aims, methods and content of the education provided;
- to describe changes that took place concerning teaching staff, infra-structure and general school administration; and
- to compile a short biography of prominent role-players in the development of the provision of education at Medingen.

1.4 Significance of the research

In addition to explaining the aims and objectives of her research, a researcher has the obligation of explaining to the reader the worth (or rationale) of undertaking an investigation such as this.

From a theoretical point of view, this study is expected to

- provide information on the previously unrecorded history of Medingen Mission Station;
either validate or revoke current perceptions that this mission station is the source from which the identity of the Balobedu has originated.

From a practical point of view, the study is expected to

- create a historical consciousness of Medingen amongst previous and current inhabitants of the Station;
- instill a sense of pride among all the current members of the Medingen community; and Balobedu in general.

1.5 Explanation of key concepts

In order to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding, the most important concepts that will be used in this study, need to be identified and defined. In this section attention is paid to the following concepts: mission and missionary, lifelong-learning, outcomes–based education and education provision.

1.5.1 Mission and missionary

The term “mission” from which the word “missionary” is derived, refers to a delegation of persons, especially advocates of a specific religion, who attempts to accomplish a specific (mostly religious) aim. Usually the aim of missionaries is to convert people who do not believe in their particular faith or dogma, to their religion. The mission of Christians, for example, was the conversion of non-Christians to the Christian faith by preaching the Gospel of the Bible (Dahwa, 1986:56, Masumbe & Coetzer, 2002:1).

A “missionary” is defined as a person sent by an authoritative person or group belonging to a certain religious denomination, to preach his or her religion to people who are not conversant with it (Mabunda, 1995:9, Allen, 1990:373). It is a person who goes on a religious mission. The concept “missionary” can also refer to a person attached to a magistrate’s court whose task it is to influence or help offenders or applicants (Concise Oxford Dictionary 1987: 648). However, in this study this meaning of the concept is irrelevant.

As an adjective used in phrases such as “missionary work” or “missionary delegation”, the concept “missionary” denotes work resulting from a desire to convert people to one’s own

It should, however, be noted that the task of missionaries usually includes much more than preaching a specific religion. Especially in the past, it also included, for example, the provision of education (Kritzinger, 1988:33-34).

1.5.2 Lifelong-learning

The concept “lifelong-learning” refers to an ongoing learning process. It is recognized that teaching is not an end in itself. The purpose is to instruct and inform individuals in such a way that in the end the learner will have a thorough understanding of the fundamental elements of the learning programme, and the way that learning influences related aspects. The aim of teaching is to provide the learner with both the will and the skills for a lifetime of learning and achievement (Curriculum 2005 in a nutshell 2001:2).

1.5.3 Outcomes–based education

Outcomes based education (OBE) is a design which is learner-centered and orientated towards results or outcomes. It is based on the belief that all individuals can learn. An OBE curriculum is designed, first and foremost, to promote the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills which are needed by a learner to perform a specific task. One of the objectives of OBE is for the learner to be equipped with what he/she should know and be able to do in order to participate actively in the society. It also includes a realization that learners differ, and that assistance may be needed to enable them to reach their full potential. OBE is an approach to education and training that is primarily characterized by a focus on results and outputs, rather than on inputs and syllabi or curricula. Educators set the outcomes of their programmes at a given level. They do not necessarily prescribe specific syllabi and they define achievement in terms of criteria rather than according to norms (a given percentage). In theory, all learners can succeed provided they are given sufficient time to fulfill the set criteria (Curriculum 2005 in a nutshell 2001:2).
1.5.4 Education provision

The term, education provision, refers to the process of providing or making education available. Provision includes more than supplying resources like books, buildings and other teaching materials. It also includes creating an environment that is conducive to learning; one that accommodates every participant’s personal background, culture (including the use of the participant’s own language) and other practices in an educational setting (Mothata, 2000:16 – 17).

1.6 Research methodology

According to Best and Kahn (1993:20), the concept “research” may be defined as the systematic, objective analysis and recording of controlled observation that may lead to the development of generalizations, principles or theories which would result in the prediction and possible ultimate control of events.

Wiersma (1991:6-7) suggests that in order for research to posses an element of validity, it needs to deal with accurate interpretation and the generalization of the results. Research must also be reliable, in that it must be consistent throughout the research process.

Keeping these pronouncements in mind, the historical-educational method of research will be employed in an attempt to find answers to the research questions posed in section 1.2 above.

1.6.1 Research design

The study will follow the historical-educational research method. It is preferred because it has the potential to provide the researcher with conclusions concerning causes, effects and trends of past occurrences which, in turn, may help to explain the present, and anticipate future events (Gay, 1987:9).

According to Wiersma (1991:206) the historical-educational research method involves the following four steps:
• identification of the research problem;
• collection and evaluation of source material;
• synthesis of information from source material; and
• analysis, classification, integration, interpretation and formulation of conclusions.

1.6.2 Data collection

To obtain the relevant data and to implement the steps of the historical-educational research method successfully, the researcher employed the following research strategies: literature study (which focused on primary and secondary sources), individual interviews (to obtain oral testimonies) and observation.

1.6.2.1 Literature study

In this investigation primary and secondary literature were studied in order to determine what other researchers and authors have already established with regard to aspects of this study. The documentary sources were compared with data gathered by other means, and then added as new information to the present study where it proved to be useful. The data from all the available sources that were utilized during the study were integrated and collated (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:126).

• Primary sources

Primary sources are eyewitness accounts. They are reported by an observer or participant in an event. Primary sources include the records kept and written by actual participants. Examples of documents classified as primary sources are: constitutions, charters, laws, court decisions, official minutes, records, letters, diaries, census information, deeds, wills, certificates, handbills, newspapers, magazine accounts, films, transcriptions, pamphlets, maps and diagrams (Best & Kahn, 2006:91).

Primary sources also include remains or relics; it is objects associated with individuals, groups or a certain time. For educational data there are official records and other documentary materials, which include records and reports of legislative bodies and state departments, city superintendents, principals, deans, educational committees, minutes of school boards, wills, professional and lay periodicals, bulletins, courses of study, samples
of students’ work and recordings, to site a few. Relics include buildings, furniture, teaching materials, equipment, decorative pictures, murals, textbooks, examinations and samples of students’ work (Best & Kahn, 2006:91-92).

Other kinds of primary sources that can be distinguished are oral testimonies. This category includes interviews with administrators, teachers, other school employees, students, relatives or lay citizens and members of Governing Bodies. In the case of oral testimonies, information has to be confirmed by two or three competent participants or eyewitnesses (Best & Kahn, 2006:92-93).

Examples of primary sources which were consulted in this research are minutes of meetings and reports from the Medingen Lutheran Church offices. During visits to Medingen Primary School, Mokgadi Lower Primary School and Mamatlepa Kgashane Lower and Higher Primary School, the following sources were available to the researcher:

- logbooks;
- instruction books;
- control books; and
- relevant school documents such as minutes of different types of meetings and school development plans.

The researcher was also afforded an opportunity to inspect and closely observe the school buildings.

- Secondary sources

Secondary sources comprise interpretations or analyses of the testimonies of actual witnesses or participants in events. The writer of a secondary source was not on the scene of the event personally, but merely reports what the person, who was there, said or wrote (Best & Kahn, 2006:93). It is sometimes very difficult to distinguish between a primary from a secondary source. Depending on the type of data it contains, the following may be regarded as examples of secondary sources: history textbooks, encyclopedias, informants, dissertations and theses.

- Tertiary sources
Because a conscious effort has been made not to utilize tertiary sources in this study, a few remarks in this regard are required.

Tertiary sources are based on secondary sources. A typical example is review articles. When the reference in a source has the following format: (Author in – or cited by - Author, Date: Page number) one can also be relatively sure that you are dealing with a tertiary source. In the world of academics tertiary data is regarded as a weak form of evidence. Consequently, tertiary sources should only be utilized, by way of exception, when the secondary or original (primary) source can not be traced.

- Assessment of source material

According to Best & Kahn (2006: 93-94) not everything which appears in print should be invariably accepted. All sources have to be subjected to a process of external and internal criticism (Venter & Van Heerden, 1992: 114-115). In this study, after collecting as much relevant data as possible from a wide range of sources, the selected data was evaluated by applying these processes.

- External criticism

External criticism establishes the authenticity or genuineness of the data. Various tests of genuineness may be employed. The age and authorship of documents may require intricate tests of signature, handwriting, script, type, spelling, knowledge available at the time and whether the information is consistent with what is known. All these may involve physical and chemical tests of ink, paint, paper, cloth, stone, metals or wood. One would ask whether these elements are consistent with known facts about the person or the document's origin (Best & Kahn, 2006:93).

- Internal criticism

Although authenticity of a document may have been established, the accuracy or worth of the statements contained in the document needs to be evaluated. Researchers have to ask themselves whether these statements revealed a true picture of events. An effort needs to be made to determine whether the authors were honest, unbiased and able to remember accurately what happened (Best & Kahn, 2006:94).
1.6.2.2 Individual interviews

An interview is a purposeful interaction in which one person tries to obtain information from another. Interviewees allow researchers to obtain significant information they cannot acquire from observation alone (Best & Kahn, 1993:198 – 199).

An individual interview seeks to interpret the meaning of the central themes in the life world of a subject. The interviewer registers and interprets the meaning of what is said as well as how it is said (Kvale, 1996:30). According to Seidman (1988:11) the aim of an individual interview is to have the respondent reconstruct his or her experience about a particular topic being studied and the task of a researcher is to place this experience in the context of the respondent’s life and the lives of those around them. Once this is done, the respondent’s behavior becomes meaningful and understandable. According to Best and Kahn (1993:184) the data obtained from interviews consists of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge.

In this study, seven individual interviews both with men and women were conducted. Open-ended questions were utilized. Interviews lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes. Amongst other things, the interviews focused on the evolvement of formal education provision at Medingen, the general circumstances at Medingen before the missionaries arrived and how the name Medingen came into being. The interviewees were interrogated about possible changes that occurred after the arrival of the missionaries. Since these particular interviewees grew up during Rev Reuter’s time, they can be regarded as *bona fide* eyewitnesses of the development of Medingen. Some of them were church elders while others were lay men. The individual participants were interviewed because they could possibly supply information that is relevant in answering some of the research questions asked above and in 1.2 and 1.3.
1.6.2.3 Observation

Researchers who make use of observation as a research strategy are interested in the ways in which people usually make sense of or attach meaning to the world around them. The researcher observes and records ongoing behavior and does not attempt to change it (McBurney, 1994:169). Since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection it is imperative for the researcher not to approach the study with any bias, hidden motives or fixed perspectives that can possibly influence the research procedures and findings (Krefting, 1991:216-217).

When engaged in observation, the researcher has to make field notes. These notes should constitute detailed written descriptions of what was observed as well as the researcher's interpretations of events (McMillan, 2000:260). The researcher must physically go to the people, setting, site and institution in order to observe behavior in its natural setting (Cresswell, 1994:154).

In her capacity as a resident and teacher at Medingen for more than three decades, the researcher has observed many (if not all) activities, developments and changes that took place at Medingen. Although these “incidental observations” cannot be regarded as formal, intentional, data collection activities, which has been observed, they nevertheless qualify as observations and have inevitably influenced the researcher's interpretations of events.

1.6.3 Triangulation


Triangulation is sometimes used to designate a conscious combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology. According to Leedy (2001:105) triangulation comprises the collection of multiple sources of data with the hope that they all converge to support a particular theory. Gay (2006:405) states that triangulation is the process of using multiple methods, data collection strategies, and data sources to obtain a more complete picture of what is being studied and to cross-check information.
In this study an attempt was also made to achieve triangulation. The researcher collected data from both primary and secondary sources, conducted interviews and utilized information based on personal observation.

1.6.4 Limitations of the research

At Medingen there are still a number of residents who were employed by the founder of Medingen Mission Station, Rev Reuter. By virtue of having lived with the missionaries and having experienced every aspect of the development of Medingen, they undoubtedly possess much knowledge concerning the theme under study. However, despite assurances of complete confidentiality and guarantees that their anonymity would be protected, they refused to be interviewed. Apparently they feared that they would be required to answer questions about people whom they respected and regarded as their superiors – something which their unique culture did not provide for.

In addition, most of the potential interviewees were women. In Bolobedu, according to custom, women are forbidden to speak in public.

The fact that many of these women were married, created an additional problem since married women first had to gain permission from their husbands to be interviewed. Many interview appointments had to be postponed several times for this reason. When the interviews were eventually conducted, the emergence of emotions such as sadness and guilt were very noticeable. This was regarded as a serious limitation of the research.

Another limitation that was experienced was the fact that certain archival records concerning Medingen were available only in the German language. Since the researcher is not conversant in German, this was experienced as a particularly serious limitation. Although an effort was made to get access to these documents by utilizing the services of an elderly member of the Medingen community, one who personally knew and lived with Rev Reuter and who was conversant with the German language, the researcher had no way in which to verify the correctness of the translations provided.

Finally, it needs to be mentioned that certain very important records related to both the general development of Medingen Mission Station and of education at the Medingen School, in particular, are not retrievable. According to one of the Logbooks of Medingen Primary School, a large number of original documents were destroyed by fire which swept
through Medingen in 1893. According to legend the fire was a result of conflict between certain community members and the school principal over the payment of school fees. Although arson was suspected, nothing could be proved.

1.7 Structure of the dissertation

- Chapter 1 provides an orientation to the research, the problem statement, aims and objectives of the study, an explanation of the key concepts and a discussion of the research methodology utilized.

- Chapter 2 provides a bird's eye view of mission education in South Africa and of the activities of the Berlin Mission Station in particular.

- Chapter 3 investigates the origin and development of the Medingen Mission Station since 1881.

- Chapter 4 deals with the provision of education and its role at Medingen.

- Chapter 5 contains evaluation: the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

In the following chapter mission education in South Africa in general, and because of its association with Medingen, the activities of the Berlin Mission Society, in particular, will be discussed. Amongst other things, the role played by the missionaries in fulfilling their various missions will be looked into and the aims of missionary education will be considered.
CHAPTER 2

A BIRD’S EYE VIEW OF MISSION EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BERLIN MISSION SOCIETY

2.1 Introduction

It is asserted that Christian missionary activities commenced when Jesus commanded his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything” (The Holy Bible, Matthew 28:19-20). Accordingly the Apostle Paul became the first missionary to spread the Gospel of Christ (The Holy Bible, Acts 13:1-52). According to Mabunda (1995:9) this happened approximately 34 to 64 years after Christ. Thereafter Christian missionary work expanded and during the nineteenth century various missionary societies were established in Europe and the United States of America. From there, missionaries were sent to almost every corner of the world, including South Africa, to impart educational guidance as the major thrust of realizing their purposes of evangelism and Christianity (Mabunda, 1995:9).

Missionaries often endured difficult conditions on their journey from Europe to South Africa; a journey which sometimes lasted for up to eleven months. They frequently reached their destination distressed and anxious. Most missionaries, however, remained hopeful and positive and did not allow circumstances to discourage them (Archives ADA 266:1). According to Masumbe and Coetzer (2002:1) the missionaries that came to South Africa shared a common goal regarding the country to which they were sent, namely to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ amongst the “heathen population” and to provide elementary schooling as an ancillary to evangelization (Horrell, 1963:1, Jones, 1966:1) and also to westernize or “civilize” blacks by imposing a version of the European way of life upon them (Davis, 1969:60). This common goal will be discussed in more detail later in the current chapter.

The most prominent mission societies that became active in South Africa were the London, South African, Moravian, Hermannsburg, Swiss and Berlin Missionary Societies (Masumbe & Coetzer, 2002:1).
2.2 The London Missionary Society

The London Missionary Society (LMS) was the first British society to enter the South African field. It was established in 1795 in London on an inter-denominational basis. However, in course of time, the LMS primarily became the missionary agency of the Congregationalists. Initially the LMS laboured in the distant islands of the Pacific and Sierra Leone, but when the British gained possession of the Cape of Good Hope in 1795, the Directors of the LMS turned their attention to the Cape. After much deliberation and investigation two Hollanders, JT van der Kemp and JJ Kircherer, as well as two Englishmen, J Edmond and W Edwards, were sent to the Cape. They arrived in Cape Town on 31 March 1799 aboard the convict ship, Hillsborough (Du Plessis, 1911:99).

According to Du Plessis (1965:108), during the first decade of the nineteenth century, the LMS succeeded in occupying four fields in South Africa, namely the eastern boarder of the Colony where Van der Kemp laboured among the Hottentots, and the areas on the northern border where the Griquas, Bechuana and the Namaquas respectively lived. In spite of adverse circumstances, the LMS established a number of well functioning mission stations, for example the mission stations at Bethelsdorp (1803), Klaarwater (ca. 1804), Stille Hoop (1805) and Warm Baths (1807).

During the following five decades the LMS occupied the one sphere of work after the other and by the middle of the nineteenth century the LMS was operating at least nine prominent mission stations in what is today known as the Northern Cape Province. Some of the most eminent of South African mission workers, amongst others, the well-known Dr David Livingstone, was employed by the LMS. However, according to Du Plessis (1965:258) there was also no other missionary society that suffered as much because of the presence in its ranks of people of “inferior capacity”. Eventually the LMS was the first to grant autonomy to its various mission stations and to make them self-supporting, self-directing congregations (Du Plessis, 1965:258).
2.3 The South African Missionary Society

Inspired by the establishment of the earliest missionary societies in England and the Netherlands towards the end of the eighteenth century, and aided by Dr JT van der Kemp from the London Missionary Society and Rev MC Vos, the South African Missionary Society (SAMS) was established on 22 April 1799 in Cape Town (Davis, 1969:151–155). It assumed the name and title of “Het Zuid-Afrikaansche Genootschap ter bevordering van de Uitbreiding van Christus Koningrijk” (The South African Society for Promoting the Extension of Christ’s Kingdom) and can be regarded as the first indigenous South African missionary society.

In course of time two of the articles which constituted part of the SAMS’s constitution, considerably hampered the activities of the SAMS. The first article described the Society’s objectives, namely to promote by all means which lie within its power the extension of Christ’s Kingdom among the heathen, (the unenlightened of the Cape Colony both within and without its bounds.) The fifth article defined the SAMS’s attitude towards the local, political government. It required every Christian to render all submission and reverence to the Temporal Power and to refrain from anything which may be repugnant to rules that have promulgated in things civil and ecclesiastical (Du Plessis 1965:93). When the Batavian Government took office in 1803 Commissioner-General de Mist proved profoundly distrustful of the work of the SAMS. According to him the SAMS was encroaching on the sphere belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church which, at that stage, was the recognised Church of the country. Amongst other things, he decreed that no missionary should be allowed to labour at a site that was less than three days’ journey from a place at which a church of the Reformed religion was erected.

The SAMS closely co-operated with the London and Rotterdam Missionary Societies and, for example, was instrumental in sending Cornelius Kramer to work among the inland tribes and MJ Kok to the Griquas in Bechuanaland.

The operations of the SAMS were significantly extended in 1817 with the establishment of the Zoar mission station in the district of Swellendam (near the current Ladysmith). A colonist, Joubert, was appointed as missionary. By 1856 Zoar had a total of 672 inhabitants.
One of the missionaries attached to the SAMS who played a significant role in the education of Malay people in Cape Town, was Rev W Eliot. While working in South Africa he learned to speak indigenous languages. Thus Eliot could help the SAMS in translating the Bible into several local languages such as Xhosa and Zulu (Behr & MacMillan, 1971:369 –370).

2.4 The Moravian Missionary Society

In 1707 two devoted Protestant missionaries, Ziegenbalg and Plütschau visited the Cape of Good Hope on their way to India. Their brief contact with the local inhabitants of the country induced them to address an earnest appeal to the Christians of Holland to become involved in missionary activities in South Africa. Three decades later this plea led to the United Brethren at Hermn hut identifying a young man from Moravia, George Schmidt, to pioneer this arduous undertaking. His arrival in Cape Town on 9 July 1737 can be regarded as the commencement of the first direct and sustained effort to convert the local population to the Christian faith.

The details of Schmidt's work in South Africa falls outside the scope of this section except to indicate that he established a mission station at Zoetemelksvlei amongst the Khoikhoi where he provided the indigenous people with religious and language instruction as well as rudiments of agricultural training. Towards the end of 1743, as a result of the Dutch Reformed Church’s (DRC’s) prejudice against Moravians, Schmidt was forced to return to Europe and for nearly half a century after his departure the missionary enterprise came to a standstill (Du Plessis, 1965:61).

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century circumstances in both Cape Town and the Netherlands became more favourable for the Hermn hut Brethren to continue their missionary efforts at the Cape. Consequently, in June 1792, three Moravian missionaries, H Marsveld, D Schwinn and JC Kühnel, embarked on the vessel ’t Duyfje (The Dove) to resume Schmidt's work in the Baviaanskloof.

After their arrival in Cape Town in November 1792 the three Moravian missionaries did not allow grass to grow under their feet. Within a short period of time they erected a dwelling-house, commenced with a garden and opened a school with sixty-one pupils. However, they did not always experience times of peaceful progress and unmixed prosperity. They also met with fierce resistance from members of the Dutch Reformed Church and
consistent hostility to the mission at Baviaanskloof amongst the colonists. There was a general conviction that Baviaanskloof was fast becoming a refuse for the idle, the discontented and the thieving.

In any event, the station rapidly assumed the dimensions of a village where pioneering work was done in the field of artisan training for black people (Behr, 1988:138). According to Behr (1988:155) the establishment of the very first training school for non-white teachers in 1838 in Genadendal by Rev HP Hallbeck, then Superintendent of the Moravian Mission at the Cape, was a milestone in the history of education in South Africa. This institution continued to function until 1935.

2.5 The Hermannsburg Missionary Society

The Hermannsburg Missionary Society was founded by Pastor Ludwig Harms who was ordained as minister in 1844. Harms was the son of a clergyman of the Lutheran Church stationed at Hermannsburg in Hanover, Germany. During 1848 Harms preached with exceptional intensity and urged all who came to conversion under his ministrations to labour for the extension of His Kingdom on earth. This resulted in the establishment of “Die Hermannsburger Mission” on 12 October 1849.

This Society immediately decided to set up its first mission station among the Gallas in East Africa. After obtaining sufficient funds for the endeavour, twelve of Harms’ pupils together with eight colonists left Hamburg on the mission ship Candace. The effort to settle amongst the Gallas failed and the Candace returned to Natal where the Hermannsburg party disembarked. From there they proceeded to establish their first mission station, the Hermannsburg Station, a few kilometers to the east of Greytown in 1854 (Du Plessis 1965:374).

This Missionary Society concentrated their mission work in the central part of Zululand, Natal and subsequently on the Western Transvaal amongst the Tswana’s (Du Plessis, 1911:380). Between 1858 and 1862 the Evangelical Lutheran Hermannsburg missionaries followed their brothers in Christ, the London Missionary Society to also work within Bechuanaland (Mignon, 1996:3).
2.6 The Swiss Missionary Society

The Swiss Mission Church was founded in Bern, Switzerland, during the early nineteenth century. Among the first Swiss missionaries to be sent to Southern Africa were Revs Mabille, Gmond, Duvoisin and Ellenberger who mainly worked in Basotholand (Lesotho) under the auspices of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (Brookes 1925:5).

In 1869, during a Synod meeting of the Free Church of Canton Vaud which was held in Lausanne, Switzerland, two students, Ernest Creux and Paul Berthoud, who had just completed their theological training, offered to serve their church as foreign missionaries, “whether under the tropics or on the northern ice” (Du Plessis 1965:330). After lengthy deliberations lasting almost two years, the Synod permitted Creux and Berthoud to pursue their missionary venture and sent them to Basotholand on separate occasions. They spent three years (1872 – 1875) at Morija.

Shortly after their arrival, a journey of exploration was undertaken by Adolphe Mabille and Paul Berthoud to the northern portion of the Transvaal, amongst other things because the local people in those regions, similar to those in Basotholand, spoke the Sesotho language. At that stage the Berlin Missionary Society and the Dutch Reformed Church had already occupied the district known as Zoutpansberg and they were compelled to go further afield (Du Plessis 1965:331). Eventually they bought a farm approximately 30 km to the east of Louis Trichardt and in 1875 Cruex and Berthoud moved, together with their families to the North Eastern Transvaal where they started their mission work amongst the Tsonga. They initiated the establishment of a mission school at Valdezia named Lemana Training College (SA (U) 1936:22-23; Brian, 1990:24-25, 61, Seroto, 1999:145). Berthoud and Creux collaborated in the first translation of parts of the Bible from Sotho into the Tsonga language. In 1879 Creux founded the Elim Mission Station, approximately 6 km to the west of Valdezia (Mabunda 1995:28). During the following years many other mission stations, schools and hospitals were established in the area and by 1973 the Swiss Mission Church was still active in the area (Ndlovu 2002:65).
Figure 1. Regions, areas and places mentioned in the following discussion of the Berlin Missionary Society.

Source: Van der Merwe 1980:2
Father J Janicke (1748-1827) was the first German advocate in missionary enterprise. He was a pastor of the Bohemian Church in Berlin, Prussia and he was very enthusiastic about Christianity work. In 1800 his keenness led to the establishment of a training school for missionaries, a seminary which he led until his death in 1827. His seminary sent out pioneer missionaries to the various congregants of the Bohemian Church. In 1824, inspired by Janicke’s enthusiasm for mission work, those missionaries and congregants, gave birth to the Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) (Lekhela, 1970:13). The origin, establishment and expansion of the Protestant world mission was a direct result of the Pietism of the eighteenth century, which was aimed at a renewal of the devotional ideal in the Protestant religion. The BMS intended fulfilling this ideal by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ all over the world (Wright, 1971:3).

From a more practical point of view and according to Mphahlele (1978:11), the BMS’s purpose was to fight against the force of immorality in the character of indigenous people, to inculcate habits of industry and to teach the dignity of manual work, discipline and regular habits. The BMS also arrived at ensuring that every person attached to a BMS mission station, earns his/her living by honest work and “in the sweat of his brow” while leading a Godly, righteous and sober life. However, its main aim was to win souls for the Lamb and to tend to them in the congregations they had formed with unselfish fidelity (Archives ADA, 266:9). The BMS intended fulfilling its ideal by promoting the exaltation of God in every single convert’s heart (Wright, 1971:3).

On 18 April 1834 five BMS missionaries arrived in the Cape. They were Gustav Adolf Kraut, formerly a clerk in a commercial firm; August Ferdinand Lange, a weaver from Rohrbeck; Reinhold Theodor Gregorowski, a teacher from Kaminkerfelde; Johannes Schmidt, a carpenter from Hochirch; and August Gebel, a theologian from Halle (Zoller & Heese, 1984:15). Their work amongst the Korannas (Khoikhoi) was not completely successful. Therefore they proceeded to the Zulu’s and Xhosa’s. In the 1860’s they started working in the former Transvaal amongst the Bapedi, Sotho and Venda speaking tribes. Mission schools were established at Ermelo, Johannesburg, Middelburg and Pretoria. In 1865 the Botshabelo Mission Station was founded while in 1906 Botshabelo
Training College was established. Medingen Station was founded in 1881 and in 1882 Medingen Primary School was established.

FIGURE 2 Missionaries who came to South Africa.

The first Missionaries sent to South Africa by the BMS.
Gregorowsky. A. Lange; J. Schmidt; Kraut; Ortlepp; Radloff; Zerwik; Gebel; Wuras; C. Lange; Doehne.

SOURCE (Archives ADA, 266:1)
Initially the Berlin Mission Society had no specific vision or plan of how to spread the Gospel in South Africa. They spontaneously focused their mission activities on black, indigenous people; not primarily on whites. Apparently the main reason for this was that white people lived predominantly in, what was regarded as the urban regions of Cape Town, and were, amongst other things, regarded as “civilized” (Kartzek, 1994:1).

Gebel, one of the five Berlin missionaries who arrived in 1834, was appointed as the leader of the group. Soon thereafter mission stations were also established at Bethaniel in the Orange Free State (1834), Bethel in the Eastern Cape (1837) and at Pniel near the Vaal River (1845) (Kartzek,1994:1). In Transvaal the BMS was active amongst the Pedi, Venda and the Southern Sotho (Behr & MacMillan, 1971:373–374).

The BMS continued to send missionaries from Germany to South Africa. In 1835, for example, a group of reverends were sent to Franschhoek near Cape Town. This group was led by Rev Dohne.

As the missionary work grew stronger, Gregorowsky had to supervise the up-keep of the buildings in Zoar in the Cape Colony where a mission station was erected in 1837. Berlin missionaries received a donation from Mrs Amalie von Stein from Germany. Using this donation, Gregorowsky managed to acquire the farm Elandsfontein, which was adjacent to the Zoar Mission Station. Soon afterwards, under Gregorowsky’s supervision and guidance, agricultural activities started flourishing at the mission station. Gregorowsky honoured Mrs Von Stein by renaming the extension of the mission station in Zoar to Amaliestein (later Ladysmith) (Archives ADA, 266:9). Gregorowsky resigned from the BMS in 1842 and joined the LMS (Zoll & Heese, 1984:18).

In 1846 war broke out between the Xhosas and the settlers in Kaffraria. In the course of this conflict Rev Scholtz (a missionary employed by the BMS) was brutally assassinated. Other members of Scholtz’s party (Revs Dohne, Posselt and Guldenfenning) were rescued by Theophilus Shepstone, Governor of the Cape, who gave them a place to do missionary work in 1847 (Mphahlele, 1972:7). They were re-settled at Emmous in Natal, today known as Zunckels (Zoll & Heese, 1984:16, Archives ADA, 266:9 – 10).

From 1865 to 1894, the BMS in the Cape continued to grow under the directorate of Dr D Wangemann. He visited South Africa twice, in 1867 and 1884 respectively. Dr Wangemann’s aim was to introduce a strategy that would ensure the continued growth of
the BMS. Four new mission stations were established in the Cape during this time. He had considerable knowledge of missionary work and passed this on to the BMS missionaries working in South Africa. Specifically, he taught them how to go about preaching and converting people. In order to achieve his goals, different mission synods were formed and the administration of the fast growing movement regionalized (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:37).

In 1860 the BMS missionaries in South Africa learned that some of their French and English speaking brethren were preaching amongst the Swazi. These reports convinced them that they should also try to work amongst the Swazi (Archives ADA, 266:7). Thus, they urged their Home Committee to allow them to expand their work to the Swazi (Archives ADA 266:9). In 1860, the BMS in Germany instructed the BMS in South Africa to pursue mission work amongst the Swazi of the former Northern Transvaal (currently Limpopo). Rev Alexander Merensky and Rev Heinrich Grutzner were designated the task of initiating missionary work among the Swazi. They then proceeded to the residence of UmSwazi, the paramount Chief of the Swazi nation. However, their request to do missionary work amongst the Swazi were refused by the Chief (Du Plessis, 1965:344) mainly because a previous (Wesleyan) missionary, the Rev James Allison, had told him that God wanted to forgive the Swazi nation their sins and he did not see any need for continued missionary work (Van der Merwe, 1984:27). In addition, he didn’t understand what sins were and as a Chief, in his mind, his traditional way of living has always been right. He also refused to accept their message that there was someone (God) greater than him; that he did not possess the ultimate authority.

In 1860, after this disappointment, the reverends Merensky and Grutzner turned northwards to the Bapedi of the Eastern Transvaal (currently Mpumalanga). Other Berlin missionaries (by the names of Nachtigal and Endemann) helped them to establish four mission stations: one at Gerlanchshoop among the Bakopa of Chief Maleo, and one at Khalatlou, Patametsane and Ga-Ratau respectively.

In 1864, however, fierce persecution of the Christians working among the Bapedi broke out. This persecution did not quell the spirit of the missionaries. They retreated from the Bapedi to the banks of the Klein Olifantsriver in Middelburg (Engelbrecht, 1963:540) where they purchased a farm called Boschhoek and established the Botshabelo Mission Station (currently known as Motetema Mission Station) in the Groblersdal parish. The farm was later called “Toevlucht” (or Botshabelo), which in both Dutch and Northern Sotho literally
means “A city of refuge” (Du Plessis, 1965:347). This mission station, under the leadership of Merensky and Grutzner, later became a new centre of mission work in the Transvaal. In 1867 Rev D Wangemann (the Director of the Berlin Lutheran Missionary Society), on his first visit to South Africa, visited the Botshabelo Missionary Station. He was overwhelmed by the way in which the black people at Botshabelo accepted evangelization. His aspiration was that all the indigenous people of South Africa should be evangelized. Consequently he encouraged preaching, the spreading of the Gospel and the establishment of more mission stations in South Africa (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:33-34).

Towards the end of 1864 conditions for mission work amongst the Bapedi improved again. That enabled the missionaries to penetrate into the unknown to the north of Botshabelo where they established mission stations at, amongst other places, Lydenburg, Lobethal and Maxabang, near the old site of Ga-Ratau (Archives ADA, 266:9). In 1865, Rev Grutzner founded a mission station at Matlala, near Polokwane, in the territory of Chief Moloto, and soon thereafter also mission stations at Makapanspoort, Thutlwane, Modimolle, Malokong and Blouberg (Archives ADA, 266:11).

At Blouberg Rev Grutzner was joined by Revs Beyer and Baumbach. These two missionaries visited the Bavenda towards the east in Vendaland near Louis Trichardt. Here the first mission station, catering specifically for the Bavenda, was erected in 1872, named Ha-Tshivhasa Mission Station. During the following years more mission stations arose in this area, for example, Tshakhoma and Georgenholtz (Archives ADA, 266:9).

Meanwhile, the Berlin office of the BMS adhered to Rev Wangemann’s request for more missionaries to join him in South Africa. Amongst those who were sent, was Rev Knothe, who arrived in the country in 1879. Knothe travelled from Pretoria to Pietersburg (currently known as Polokwane) where, in 1880, he established a mission station at Mphome circuit at Kratzenstein (Masealama) in the area of Ga-Mamabolo. Mphome was the head office of the Northern Diocese where Synod meetings were held. The Berlin Director Wangemann gave Rev Knothe the superintendence of the regions at Mphome which geographically falls within the North Eastern Transvaal that was, at that stage called the Devhula Leboa circuit. From Mphome, also in 1879, Rev Knothe undertook a trip on horseback to the Low Country of Transvaal, the North and East, toward the mountains and high plains of Modjajdi and the Batlokwa where the Balobedu lived (Archives ADA, 266:11).
Medingen was founded in 1881 by Rev FL Reuter in the vicinity of Modjadji. Modjadji Headkraal was the chieftaincy’s capital. As often happened in other villages, the indigenous people initially received the Gospel with bitter protestations. On Easter Friday in 1884, the Christian oriented Chief, Johannes Kgashane Mamatlepa, became a victim of these protestations, the story of which will be told in the following chapter (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:50; Archives ADA, 266:11).

Various educational institutions around Medingen such as Masalanabo High School, Sekgopo Primary School, Safagong Primary School, Morapalala Primary school were also established by the missionaries. In the course of the nineteenth century a large number of teachers were trained by the missionaries. The Botshabelo Mission Station, for example, produced more than eighty teachers before it moved to Groblersdal in the 1970’s as a consequence of the Group Areas Act (Mofya, 1996). Botshabelo was first renamed Rehlahliwe (We are lead) and two years later named after Chief Mamokgalake Tshwene by the former Lebowa Premier, Chief CN Phatudi.

From Medingen, the mission posts extended as far as Moletsi (Bischoffkreuz) and Makotopong (Kreuzburg). The seat of the Superintendent was finally transferred to Pietersburg, which became the base for the BMS’s operations in the Northern Transvaal (Archives ADA, 266:11).

The first BMS church was erected in Cape Town in 1907. The Berlin Mission Church (later known as the Berlin Evangelical Lutheran Church) considered itself an independent church. The Berlin Mission Church also did not integrate with other denominations, whereas other churches did (Kartzek, 1994:1-3). For this reason, over the years and compared to other churches (e.g. the Moravian and Anglican Church), there was little increase in the number of congregants. The Berlin Lutheran Church failed to attract many affluent people. As a result, the Church found itself in a continuous financial crisis and was not able to do the diaconical work dictated by urban demands (Kartzek, 1994:2-3).

Taking into account how many missionaries came to South Africa during the nineteenth century and remained active for many decades, questions arise regarding their intentions. What did they hope to achieve? In the following section an attempt will be made to provide a very brief answer to this question.
2.8 The aims of the missionaries

The primary aim of all missionary activities was to evangelize (resp. to Christianize) the local population. According to Mphahlele (1972:89) all missionaries that came to South Africa held the belief that this country was part of a Dark Continent (a continent of which its inhabitants do not possess knowledge about God) and its residents were “heathens” who had to be introduced to the Word of God. According to Motseo (2006) the term “heathen”, referred to people who were not attending church, practiced polygamy, participated in rituals such as the “dinaka” (African horns), played on the “meropa” (drums), used excessive amounts of alcohol (beer) and attached great value to “dikoma” (initiation schools). Such people were not considered to be Christians, since the term “Christian” refers to a person who has accepted Jesus Christ as his or her Saviour, who puts into practice the religious and moral standards set by Him and do not take part in activities such as these. Missionaries therefore emphasized attempts to Christianize local people. They strove to bring all souls to the Kingdom of God so that man may recognize the Lordship of Christ and worship Him.

Since missionaries, in general, regarded black people as “backwards”, rural, and indolent, and because the latter's lifestyles were often considered to be unacceptable (Van Dyk, 1967:1), one of the main goals of missionaries was to drastically change the lifestyle of the people they worked with. Specifically, efforts were made to reform black people regarding their health practices, their education and their religion. During Reuter's time, for example, if one was be seen drinking beer, attending circumcisions, or celebrating dinaka, one would immediately be expelled from the missionary endeavours. Those who were fond of beer, usually drank it from tea kettles in order for the Reverend not to recognize that they were drinking beer. In effect this implied that the existing African value system had to be exchanged for a Western value system. Cuenod (1932:1) contends that the missionaries envisaged the development of a black community which could be converted to Christianity and become “civilized”. The term “civilize” referred to the stage of development that was reached when the “barbaric” customs of the black people's ancestors have been replaced by a culture comparable to those of modern Western nations.

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3 When boys play the naka pipes in traditional ceremonies, they normally form a circle and dance a specific dance anti-clockwise. Each person plays one note at a time. This is called dinaka.

4 A meropa is an elongated, conical shaded wooden drum with a single membrane, made from goat or cow hide, attached at one end with pegs (Amato, Carlin, Datlen, Davis, FAXI, Hagemann, Msengana-Ndlela, Mtimkulu, Nyren & Young 2000:43).
However, the missionaries soon realized that the process of conversion and evangelization would not succeed unless the subjects were able to read the Bible on their own and until they were able to write (Mphahlele, 1972:98). As a result, before the turn of the century, the missionaries established schools wherever possible to facilitate the spreading of religious information (Hlatswayo, 1989:26) and ever since missionaries have played a significant role in education.

2.9 Conclusion

The focus in this chapter was on the activities of various missionary societies, in particular those of the Berlin Missionary Society (BMS), and the beginning of mission education. In chapter three the origin and development of the Medingen Mission Station, as a consequence of BMS activities in the northern part of South Africa, will be explicated.
CHAPTER 3

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDINGEN MISSION STATION

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the early work of various mission societies in South Africa with special reference to the Berlin Missionary Society (BMS). In this chapter the origin and development of the Medingen Mission Station, one of the important mission stations established by the BMS, will be described. However, for purposes of general orientation, this description will be preceded by an indication of the geographical location and inhabitants of Medingen.

3.2 Geographical location of Medingen and its inhabitants

3.2.1 Geographical location of Medingen

Mojadjiskoof is in the Eastern part of Limpopo. Medingen village is about 21km East of Mojadjiskoof, near the Kgwekgwe Mountain. It is situated next to the Ga-Kgapane Township.

The original territory of the Bolobedu included the land situated between the Little Letaba and Great Letaba rivers in the North and South respectively and the common source of the two rivers in the West and their confluence in the East (Motshekga, 2004:42-44).
Figure 3: Location of Medingen

SOURCE: TZANEEN TOURISM BUREAU (s.a.).
3.2.2 The Balobedu tribe

The Balobedu tribe, under the rule of the Rain Queen Modjadji I and her successors, hails from the Mbire Rozwi who formed the Mwanamutapa dynasty. Her great ancestors in Zimbabwe (Bokhalaka) included Mbire, Mambiri, Murenga and Thobela. BaRozwi (BaLozwi) is a clan. The Rain Queen was known as “Modjadji ka Thobela” (Modjadji the King). These people were originally divided into two groups: the Southern Transvaal BaRozwi and the North Eastern Transvaal BaRozwi.

The North Eastern Transvaal group was known as “Bana ba Tsiekhalaka” (Children of the ants). The BaRozwi (BaLozwi) sacred kings were born of a brother and sister (Dzugudini) who entered into endogamous marriage (Motshekga 2004:35–36). Dzugudini gave birth to Makhaphele who was destined to establish a new Dynasty. Makhaphele assumed the leadership of the BaRozwi after the death of his mother in Vuthuhazindi in the Tswaing Mountains (currently Soutpansberg). He died in the Soutpansberg region and was buried at Phiphidi falls.

Makhaphele had three sons, Mohale, Ragolane and Kgada. They were all nephews of Nengwekhulu. After Makhaphele’s death, the three sons competed amongst themselves for the leadership of the BaRozwi. Finally Mohale, succeeded his father and led the BaRozwi to Letaba. There they established the Kingdom of the Bolobedu and the Balobedu became known as “BaLozwi ba Mohale” (Anonymous, 1969:91).

To use a natural object, especially an animal, as an emblem of the clan, is part of the traditions of a large number of black tribes in the far northern regions of South Africa. The chosen object is often taken as a clan-name and even as an object of worship. This object (or totem) is treated with utmost respect. In traditional fashion Mohale preferred a pig as totem whereas Ragolane and Kgada preferred an elephant (Anonymous, 1969:91 - 92). The BaRozwi came to the Letaba Valley with the kith and kin of Mamabolo (the pigs) and the Nengwekhulu (the elephant). The elephants separated from the Balobedu of Mohale (the pigs) at Phukubweni (currently Ha-Sekgopo) and settled at Naje, near Tsanen (currently Tzaneen) in the Letaba valley (Motshekga, 2004:43). Although traditional tribes only have one totem each, the Balobedu is unique in the sense that it has two different totems, namely the Pigs and the Elephants which symbolize the heads of the families.
When Mohale left the elephants of Ragolane and Khada (currently known as Didou Khalaka) at Naje in Tzaneen, he migrated to Khiedeulu (currently known as Deerpark). From Khiedeulu the BaRozwi (the pigs) moved to Ga-Kgapane (currently known as Medingen) and the Thlotlhokwe Mountain range which stops at Modjadji’s neck en route to Giyani. There the Balobedu found a tribe which called itself an heir (Bangona) of Khioka (now Seoka) who had settled along the Thlotlhokwe mountain range. Mambo (King) Mohale used his sacred powers to attack and kill most of the Seoka people because Mohale did not want to be ruled by someone else. Those Seokas that survived Mohale’s assault had no other alternative than to become followers of Mohale. After Mohale’s victory he took charge of the whole Letaba valley and named it Bolobedu (Motshekga, 2004:42-44).

The researcher has made special efforts to trace the historical details of the Southern Transvaal BaRozwi, but as far as could be determined, no written, historical record of the early activities of this group exists.

3.2.3 Current inhabitants of Medingen and their circumstances

Currently Medingen is home to a relatively large number of different ethnic groups who practice different cultures. These groups include the Shangaan, Pedi and Venda. In spite of the ethnic variety and cultural differences, the inhabitants of Medingen live peacefully together.

Medingen has a population of about 10 000 members (Medingen Census, 2002). In 2002 this population was made up of 3000 men, 5000 woman and 2000 children. Some people are employed as domestic or farm workers at the Ga-Kgapane Township. However, the Medingen community is characterized by a very high rate of unemployment; a rate that may even be as high as 70%. Although the causes of unemployment in this community do not have any direct relevance for this study, it may be important to note that a large number of adults (parents) from this community have taken up employment in Gauteng whilst their children remained in Ga-Kgapane without proper supervision. Due to this laissez-faire manner in which the children were looked after, a number of young girls became pregnant and left school prematurely. As a result of the fact that they did not complete their schooling, they were later-on unable to find suitable employment.
In addition, Medingen is located in a deep rural area. There are no large businesses or industries nearby which can provide employment to prospective workers characterized by a scarcity of skills.

Most people at Medingen experience a shortage of basic needs. They also do not have the luxury of good roads, well-lit streets and foreign investments. There are no shopping malls. The area is largely underdeveloped.

### 3.3 The establishment of Medingen Station

In a sense, the missionary work at Medingen in the Bolobedu area during the 1860’s and 1870’s originated in Port Elizabeth. One of the most prominent figures in the period just prior to the establishment of Medingen, was Kgashane Mamalepa (jr).

#### 3.3.1 The role of Kgashane Mamalepa (jr)

Kgashane Mamalepa (jr) was born in a Balobedu tribe in 1846 and was named after his father Kgashane Mamalepa (sr). He was designated to succeed his father as tribal leader in the head kraal.

In late 1868 Kgashane (jr) and other young men walked from Bolobedu (also known as Duiwelskloof) to Port Elizabeth in the Cape Colony, to buy firearms which could be used to defend themselves during inter-tribal wars. When Kgashane and his friends reached East London, they not only found employment but also came into contact with devoted Lutheran Christians. One of these Christians, Peka Napondo, became a good friend of Kgashane Mamalepa (jr). Peka Napondo told the latter that he should become a Christian and return to his home to teach the Gospel. Kgashane fled into the bush and stayed there for some time as he was moved by Napondo’s words. When he returned, he said to Peka: “You have stabbed my heart with an assegai which I can’t pull out again. You must help me to become a Christian” (Makwala, 1958:5).

Hereafter, Kgashane Mamalepa (jr) enrolled in baptism classes in Port Elizabeth. In 1870, after passing the prescribed test, he was baptized and named Johannes Kgashane Mamalepa by Rev Keizer (Makwala, 1958:6). Rev Keizer was one of the missionaries employed by the Berlin Missionary Society who held Christian sermons for the
mineworkers. When Johannes Kgashane⁵ and his friends were ready to return to Bolobedu, one of them suggested that they go to Kimberley where diamonds had been found in order to earn more money before they return home. In response, Johannes Kgashane took a New Testament which Peka Napondo gave him from his pocket and said: “This is my diamond. Let’s go home” (Makwala, 1958:7).

By the time he arrived home, Kgashane Mamatlepa was too old to further occupy his leadership position. Johannes Kgashane was expected to immediately take over his father’s duties. Subsequently he was inaugurated as an Induna and leader of the Balobedu at Modubeng (near the current Mooketsi). However, on the basis of his “new” religious convictions, he soon started refusing to abide by all the Induna’s traditions. He tried to explain the message of the New Testament to his parents, but they did not approve of the content he attempted to convey. Amongst other things, the New Testament instructs people to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour and to worship the Almighty God. It teaches people not to serve idols and to have one wife only. In these and other respects, it represented the direct opposite of the Induna’s traditions.

Johannes Kgashane’s parents tried to convince him not to read or mention the New Testament in public, especially since he was then the leader of the Balobedu. Instead he was advised to abide by the Induna’s traditions, practice polygamy (i.e. to marry many wives), adhere to traditional rituals and to worship idols. His parents expected him to show respect for the customs and beliefs that have been handed down to them from generation to generation by word of mouth. However, his parents’ attempt to discourage him was in vain. To Johannes Kgashane the New Testament was a source of new-found wisdom (Makwala, 1958:25; Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:45).

3.3.2 The role of Rev Knothe

In Chapter 2 the arrival of Rev Knothe in South Africa, his appointment as Superintendent of the Northern Diocese Synod and his visit in 1879 to the Low Country of Transvaal was mentioned (cf. section 2.7). During this particular journey, Rev Knothe met Johannes Kgashane who indicated his desire that a missionary be sent to the Balobedu. It is reported in various sources that he said to Knothe: "Matlala, Moletsi and Blouberg have

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⁵ In order to distinguish between Kgashane Mamatlepa (jr) and his father, who went by the same name, in this dissertation, from this point onwards, Kgashane Mamatlepa (jr) will be referred to as Johannes Kgashane whereas the name Kgashane Mamatlepa will be used for Kgashane Mamatlepa (sr).
received missionaries. We in Bolobedu want one too” (Martin, 1888:9; Makwala, 1958:9; Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:6). Rev Knothe informed the BMS in Germany of Kgashane’s wish and encouraged the Society to send someone to the land of Modjadji.

3.3.3 The arrival of Rev Reuter

The BMS responded by sending Rev Fritz Ludwig Reuter to the Balobedu. Reuter was born in the German town, Teltow, in 1848. In 1869 he was conscripted for military service and, amongst other things, served his country in a war between Germany and France. On the battlefield he saw many soldiers being killed and wounded and vowed that if God brought him home unharmed, he would become a pastor. After the war he fulfilled his promise by joining the BMS.

FIGURE 4: Picture of Reuter, the Pioneer, Founder of Medingen.

Source: Archives ADA, 226:1
In April 1881 Reuter (accompanied by one Rev Johnson) first visited Durban as part of his journey from Cape Town to the North (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:45) and then spent several months at the mission station Koeningsberg (near Newcastle in Natal), waiting for permission from the relevant Land Commissioner to travel further north (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:47). When permission was finally granted, Reuter bought a horse and set off to Middelburg in the Transvaal. Rev Johnson remained in Natal. Reuter reached Botshabelo near Middelburg safely and from there he travelled to Mphome, near Polokwane. There he noticed that the missionaries were already providing religious instruction to the Masealama (Kraztzenstein) residents and getting acquainted with the Sepedi language (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884: 49).

Rev Reuter first met Johannes Kgashane at Modubeng on 14 October 1881. Kgashane asked: “Are you the missionary for whom we have been praying to God to send to us?” to which Reuter replied in the affirmative (Makwala, 1958:6; Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:47). Reuter immediately wanted to establish a mission station near the kraal of Johannes Kgashane. However, Rev Knothe disagreed and suggested that he settle on top of the mountain near the home of Kgashane Mamatlepa. Reuter experienced great difficulties to reach the mountain top with his heavily laden ox wagon, but eventually he got there and founded Ga-Kgapane. He immediately renamed the area where he had settled Medingen. The station was named after a wealthy German lady, Fraulein Charlotte Von Meding, who was interested in Christian work. In 1867, when Rev Wangemann visited the head office of the BMS in Germany, Fraulein Von Meding contacted him. She was impressed and very pleased to learn of the achievements of the missionaries in South Africa and decided to donate money to further their work (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:33). She then made a generous donation to the Berlin Lutheran Church in Germany for the establishment of a mission station in South Africa (Martin, 1888 : 7).

In 1882 Miss Kaul (the future Mrs Reuter) arrived in South Africa. Reuter had left Germany before they were married, and they were married in Botshabelo. Both travelled from Botshabelo by ox wagon to Ga-Kgapane (Medingen). At the foot of the mountain the heavily laden wagon got stuck. When evening fell, Reuter said to his wife: “I shall have to remain here and guard our luggage. Here is a horse. Ride up the ‘berg’”. Because she had never ridden a horse before, she indicated that she did not know the way. However, Reuter insisted and mentioned that a “horse knows where its stable is.” Mrs Reuter reached the mission station safely, and lived at Ga-Kgapane for fifty four years thereafter. She faithfully assisted her husband in his mission work (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:34).
In 1940 Rev Reuter died from malaria, followed soon afterwards by his wife. Their graves can be found on the east side of the Medingen cemetery.

**FIGURE 5: Medingen Lutheran Church**

Source: Original Photograph by (F. Dippenaar, May 2009)
3.3.4 The Lutheran Church in Bolobedu (Medingen)
In 1882, the first church at Medingen was built by Rev Fritz Reuter. The building was 83m long and 25m wide. The construction work took 25 months under the direction of the Medingen Lutheran Church master brick layer, Walter Krause, the son-in-law of Rev Reuter, to complete. The church foundation still exists today. In spite of the drought and wars, the congregation managed to raise the sum of £572 (more or less R1 144-00) to cover the cost of the building. Additional funds were supplied by the BMS. The official opening took place on 05 December 1882 (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:53).

3.3.5 Rejection of Johannes Kgashane

Meanwhile, as a result of Johannes Kgashane’s overt rejection of most of the Balobedu customs, the elderly Balobedu wanted him dethroned. This did not happen, though. Instead, he steadily gained support for the Christian faith. More and more of his people, especially the youth, joined him in studying the New Testament. This infuriated the traditional Balobedu who eventually conspired to murder him. Simultaneously Tshiwawa, the Land Commissioner in the Bolobedu area at the time, a man of Portuguese origin, encouraged Johannes Kgashane to continue studying the gospel of Christ (Makwala, 1958:39; Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:33).

Steadily the hostility of the Balobedu towards their leader increased. He also provoked the anger of Her Majesty, Queen Masalanabo Modjadji II (Masalanabo means “remain with them”) because he was a senior member of the Modjadji Royal House, yet, in effect, he condemned the culture and spirituality of the Balobedu Royal family and their ancestors, as well as the preservation and practice of Balobedu traditions. The Balobedu not only hated him, but also began to persecute his followers (Makwala, 1958:42, Motshekga, 2004:72).

3.3.6 Persecution of Christian converts in Bolobedu

In 1883, the Modjadji Royal House intensified the persecution of Johannes Kgashane and his followers. He remained unshaken and persisted in spreading the message of, and preaching from, the New Testament. This resulted in the majority of the Balobedu tribe becoming hostile towards him and on 10 April 1884, the Modjadji Royal Council resolved to attack the Modubeng congregation with the main purpose of killing Johannes
Kgashane, its leader. One of Her Majesty, Queen Masalanabo’s Councilors, Mpapatla, warned Johannes Kgashane about this and advised him to flee. However, the latter did not follow this advice (Anonymous, 1953:54). Consequently, on 11 April 1884, while his closest friends and followers went to Mphome at Masealama for the Harvest Feast, Johannes Kgashane Mamalepa and his assistant, David Setsoga, were assassinated by Queen Modjadji’s warriors.

Reuter was informed of the murders by Mr Ramputla, Mamalepa's bodyguard and friend. Reuter organized a burial for the two men and built a hut for Mokgadi Maria Kgashane (the wife of the deceased) next to his own, as he had been requested by Kgashane to do before the latter was killed (Makwala, 1958:46).

3.3.7 Events immediately following on the death of Johannes Kgashane

In order to remain united after the death of Johannes Kgashane, his followers moved to Ga-Mamaila and erected a small church. This pleased the BMS’s Director of Missionaries, Rev Wangemann, who paid the Mamaila Lutheran Church of the BMS a visit in 1884. However, the Rain Queen, Modjadji, was not at all happy when she realized that a relatively large number of her people (the followers of Johannes Kgashane) had forsaken her. She requested them to return to their homes at Modubeng. They complied, but settled in the mountainous sections of the area where they were later joined by other Christians at Medingen (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:37, Makwala, 1958:8).

In 1894, Bolobedu suffered a serious drought. The Balobedu believed that the drought was caused by Queen Modjadji. She allegedly failed to let the rain fall because white settlers had, in course of time, built houses with corrugated iron on what she considered to be “her land”. This resulted in hostilities between the Balobedu and the white settlers led by General Piet Joubert. In an effort to achieve peace and quiet, Rev Reuter tried to involve the Government of the Transvaal by discussing the matter with government officials in Pretoria. Rev Reuter represented the Balobedu and, amongst other things, recommended that the Balobedu should be officially provided with land on which whites would not be allowed to stay. He also promised the Government that the Balobedu tribe would end their hostility towards white people and that he would personally do everything in his power to ensure that they live in peace and harmony, provided the Balobedu were
given their own land. Thereafter the war ended promptly and Medingen Mission Station was built where it is today (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:51).

3.3.8 More trouble at Medingen

In 1897 the Balobedu experienced another severe drought which destroyed many crops. Many people died of starvation. Rev Reuter requested the Transvaal Government to support the Balobedu people. The request was granted by President Paul Kruger who supplied financial aid, and arranged for bags of mealie meal to be sent to Medingen. People from the neighbouring villages, such as the Botlokwa and Bokgaga, flocked to Medingen in an effort to also get hold of something to eat. It is estimated that approximately 200 people were converted to Christianity during this event.

During that same year (1897) Rev Reuter visited Germany accompanied by 60 members of the Balobedu tribe. The delegation included men, women and children, both converts and non-converts. The aim of the trip was to familiarize the BMS in Germany with the local people in the Transvaal as well as with both their customs and circumstances. The visitors also testified about the work that was being done by the missionaries at Medingen (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:45). The Germans were pleased and encouraged Reuter to keep up the good work he was doing. More people were converted thereafter.

3.3.9 The relationship between Rev Reuter and the Royal family/Queens of Modjadji.

During the first years of his stay at Ga-Kgapane, Rev Reuter had to obtain permission from Queen Modjadji I for each and every action he planned. Queen Modjadji I and Modjadji II were never seen by a white person during their reign. They communicated with Rev Reuter through the Indunas. Their secrecy indeed became their greatest fame. They were also believed to be immortal. The most important functions they performed in the tribe were that of conducting spiritual ceremonies. They were the cultural heads of the Balobedu. They led very private lives. In accordance with the tribe’s culture and tradition they were geographically restricted to the Headkraal (Mosate). They were not freely accessible, in the sense that no-one could merely come to Mosate, say that (s)he would like to see the chieftains and then expect to see them personally. When Reuter had a request, he had to travel to the Mosate, sit in the tribal court (“kgoro”) and wait until an Induna came to ask what he wanted. To get to the tribal court one had to crawl on his/her
knees with bare feet to show some respect. In the beginning it was difficult for Reuter to get permission, but the situation improved later on.

After the death of Queen Modjadji II in 1896, President Kruger gave instructions to the local people to select and appoint another queen. This queen had to be inaugurated by Rev Reuter. This could (and probably would) have been done without the intervention of Kruger, but his “instruction” was carried out as a sign of respect for the President. Queen Modjadji III was appointed and her inauguration was witnessed by eighty Indunas (Malapane, 2005; Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:49).

Queen Modjadji III worked harmoniously with her councilors. She also accepted advice from Rev Reuter. He once, for example, advised the Queen not to get involved in a war with Piet Joubert, an instruction which she adhered to (Motshekga 2004:66). It is interesting to note that the threat of war existed because, as explained in section 3.3.7, the Balobedu wanted to have land of their own, but mostly because the Rain Queen ascribed her inability to make rain to the corrugated iron which the white settlers used to construct the roofs of their houses (Motshekga, 2004:64).

3.3.10 Aspects of life at Medingen

It is important to note that neither the BMS nor their missionaries approved of heathens mixing with Christians. According to Ramokgola and Krause (1884:36) they regarded this not to be in line with God’s will. These two groups (irrespective of their ethnic or racial composition) were separated from each other, because missionaries believed that non-Christians would influence Christians negatively and cause them to regress.

This separation of Christians from non-Christians was particularly evident during funerals. Certain steps were followed during heathen funeral ceremonies. Firstly, a heathen was never allowed to enter the church and had to be buried elsewhere. In fact, the cemetery at Medingen was divided into two clear areas: one site was reserved for heathens while another, separate site was reserved for Christian burials. Pastors were not bound to attend the burials of heathens seeing that certain (non-Christian) rituals were performed. These rituals included putting seeds, sleeping mats, cups and other utensils into the grave. Goats were killed and their hides were used to line the graves. Heathens included these things in the grave for the deceased to use wherever he or she may be.
In contrast, when a Christian passed away, the Pastor, Elders of the church and congregation all attended the funeral service. The coffin would be taken to the church and thereafter to the cemetery. A Pastor conducted the service.

According to Van Dyk (1967:1) black people in South Africa were not familiar with Western education before missionaries came to South Africa. They provided informal education to their children from infancy until adulthood. Children learned through imitation from siblings, parents and other adults, adaptation to their environment and observation. Boys and girls followed their role models until they were sent to initiation schools. Thus the parental home was the institution responsible for instilling the correct attitudes, knowledge and skills in the young. Informal education introduced the child to the system of values prevailing in a particular society. Values were accepted by the children as norms. Knowledge was passed on to the younger generations through direct but informal instruction in the form of experience and utilization of riddles, fables, folklore/folk-fables and praise songs.

Before the coming of colonialism and Western education, the home and community were important places for social development amongst African communities. The arrival of missionaries led to the introduction of formal education among the indigenous people as literacy was viewed as vital to evangelization (Masumbe & Coetzer, 2003:203).

It was difficult and hard for Reuter to convince the Balobedu to accept the word of God. He did not despair.

From 1881, twelve Reverends served at Medingen Mission Station. Most of the Reverends (especially the first six) worked both as preachers and as teachers. The names of the reverends who worked at Medingen and the period of their involvement at the Mission Station are provided in Table 1:

Table 1: Names and period of involvement of Reverends who served at Medingen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Period of involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rev FL Reuter</td>
<td>1881 – 1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev W Krause</td>
<td>1877 - 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev G Hagens</td>
<td>1952 - 1954</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher provided a description of the genesis and development of Medingen Missionary Station. The developments have shown the gradual acceptance of the Berlin missionaries’ efforts by the Balobedu. In the next chapter the establishment and development of missionary education at Medingen will be investigated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rev A Lathane</td>
<td>1955 – 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev L Malapane</td>
<td>1970 - 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev P Tshikota</td>
<td>2001 – 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev P Mafomane</td>
<td>2003 – to date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4

PROVISION OF EDUCATION AT MEDINGEN

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 focused on the establishment and development of Medingen Mission Station. For more than a hundred years, since 1881, Medingen Station and Medingen Primary School fulfilled what can be regarded as a “sacred mission”. Especially Medingen Primary School had a significant influence on the lives of many black people living in the region of Ga-Kgapane in the Limpopo Province. Consequently, in this chapter an overview will be provided of the development of education provision at Medingen from its inception to the present day, with special reference to Medingen Primary School.

4.2 Education at Medingen prior to the arrival of missionaries

Before the onset of missionary education, the Balobedu practiced informal education in their unique cultural style. Education was imparted mainly through oral communication; narratives being passed down verbally from generation to generation. The main aim of informal education was to preserve the cultural heritage of the tribe and extended family, as well as to teach the new generation how to adapt, control and use their physical environment. According to Mazonde (2001:2) informal education during the pre-colonial times comprised an explanation to children that their own and their community’s future depended on both a knowledge of and an upholding of the inherited laws, language and values which characterized the tribe. This type of education mainly comprised singing, dancing, story telling, as well as instruction in hunting and the main beliefs of the tribe (Guma 1983:4, 39, 65, 136).

The children of the Balobedu were raised exclusively by their own community since the child was regarded as a community asset. Every member of the community contributed to the upbringing of the child whether the child was an offspring, family relative, extended family member, or simply another member of the clan (Mbamara 2004).

It was only in 1881 that formal education as it is practiced today, came to the Bolobedu area in the form of missionary education (Ramokgola & Krause 1884:47).
4.3 Formal education at Medingen in its initial stages

The primary aim of missionary education was to save the soul of man through Christianization. The missionaries attempted to evangelize not only the youth, but also the whole local population. Evangelization was intimately connected to the promotion of European (resp. Western) norms and values (Grunder, 1997:23). Although there were exceptions, most of the Medingen inhabitants became devoted to the Christian faith and committed themselves to the Word of God. As a result of their conversion, they not only became receptive to Christian values such as individual discipline, respect for others, honesty in personal conduct, obedience and an inclination towards cooperation with other converts, but they also increasingly adhered to these values.

According to Malapane (2005) the Berlin missionaries, in particular, wanted to cultivate a sense of loyalty amongst the Balobedu, inculcating attitudes for the realization of dignity, and stressing the importance of labour, self-discipline and “civilized habits”. They aimed at inculcating an acceptance and appreciation of moral behavior and the moulding of the children of Medingen into responsible and loyal citizens (Ashley, 1989:16, 19; Mabunda, 1995: 38; Moothal, 1990:72).

According to the missionaries, and on a more practical level, being able to read and write would have helped black converts to emancipate themselves from the bonds of what the former regarded as superstition, animism and witchcraft. Consequently learning to read and write became an integral part of missionary education. In this manner, the school became an ancillary to evangelization (Mphahlele, 1972:91; Van Dyk, 1967:2).

At Medingen, the Rev Reuter introduced Sunday school lessons and sermons and actively encouraged both parents of the Balobedu community and their children to attend it. However, he soon realized that Sunday school lessons only would not be enough. In order to teach the Balobedu to read and write, Christian scriptures would have to be translated into the local language and children would be required to attend school on a daily basis. He would also be required to initiate the erection of a school building.

Consequently, the first classroom at Medingen was built by Reuter and other missionaries from the Berlin Missionary Society with the assistance of parents from the Balobedu community. It was the first school in the Bolobedu region and later gave rise to the
establishment of many other schools in the area; in fact, in most cases teachers were seconded from Medingen to set up new schools (Ramokgola & Krause 1884 : 43)

The first school at Medingen, Medingen Primary School, accommodated all the children from, for example, the Malematja, Mapaana, Ga-Rabothata and Ga-Rapitsi villages. Initially the school comprised only one classroom which was used on Sundays for church services and Sunday school lessons, and during the week for formal education purposes.

The expressed aims of formal education at Medingen when the new school was inaugurated, were to:
- spread the Gospel of Jesus to a heathen population;
- convert the Balobedu to Christianity;
- evangelize the Balobedu; and
- bring civilization to the Balobedu (Dahwa, 1986:56, Malapane 2005)

As regards the curriculum that was followed at Medingen Primary during its early years, it was already mentioned earlier that the emphasis was on evangelization, reading, writing and arithmetic. Religious and moral instruction were emphasized to foster the realization of Christianity. Children who attended Medingen Primary School were obliged to adhere to the Christian faith and were expected to attend both church and Sunday school every Sunday. The same applied to the teachers who worked at Medingen: they too had to be Christians, display good morals and demonstrate behaviour characteristic of a Christian.

The daily work at the mission school began and ended with hymn singing, scripture reading and prayer, all aimed at character building, and the promotion of good, moral behavior and a sound personality. However, it did not take long before the missionaries also attempted to provide the Balobedu with knowledge and skills related to farming. As a community depending on a subsistence economy, that was a way of trying to improve the community’s well-being (Malapane, 2005, Ramokgola & Krause 1884 : 37)

The school attracted so much attention that almost immediately three more class rooms had to be built before the school was officially opened in 1882. At that stage there were 90 learners attending the school: 10 learners in Sub Standard A, 30 in Standards 1 to 3 and 50 in Standards 4 to 6. To accommodate this large number of learners who yearned for formal education, some of them had to attend a morning session and others an afternoon session. (Motseo 2006). According to Motseo and Maponya (both interviewed November 2006), parents of Medingen were overwhelmed with joy to see their children being taught
and afforded opportunities to learn and by 1889, the total school enrolment had increased to 250 learners (Medingen Report by the Berliners: 1889).

In 1882 there were five people acting as teachers at Medingen Primary. The initiator of the school, Rev Reuter, and a colleague, Rev L Malapane, took the lead in the formal education of learners at Medingen. They were assisted by one qualified teacher, Mr F Shoroma, who was subsequently appointed as the first Principal of Medingen Primary, and two community members, Mr J Mokitimi and Mr I Makwela. Mr Mokitimi experienced ill health and was absent from school for long periods of time (Ramokgola & Krause 1884:31). The fact that two untrained but willing community members acted as teachers, was not unusual for that period; in fact, in the beginning most of the teachers serving at Medingen Primary, where un- or under-qualified. It was primarily the priests and evangelists who had received some training in theology, that also acted as teachers. However, in the course of time, Medingen was able to acquire the services of more and better qualified teachers, mostly teachers trained at the Botshabelo and Lemana Training Institutions which were also established by Berlin and Swiss missionaries (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:36).

At Medingen the development was fairly rapid as the total church membership increased. A period of progress followed when Rev W Krause, Rev A Lathane, and Rev L Malapane, to mention a few, joined the mission work. As a result, missionary work increased and the following mission stations were established nearby: Sethale Mission Station, Sekgopo Mission Station, Moila Mission Station (Ramokgola & Krause 1884:36). All those stations were regarded as “Bana ba Medingen” (Children of Medingen).

4.4 Aspects of formal education at Medingen during the early twentieth century

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a large number of missionary schools were established. These schools were organized, administered and controlled by the various founding missionary societies (Hartshorne, 1992:24–25). In the case of Medingen, education was controlled by officials from the Berlin Missionary Society.

In the course of the twentieth century, Medingen Primary School was often visited by inspectors attached to the BMS. From 1938 Rev W Krause was the Superintendent of mission schools in the Bolobedu area where Medingen was situated. The Berlin Missionary Supervisors kept a close check on the moral development of both educators
and learners and also made sure that the school buildings were secured and looked after. Missionary Superintendents also took responsibility for the hiring and management of teachers in mission schools. Even after 1955, when the state took control of all mission schools, Missionary Superintendents recommended teachers for appointment or promotion by the Department of Education (Christie 1991:90; Sparks 1990:195-196).

An intimate relationship exists between a school’s performance and the person directing matters from the helm; the school principal. Therefore, assuming that this pronouncement is true, a brief consideration of the various principals that managed Medingen Primary during the twentieth century, can provide valuable data pertaining to the development of Medingen Primary School.

4.4.1 School principals who served at Medingen Primary

During the early twentieth century many mission schools were established in the Limpopo Province in addition to Medingen Primary. Amongst these were the Wesleyan, the Swiss and the Berlin Mission Schools. At that stage the leadership of the Berlin Mission Society (BMS) in Germany decided that representatives of their society should visit South Africa for an unannounced inspection of all the schools attached to the BMS to evaluate their activities. Consequently, in 1927 a delegation from the BMS visited the area in which Medingen Primary was situated.

During the BMS’s inspection of a school at Ga-Mokopane, learners sang and danced under the leadership of a certain Mr Aaron Bopape. The Berlin delegation was not only taken by surprise but also very impressed with what they saw. In their report they wrote that they were overwhelmed by the way they saw learners and teachers working hand in hand. They encouraged both teachers and learners to keep up the good work so that their mission could be achieved. According to Shoroma and Reuter (1927) learners were told to do their best and to strive to achieve more, and especially to uphold their school motto “Nthahle ke hlahlé” which means “Lead me that I may lead”.

From Ga-Mokopane the inspecting delegation proceeded to Medingen. When they arrived at Medingen they excitedly expressed to Rev Reuter their appreciation for the welcome they received at Ga-Mokopane. In particular they mentioned their admiration for Bopape’s talent. It seems as though Rev Reuter experienced negative emotions about the fact that Bopape, as someone born and bred at Medingen, received such accolades for work done
outside of his own community. He regretted the fact that Bopape was not employed at Medingen Primary and resolved to obtain Bopape’s services for his own school.

Towards the end of 1928, Reuter decided to transfer Mr Shiroma to a school in the diminutive village of Ga-Moshakga and appointed Aaron Bopape as the second Principal of Medingen. Bopape held both a Junior and a Native Primary Lower Teacher’s Certificate which he obtained at the Botshabelo Training Institution. He first taught at Ga-Mashashane before being employed by the Ga-Mokopane Lutheran Mission School (Ramokgola & Krause, 1884:21, Maponya (2006).

In 1929 Mr Bopape commenced with his duties as Principal of Medingen Primary School. He taught Music and English. Amongst other things, the Medingen Primary School anthem was written and set to music by Bopape. From 1935 to 1945 he conducted the Medingen choirs and both good singing and delightful music became characteristics of Medingen. Furthermore, Bopape directed school plays and encouraged the children to excel in drama. Many plays were performed on parents’ days and at annual concerts. During the course of Mr Bopape’s principalship, the staff consisted of seven members, namely Mr J Mashale, Mr G Rabothata, Rev A Lathane, Mr G Monakga, Mr S Mathole, and Mr L Malapane and Mrs V Motau. Mr Bopape and Mrs V Motau succeeded in fostering a spirit of teamwork amongst these staff members. It is interesting to note that, in spite of the fact that not all of these teachers were fully qualified, Mr Bopape managed to keep them involved and enabled them to succeed in whatever they had to do. The persons that were not suitably qualified were Mr S Mathole, Mr L Malapane and Rev A Lathane (Motseo, 2006; Maponya, 2006).

In 1945 Mr J Mashale replaced Mr Bopape as Principal of Medingen when the latter retired. Mr Mashale also received his initial training at the Botshabelo Training Institution. Mashale and his staff introduced new teaching strategies and tried to motivate their learners to study hard. During Mashale’s principalship the school enjoyed much support from neighbouring villages and prospered to such an extent that it developed into Medingen Lower and Higher Primary School. The relationship between the local teachers and the Reuters was not always perfectly sound. During their respective periods of principalship, both Mr Bopape and Mr Mashale,
for example, experienced problems with “Juffrou” Reuter, as she was known. She used to shout at teachers in the presence of children and whenever the Reuter family celebrated a birthday, both learners and teachers were forced to sing to the “Moneri” (a term referring to Rev Reuter and his family). The singing usually took place before or during school hours. Both Mr Bopape and Mr Mashale objected to this as it interfered with school lessons. When Rev W Krause took over the superintendence of the school in 1938, the practice of singing on birthdays during school hours was reduced (Maponya, interviewed November 2006).

During his period of principalship Mr Mashale strove to retain the quality of teaching at Medingen and attempted to ensure that Medingen maintained the good name of ‘Medingen wo Mokgethwa’ (Medingen, the Holy place). He urged the children to attend Sunday school. In this regard he often applied corporal punishment. Corporal punishment was regarded as a tool to uphold discipline. An attendance register was kept and every Monday morning before school punitive measures were applied to any child who failed to attend religious services on Sunday. He consistently endeared himself to the Balobedu tribe, and served his school and church with loyalty and devotion. According to Mashale (1969), the quality of his work is reflected in Medingen’s products: clever young men and women who are spread all over the Limpopo Province, and even beyond its borders. The work of Mr Mashale was appreciated by the missionaries, school superintendents and the community at large. He experienced great joy in his work during the many years he taught at Medingen. He retired in 1969 after he had seen Medingen Primary established and developed into a big, well known school.
In 1970 Mr H Moselekwa was appointed in the post of Principal of Medingen Primary School. He held a Joint Matriculation Board Certificate and a Higher Primary Teacher’s Certificate. He taught at Ga-Moroko as an assistant teacher for approximately three years prior to this appointment. His training prepared him for leadership, and developed in him a pleasant, fatherly attitude. Although he had a slow, deliberate manner of speaking, he possessed an ordered, methodical way of presenting facts. He believed in strict discipline. He inspired the learners to build a road, using the stones at Medingen. During an inspection, his zeal, earnestness, close attention to neatness and good arrangement of school work in general, made a favourable impression on the inspectors (Moselekwa, 1978).

Mr Moselekwa, the parents, teaching staff and the School Committee devoted much attention to the construction of additional classrooms. During this endeavour Mr Moselekwa proved how well he could manage the school and all the various school committees. He infused into his co-workers, learners and the community sincere and excellent practices of leadership, enterprise and exploration. He was an accessor within the Ga-Kgapane Magistrates Court. Corporal punishment was still fervently applied during his principalship. Mr Moselekwa retired in 1988. By that time Medingen Primary School had eleven classrooms and the morning and afternoon system was no longer in operation (Moselekwa, 1988).

Throughout his years as Principal, Mr Moselekwa was passionate about pleasant, neat and clean conditions in- and outside the classroom. Above all, he advocated disciplined Christian conduct under all circumstances. To maintain high standards at Medingen, children had to stand in line before the lessons commenced - their teachers then inspected the pupils’ overall appearance. Mr Moselekwa was a dignified school principal who knew what he wanted from his learners. He was an outstanding teacher and a sound organizer and he stamped his authoritative, impressive personality on the school.

In 1989 Mr C L Ranaga succeeded Mr Moselekwa as Principal of Medingen Primary School. He possessed a Primary Teachers Certificate. He also completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of South Africa. Before his appointment at Medingen he taught at Malematsa Primary School as an assistant, and occupied a position as Deputy Principal at Moleketa Primary School. He taught Music and Mathematics at Medingen. Whereas the good singing and delightful music which characterised Medingen during its early years of existence, was attributed to Mr Bopape, it was almost entirely ascribed to Mr
Ranaga towards the end of the twentieth century. The latter also taught children how to act in the drama classes. Mr Ranaga had empathy with other people. He was a man of integrity. Because of his compassionate personality, he refrained from using corporal punishment. His staff members consisted of Mr NJ Moila, Miss LM Maepa, Miss R Ranaga, Mr V Motau, Mr R M Mohale, Mr N Molawa, Mrs R P Matatanya, Mr D Matatanya, Mrs A Z Ramaoka, Mr G Monakga and Mrs T Lebepe. He had a special way of presenting information and of making announcements to the community. After circulating notices via the learners, he would send notes to gathering places (such as churches and the “Kgoro” or Village courts). In his time, Medingen Primary’s senior and intermediate choirs regularly occupied the first two positions at local Eisteddfods. Mr Ranaga died on 16 September 1998 under mysterious circumstances. He was found dead and it was suspected that he had committed suicide (Moila), (1998).

On 29 October 1998 Mr N J Moila assumed duty as Principal of Medingen Primary School. He held a Secondary Education Certificate and Secondary Education Diploma from Vista University. Mr Moila became the Principal during a transitional period when new departmental curricula associated with the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), had to be put into operation.

Medingen village had, in the meantime, in 1977, built a secondary school named Magoletsa High School (named after Magoletsa Kgapan's brother, the then head man of Medingen) for the general advancement of education in the area. At that stage Mr R S B Motsinoni and Mr J Molawa respectively acted as Principals of Magoletsa. Since the secondary school experienced a shortage of teachers, some of the teachers from Medingen Primary were seconded to Magoletsa Senior Secondary School and left Medingen Primary in need of a sufficient number of qualified teachers.

Mr Moila positively accepted all of the challenges related to the introduction of outcomes-based education and dealt with it decisively. He was not rigid in his approach to school matters and encouraged both educators and learners to adapt to the changes in the curriculum. Visitors and subject advisors often made positive remarks about the disciplined manner in which learners and staff at Medingen Primary acted. The pleasant tone and the resultant good work, the spirit of sympathy and cooperation between staff and learners, the keenness and earnestness that showed itself in the efforts of the staff, and the unsparing, hard work of staff are all mentioned in the Principal’s report which appeared in 2000 (Moila 2000).
Mr Moila can be described as a product of Mr Moselekwa and Mr Ranaga (Ramaano, Ramoshaba & Monakga 2002:2). Like his predecessors, he avoided corporal punishment. When learners had to be reprimanded, they were summoned to the Principal’s office where they were made aware of the negative effect which their behaviour had on their personalities and on the reputation of Medingen (Moila 2000).

Currently Medingen Primary is still under the leadership of Mr. Moila who accepted all the challenges of education. He has adapted to the new curriculum system called the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). His staff members are doing great and excellently. He is organized, disciplined and tackles issues with a vigilant eye.

Earlier in this section the inspection of the BMS during 1927 was mentioned. The report of this delegation provides a further indication of what the situation at Medingen Primary was during the early twentieth century.

4.4.2 Report of the Berlin Missionary delegation (1927)

The delegation reported that the Principal (at that stage, Mr F Shoroma) and his staff set and maintained good educational standards. Amongst other things the Principal provided educators with sound guidelines to be leaders, better guides and counselors to the learners. The inspectors mentioned that there existed strong teamwork and cooperation among the teachers. They gave the impression that they were committed and dedicated to teaching.

The report mentioned that, although it sometimes seemed difficult to maintain discipline, discipline in the classrooms was good: during lesson presentation, learners were attentive and participated when questions were asked. Learners were neatly seated and neatly dressed in their school uniforms. Teachers were able to control their learners, which showed that discipline was properly taken care of. In general, learners were obedient (Shoroma & Reuter, 1927).

According to the 1927 report, the school buildings at Medingen were well kept. The learners helped to clean the classes after school. It was also mentioned that new, attractive classes and a church hall had been built where people could sing and practice drama.
The delegation was impressed by the general standard of education. Teachers appear to have encouraged their learners to work hard and to do their best. Learners in standard 2 were able to read English relatively well, if not fluently. Especially boys did well in art classes. The inspectors were also very impressed with the vegetables grown in the school garden. On average, the learners performed well, with between 60 and 70 percent passing their final examinations. The teachers reported that learners who did not pass, failed to work diligently and were often too lazy to even do their homework (Shoroma & Reuter, 1927).

Determined attempts by the researcher to obtain more detailed information concerning the daily activities of Medingen Primary during the three decades following on the BMS’s visit, resulted in nothing. Very little, if any information in this regard appears to be available. However, Medingen was also subject to the same circumstances that applied to the education of black people in the whole country at that stage. A relatively good picture of the state of black education immediately prior to, and shortly after, the change of government in 1948 can be obtained from a study of the Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education of 1935-1936, better known as the Welsh report, and the Report of the Eiselen Commission, 1951.

4.5 The state of education provision for black people towards the middle of the twentieth century

In 1935, under Government Notice 978 of 12 July 1935 (UG29/1936), the government appointed an Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education under the chairmanship of Mr WT Welsh to investigate the state of education provision for black people.
4.5.1 Report of the Welsh Commission (1936)

According to the Welsh report, in the 1930s the majority of schools for blacks were state-aided mission schools, each under the control of a missionary manager. In the Transvaal these managers were mostly white people. Amongst other things they supervised the moral and religious instruction of learners and ensured that school buildings were kept in good repair.

Primary school education stretched over a period of eight years and comprised two sub standards and six standards. The curriculum consisted of the two official languages and the vernacular, religious instruction, arithmetic, geography, nature study, history, hygiene, music, manual and industrial training, and drill and games.

The Welsh Committee concluded that certain reforms in the existing system were necessary. It mentioned, *inter alia*, that

- financially, the government contribution per learner for the education of whites was almost ten times as large as that for the education of blacks;
- missionaries sometimes, at their own account, employed unqualified black persons (who knew little more than the learners) to teach in missionary schools;
- some seventy percent of black children of school age did not attend school, often because of a lack of facilities;
- rivalry existed among different denominations in their bid to establish schools without regard to the needs of the community (Behr 1988: 30 -33’ Hartshorne 1992: 28 – 29)

Although the Welsh Commission disapproved of many aspects of missionary education, it also “fully applauded the sterling work that had been done by the missionaries over the years” (Behr 1988: 31).

The Welsh Commission recommended that black education be centralized, financing be provided by the then Union Education Department and that the feasibility of compulsory school attendance for blacks be investigated. Although the recommendations of the Welsh Commission were not implemented immediately, these recommendations must have had an influenced on the National Party when it came to power twelve years later.
In 1948 the National Party was elected into office. It is significant that one of the first steps the new government took in regard to education, was to set up a Commission on Native Education, under the chairmanship of Dr WWM Eiselen.

4.5.2 Report of the Eiselen Commission (1951)

The Commission was tasked to

- formulate the principles and aims of education for black people “as an independent race”,
- determine the extent to which the education system for blacks should be modified to prepare them more effectively for their future occupations,
- investigate the organization and administration of the various branches of what was then referred to as “Native education”, and

In its report which appeared in 1951 (UG53/1951), the Eiselen Commission concluded, amongst other things, that

- the educational program of black education was far removed from a socio-economic development plan,
- there was no active participation of black people in the control of education,
- schools for black learners lacked adequate supervision,
- the school life of black learners were too short,
- the general orientation of schooling was too academic by nature, and
- religious bodies was too intensely involved in the day-to-day control of schools.

Some of the main recommendations of the Eiselen Commission were the following:

- the control of black education should be vested in a separate department under the aegis of the Central Government. This would necessitate the creation of bantu local authorities who would then be expected to gradually take over the local control of schools run by missionary societies, provincial administrations, communities and tribes,
- the proposed Department of Bantu Education should make provision for decentralization into six regional divisions that could ensure the grouping together of homogeneous population elements,
• elementary schooling should provide for two types of primary schools, namely a lower and a higher primary school,

• post-primary education should also be provided which could lead to, for example, a university or teacher's training course (SA (U) 1951:159-153).

The government accepted most of the Eiselen recommendations and this led to the promulgation of the Bantu Education Act (Act 47 of 1953) in 1953. In his speech before Senate in 1954, the then Prime Minister, Dr HF Verwoerd, pointed out that this Act, amongst other things, provided for mission schools to be replaced by community schools which would be supervised by the State but be controlled by black organizations. However, subject to certain conditions and a grant limited to 75% of the salaries of approved staff, missionary societies would, as a provisional arrangement, be permitted to continue to maintain their schools (Senate Debates, 7-11 June 1954, cols. 2595-2622).

In 1956, in accordance with the stipulations of the Bantu Education Act, no 47 of 1953, Medingen Primary became a state controlled community school.

4.6 Medingen Primary School after 1956

The Bantu Education Act made provision for the setting-up of elected school committees and school boards. As required, Medingen Primary also established a school committee to assist in the control and governance of the school. Mr E Malapane, Mr F Moila, Mr P Lebepe and Mr E Itsweni were the first persons to serve in the first Medingen School Committee. The term for the team was 3 years, but this team was allowed to remain in the position for six years. The second Medingen School Committee consisted of Mr A Letseku, Mr P Ramatseba, Mr P Sedutta, Mr T Lebepe and Mr M Ramoshaba. This School Committee was assisted by Circuit inspectors who often visited Medingen. The latter assumed the primary responsibility for the control of the school and the execution of both the administrative and professional duties performed by the Principals and teachers (Lebowa, 1990:12).

In 1966 the Government placed the regional control of Medingen Primary under the auspices of the Molototsi School Board. From 1972 to 1976 education at Medingen and at all other black schools in the Limpopo area, fell under the central control and administration of Bantu Education in the Lebowa Self-Governing Homeland. At that time,
education at Medingen was regionally controlled and administered by the inspectors of schools in the Bolobedu circuit in the Letaba District (General Inspection Report, 1974).

During the 1960’s and 1970’s, Black education at provincial level was not only affected by the general education policies of the country, but also by that of the self-governing homelands. Lebowa, where Medingen is situated, became a self governing homeland in 1972 (Hartshorne 1992:126). As in other self-governing homeland schools, parents of learners at Medingen were expected to contribute financially towards the education of their children. Parents also contributed towards the remuneration of private teachers at Medingen in order to provide adequate staffing. Principals encouraged parents to contribute financially towards the building of new classrooms at Medingen.

Since, after 1954, the building of schools and class rooms largely became the responsibility of local communities, the number of available classrooms at Medingen limited the number of learners that could be accommodated and the number of teachers who could be employed. Medingen also experienced difficulties in erecting, for example, a laboratory. Parents were nevertheless impressed by those facilities which the school did manage to set up, for example, the four classroom building which was added to the school in 1993. This was initiated by the School Committee under the chairpersonship of Mr M Ramoshaba and the late Principal, Mr C L Ranaga.

During the period 1976-1977, the Circuit Inspector for Bolobedu, Mr ML Moloto, and Assistant Inspectors (amongst others Mr TR Makgoka, Mr BE Mehlape and Mr LS Raganya) controlled and administered education at Medingen and all other schools in the Bolobedu circuit (Lebowa 1977:21). In the ensuing eight years Medingen Primary School was controlled by the Ramokgopa circuit in the Pietersburg (Polokwane) district. Throughout this period, the Circuit Inspector Mr R Makgamatha supervised and administered the progress of all schools in the Bolobedu area. In 1986 Mr ML Moloto succeeded Mr Makgamatha as Inspector.

Throughout this period, the Berlin Missionary Society continued sponsoring Medingen financially even though the Central Government controlled and administered education at Medingen.

In June 1996 the first School Governing Body (SGB) (consisting of Mr A Letseku, Mrs M Motsinoni, Mr P Rampedi, Mr M Itsweni, Mr S J Molate and Mrs A Itsweni) was appointed.
Due to the death of Mrs M Motsinoni, Mr T A Nlokwe substituted her. From 1996, Medingen Primary School was thus controlled by the following parties: the Principal, Inspectors, the SGB and teachers.

In 1996 the South African Schools Act (SASA) encouraged schools to become self-managed and self-reliant. In the past, the Principal of a school was expected to run the school all by him/herself. In contrast, Section 16 of the SASA required schools to establish a School Management Team (SMT) comprising of senior personnel at the school. At Medingen Primary, an SMT was formed to address the day-to-day running of the school as directed by the policies of the Department. The following persons agreed to serve in the first Medingen Primary School SMT: Mr B M Mohlaloganye, Miss M L Maepa, Mr NJ Moila, Miss R. Ranaga and Mrs A Makgeru.

During 1997 the Department of Education came to the conclusion that the work-load of the Circuit Managers is too big and that, as a result, some schools are not visited during the year. Major circuits were therefore divided into mini circuits, each under its own Circuit Manager. The Bolobedu cluster circuit was divided into five mini circuits (Rakwadu, Modjadji, Mawa, Motupa, and Molototsi). Medingen falls under the Rakwadu circuit in the Mopani District. The temporary Circuit Manager of Rakwadu Circuit was Mr T Z Phakhula. Mr MD Sethaba is the Current Circuit Manager. He is assisted by five Subject Advisors, namely Mr MS Mabitsela, Mr S Raholane, Mr Z Monareng, Mrs M Modiba and Mr H Mailula (Kgomo, 2008).

Medingen Primary School followed a curriculum similar to that of other black, primary schools in the previous Transvaal (Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West). Amongst other things and as recommended in the Eiselen Report, teachers focused on teaching learners about personal hygiene and also inspected them on a regular basis during hygiene lessons in order to promote their good health and influence them to develop respect for their own physical and mental states. Attempts were made to stimulate learners’ creativity by emphasizing handwork (Motseo, 2006).

At Medingen teamwork was considered very important for achieving success. When compared to other schools in the Mopani District, Medingen’s results in year end examinations were admirable. This attracted parents to the school, as did the school’s
accomplishments in regard to extra-mural activities such as parents’ days, the promotion of music and various sports activities.

4.6.1 Parents’ days

Over the years, parents’ days were held at Medingen for both fundraising and entertainment purposes. The missionaries realized that missionary education would be more effective if parents were involved in the education of their children and were able to inculcate the community’s culture, virtues, norms and values in their children. Simultaneously prizes could be awarded to the learners who performed well at school in order to encourage and motivate them to continue with their good achievements. As a result, parents were invited to watch their children perform in items such as drama, recitations and public speaking (Maponya, 2006).

More recently Medingen Primary School has been organizing parents’ days on a quarterly basis. On these days the Principal usually hands out academic reports and the financial statements of the school, and informs parents and learners about important developments at the school. During these occasions the Principal also encourages parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly (Maponya, 2006).

Especially since 1994 parents and prominent guests have been invited to the school to be entertained by learners who, for example, dance, sing, recite memorized verses from scripture or other literary books, take part in drama or perform physical exercises. In this manner parents, teachers and learners get to know one another and form mutual relationships. Speakers are often invited to address the audience and to give motivational talks. According to Letseku and Motau (2005), the main objective of these days was marketing: to encourage parents to continue sending their children to Medingen Primary School.
4.6.2 Promotion of music

Music was an essential component of missionary education at Medingen and it attracted many parents to Medingen Primary School. Music improved the relationships between parents, teachers and pupils who gathered during the annual music competitions (Letseku & Motau, 2005).

Medingen has always been known for the successes of its senior, intermediate, boys’ and girls’ choirs, and for competent conductors, such as Mr A Bopape and Mr C Ranaga. Medingen’s choirs competed against the choirs from other schools on different levels, and often won trophies at such competitions. For example, during 1998, the senior choir under the leadership of Mr Ranaga was placed first out of thirteen choirs in the category ‘Zulu songs’ and second out of eight choirs in the category ‘English songs’ even though neither of these languages were the vernacular of the choir members. The intermediate choir was awarded two trophies for winning the Northern Sotho and Afrikaans songs categories (Motau, 2005).

4.6.3 Participation in sports activities

The aim of being involved in sports activities (as part of the physical training curriculum) has always been not only to improve the pupils’ general fitness and their gross motor skills, but also their spiritual and intellectual development, and to teach concepts such as ‘teamwork’ and ‘tolerance’. Sports activities at Medingen Primary School included athletics, soccer and netball.

From the school’s earliest days, athletics was regarded as an important component of missionary extra-mural activities. In the 1950’s and 1960’s athletics was supervised by specifically selected staff members, namely Mr Rabothata and Mr Monakga who were familiar with the sport. Mr Monakga not only took the lead in athletics coaching, but also assisted in inspiring the learners to build Mr Moselekwa’s road. Medingen always performed outstandingly and produced dedicated athletes (Motseo, 2006). In 1998 the Letaba North Regional competition was held at Masalanabo Senior Secondary School. Medingen Primary School received the trophy for the school with the best overall performance. Noted athletes were Bethuel Kobela, Ramputla Ramoshaba, Sekgota Modjadji and Freddy Mohlalogueanye (Motseo, 2006).
Soccer was also regarded as a vital means of promoting the physical and mental health of learners at Medingen Primary School. Traditionally, soccer was the exclusive domain of boys, but more recently girls are also playing soccer. Netball, on the other hand, was traditionally only played by girls. Participation in soccer and netball have always had a positive impact on the learners and as a result of the successes achieved by learners in these sports activities, teachers and learners have also shown interest in learning how to play rugby and cricket. Medingen’s soccer teams used to win many matches against the neighbouring school teams of Malematsa, Sefahong, Sekgopo and Mawa Primary Schools (Maponya, 2006; Motseo, 2006).

4.7 Recent developments in the provision of education at Medingen

In 1998 the then Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, published the document, National Norms and Standards for public schools funding (Republic of South Africa, 1998). Each provincial Education Department was required to produce a ‘yardstick targeting list’ informed by the physical conditions, facilities and degree of crowding in the school, teacher-learner ratio’s, the availability of basic services, and the relative poverty of the community (Republic of South Africa, 1998). Consequent upon this development, Medingen Primary School was earmarked as one of the schools that required urgent financial assistance. During 2004 additional assistance was provided to the school when it was declared a “no-fee school” in terms of Prof Asmal’s “Plan of Action to improve access to quality basic education for all”. All “childcare orphans” and those receiving a social grant at Medingen were exempted from paying school fees.

In 2001 marathon running was added to the school’s annual cultural celebrations. During that and the following year it was attended by the likes of the late Moss Motshekga, Mathole Motshekga, and representatives from the Premier’s office and the Department of Education. In recognition of Medingen Primary’s contributions to the community, Dr Ramphenyana, a bona fide “child of Medingen” presented the school with a new facsimile machine. Modjadji College of Education donated two chalkboards and a typewriter, and a representative of the Limpopo Department of Education announced that four new classrooms would be built during the following year. These buildings were erected in 2003 and named the Moses Motshekga Block.
In 2004 the school participated in a life-skills education programme and attained the second position in the regional poetry section. In 2005 it was again placed second in both the regional poetry and drama competitions respectively. In 2006 the school attained a third place in both the regional public speaking and choral verse competitions.

An Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) centre was opened at Medingen Primary School in 2005. ABET was established in 2005 at Medingen by Mr Motheta as the coordinator working at the Regional Office of Education in Tzaneen. Educators were Mrs J Radimpe, a “child from Medingen”, Mrs P Modika from Ga-Kgapan, Miss S Malematša from Mokgwathli and Miss J. Motseo, also from Medingen Village. The reason why Medingen Primary School was selected to be an ABET centre, is that it is regarded as the fountain of knowledge and the largest of the neighbouring villages. ABET classes are held three times a week. Most learners are adults who do not possess a Matric (Grade 12) and workers who never attended school.

Scholars of various faculties, for example, of law, nursing and education at tertiary institutions in Limpopo Province emerged from Medingen. Today they are accomplished, prominent people who are role models in society and who aim to make the world a better place to live in. Examples in this regard are the late Mr RSB Motsinoni, the former principal of Magoletsa High School (see section 4.4.1) and Mr Mathole Motshekga, the previous premier of Gauteng Province, Mr Matome Kgapan, Miss Malatja Agnes and Mr Mokgwakgwa Clement Sodi (all administrators at the Kgapan office).

4.8 Conclusion

From its establishment in 1882, Medingen Primary School has consistently strived, as the school’s official vision indicates, “to equip the people of our community with life-long and quality education, aimed at making them skillful and knowledgeable so that they can play a key role in the community, as well as in the society at large”. Medingen Primary has remained dedicated to its mission, namely to

- motivate our community towards self-reliance and to foster the participation of all parents in their child’s education, learning and cultural activities,
- develop a community of people who are ready to help pupils and teachers in the day-to-day activities of the school, and
• transform and develop our community into one that will realize and practice the principles of non-racism, non-sexism, freedom of religion and democracy; a community that will respect children, and women’s rights.

This chapter provides an explanation of the provision of education at Medingen. In the next chapter evaluation, findings, conclusions and recommendations will be discussed.
CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4 an overview of the provision of education at Medingen was provided with the emphasis on the founding and development of Medingen Primary School. This overview followed on and was intended to be read in conjunction with Chapter 3 which focused on the establishment of Medingen Mission Station during the second half of the nineteenth century and its development since then. This chapter, Chapter 5, comprises a reflection on the investigation as a whole in order to arrive at justifiable conclusions, opinions and/or decisions. A suitable point of departure in this regard, is to briefly revisit the aims and objectives of this study.

5.2 The purpose of the investigation: a reminder

The main aim of this study was to provide a detailed description of the origin and development of the Medingen Mission Station, focusing on the provision of education. This broad and relatively imprecise aim was broken down into its constituent parts and the argument was advanced that, if the majority of the following refined, more concrete and operationalised objectives of the study could be achieved, the main aim would, by implication, also have been achieved:

- to ascertain how the mission station came into existence;
- to describe the development of the mission station;
- to determine why and how Medingen gained the educational status and prominence it currently seem to have, over the years;
- to describe the socio-political context within which Medingen was established and in which it developed over the past 127 years;
- to determine what changes have taken place at Medingen Primary School in the course of time with regard to the school’s aims, methods and content of education;
- to describe changes that took place concerning teaching staff, infra-structure and general school administration; and
to compile a short biography of prominent role-players in the development of the provision of education at Medingen.

In addition, the study was also expected to either validate or revoke current perceptions that this mission station is the source from which the identity of the Balobedu has originated.

In order to eventually determine whether the aim of the study has been achieved, the various findings of this investigation, arranged in accordance with these objectives, are briefly considered and presented in the following sections.

5.3 The establishment of Medingen Mission Station

The establishment of Medingen Mission Station should be viewed against the background of a major increase in missionary activities in South Africa during the second half of the nineteenth century, as reflected to some extent in the description of the activities of the London, South African, Moravian, Hermannsburg, Swiss and Berlin Missionary Societies provided in Chapter 2. Although a spirit of increasing cooperation between the various missionary societies in the country seemed to prevail (cf. sections 2.3 and 2.5), there were also signs of conflict and competition between, on the one hand, the missionary societies and the Dutch Reformed Church, and between missionary societies among themselves, on the other (cf. sections 2.3, 2.4 and 2.6).

At that stage, local chieftains were supreme within their own dominions and missionaries could only enter these dominions with their express permission. This also applied to the Balobedu under chief Kgashane Mamathepa (sr) (cf. section 3.3.9). In this regard it is interesting to note how Rev Reuter was at first expected to crawl on his knees and wait indefinitely in the “kgoro” for an opportunity to communicate with Queen Modjadji I and II via the Indunas, and how relations later improved to such an extent that Queen Modjadji III even accepted advice from Reuter (cf. section 3.3.9).

In contrast to many other mission stations that were founded during the 18th and 19th century, the initiative for the establishment of Medingen Mission Station in 1881 did not primarily come from any individual missionary or missionary society. Instead, this Mission Station came about as a result of the convictions of Kgashane Mamathepa (jr) (after his conversion to Christianity known as Johannes Kgashane), tribal leader of the Balobedu at
the time. Rev Fritz Reuter, a missionary attached to the Berlin Missionary Society, a society that had been active in South Africa since 1824, also played a significant part in the establishment of the Station at the request of Johannes Kgashane. From Rev Reuter’s perspective, his task was certainly simplified by Johannes Kgashane’s request for missionaries to get involved with the Balobedu (cf. section 3.3.2) and his positive attitude towards the missionaries (cf. section 3.3.3).

The station was initially known as Ga-Kgapane Mission Station, but soon after its establishment it was renamed after an influential German lady, Fraulein Charlotte von Meding, who had made a substantial financial donation to the missionary work of the BMS in the Bolobedu area (cf. section 3.3.3). Medingen was one of the first mission stations founded by the BMS to the north of the current Polokwane.

5.4 The development of the mission station

Medingen Mission Station followed the same pattern of development which can, in retrospect, be discerned in the development of all other missionary stations which were established during the second half of the nineteenth century. Initially one or two missionaries, together with their families, settled amongst members of the community they had targeted for missionary work and erected a dwelling house for themselves (cf section 3.3.3). One of their first tasks usually was to erect a small building which could serve as a church (cf. section 3.3.4). Then followed the introduction of a Sunday School which eventually resulted in the establishment of a school (cf. section 4.3). This, in its turn, created a need for the services of qualified teachers and the creation of both educational and religious structures, such as school committees and mission synods (cf. section 2.7).

The missionaries at Medingen continuously experienced financial problems (cf. section 2.7) as did the missionary society they belonged to, namely the BMS. As in the case of other missionary societies and mission stations, Medingen Missionary Station also relied heavily on financial assistance from churches and governments in Europe as well as on individual donations. The lack of finances seriously hampered the development of the mission station.

In spite of the lack of finances, Medingen developed into a multi-ethnic community consisting of approximately 10 000 members of whom the majority are women (cf. section 3.2.2). Due to its geographical location, Medingen is currently not only regarded as a
village in a so-called “deep rural area”, but also relatively underdeveloped. It appears as though Rev Reuter was the major driving force behind the Station’s development, but that the development slowly grinded to a halt after Reuter’s death in 1940. Development was also hampered by political changes which occurred towards the middle of the twentieth century (cf. sections 3.3.3 and 4.6).

5.5 Reasons why Medingen Primary School gained the status it currently has

One of the main reasons for the status Medingen Primary School has achieved over the past 127 years, is the intimate link which existed between school and church (cf. section 4.4.1 – Mr Mashale’s attempts to maintain the good name of “Medingen wo Mokgethwa”). Medingen Primary constituted the centre of all religious activities at Medingen Mission Station and therefore also grew into the centre of all other activities. It became a community centre in the true sense of the word.

A second reason for the status Medingen Primary School enjoys at present, is the value the local community attaches to the school. The community appear to have been exceptionally involved in the activities of the school. They, for example, assisted in the construction of the first school building and community members even acted as teachers (cf. section 4.3). From the earliest times special attempts were made to involve parents in school matters via parents’ days (cf. section 4.6.1).

Thirdly, as the first school established amongst the Balobedu, Medingen Primary also has the status of being the oldest school in the area. Most, if not all of the other schools which are currently in operation in the area, originated from Medingen and are regarded as “Bana ba Medingen” (cf. section 4.3).

In the fourth instance, the school’s status can be attributed to the fact that it is housed in old but attractive buildings (cf. section 4.6). In addition, despite the school’s obvious lack of material sources, this school has excelled academically – many influential people, for example, Mr Mathole Motshekga, the former premier of Gauteng, completed their schooling at Medingen Primary School (cf. section 4.7). The school has also consistently caught the eye as a result of outstanding performances in extra-mural activities, especially in the field of choir work (cf. sections 4.6.2 and 4.6.3).
5.6 The context within which Medingen was established and in which it developed

As can be derived from the relatively brief overview of missionary activities in South Africa which was presented in Chapter 2, the work of missionaries should not be viewed in isolation from the activities of either traders or government officials. In the final analysis, these parties shared a common interest in the local population and were all part of a progression of events which paved the way for the colonisation of indigenous groups. In this regard it should be noted that the work of the missionaries reflected their own historical backgrounds, culture (including their personal life and world views and understanding of reality) and personalities. It did not make adequate provision (if at all) for the preservation and promotion of the original culture and traditions of the people they targeted for their missionary endeavours. All missionaries, including those at Medingen, were driven by a strong desire to genuinely serve humanity and bring about material and social changes which would improve the quality of life of the local people. Their aspirations manifested in an involvement in, for example, local agriculture, which only found a small measure of acceptance in rural societies. Simultaneously they were possessed of a moral self-righteousnes which often led them to make hasty and uninformed judgements upon indigenous norms and values which they probably did not even understand. Consequently they imposed an alien morality and work ethos upon the local people without realising that these undermined, in the case of Medingen, the Balobedu’s most basic social and cultural tenets.

Medingen also did not remain untouched by the policies of various governments. Medingen was established during the period in which Transvaal was a “Boere-republiek” – which explains, for example, Rev Reuters’ negotiations with President Paul Kruger after the death of Queen Modjadji ll in 1896 (cf. section 3.3.9). During the era of the Union of South Africa Medingen was also investigated as part of both “native education” and missionary education; hence the references in this dissertation to the reports of the Welsh and Eiselen Commissions in 1936 and 1951 respectively (cf. sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2). After the National Party came to power in 1948, Medingen Mission Station was also subject to the racial segregation policies of the country. As a result Medingen Mission Station was directly influenced by the policies of the Lebowa Homeland in addition to the overarching policies of the country, and Medingen Primary School changed from a missionary school to a tribal community school. In a similar fashion, Medingen Primary
was compelled to implement a new curriculum after 1994 when the ANC was elected into office (cf. section 4.6).

Medingen was also influenced by general social and economic factors. In this regard the ability of the missionaries to make converts and to hold them on their stations, seem to have been somewhat in doubt. Many people sought either material advantage or psychological security by pretending to be converts. Conversion sometimes seem to have been a practical move for local inhabitants to have their earthly needs fulfilled (cf. section 3.3.9 – the conversion of 200 people during a period of drought).

5.7 Education-related changes at Medingen Primary School since its foundation

The development of education provision at Medingen is characterised by three distinct periods: the period of mission education (1882 to 1956), the era of “apartheid education” under the policies of racial segregation (1956 to 1994) and the period of “democratic education” introduced by an ANC led government (after 1994).

5.7.1 Mission education

Before 1953, when schooling for blacks was not regarded as a high priority by the various governments ruling the country, the BMS provided virtually all the formal education to black people residing in Medingen area. Everything was subsumed under the one ideological purpose, namely to evangelise black people and mission schools were regarded as very efficient and strategic aids in this process; in fact, mission schools were generally viewed as the safeguard of Christian civilisation in pagan territory. An intimate link existed between church and school. For the missionaries, evangelism was inseparable from education. Therefore, in practice, schooling provided a model for conversion and conversion a model for schooling. Since individuals were regarded as capable of being shaped (or reshaped) by social institutions, the objective of both church and school was a systematic, moral reconstruction of all persons. No room was left for neutrality in this exercise. Western civilisation was the Christian norm and according to the missionaries, there was little need for any attention to be paid to African culture, including its educational dimension.

The missionaries also made efforts to teach better methods of agriculture, induced the inhabitants to build better houses and to use furniture, and provided instructions in house-
and laundry work to the women. They taught them simple industries. Furthermore, the curriculum included lessons on the development of habits like tidiness, cleanliness, obedience and honesty. However, the main emphasis was on religious instruction which emphasized morality, good conduct, and especially, character building.

Although character building was not a formal, overt part of the school timetable, it was an omnipresent subject in the curriculum of mission schools. It constituted part of what intellectuals today refer to as the “hidden curriculum”. Missionary education did not merely purvey knowledge but also promoted a particular value system. Although, initially, mission education was primarily concerned with communicating Christianity, the emphasis gradually changed to its role as an agency in “civilising the natives”, this being regarded as the necessary preliminary to conversion.

Discipline was an integral part of character formation. Its use was probably based on the assumption that enforced discipline will somehow lead to self-discipline. This matter was constantly stressed in the logbooks of Medingen Primary School (cf. for example, the references to the strict discipline of Mr Mashale and Mr Moselekwa in section 4.4.1) and other external reports (cf. section 4.4.2). Discipline was maintained mainly via corporal punishment. This was only abolished in the early 1990s under the principalship of Mr Ranaga. According to available sources of information, he refrained from using corporal punishment due to his “compassionate personality”. However, during his term of principalship corporal punishment was also, for the first time in the history of the country, prohibited by law. This may have contributed to his decision.

5.7.2 Apartheid education

After 1953 the provision of education to Black people became a state concern and in 1956 Medingen became a public, community school. It was controlled by the state (cf. section 4.6) and as far as educational aims, teaching methods and curriculum content are concerned, Medingen was subject to the same regulations and prescriptions that applied to all other state controlled primary schools in the country. Little detail in this regard was offered in this dissertation because of restrictions on the overall scope of the dissertation and because it was deemed to be common knowledge for the expected, potential reader of this particular dissertation.
5.7.3 Democratic education

In 1994 a new government took office and soon thereafter the whole education system changed. Of particular significance was the introduction of a new Outcomes-Based Curriculum which was based on new objectives. These objectives were to be achieved via new teaching methods. As in the case of apartheid education, detailed attention could not be given to these changes except to indicate that the governance of the school also changed in accordance with new requirements (cf. section 4.6). Amongst other things this resulted in Medingen Primary School becoming part of the Rakwadu Circuit of the Mopani District, the appointment in the school of an SGB and SMT, and more recently, being singled out by the government for special financial support.

5.7.4 Concluding remarks concerning education-related changes at Medingen

Over the past 127 years education provision at Medingen developed from a type of education which can be labelled “mission education” to the current form of lifelong learning.

Standing at the intersection between traditional African culture and religion, and European Christianity and all its trappings, the missionaries espoused a Protestant work ethic. They promoted numeracy and literacy, improved black people’s general physical health, engaged children in sports activities and tried to improve relationships between teachers, parents and children. They provided black people with various job skills and knowledge, as well as with a type of formal education which unfolded their learners’ innate potential and led to the development of professional and political leaders. The missionaries seem to have succeeded in the realisation of their main goal, namely to Christianise, evangelise and civilise black people. However, they also stamped out certain traditional beliefs and to a large extent replaced black culture by Christian beliefs and Western culture.

5.8 Infrastructural changes at Medingen Primary School during the past thirteen decades

The first school at Medingen Mission Station in 1881 consisted of only a single class room. Within a year’s time three more class rooms were added and when the inspection team of the BMS visited the school in 1927 the school had grown to four class rooms. In 1988 the school boasted eleven class rooms, to which four were added in 1993 and another four in
2003. Today Medingen Primary School comprises eighteen class rooms and a beautiful administrative office.

The gradual increase in physical facilities is significant in itself, but also reflects the increase in number of learners that attended Medingen Primary. The school started off with 90 learners in 1881 and even though Medingen has eventually given rise to many other schools in the vicinity (which must have had a negative effect on the numbers of the mother school), it still has more than 800 learners enrolled at the school today.

5.9 Prominent role-players in the development of education provisioning at Medingen

The most prominent roleplayers in the development of education provisioning at Medingen were undoubtedly the Berlin Missionary Society and various individual missionaries whose names have been mentioned towards the end of Chapter 3. However, Rev Fritz Reuter stands out in this regard. His name has become almost synonymous with that of Medingen, as can be seen in the following two extracts from a tribute to him by the Medingen Lutheran Church (the emphasis is ours):

“You came with light and wisdom to us and taught us everything you could, by the power of God Almighty. You have been sincere, faithful and honourable to us and you had enough faith in us that we too would succeed. You came to Medingen village so that you could show all the people that there is hope and wisdom, and all this is from one Person.”

“Pastor Fritz L Reuter, you have been a wonderful gift from God. You were and still is the founder of the lives that we have today. You created a relationship with all the people around you, and with Bolobedu at large. Before you came to Medingen, the village was a dark place, but you as the most honourable and noble man brought light, you brought comfort to Balobedu and gave all the best education you could. When you first arrived at Medingen village there was nothing, but through the glory of God, you turned ‘nothing’ into what it is today.”

Reuter obviously devoted his whole life to the development of Medingen, including the provision of education.
The various principals that were in charge of Medingen Primary School since its inception also played an important part in the history of education provisioning at Medingen. Each of them brought something new to the school during their respective periods of principalship (cf. section 4.4.1).

5.10 Medingen Mission Station as a source of the Balobedu’s identity

In section 3.2.1 a brief description was provided of how Chief Mohale established the Kingdom of Bolobedu and how he gave birth to an own identity for his people by electing to be referred to as the Pigs of Mamabolo. In addition, evidence exists of the provision of traditional, informal education at Ga-Kgapane before the arrival of the missionaries. This type of education was geared towards an inculcation of the inherited laws, language and values of the tribe (cf. section 4.2). One can therefore safely assume that the Balobedu possessed an own, unique identity long before Rev Reuter established Medingen Mission Station. However, what the creation and development of the mission station at Medingen did achieve, was to radically influence the Balobedu’s original identity. The changes in rituals related to the burial of Christians and heathens respectively (cf. section 3.3.11), amongst other things, bear testimony to this. Consequently one has to conclude that the mere presence of Medingen Mission Station in the Ga-Kgapane (Balobedu) area and whatever the local inhabitants were taught at the mission station, can be regarded as one of the sources – not the exclusive one - of the Balobedu’s presentday identity.
5.11 Suggestions for further research

The histories of each and every school in the Medingen area need to be recorded and preserved for future generations.

A more detailed study of changes in certain aspects of education from a time perspective could prove to be scientifically worthwhile. With a view to the completion of a dissertation of limited scope, this study has traced the general development of the Medingen Mission Station and focused on Medingen Primary School. A more detailed description and comparison between, for example, the aims, teaching methods and education curricula of a particular school during its first years of existence and its current circumstances, may possibly provide valuable information which could extend the existing body of knowledge in this regard.

5.12 Final comments

Taking the above-mentioned findings into consideration, it appears as though all the objectives that were set for this study, and consequently also the main aim of the study, have been achieved.

It is hoped that this attempt to provide information on the previously unrecorded history of Medingen Mission Station will make a significant contribution to the creation of both the historical consciousness of, and a sense of pride amongst the inhabitants of Medingen.
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