

**The African child and the hidden curriculum at Blythwood Institute:**

**Three snapshots.**



Supervisor: Prof. Nicky Rousseau

Co-supervisor: Dr. Riedwaan Moosage

A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Magister Artium in the Department of History, University of the Western Cape.

## **Plagiarism declaration**

I, Xolela Nogqala, hereby certify that this thesis is my own work. I understand what plagiarism is and I have used quotations and references to fully acknowledge the words and ideas of others.

Xolela Nogqala

November 2021



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## Contents

Plagiarism declaration	i
Acknowledgements	ii
<b>Abstract</b>	1
<b>Introduction</b>	2
<i>Snapshot 1: The colonial present</i>	11
Blythswood	11
The church and the assembly	14
The Western styled building	17
<b>Chapter 1: The Colonial Programming of African Children</b>	19
The contested birthing of Blythswood	22
Educating the African child: The missionaries	26
Educating the African child: The colonialist	34
Concluding thoughts	41
<i>Snapshot 2: The colonial present</i>	50
The fence	50
The bell	51
The emblem	53
The gender segregated dormitories	57



## **Chapter 2: Bantu Education and the Revitalising of Colonialism’s Imagined African**

<b>Child</b>	59
Introduction	59
Apartheid and the Bantu Education Act	63
Apartheid vs. colonialism for Africans	73
Adaptation of education for African children	78
Conclusion	83
<b><i>Snapshot 3: The colonial present</i></b>	86
The present past at Blythswood	86
The wearing of a blazer and a tie	89
Blythswood democratised	90
<b>Conclusion</b>	92
<b>Bibliography</b>	94



## Abstract

This mini-thesis seeks to understand how the colonial and apartheid state imagined the African child in South Africa through education policies and their associated hidden curriculum. It asks what educational project was deemed suitable for the African child and how did this project configure her future? At the core of this enquiry is a preoccupation to understand how institutions, their curricula and objects rid themselves of colonial precepts. In working through this, I employ Blythswood Institute as a provocation to think and to historicise the education of African children, such as those at Blythswood, in three moments: colonialism and the founding of Blythswood in 1877; apartheid and the passing of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, and the post-apartheid times of democratic South Africa.

The imagined African child of colonial education policies was perceived as one in need of ‘civilisation’: Christianised, taught to be an obedient and useful servant who would desire European goods. While some of these core attributes were inherited by apartheid, the imagined African child of apartheid education policy was re-imagined as a ‘tribal’ subject of a Bantustan, no longer a South African and trained for a lifetime as a subordinate.

The imagined African child of post-1994 has been declared an equal citizen, able to free her imagination and aspirations. Yet through a series of snapshots of my own encounters with Blythswood, I argue that learning is not restricted to the classrooms, but every moment, ritual and rationality within Blythswood’s premises bears a lesson for the subjects of schooling. Each of the school’s symbols imparts particular lessons about being and informs one’s world-view. The snapshots argue that the colonial legacies within Blythswood continue to live on through the continuities of the hidden curriculum, its symbols and practices. These still work to trap the African child and keep her in her place in the colonial present.

*Keywords: African child, Blythswood Institute, hidden curriculum, Bantu education, colonial education, post-apartheid education, agricultural industrial education, mission schools.*

## Introduction

Growing up in the eastern part of the Eastern Cape, previously known as Transkei, was never easy owing to the inevitability of infrastructural underdevelopment. For many people, poverty overshadowed any possibility of positivity and hope. People of working age had to go look for employment on farms and in industries across the Kei River, or had to travel as far as Cape Town and Johannesburg. The region did not, and still does not, give any impression that there might be a possibility of prosperity while living in the villages. At close range, the villages told a story of marginalisation of villagers in the management of the state, or at the very least by the provincial government. They were only brought into the picture of democratic governmentality during election periods and after that were pushed back to the margins. Unconsciously, these conditions imparted to the villagers a sense of being which drew from the deep well of their reality as marginalised subjects.

In the midst of all these crippling effects, Blythswood Institute stood as a beacon of hope and – figuratively and literally – bringing light to the dark villages. Figurative in the sense that attending the high-school level at Blythswood was seen as a one step towards poverty eradication. And literal in the sense that it remained the only place with electricity until the early 2000s. Even though I was too young to fully grasp the village perception about the school, it was everyone’s dream to be enrolled at Blythswood. And those who managed to be enrolled, either through pulling strings or on merit, were seen to occupy a higher rank in village life. But when the time came for me and my peers to go there for our high-school careers around 2011, Blythswood Institute was a complete disaster. Indeed, it had become the norm that attending Blythswood was a recipe for failure and a speed-trap in the chase of innocent pupils’ dreams. It was and continues to be one of many schools within the Eastern

Cape Province that seem to be in a culture of underperforming when it comes to producing good matric results. And it is no longer a shock when the province comes last in pass rates out of eight other contending provinces. This has become such a norm that those in high positions do not seem to be doing anything about the matter at hand. When I was at school, obtaining the Diploma in matric was considered a great achievement considering the challenges faced by pupils which included overcrowding, lack of teachers and resources. So my parents decided to send me away as a means to avoid succumbing to such failures.

Despite these problems, there are few studies that have attempted to understand the educational crisis in the Eastern Cape, and this mini-thesis stands as a contribution to those few. Their approach to the matter differed from one research to the other. Sarah Meny-Gibert diagnosed the educational crisis in the Eastern Cape as a side effect of apartheid policies, more especially the Bantu Education Act of 1953.<sup>1</sup> This Act was responsible for the removal of black schools' authority from missionaries and churches, and relocating it to the hands of government appointed traditional leaders and a School Governing Body (SGB) comprised of parents, and subjecting African children to a poorly constructed academic curriculum.<sup>2</sup> With the independence of Transkei as a 'self-governing Bantu state in 1963, things turned for the worse as it continued to offer educational training based on the principles of the Bantu Education Act. This led to a trend of "poor academic results and a culture of teachers' demoralisation",<sup>3</sup> which still persists in present times after 27 years into the democratic dispensation. According to this line of thinking, the educational crisis can also be attributed to the current "state's weak administrative authority over the education sector", which manifests through "weak supervision of teachers' work and uneven allocation of resources."<sup>4</sup> All-in-all,

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<sup>1</sup> Meny-Gibert, Sarah. "State 'infrastructural power' and the Bantustans: the case of education in the Transkei and Ciskei", *African Historical Review* 50, no. 1-2 (2018). 47.

<sup>2</sup> Meny-Gibert, Sarah. "State 'infrastructural power' and the bantustans." 54.

<sup>3</sup> Meny-Gibert, Sarah. "State 'infrastructural power' and the Bantustans." 47.

<sup>4</sup> Meny-Gibert, Sarah. "State 'infrastructural power' and the Bantustans." 46 & 47.



the point being that the ongoing education crisis is caused by the legacy of Bantu Education compounded by poor management of schools and an abundance of incompetent Eastern Cape Education Department officials.

On the other hand, it has been argued by Andrew Paterson that the crisis goes a long way further than incompetent bureaucracy. He posits that South African rural schools during apartheid times were turned into potent weapons to acquaint African children with behaviour patterns that include being allergic to economic competitiveness relative to their white counterparts and being content with their status as subordinates.<sup>5</sup> Imparting these particular behaviour patterns was done successfully with the assistance of the Bantu Education's hidden curriculum, which covertly accompanied the academic curriculum that can be traced back to colonial times. As this term suggests, the hidden curriculum was colonialism's hidden objectives and practices of education introduced in the Cape Colony by Sir George Grey in 1855, entailing that "Africans ought to undergo a training that fixated them to rural life, and which would prepare them for labouring life on white farms."<sup>6</sup> This process of producing the desired African children was strengthened, but also reworked, by the apartheid regime through the passing of Bantu Education Act which "facilitated the reproduction of the relations of reproduction in a docile form so that it would appear natural and based on economic sense."<sup>7</sup> It is no coincidence then that Africans overwhelmingly occupy ranks that do not seek to threaten whites and which are in constant service to white society.

The notion that education produces desired African children expands the investigation by scholars such as Heather Jacklin in understanding the relations between the schooling system

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<sup>5</sup> Paterson, Andrew. "Agricultural and industrial curricula for South African rural schools: colonial origins and contemporary continuities", in S. McGrath, A. Badroodien, A. Kraak & L. Unwin, *Shifting Understandings of Skills in South Africa: overcoming historical imprint of a low skills regime*, (Cape Town: HSRC, 2008), 75.

<sup>6</sup> Paterson, Andrew. "Agricultural and industrial curricula for South African Rural Schools." 81- 82.

<sup>7</sup> Christie, Pam and Collins, Colin. "Bantu Education: apartheid ideology or labour reproduction", *Comparative Education* 18, no. 1 (2012). 69.

and education policies in the framing and imagining of the desired subject by governments.<sup>8</sup> This line of thinking holds schools accountable for producing subjects deemed useful and desirable by the governments in power and the characteristics of these imagined subjects are to be found in the educational policies. In the case of this research, Blythswood is responsible for framing African children as rural and civilised subjects during colonialism; during the apartheid period, it inculcated notions of being ‘tribal’ subjects and framed pupils as labourers in white industries. And at the present moment, in democratic times, it continues to frame pupils as labourers despite their being inscribed as equal South African citizens.

I think it is very important to explain my terminology on the matter – namely, the imagined African child. I chose to refer to subjects of rural education as ‘African children’ to invoke their innocence and vulnerability in all the politics that take effect within the classroom. Referring to them as ‘black students’ would lead me to debates about racial classifications that is not the focus of this research project, except where it directly pertains to schooling. The terminology of African children is perfect in depicting how successive government administrations in South Africa have and still continue to perpetuate psychological violence towards innocent children with hopes of learning in order to achieve their desired subjects. Moreover, so as to get clues as to how African children have been imagined, I outline some of the thinking associated with the educational policies formulated since colonial times for the educational training of African children. The use of educational policies as a viable vehicle to make visible the imagined African child is influenced by the argument that “government policies instantiate government aims, these aims are politically related to sectoral aims of dominant groupings within society.”<sup>9</sup> So bringing them to the fore might offer us an advantage of peeking into the fractured past of how African children have been

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<sup>8</sup> Jacklin, Heather. “The imagined subject of schooling in the logic of policy.” *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 50, no. 4 (2018): 2.

<sup>9</sup> Jacklin, Heather. “The imagined subject of schooling in the logic of policy.” 2.

imagined, produced and affected by the colonial, apartheid and the democratic administrations. Here we might learn the reasoning behind the aforementioned behavioural patterns and the education crisis within the Eastern Cape Province. And who sought to benefit from the type of education system advocated by the educational policies passed by different regimes.

Henceforth, my point of departure is to employ Blythswood Institute as a provocation to think and to draw some clues as to whether the present education system has deviated from the past systems with regards to educational policies and to what extent. This strategy required me to historicise the experiences of African children, such as those at Blythswood, in three moments: the founding of Blythswood in 1877; the passing of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, and the post-apartheid times.

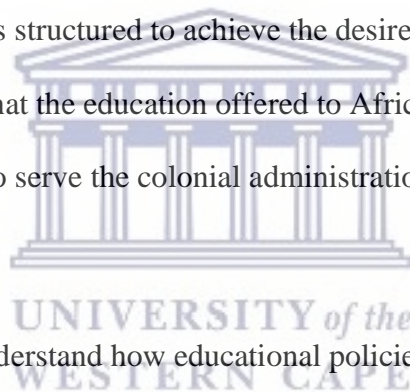
More precisely, my research is geared towards an understanding of how the African child has been imagined by the state, how her future is configured, and what educational project was deemed suitable for her under the aforementioned historic moments in time. The educational experience of African children is under-researched and this research project is a contribution to the shortcomings of understanding the current economic state of Africans and linking it to colonialism and apartheid within the scholarship. As such, it pursues a line of thinking that colonial and apartheid education have subjected African children to a “poorly constructed educational training that was preparing them for the life of being labourers in white owned enterprises; avoiders of competition with their white counterparts in economic spheres; at most docile, and socially detached petty bourgeois.”<sup>10</sup> But I present a twist to the narrative of

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<sup>10</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curricula for South African rural Schools.” 81-83.

continuity of colonialism during the apartheid era, where the education system was used to re-imagine African children as ‘tribal’ subjects and lifetime subordinates.<sup>11</sup>

The argument about the continuity of colonial aspects in the South African education system is discussed in two chapters. The first chapter focuses on how colonial social engineers imagined and structured the education system to advance the desires of the colonial enterprise. These include neutralising resistance by amaXhosa; the effecting of divide and rule tactics on Africans; the expansion of Christianity and the Empire; the assimilation of Africans into the European modes of life; the establishment of colonial hegemony; and to rationalise domination and dispossession. This chapter thus outlines how the educational training of African children was structured to achieve the desires of the missionary and colonial enterprises. It argues that the education offered to African children sought to produce subjects who were ever ready to serve the colonial administration, settler farming and industries.



The second chapter seeks to understand how educational policies adopted during apartheid times sought to maintain and perpetuate colonial ideology. It firstly shows how the colonial administration laid the foundation for the segregationist apartheid regime and argues that the apartheid government did not introduce racial segregation, but rather intensified an already existing segregationist system, adding a twist of the National Party’s specific racial ideology.<sup>12</sup> This narration suggests that the apartheid regime gave life to a dying colonial hegemony by giving it a new face and remodelling it under the auspices of ‘separate development’ and preservation of white domination. It passed educational policies that sought to marginalise African people even further from socio-economic and political

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<sup>11</sup> Tabata, Isaac B. “Education for barbarism.” *Pall Mall* (1960). 11.

<sup>12</sup> Wolpe, Harold. “Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid.” *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 425.

opportunities, through imparting them with behavioural patterns, which aimed to freeze their hopes and opportunities in order to secure their subordinate status. It outlines the policies that might have influenced Blythswood Institute into establishing rationalities and rituals that in the long run sought to inculcate notions of ‘tribalism’.<sup>13</sup> Such policies shed a light of how loyalties to the Bantustan authorities were forged with the artificial notions of ethnicity during the apartheid regime. Finally, it discusses the continuities and discontinuities of colonial and apartheid’s educational mandates.

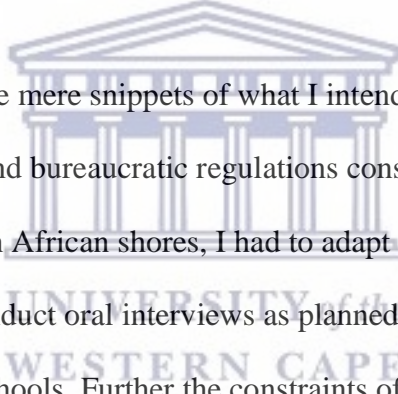
Rather than providing a similar account for the post-1994 period, I have shifted my attention to providing a series of snapshots, interspersed between chapters, of Blythswood through my eyes and how it continues to be a colonial institution despite some discontinuities. These snapshots also speak to the centrality of symbols and material practices in the hidden curriculum. More precisely, the focus of the snapshots is on understanding the effectiveness of colonial symbols written all-over Blythswood, in advancing their supposed colonial mandates. These symbols include the design of buildings, the school’s emblem, the wearing of ties and blazers, gender segregated dormitories, the fence, the clock, the school’s geographical position, and the assembly and the church. Each of these symbols are dissected in a quest to understand their underlying mandates and how they continue to live up to the respective roles that they have acquired under the democratic dispensation. At the core of this narration exists a preoccupation to understand how institutions and objects rid themselves of colonial precepts.

With regards to Blythswood, I wanted to understand if Blythswood and its symbols ever transformed from a past of being agents of colonialism and what form they have taken at present moment? Did the removal of “Missionary” from the name of the school mean that the

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<sup>13</sup> Tabata, Isaac B. “Education for barbarism.” 10-12.

school was no longer propagating a colonial ideology? My conclusions paint a clear picture that Blythswood has not transformed, but the friendly symbols blindside the general public into taking them as natural. Owing to this blindsiding, nobody asks, for instance, why Blythswood was established within African settlements and why it was geographically positioned on a plot that isolated it from the surrounding villages. It is such characteristics that enable colonialism to function uninterrupted. This line of thinking led me into arguing that learning is not restricted or constrained to the classrooms, but every moment, ritual and rationality within Blythswood's premises bears a lesson for the subjects of schooling. And each of the school's symbols impart particular lessons about being and informs one's world-view.



The aforementioned chapters are mere snippets of what I intended to do with this research, but unforeseen circumstances and bureaucratic regulations constrained this mini-thesis. When the coronavirus landed on South African shores, I had to adapt to the reality that I would no longer get an opportunity to conduct oral interviews as planned nor be able to travel to the Eastern Cape in 2020 to visit schools. Further the constraints of a mini-thesis have not allowed me to expand on many important aspects.

Nonetheless, I do not take these constraints as discouraging forces, rather I choose to see them as motivation to expand and deepen my research at PhD level. The thought of expanding this project at PhD level excites me since I will be able to address the issues I also wanted to do. Initially, through an historical study, I wished to understand the root-causes of Blythswood's poor academic performance and consider how this may be addressed. Instead I ended up formulating a research question that focused on understanding how African children have been imagined by the state through educational policies. I am fascinated as to how a mere M.A. mini-thesis turned to be such a great work, which offered up biographies of

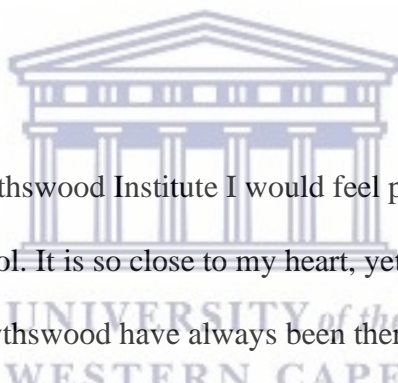
multiple objects and subjects simultaneously. It is a biography of objects in a sense that it outlines the emergency and maintenance, of the colonial framework in the governing of Africans, and of Blythswood with its rationalities and rituals. In the main, it tells a story of how Africans have been and still continue to be imagined by the social engineers, and how those in power continue to shift goal posts in economic spheres. All-in-all my mini-thesis shows how these objects and subjects have created a parasitic, if not toxic, relationship that have enabled them to survive centuries old conflicts.



## *SNAPSHOT 1*

### *The colonial present*

#### **Blythswood**

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building with columns and a pediment, with the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' below it.

Whenever I used to pass by Blythswood Institute I would feel pity for it. My research has made me grow fond of the school. It is so close to my heart, yet so distant. These contradictory feelings about Blythswood have always been there in my life: as a young boy I adored the high school's infrastructure but despised the junior level of the school because it was in competition with my school. It was well established compared to all the schools around Ngqamakhwe and it sought to epitomise the kind of high school life we used to see on televisions. A life of separated dormitories and never used chemical laboratories; a school uniform with a blazer and unimaginable amenities for a rural school. It was at the centre of survival for all the surrounding schools that used Blythswood's sports field and halls for sporting and choral competitions. In the main, I resented the junior level of the school because of its consistency in coming first in all activities. We always knew a sporting encounter between my school and Blythswood Junior was going to end with fighting. But the animosity was strictly restricted to the uniforms we all wore; after school hours we were



friends and some of whom I used to herd cattle with. We all knew that we were only enemies during school hours.

Sometimes my resentment of Bly Junior was overshadowed by a consistent excitement that would creep in whenever we had to use their infrastructure. I vividly remember how excited I used to be when it was athletics season because I would get a chance to compete with children from around five different schools. Here we got a chance to compete with learners from other villages and it was a sort of deciding factor whether there was a future for you in your sporting code. The excitement used to emanate from the fact that I was going to run on the same field my father, my uncles and my sisters ran on. And each time I set foot on the ever green plain sports field, I would get some flashbacks of the stories I heard about how my family-members used to out-run or cheat their fellow competitors. But the excitement would be distracted by the lingering fear that there would be physical fighting between my school and Blythswood's junior level. We never knew the root-cause of this animosity between these schools, but it was like a tradition that, at the end of the sports day or choral competitions, there should be fighting. To avoid partaking in the fighting, we had to sneak out before the end of every occasion and it was always painful not to get a chance to mingle with learners from nearby schools.

However, now with all the information that I have incurred in the process of formulating this research project, I just feel pity that such an institution on 'esiqithini' could be left to self-destruct. Esiqithini is a term in isiXhosa that refers to an island. I use it to refer to the school's geographical position – being on a piece of land that is located across the river to all the surrounding villages. The thought that there is no life-size hero willing to save a school on 'esiqithini' from the abyss that it is in, scares me: perhaps it might be closed and left to ruins like other schools within the Ngqamakhwe District. When I look at it now I no longer

see a school that was ‘established by whites with overseas origins’ or even a school that most of my family members attended. Now my eyes see beyond all that personal attachment to the school. Now I see a forgotten, if not abandoned, heritage site where clues about contemporary issues can be drawn from. A magnifying glass over the school’s historical timeline can offer some hints about the isolation of amaMfengu from the royal house of amaXhosa; the social detachment of the rural elite; and the socio-economic dependency of the African child.

The school’s history is far too rich to be overlooked and too precious to be booked a grave site at the historical cemetery. I blame the country’s preoccupation with the liberation struggle and with urban stories, which has deemed any history outside this bracket as not having national status or even having any relevancy to national identity. Rural life is marginalised with multi-layered silences so extensive that even those who are from there feel the need to disown it. But Blythswood refuses to be forgotten like other stories that took place in the rural context. It consistently tells a history of European occupation that has been accepted but rejected in the meantime – accepted by the gesture of allowing the school to be established amongst African settlements but rejected by positioning it across the river. Such history deserves to be relayed to the public and can explain a lot of unanswered questions. And this research has offered me answers to many questions I had when I was still a young boy.

However, the recent bad publicity around the school has tainted the rich history of occupation, competent administration and ‘civilisation’. The school has changed from being a site of acquainting African children with educational training into a crime scene to multiple murders and a factory for poor academic results.

## The church and the assembly



It was never easy to comprehend seeing a church house inside the school premises. I used to wonder who goes there and why there is a church within a school? I thought maybe it was used as a class-room in cases where there were shortages of classrooms. My conceptions about the church's role within the school premises were more or less influenced by my personal experience with a church built next to a school. In our school we were forced to use a communal church house as a class-room; one side was reserved for grade 1 and the other for grade 2. As young children we had to act as if we cannot see each other and one had to ask for permission to move from one side to the other. We were given the idea that there is an imaginary wall separating these two grades and failure to comply with this idea was an invitation for punishment. So I thought the church at Blythswood was used in that manner.

However, the church within Blythswood had a different meaning from what I imagined. It represented a whole set of dynamics at play within the frontier – the spread of Christianity

and the expansion of the colonial empire. Even though “the Ngqamakhwe District was not part of the Cape Colony”, the construction of a church signalled the possibility of colonisation of the Mfengu people.<sup>1</sup> Their colonisation did not involve the expropriation of land, but the church and the school created a conducive environment, which enabled them to partake in the process of giving legitimacy to imperialism. Hence it was so easy for them to side with colonialists against amaGcaleka in the war of Ngcayechibi (otherwise known as the Sixth Frontier War).<sup>2</sup>

In other words, Fingoland<sup>3</sup> was transformed by the church and the school into a zone where the Mfengu people had to constantly show their loyalties to missionaries and colonialists, who would then give some compensation. This could have been the case since Blythswood, like Lovedale, “was formed as part of the conscious intention of a group of missionaries acting in accordance with the wishes of sending a church at a particular time, in a certain place and with a specific agenda in mind.”<sup>4</sup> This strategic move can be read as more than gaining converts, but rather as a process that turned amaMfengu into passive participants in their colonisation in exchange for an unlimited, yet limited, access to Western modes of life.

Moreover, the church building structure can be read as representing the consistent transformation of souls and the production of the desired subjects. This was the case since it fell under a hegemony that was constituted by an “order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies – drawn from a historically situated cultural field – that come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the world and

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<sup>1</sup> Alastair Rodger. “The early history of Blythswood Missionary Institute.” M.A. thesis, Rhodes University (1977). 4.

<sup>2</sup> Alastair Rodger. “The early history of Blythswood Missionary Institute.” 1.

<sup>3</sup> This is the colonial name for the land occupied by amaMfengu.

<sup>4</sup> Duncan, Graham. “Coercive agency: James Henderson’s Lovedale, 1906-1930: Lovedale Missionary Institution Under Principal Arthur Wilkie and RHW Shepherd.” *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 38, no. 3 (2010). 13.

everything that inhabits it.”<sup>5</sup> In simple terms, the church’s practises and rationalities that sought to initiate African children from being savages to civilised and heathens to Christians. The transformation involved introducing schooling subjects to Christian interpretations of life and death and the practice of continuous reading of religious scripts. This is where the school’s assembly came into the picture to constantly Christianise African children and to instil the fear of going to hell. Upon graduation, African children had lost connection with their African traditions and despised customs that had links with ancestors.

I remember how both of my sisters used to describe an assembly session at Blythswood as being a mini-church service – a mini-church service because there were no offerings after the sermon nor the calling to the front of those keen to be born-again. And this mini-church service was done every day regardless of the weather conditions. There is no way one can graduate without admitting to have been introduced to Christianity.

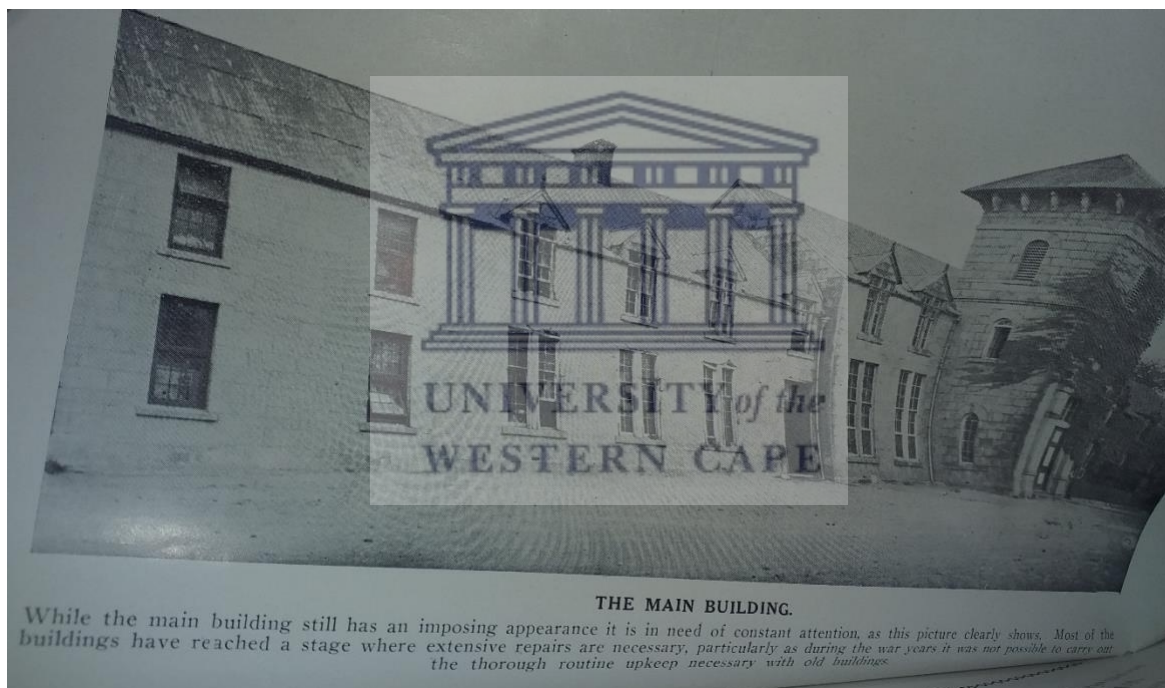
My school was established by a rich taxi owner, J.S. Skenjana, on the foundations of creating book-keepers for his taxis in 1986. And Christianity was infused into the school’s identity. The imposition of Christianity was in the same level as that in Blythswood, we were treated as if we all subscribed to Christianity. In my case, I always felt like we were being blackmailed into ‘accepting Jesus as our saviour’. They used to present scary scenarios about what will happen to those of us who refused to be ‘born again’ when we die. And this aspect caused long-term confusions about who we were and what we were supposed to subscribe to between Christianity and African spirituality. At school you were told that everything you have, you have been given by God, but at home you were told about ancestors. As a child you are left to battle it out on your own.

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<sup>5</sup> Duncan, Graham. “Coercive agency.” 31.

## The Western Styled Building

The school's rich history tells a story of a good relationship between missionaries and amaMfengu towards the realisation of the dream of having a European educational centre built within African settlements. The cooperation gave rise to the fruition of a "Child of Lovedale" built in a western style by Scottish builders, which to a great extent stood for contradicting sentiments.<sup>6</sup>



When you come to think of it, the move to allow the establishment of a European educational training centre amongst African settlements must have been to present what the colonisers could bring with their form of government. So the school's building structure epitomised the

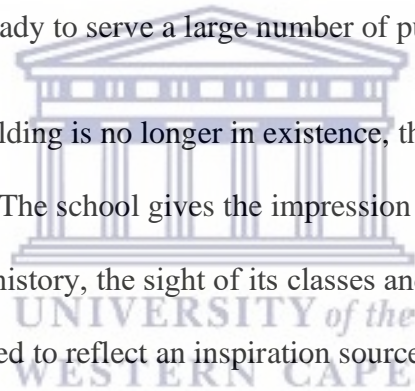
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<sup>6</sup> Tony McGregor. "Blythswood: A unique South African mission station."  
<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Blythswood-a-unique-South-African-mission-station>.

civilisation that might be brought by colonisers and missionaries. Mind you that the Ngqamakhwe District was not colonised at the time of establishment of the school. Perhaps the missionaries and colonialists agreed to establish Blythswood so as to effect the weakening of resistance towards the Cape government posed by amaGcaleka.

On the other hand, the photographed building above stood on 'esiqithini', materially representing the new unfamiliar normal, which sought to keep Africans in a state of constant shock. This sentiment can be attributed to the uniqueness of the building from the settlements surrounded it. Its design and structure tells a story of modernity and preparedness to serve. The modern aspect of it gave an impression of being ahead of its times. While the structure indicated that the school was ready to serve a large number of pupils.

Although the photographed building is no longer in existence, the sight of the school still invokes unfamiliar sentiments. The school gives the impression of being from far lands. Without knowing the school's history, the sight of its classes and dormitories gives an impression that they are designed to reflect an inspiration sourced from far lands. I remember how as a young boy I used to fail to relate Blythswood to the other schools I have seen in Ngqamakhwe. It just resembled the schools I used to see on television and going inside the school was a huge shock as its strategically planted fruit trees and the buildings gave me an impression that I was not in Ngqamakhwe.



## Chapter 1: The Colonial Programming of African Children

This chapter outlines how colonialists, missionaries and African people conceptualised the educational training of African children in European educational centres. This educational training was engulfed in the politics of land and of belonging in the increasingly racially stratified colonial era. The educational content offered to African children was structured in a manner that easily enabled the enforcement and naturalisation of the new reality of land dispossession and subjection to the colonial order. Acceptance of the colonial order had to be inculcated in the young so as to wipe-out probabilities of resisting the colonial order. Lessons of this nature were not necessarily directly transmitted through the academic curriculum, but through the hidden transcripts of the academic curriculum, as well as the everyday material practices and physical surroundings of colonial schools. These transcripts and practices are known as a hidden curriculum and it is here that we can most clearly see how the African child is imagined. It is the soul behind the schooling of prospective students, that which dictates the direction their education should take and the horizons of expectation for the African child. In the case of colonial education, “the hidden curriculum of schools largely functioned to maintain the colonial order of dependency; graduates became docile, dependant and low on initiative, and the education system was devoid of the economic, social and political needs of the local people.”<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, colonial education was intended to assimilate Africans to European modes of life and to effect the emergence of what we may call a desired or imagined African.

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<sup>1</sup> Dunne, Máiréad, and Vincent Adzahlie-Mensah. "Subordinate subjects: The work of the hidden curriculum in post-colonial Ghana." *The SAGE handbook of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment* (2016). 216-230.



The notion of the imagined African child can be read as the manifestation of the desires and aims of colonial rule, which included the work of missionaries in the educational process. Such aims can be drawn from educational policies, often presented as revising the educational system. During the colonial era, the Cape Colony governor between 1854 and 1861, Sir George Grey, “introduced a form of education based on Christian African peasantry, aimed at creating a settled and industrious peasantry that would work its own land or the land of white farmers and also contribute to social order.”<sup>2</sup> In this regard, colonial rule imagined African children as “useful servants, consumers of our (European) goods, contributors to our (Cape Colony) revenue, in short, a source of strength and wealth to the colony.”<sup>3</sup>

This line of imagining African children as “useful servants” through education policies reigned until the 1890s when education came under the spotlight of the Barry Commission, which also framed African as non-citizens. The Commission reported that the African child “unlike a European child, is not a citizen and is neither entitled to education nor required to acquire it.”<sup>4</sup> This notion of not making education compulsory for Africans was influenced by the imagining of African children as “‘intellectually inferior and socially distinct race’ who, in matters pertaining to their education, ‘are not supposed to have any opinion worthy of notice.’”<sup>5</sup> The schooling system was turned into a very pivotal instrument to reimagine and frame Africans as non-citizens of the colonial society which meant to revoke their rights within the colony. The Barry Commission’s recommendations can also be read as the

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<sup>2</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curriculum for South African rural schools: colonial origins and contemporary continuities.” In Simon A. McGrath, Azeem Badroodien, Andre Kraak, Lorna Unwin (eds), *Shifting understandings of skills in South Africa: Overcoming the historical imprint of a low skills regime* (2004). 72-73.

<sup>3</sup> Moore, Nadine Lauren. “In a class of their own: The Bantu Education Act (1953) revisited.” PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2015. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Jacklin, Heather. “The imagined subject of schooling in the logic of policy.” *Journal of the Educational Administration and History* 50, no. 4 (2018). 10.

<sup>5</sup> Jacklin, Heather. “The imagined subject of schooling in the logic of policy.” 10.

drawing a line on the sand on matters ranging from who is a citizen and to whom does the country belong.<sup>6</sup> Then pupils were trained on how to perfect their occupation of either side of this line. In both cases, the schooling project of African children was targeted at acquainting them with behaviour patterns and philosophies that sought to achieve the aims of colonial rule. Missionaries, arguably the custodians of colonial education systems, had their own ideas about the ideal African graduate. They understood education as “something more than gaining converts, something more than mere book-learning and acquiring of technical skills”, but as a “means by which a child acquired a philosophy of life, a way of thinking about time and eternity, a code of values, a tradition of culture.”<sup>7</sup> Missionaries imagined the desired African child to be an individual with transformed ways of thinking and new behaviour patterns. As such their graduates were said to have “generally regard[ed] themselves as progressives, they had deliberately and willingly changed their behaviour patterns and learned a new lifestyle.”<sup>8</sup> In this instance, their education was targeted at transforming their world-views and they were expected to behave in a manner that was different from the rest of their communities, not just as converts but in their everyday comportment.

Seemingly, forces from outside the school premises – the politics of land dispossession and colonial domination – had far reaching influence in the day to day operation of schools meant for African children. The aforementioned definition of a hidden curriculum by Adzehliah Mensah captures all the aspects of the colonial education that was presented to colonised Africans as a way to cope with European domination.<sup>9</sup> From afar it reflected the aspirations of colonial agents, colonialists and missionaries, as it strived for the acceptance of the colonial status quo and further conversions of African people to Christianity. For parents, the

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<sup>6</sup> Jacklin, Heather. “The imagined subject of schooling in the logic of policy.” 9.

<sup>7</sup> Abraham, Garth. “The Catholic Church and Apartheid, 1948-1957.” PhD diss., (1984). 91.

<sup>8</sup> Davis, R. Hunt. “School vs. blanket and settler: Elijah Makiwane and the leadership of the Cape school community.” *African Affairs* 78, no. 310 (1979). 12.

<sup>9</sup> Dunne, Máiréad, and Vincent Adzehliah-Mensah. “Subordinate subjects.” 3.

choice to convert into Christianity or not was strongly influenced by a pre-requisite that only children born to ‘born again’ parents could be enrolled.

In making these arguments, this chapter will be directed at outlining the historiography of the Blythswood Institute before moving to recounting the educating of African children and perspectives of colonialists about missionary education, as well as offering concluding remarks on the hidden curriculum.

### **The Contested Birthing of Blythswood**

Blythswood Institute (hereafter Blythswood) is no stranger to these politics of European domination although it has a peculiar origin story. Mission schools were generally established by particular white missionaries who, after establishing a mission station besides African settlements, would raise funds to establish a school for African children. In the case of Blythswood, one account claims that locals came-up with the idea of establishing a European educational centre in the midst of African settlements. According to Tony McGregor, “the leaders of amaMfengu asked through Captain Mathew Blyth for the establishment of a ‘child of Lovedale’ in the Ngqamakhwe.”<sup>10</sup> This, however, is wildly contested by other biographers of the school. In his M.A. thesis, Alastair Rodger tells a different story of how “Captain Bly and Richard Ross gained the support of a few headmen for an educational institution in the Transkei, and approached Dr James Stuart of Lovedale to found an institution on the lines of Lovedale”<sup>11</sup> In the absence of evidence, it is easy to interpret this as a form of racial politics as the discourse of Africans not being capable enough to decide their own futures is a

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<sup>10</sup> McGregor, Tony. “Blythswood: a unique South African mission station”.

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Blythswood-a-unique-South-African-mission-station>.

<sup>11</sup> Rodger, Alastair. “The early history of Blythswood Missionary Institute.” M.A. thesis, Rhodes University (1977). i.

common and deeply engrained trope. Until I find evidence to the contrary, I will continue to suspect that Rodger belongs to that generation of scholars that were convinced that Africans lack innovation and always require a white man's supervision.

However, regardless as to the debate around who proposed the establishment of an educational centre, the school's biographers' tell a common story about the dedication and contribution made by amaMfengu in the realisation of this monumental idea. The biographers' relay a story of the local community going all out to ensure that their children received education in a European educational centre. I always put an emphasis on the origin of the educational training centre so as to point-out its exceptionality compared to the conventional African way of educating the youth. In African settings everything the youth is commanded to do is believed to be preparing them for their adult responsibilities. Conventionally boys, for instance, were assigned with a duty to herd livestock, which was aimed at teaching them a life of responsibilities and being consistent at it. Institutions like Blythswood brought a new form of educating the youth, which included amongst others, permanent structures for learning, reading and writing, and acquiring a certificate at the end of the training.

Although educational training in colonial mission schools posed a challenge to the African conventional ways of learning, amaMfengu were not shaken by this challenge. They stood firm to the idea of establishing a school for their children. McGregor posits that the amaMfengu collected £1 646 at the beginning phases of the project; by the end of the project they had contributed £4 500.<sup>12</sup> This is a clear indicator that they were fully committed to the idea of sending their children to schools. Their capital contributions and commitment are what make the school different from other mission schools. Different in a sense that the locals

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<sup>12</sup> McGregor, Tony. "Blythswood: a unique South African mission station."

were at the forefront in the founding of the institution. And after acquainting oneself with such an historical fact, it is hard to understand why it was named after a European man. After meandering through Captain Blyth's contribution to the founding of the school, I got a sense that they decided to honour him by naming the school after him. Apparently, he was at the forefront of a programme to bring infrastructural development to the frontier – hence he did not hesitate to approve the proposal of founding an institution in the line of Lovedale.<sup>13</sup> Maybe the leaders of amaMfengu wanted to be in his good books and aimed to motivate him to do more good things in their favour. Nonetheless, it still haunts me as to why leaders of amaMfengu decided to honour Captain Blyth with their hard work.

The institution was then established as per an agreement made at the meeting between amaMfengu, Captain Blyth and Dr James Stewart where the terms and conditions about the founding of Blythswood were also proposed and sealed. According to McGregor this meeting took place “four days after Christmas of 1873 on a bare stretch of a level ground.”<sup>14</sup> Some of the conditions included that “the Institution [be] undenominational;<sup>15</sup> Stewart should have overall charge; amaMfengu should have a voice in the management; and that the Institution should be built soon.”<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately some of the agreements did not materialise. For instance, the promises that the Institution should be un-denominational was not honoured and thus religion dominated admission to the school. Similarly, the undertaking that amaMfengu should have a voice in the management did not materialise in the real world when the institution was officially opened. The reason being, as I elaborate on below, was that they were in contradiction with the academic curriculum and governance prescribed by the colonial government and its associated hidden curriculum. Blythswood was “opened in 1877

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<sup>13</sup> Rodger, Alastair. “The early history of Blythswood Missionary Institute.” i-ii.

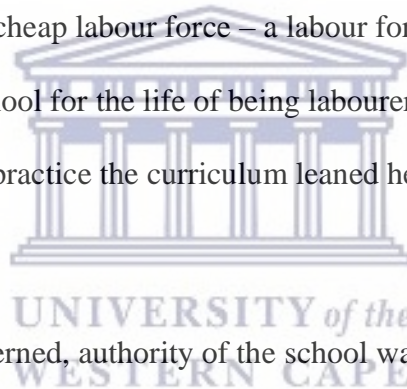
<sup>14</sup> McGregor, Tony. “Blythswood: a unique South African mission station”.

<sup>15</sup> In other words, all children could be admitted to the school and that belonging to a religion would not be a factor.

<sup>16</sup> Rodger, Alastair. “The early history of Blythswood Missionary Institute.” 13.

before it being fully completed in 25 July 1877”<sup>17</sup>, which means that it was born at a time of colonial governor Sir George Grey’s famous educational scheme – the Grey Plan.

The Grey Plan envisioned education to be a perfect platform to strengthen conversion and to plant a seed of dependency for African children. Grey’s Plan proposed industrial education for equipping pupils with skills.<sup>18</sup> As much as “industrial education consisted of the training of apprentices in trades such as carpentry, blacksmithing and printing”, this was not enough to guarantee independence for African children.<sup>19</sup> This was due to the fact that “industrial education...did not present African learners with vocational skills that had real market value, leaving them with only their labour to sell.”<sup>20</sup> The emerging industrial sector would be at an advantage and could employ a cheap labour force – a labour force, which had been psychologically prepared in school for the life of being labourers who were always punctual, respectful and trustworthy. In practice the curriculum leaned heavily towards an agricultural curriculum.



As far as governance was concerned, authority of the school was given to the missionaries. In effect then, it over-ruled the agreement to give amaMfengu a voice. In the main, the curriculum nullified the agreement that the school should be un-denominational, as this agreement opposed the colonial project of converting Africans to Christianity. From its onset, the Grey Plan was set to, “Christianise and civilise Africans by means of education and medical services.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the promise that the school should not be prejudiced had no grounds and had no place in the colonial world.

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<sup>17</sup> McGregor, Tony. “Blythswood: a unique South African mission station.”

<sup>18</sup> Rodger, Alastair. “The early history of Blythswood Missionary Station.” 14.

<sup>19</sup> Rodger, Alastair. “The early history of Blythswood Missionary Institute.” 14.

<sup>20</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curricula for South African rural schools.” 73.

<sup>21</sup> Rodger, Alastair. “The early history of Blythswood Missionary Institute.” 14.

## **Educating the African Child: The Missionaries**

The process of educating African children fed directly into the project of incorporating the colonised into colonial society. The project came with long lasting side effects on African children's understanding of their African roots, their relationship to the land and the continuous state of being subordinates regardless of qualifications. This can be attributed to the way in which, while the educational training of African children was caught up in the project of colonisation, its hidden curriculum obscured the politics, functioning instead to make it seem like part of the natural order of education. The hidden curriculum operated to determine how the stakeholders (missionaries, colonialists and Africans) viewed this life changing initiative. These were reflections of their respective ideal imagined, educated African child; they mapped what future each stakeholder had imagined for the educated African child. Behind each reflection lay the politics that were at play during the time under study. Such politics were somehow each stakeholder's defence to the lingering fear of extinction at the face of contestations about dominance and relevance during ever-changing colonial times. Catherine Woeber cautions us that "education is never neutral but directed towards the achievement of certain purposes."<sup>22</sup> This line of thinking awakens us from the illusion that schools are spaces of nurturing talents and of acquiring skills. But in actual fact they are more likely to be spaces of contestation and battlefields for psychological warfare.

Conceptualising schools as contested spaces allows us to peel back the multi-layered issues at play when formulating the educational policies. It gives us a magnifying glass to zoom into the issues that were contested and who had more muscle to influence the colonial government's stance on education. Sir George Grey viewed the education of the colonised as an "imperative in ensuring that the Colony's economy grew by utilizing the indigenous

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<sup>22</sup> Woeber, Catherine. "A good education sets up a divine discontent: The contributions of St Peter's School to black South African autobiography." PhD diss., University of the Witwatersrand, (2000). 9.

population as “useful servants; consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue, in short, a source of strength and wealth to the colony.”<sup>23</sup> It is clear that the education of African children was turned into an “instrument of governmentality intended to produce a population with capacities that are useful to government and related dominant groups.”<sup>24</sup> In other words the education of the African was geared towards the idea of creating servants for white industries and to inculcate the burning desire to possess Western goods. The colonial government stood to benefit a great deal by producing loyal subjects who would be willing participants in the establishment of colonial legitimacy.

The above offers us a glimpse into the aims of the colonial government and how it managed to control the behaviour of African children. In this case, the educational policies became mouthpieces of the colonial government’s political intentions with regards to the frontier and gave a clear directive as to what role the educated African within the colonial society would play. Although the schooling system was turned into a factory producing graduates that would pose no threat to the colonial project and who would assimilate seamlessly into the colonial society, in some cases their aims did not materialise.

Here I speak of a rare breed of Africans that managed to escape the severe psychological violence committed by the missionary education. Upon graduation, they became pioneers of restoring the dignity of African cultures and languages. In hindsight, their diverse activities as adults can be read as subtle moves in resistance against colonial rule. Such activities ranged from writing poems and novels to adapting Christianity to best suit their needs. The non-lethal nature of these activities enabled them to continue imparting Africans with knowledge

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<sup>23</sup> Moore, Nadine Lauren. “In a class of their own.” 22.

<sup>24</sup> Jacklin, Heather. “The imagined subject of schooling in the logic of policy.” 2.



that sought to reincarnate the African pride and suspicion of the presupposed European superiority.

Yet, in the main, the fine prints of the policies tell a clear story of how the socio-economic status quo should be like – who was the master and who was the servant. So the education of African children was engulfed in politics and tensions that to a great extent dictated the nature of the kind of academic curriculum, which ought to be offered. To make matters worse, the academic curriculum was forced to comply with the aspirations of those with strong gunpowder and financial muscles. After reading about the structure of Sir George Grey’s educational policy I share the same sentiments as Catherine Woeber that “behind any educational order rests fundamental issues such as philosophies of life, views of man, religious beliefs, ideas about the state and society, in particular the place of the individual, political ideologies and the working of economic forces.”<sup>25</sup>

With that being said, I think it is fitting to alert my reader that I am not intent on bashing missionary education but seek to outline the different perspectives on educating African subjects by the aforementioned historical actors. In other words, I subscribe to Swartz and Kallaway’s thinking regarding the writing of colonial education’s history. They argue that “to write about colonial education as a monolithic sustained project meant to bring civilization or as a means of subjugating the masses, would be to erase the multiple complicated ways in which government actors, teachers and colonised people interacted with colonial education system.”<sup>26</sup> So here I attempt to write about missionary education as an instance where Africans, missionaries and colonialist worked together in making it a reality.

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<sup>25</sup> Woeber, Catherine. “A good education sets up divine discontent.” 9.

<sup>26</sup> Swartz, Rebecca, and Kallaway, Peter. “Imperial, global and local in histories of colonial education.” *History of Education*, 47, no. 3 (2018). 364.

I want to stress that missionary schools, like Blythswood and Healdtown Missionary Institute,<sup>27</sup> were vibrant and active forces in the emergence of the desired adult-self of the African child. In this instance, schools became melting pots, where African children with a diversity of talents and varying degrees of intelligence, were subjected to the same academic curriculum. This often resulted in graduates with uniform attitudes that included “being low on initiative, docile and dependent”.<sup>28</sup>

I am also cognisant that, despite the hidden curriculum, missionary education also included other effects, even if only for some. As Woeber notes, colonial schooling had the effect of “empowering Africans to meet the new historical conditions ... [and] was a crucial factor in the creation of a new elite and leadership echelon... [It offered] an academic education of international standards, and had power to effect material conditions of life in a disrupted and industrialised society, and to effect change in class and social status.”<sup>29</sup> And Swartz and Kallaway add that “classrooms provided the space for anti-colonial movements to flourish in some colonies, while fostering the development of loyal indigenous elites in others.”<sup>30</sup> But what if these benefits were reverse psychology to colonial indoctrination? I find it hard to believe that missionary schools could teach Africans the art of revolution considering their intentions. The militarisation of missionary schools can be read as a reverse psychology by graduates in response to the condemning transcripts of colonial education and broader inhuman conditions Africans were subjected to. I propose this line of thinking since only a small number of graduates of missionary schools challenged the colonial status quo.

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<sup>27</sup> Healdtown Missionary Institution, currently known as Healdtown Comprehensive School, is a Methodist school established near Fort Beaufort in 1855. It is famous for producing the likes of Nelson Mandela. Also check: Sampson, Anthony. *Mandela: The authorised biography*. Harper Collins Publishers, (1999). 14-27.

<sup>28</sup> Dunne, Máiréad, and Vincent Adzahlie-Mensah, "Subordinate subjects" 3.

<sup>29</sup> Woeber, Catherine. “A good education sets up divine discontent.” 12.

<sup>30</sup> Swartz, Rebecca, and Kallaway, Peter. “Imperial, global and local in histories of colonial education.” 364.

In the main, I am open to entertain the idea that missionary education encouraged some to fight against colonialism. I choose this path because I do not want to suppress any side of the story about the education of African children at the hands of missionaries. I am mindful of Woeber's caution that "if it is the function of historians to understand historical actors as they understood themselves, they must critique missionaries as shaped by forces of imperialism, chauvinism and capitalism."<sup>31</sup> Even though I am entertaining the idea that missionary education may have been instrumental in the emergence of anti-colonial movement, I still regard them as active agents of colonialism and an emerging capitalism.

Amidst missionary aspirations about the schooling of African children, there are bold lines supporting the establishment of settler colonialism and, concomitantly, the production of African elites, who would consume European products. It is widely known that "missionary education was a purposeful process aiming at the incorporation of the independent peoples into structures of the Western civilization."<sup>32</sup> The only way to do this was to transmit values deemed important by Western civilisation to young African children. This was very strategic since the African children were the future, so destroying their connection with African modes of life was the end-goal of their educational training. Leaving the missionary schools, the African child was framed as lesser than a European but no longer an African. This child was to become a petty-bourgeoisie group without strong links with their African roots but very vocal about the independence of African people from the shackles of colonialism. This 'reformed' African child had two faces – one for the workplace and the other for real life.

Seemingly but perhaps not, missionary schools played a vital role in the process of colonisation that entailed the enforcement of European modes of life and crippling any form

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<sup>31</sup> Woeber, Catherine. "A good education sets up divine discontent." 16.

<sup>32</sup> Marsh, Ian. "For the good that we can do: African presses, Christian rhetoric, and white minority rule in South Africa, 1899-1924." M.A. diss., University of Central Florida (2017). 15.

of resistance to colonial power. Some scholars, such as Felicity Jensz, even go to the limits of labelling missionary schools as “nurseries of the church, and spaces in which life-long denominational loyalties could be forged.”<sup>33</sup>

Somehow this description of missionary schools as entities independent from the politics of colonialism downplays their contribution to the colonisation of the conquered Africans. This line of thinking succumbs to Woeber’s caution not to “write them off as stooges of the colonial authority” nor to position them “as fearless fighters for the rights of the oppressed and colonised people.”<sup>34</sup> On the same hand, it provides a conceptualisation that missionaries might have understood the mission to educate African children on their own terms; terms which might have had no connection with colonialists’ aspirations, but was rooted in the desire to gain converts and expand Christianity. This can be read from the 1910 Edinburgh World Conference’s attitude towards missionary education, as it deliberated on matters concerning the education of colonised lands.<sup>35</sup> The conference understood education as a way of advancing the evangelical work through the production of preachers and leaders who were Christians.<sup>36</sup> This attitude may be read as exculpating the missionary schools from the colonial project of dominating in the expropriated lands.

Writing of missionaries and their respective churches as independent entities somehow exposes their layered participation in the colonisation of independent African nations. My undergraduate training underscored a notion that the missionaries took a stand for the colonised, and always had the best interests of Africans at heart. Such historiography awards them with humanitarian attitudes and with no ulterior motives as they sought to deal with the

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<sup>33</sup> Jensz, Felicity. “The 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference and comparative colonial education.” *History of Education* 47, no. 3 (2018). 400.

<sup>34</sup> Woeber, Catherine. “A good education sets up divine discontent.” 17.

<sup>35</sup> Jensz, Felicity. “The 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference and comparative education.” 400-401.

<sup>36</sup> Jensz, Felicity. “The 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference and comparative education.” 400.

colonised directly. On the contrary, “churches used the notion of the empire as a realm of conciliation in their aim for the expansion of Christendom.”<sup>37</sup> So the essence of their presence on African soil was to spread the gospel of Christianity. Missionary schools then were effective factory sites for the emergence of subjects that would endorse Christianity. They became laboratories where Christianity was genetically transmitted into the DNA formations of African children. To some people this is not a bad thing, but this form of education instilled obedience and a culture of compliance with authority. This was dangerous as it delayed the independence of the colonised, if not guaranteed their bondage.

Hopes of retaining the previously enjoyed independence of Africans were becoming a far-fetched ideal as the enrolment of African children was rising. This can be attributed to the assimilative nature of education, which was distancing pupils from their African roots further and further. Seemingly the desired adult version of the African child was a stranger to his or her own culture and modes of life. The missionaries went to the limits of “re-clothing and often renaming of indigenous peoples” so as to “remake the so-called heathens as Christians and to refashion peoples regarded as savages in the newly minted mould of civilization.”<sup>38</sup>

Considering these conditions in which their educational training was engulfed, assimilation was guaranteed – almost. There were those who upon graduation showed a great deal of resistance to following the scriptures about being and their relations with other people, a point to which I will return.

The project to educate African children also took a gendered path with a dash of racism. The education offered in missionary schools prepared its subjects for their assumed roles within

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<sup>37</sup> McKenzie, John. “Making black Scotsmen and Scotswomen?” Scottish missionaries and the Eastern Cape Colony in the Nineteenth Century.” In Hilary M. Carey (ed.), *Empires of Religion*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2008. 113.

<sup>38</sup> May, Helen, Baljit Kaur, and Larry Prochner. *Empire, education, and indigenous education: Nineteenth-century missionary infant schools in three British Colony*. Routledge, 2016. 3.

the colony. It was structured in a manner that adapted their learning in line with their future roles. As such “the official curriculum was explicitly engendered, with native girls trained in needlework or sewing and encouraged to be good servants and housewives, whilst carpentry, masonry, blacksmithing and shoemaking were organised for boys.”<sup>39</sup> It is clear that girls were prepared for their feminine and domestic roles, while it inculcated the “character of manliness and aggression for military and administrative service within the colony” for boy children.<sup>40</sup> This logic of thinking perpetuated the subjection of African women to eternal submission to their male counterparts, their roles to be assistants to males in the working spheres, limiting them to a domestic environment with roles ranging from being wives of the educated African men to working as domestic workers in the households of missionaries or settlers.<sup>41</sup> It framed them as belonging in the domestic sphere, which can be also be read as inculcating notions of gender roles and male dominance.

The racist politics within the missionary schools allowed missionaries to assert their righteous ‘birth-right’ to be custodians of the colonised. In this instance they presented themselves as the chosen ones to look after the supposed ‘God’s children’ and to being irreplaceable. With regards to the schooling of African children, it was “translated into a perceived need on behalf of missionaries to be constantly present to watch over their African charges.”<sup>42</sup> This notion legitimised the appointment of white missionaries as principals or headmasters for a very long time without any competition from Africans. In turn this “revealed the lack of trust in African leadership at mission stations and the self-prescribed need of missionaries to maintain the highest positions within the church hierarchy.”<sup>43</sup> So the educational curriculum

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<sup>39</sup> Dunne, Máiréad, and Vincent Adzhalie-Mensah. "Subordinate subjects." 3.

<sup>40</sup> Gaitskell, Deborah. “Race, gender and imperialism: A century of black girls’ education in South Africa.” Seminar paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand (1988). 1.

<sup>41</sup> Gaitskell, Deborah. “Race, gender and imperialism.” 1. The issue of gender in missionary education needs a significant attention from scholars as it is currently overlooked and under-examined.

<sup>42</sup> Marsh, Ian. “For the good that we can do.” 23.

<sup>43</sup> Marsh, Ian. “For the good that we can do.” 23.

was structured in a manner that enforced the mentality of always seeking guidance from white missionaries as they stood as teachers, principals and the highest ranking officials within the mission stations. This is where the African children would inherit the attributes of docility and being low on initiative because their training taught them obedience and to always wait for instructions from white missionaries.

### **Educating the African Child: The Colonialists**

The preceding section strips bare the complicity of missionaries in the project of colonizing African peoples, as they often enjoy immunity from scrutiny. In awarding missionaries with divine intentions, colonialists are given contradictory personalities. They are historicised as being cruel and innovative at the same time. The next section turns away from the missionaries to focus on the perceptions of colonialists about schooling for African children in missionary schools. The term colonialist has been employed here to refer to agents of settler colonial projects either headed by the Dutch or British administrations.

When studying settler colonialism in Southern Africa, one needs to be very sceptical of the assumed unity amongst colonialists. Hence I decided to approach the colonialists with delicacy since I have learned that colonialists in Southern Africa did not agree on many things. The division is most clear on the matter of educating children of African descent. Ian Marsh reminds us that prior to the British take-over of the Cape in 1806, educational training was preserved for a minority of African peoples.<sup>44</sup> The Dutch understood education as a way of acquainting Africans with basics of Christianity and rudiments of Dutch, with an intention to produce a labour force for the Dutch.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, the British administration perceived

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<sup>44</sup> Marsh, Ian. "For the good that we can do." 15.

<sup>45</sup> Marsh, Ian. "For the good that we can do." 15.

education as a way of transforming the behaviour patterns and ways of being in a space. More broadly, this discussion highlights difference in attitudes towards and the aims of educating Africans between the Dutch and British administrations. The following section will discuss these attitudes and the effect they had on the project of educating African children.

As with missionaries, for the colonialists, the project of schooling African children had less to do with an academic curriculum than an understanding that saw the classroom as a platform to transfer attitudes and skills in line with their project of colonising this southern part of Africa. In the early 1900s, settler colonial societies began to deliberate about the supposed nature of education that should be provided in mission schools.<sup>46</sup> A fine line of disagreement amongst colonialists was then renewed as is apparent from the contributions made to the South African Native Affairs Commission 1905. Some, sheltering behind their supposed racial superiority, cared less for which curriculum would be offered as they considered Africans as being of “lower intellect... [who] could not rise to any artisanal levels or any skilled post.”<sup>47</sup> Their back-up plan to the looming threat of wage equality across races and the potential influx of Africans into the job market was their supposed racial superiority. I am more than comfortable to label this faction of colonialists as nationalists because of their emphasis on racially classifying people. As a matter of fact, according to this faction it was one’s pigmentation that would determine one’s prosperity in the job market and Africans were to be lifetime subordinates. Basically, they envisaged that races were to live peacefully if they interacted on the basis of strict *baaskapsheid* with whites as bosses to all others.

This group of colonialists had all the tendencies of nationalists as they strongly supported the colonial state’s mission of civilisation while pushing to the margins the majority of the population in the Colony. They envisaged education for African children to be restrictive and

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<sup>46</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curriculum for South African rural schools.” 79.

<sup>47</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curriculum for South African rural schools.” 79.



to inculcate a sense of inferiority along with a strong work ethic, which fed directly to the notion of never being equal to and never posing any threat to white domination. This attitude hints at a great deal of racism and fear of equality. The views of this group of colonialists coincided with certain missionaries such as Dr Robert Shepherd of Lovedale, who argued to the South African Native Affairs Commission that “the cast of mind of the Native is such that he could rarely take charge. His lack of inventiveness and of ingenuity in mechanical work would make him inferior to the European as a trained workman, and at no time would he compete with the European.”<sup>48</sup> Their viewpoint to restrict the educational training of the African people was influenced by the racist ideas of always approaching Africans as being children, irrespective of age. As such, Cecil Rhodes argued that with regards to voting Africans are citizens “but not altogether citizens – they are still children ... They are emerging from barbarism.”<sup>49</sup> He also added that “they have human minds and I would like them to devote themselves wholly to the local matters that surround them and appeal to them.”<sup>50</sup> It is clear that this group of colonialists wanted to create the continuous need for Europeans that would be the paternal custodians of Africans, while also securing a supply of unskilled labour for white industries. In both cases, Africans were doomed never to overcome such economic impediments but instead to make them eternally responsive to colonial needs.

In contrast, there also existed a group of colonialists who did not allow their supposed racial superiority to rob them of their hope in humanity. Their stance on the type of academic curriculum, which ought to be offered by missionary schools, was more economically driven. As a matter of fact, this group “had no problem with the injection of technically-trained Africans into to the labour market, believing that the growing colonial economy could easily

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<sup>48</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curriculum for South African rural schools.” 78-79.

<sup>49</sup> Parry, Richard. ““In a sense citizens, but not altogether citizens...”: Rhodes, race , and the ideology of segregation at the Cape in the late nineteenth century.” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 17, no. 3 (1983). 386.

<sup>50</sup> Parry, Richard. ““In a sense citizens, but not altogether citizens...” 386.

absorb all skilled workers.”<sup>51</sup> So they did not succumb to the fear of black domination as their fellow compatriots. I think I should make it clear to my reader that this mind-set did not make this faction any less dangerous to the mere existence of African people.

This group, who can be labelled as liberal colonialists, did not base their views of the education of African children on racist ideas. Rather, they based them on notions of having hope in humanity, and centred on reason. A member of the Legislative Assembly, George Whitaker, is referenced by Andrew Paterson stating that “there would be ‘plenty of work for all’ with the development of the country’s economy.”<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile the Cape’s Superintendent General of Education, Sir Thomas Muir, asserted to the Native Affairs Commission that, “the Cape education system did not have the finance or facilities to produce skilled African labour in vast numbers.”<sup>53</sup> These reasons made it clear that the most feared event that the job market would be saturated with skilled Africans was far from happening. This was due to the fact that missionary schools did not have enough infrastructure to produce competitive graduates. So the liberal colonialists did not succumb to the fear of reverse domination by Africans, they rather believed that whites and Africans could survive side by side.

However, each of the aforementioned staunch ideas about academic curriculum for missionary schools were informed by their envisaged end-goals of the project of educating African children and their intentions varied considerably. To nationalist colonialists the project was meant to keep Africans in steady position of being unskilled labourers regardless of talents and skills. As such they “were appeased by the restriction of mission schooling to low-level labour utilising basic skills” which in effect rendered “Africans to become non-

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<sup>51</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curriculum for South African rural schools.” 79-80.

<sup>52</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curriculum for South African rural schools.” 80.

<sup>53</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curriculum for South African rural schools.” 80

competitive in the skilled sector and useful in the unskilled sector of the wage labour markets.”<sup>54</sup> So they envisioned missionary schools as factories responsible for the production of subjects who would definitely conform to their defined place in colonial South Africa.

In the main, the project of educating African children was perceived as an incentive to those deemed as friendly towards the project of colonisation. The colonial social engineers employed an old dirty trick in the book of divide and control between those who supported and those who opposed the colonial enterprise. The mission schools became the perfect apparatus to effect the control over the access to colonial resources. It is this conceptualisation that landed amaMfengu in a newly expropriated land, since they fought alongside the British troops in the Sixth Frontier War, and they were regarded as being “more responsive than amaGcaleka to the message and the opportunities offered by the missionaries.”<sup>55</sup> AmaMfengu were awarded lands that fell into the mandate of Sir George Grey’s Grey Plan that sought to “civilize and Christianiz[e] the Africans in the Colony by means of education and medical services.”<sup>56</sup> The social engineers employed education as a discourse to widen up the division amongst Africans; mission schools became sites to create a new elite group of educated Africans. This group was to be programmed in such a way that they would remain forever loyal to the British Empire and would be detached from their African roots, albeit always lesser subjects in comparison to European settlers.

Judging from the educational curriculum that was then prescribed for missionary schools, it was cobbled together in a way that suggests a compromise from both factions. Missionary schools had to abide by an industrial and agricultural curriculum, which had the perspectives of nationalists and liberals written all over it. This is the case since it “referred essentially to

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<sup>54</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curriculum for South African rural schools” 81.

<sup>55</sup> Rodger, Alastair. “The early history of Blythwood Missionary Institute.” 1.

<sup>56</sup> Rodger, Alastair. “The early history of Blythwood Missionary Institute.” 14.

low skill forms of education for Africans to participate in a segregated colonial society in which their roles were defined for them in a largely rural environment.”<sup>57</sup> They were included into colonial society but excluded on the basis of their ancestral origins. This sums up the aspirations of both colonial factions, which includes acquainting Africans with European values so that they will forever long to be European but forever be excluded based on their race.

However, it is disturbing to learn that some Africans eagerly co-operated in the project of sending their children to missionary schools. We are not able to ascertain if they knew what the project entailed. We can however ascertain the extent to which they were active in supporting the education of their children in such institutions. According to Tony McGregor, amaMfengu in the Nqamakwe District wished to send their children to European educational centres so they would be “able to command better-paying jobs in the growing economy of the Cape Colony.”<sup>58</sup> To them, educational training was a way of catching up with the evolving Cape Colony, which was quickly converting them into cheap labourers. Enrolment at a missionary school was seen as a guaranteed ticket to escape irrelevance and became a means to cope with gruesome conditions brought about by settler colonialism.

This move by the Mfengu leaders was not surprising considering that their history is full of events where they showed unquestionable openness to European modes of life. Prior to the meeting to establish Blythswood, there was another meeting where they pledged their alliance “to God and King”.<sup>59</sup> This meeting is known as emQwashini (White Milkhood), which signifies the name of the tree next to which this meeting is said to have taken place. My father used to relay his knowledge of this meeting and how it had influenced the

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<sup>57</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curriculum for South African rural schools.” 72.

<sup>58</sup> McGregor, Tony. “Blythswood: a unique South African mission station.”

<sup>59</sup> “Mfengu/Fingo umQwashu/Milkwood tree: Peddie, Eastern Cape.”

<https://www.artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/bldgframes.php?bldgid=13250>.

behaviour of the Mfengu people. His version of the event did not pay attention to date nor a place, rather it concerned the Mfengu agreeing to send their children to European schools, going to church and pledging alliance to the King. The request to establish Blythswood Institute within the African settlements might be a follow-up to the umQwashu covenants of 1835. Or they might have wanted to test the colonialists from finally holding their end of deal.

The aforementioned trail of events posit the Mfengu leaders as optimistic historical actors.

This is due to the fact that their decisions always sought to benefit them from the opportunities resulting from the colonial expansion into the frontier. The umQwashu covenants secured them a placement in the newly expropriated lands from amaGcaleka.<sup>60</sup>

Their moves seem to have been informed by the desire to better their status amongst various Xhosa clans. Even with the establishment of Blythswood, they stood to benefit. I think it is safe to label them as having envisioned education as a medium to render a 'better future' for their children. Little did they know the amount of violence that awaited the children in those schools. School and its academic curricular were engineered to be friendly in creating a culture of silence "where the colonial element in schooling is to attempt to silence, to negate the history of indigene, to rationalise the irrational and gain acceptance for structures which are oppressive."<sup>61</sup> Those enrolled in such schools were presented with no alternative to choose from, but were expected to comply with the violence of constant demonisation of African modes of life. Further, "colonial education induced attitudes of human inequality

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<sup>60</sup> Rodger, Alastair. "The early history of Blythswood Missionary Institute." 1-4.

<sup>61</sup> Kallaway, Peter. "An introduction to the study of education for blacks in South Africa." History Department, University of the Witwatersrand 1982. 9.

especially in the economic field.”<sup>62</sup> So schools for African children became trauma centres to patiently “endure cultural and ideological transformation.”<sup>63</sup>

Mission schools were established under circumstances that sought to normalise the domination and dispossession of African people. Schools were strategically constructed to offer a sense of exoticism though still on African soil. Exoticism in such a manner that the life within mission stations was completely different from the outside world and geographically positioned afar from African settlements. To seal the deal, the design of their structures was imported from far lands and stood as monuments to progress. Most definitely the attendees were expected to “despise their own culture and traditions in favour of those of the coloniser or at the very best become ambivalent about their links with the traditional past or social milieu.”<sup>64</sup> This kind of behaviour came to be an essential part of the skills most attendees of missionary schools took with them to the outside world and never looked back. It became some kind of an inheritable culture that graduates had to be distanced from their respective societies. And some scholars, such as Woeber, suggests this as an instigator to the emergence of African urban dwellers, since some felt that they had no links with rural areas anymore.<sup>65</sup> This, as will become evident in the following chapter, underscored apartheid policies on educating and imagining the African child in certain ways.

### **Concluding thoughts**

As a means of concluding this chapter, I think I should stress that missionary schools did not only possess toxic traits to the mere existence of the African family. However, this does serve to cover the overlooked double-edgedness of missionary education. Mission schools

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<sup>62</sup> Nyerere, Julius. *Education for self-reliance*. Dar es Salaam: Government Printer, 1967. 47.

<sup>63</sup> Kallaway, Peter. An introduction to the study of education for blacks in South Africa. 8-9.

<sup>64</sup> Kallaway, Peter. An introduction to the study of education for blacks in South Africa. 9.

<sup>65</sup> Woeber, Catherine. “A good education sets up divine discontent.” 33-34.

produced iconic graduates who contributed significantly to the preservation and transmission of African languages and cultures. These figures somehow managed to transmit some very sensitive information through poems, novels and folklores without being caught contravening any publishing restriction. They produced works that tread on matters ranging from African pride to self-determination and their writing managed to blindside any colonial red tape to thinking and writing. Such content can be found in works produced by the likes of Nontsizi Mgqwetho, Krune Mqhayi and Tiyo Soga, to count a few.<sup>66</sup> These authors' works were often referenced by former President Thabo Mbeki in his address at the unveiling of Reverend Tiyo Soga's memorial in 2011. He achieved his aim of presenting African renaissance as a necessity for the survival of African identities and cultures.<sup>67</sup> It is jaw-dropping that Mbeki based his arguments on works produced during colonial times. For me, the question is always: how did these works even make it to be published if they focused on such deep politics? I am of the idea that this was the case owing to what I would call a mode of coding in their writing. Unfortunately history only remembers contributions made by males, and only remembers women as mere teachers, domestic servants and house-wives. The contributions made by the likes of Noni Jabavu and Nontsizi Mgqwetho, for instance, are surrounded by extensive silence as if they do not shed any light on the struggles of African people.

When reading the poems cited in Mbeki's speech I just could not stop thinking about how the authors managed to escape the script of colonial education. How did they manage to graduate from the missionary schools and still advocate for a pride in being African and pushing for self-determination? Partly my probe comes from the position of understanding that "missionary education was [a] purposeful process aim[ed] at the incorporation of the

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<sup>66</sup> Thabo Mbeki, "A pioneer modern African intellectual who died in 1871." Speech, The Unveiling of the Tiyo Soga Memorial, Thuthura, Centane, September 29, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Thabo Mbeki, "A pioneer modern African intellectual who died in 1871."

independent peoples into structures of Western civilisation.”<sup>68</sup> But the poems written by Mqgqwetho and Mqhayi, for instance, do not show any signs of being written by individuals who have been fully incorporated into the colonial society. The manner in which they critiqued the colonial system and always pleading for Africans to love who they are, it just made me think of the possibility of another side to this story of colonial missionary education and its hidden curriculum. This made me understand clearly the caution, underscored by Rebecca Swartz and Peter Kallaway, that “to write about colonial education as a monolithic sustained project meant to bring civilization or as a means of subjugating the masses, would be to erase the multiple complicated ways in which government actors, missionaries, teachers and colonised peoples interacted with colonial education system.”<sup>69</sup>

Swartz and Kallaway allows us to ask difficult questions about the interaction forged by the education system between Africans, missionaries and colonialists. Questions such as: how did the missionaries and colonialists understand the project of educating African children? What was the aim of the education offered to African children? I think the former has been answered in all aspects throughout this chapter, so in concluding this chapter, I will try to provide possible answers to the latter. Thinking about the aims of the colonial education enables an unmasking of the politics behind the introduction and enactment of the missionary education system. It is through this line of thinking that we can get to understand the behaviour patterns of graduates of missionary schools. The discussion will be centred on issues such as defining the idea of a hidden curriculum and how it was enacted.

If I were to define the notion of the hidden curriculum, I would refer to it as the actual reason behind a particular education system tied up in the politics that took effect outside the school premises, effected through material practices and physical structures. In this light, Heather

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<sup>68</sup> Marsh, Ian. “For the good that we can do.” 15.

<sup>69</sup> Swartz, Rebecca, and Kallaway, Peter. “Imperial, global and local in histories of colonial education.” 364.



Jacklin would link the hidden curriculum as being the aims of an education that is always in the quest of producing governable subjects, and such aims can also be read as the aspirations of dominant groupings or classes.<sup>70</sup> This conceptualisation can be traced from Catherine Woeber's argument that, as cited earlier in this chapter, and worth restating, "education is never neutral but directed towards the achievement of certain purposes."<sup>71</sup> Education policies and education systems are always targeted at achieving particular goals, and that is where the hidden curriculum comes into the bigger picture. Being the hidden transcripts of the education system constituted by a combination of aspirations of government and of dominant groupings, it is then snuck into the academic curriculum in the form of practices and rationalities.<sup>72</sup>

In this understanding, the general public gets to be acquainted with an educational system that has gone through various stages of adapting to the aspirations of the government and of the dominant groups, to best fit the imagined position of the school subject. Sir George Grey for instance, "introduced a form of education (Grey Plan) based on the Christian African peasantry, aimed at creating a settled and industrious peasantry that would work its own land or the land of white and contribute to social order."<sup>73</sup> And bearing in mind that "behind any educational order rests fundamental issues such as philosophies of life, views of man, religious beliefs, ideas about the state and society, in particular the place of the individual, political ideologies and the working of economic forces."<sup>74</sup> We can then argue that the hidden curriculum, in this instance, entailed the training of African children so as to be useful servants in white industries and being great contributors to the revenue of the colony as they

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<sup>70</sup> Jacklin, Heather. "The imagined subject of schooling in the logic of policy." 2.

<sup>71</sup> Woeber, Catherine. "A good education sets up divine discontent." 9.

<sup>72</sup> See Christie, Pam. "Changing regimes: Governmentality and education policy in post-apartheid South Africa." *International Journal of Educational Development* 26, no. 4 (2006): 375; Jacklin, Heather. "The imagined subject of schooling in the logic of policy." 2-4.

<sup>73</sup> Paterson, Andrew. "Agricultural and industrial curriculum for South African rural schools." 72-73.

<sup>74</sup> Woeber, Catherine. "A good education sets up divine discontent." 9.

would seek to satisfy their desire for European goods.<sup>75</sup> The colonial administration and the white industries stood to benefit directly from this system as they were to have employees who had been initiated into the life of labouring at school and subjects who would understand the imperatives of paying taxes and obeying laws.

In the main, the Grey Plan's hidden curriculum did not pertain only to creating servants and consumers, but went as far as neutralising resistance towards the colonial enterprise. The plan was structured in a manner that sought to initiate Africans into Western practices and to forge alliances between Africans and colonialists. "Grey's idea", for instance, "was to apply industrial education only to a specific group of Africans who were located within a strategic space as a buffer group on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony."<sup>76</sup> Hence it was not difficult for missionaries and colonialists to agree to establish an institution amongst Africans, since the Ngqamakhwe District was part of a buffer-zone between the rebellious Gcaleka and suppressive Cape Colony. The hidden agenda of the Grey Plan can be read as aiming to create allies with the Mfengu in the buffer-zone so they will take their side against any resistance, as they did during the war of Ngcayechibi. This cooperation of the Mfengu leaders highlights the success of the Grey Plan in neutralising resistance towards the colonial project.

Even though the Grey Plan was an educational policy, its hidden agenda stretched as far as setting the political tone of the Mfengu leaders and naturalising the introduction of African children into colonial structures through education. The famous "industrial education consisted of the training of apprentices in trades such as carpentry, blacksmithing and printing."<sup>77</sup> While agricultural education consisted of training that focused mainly on manual

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<sup>75</sup> Moore, Nadine Lauren. "In a class of their own." 22.

<sup>76</sup> Paterson, Andrew. "Agricultural and industrial curriculum for South African rural schools." 73.

<sup>77</sup> Rodger, Alastair. "The early history of Blythwood Missionary Institute." 14.

labour and subsistence farming. This is due to the fact that “when colonial officials spoke of agricultural education for Africans, they were not referring to any scientific form of agricultural expertise as they did when speaking of white agricultural training, rather they envisioned an introduction to the most basic skills for rural life.”<sup>78</sup> Here the agenda is clear, the British administration wanted to produce subjects that were deemed more useful amongst their respective communities and already introduced into the life of labouring. They were imagined to be useful for their communities in a sense that they were bound to replace the traditional leaders: they could work their own land using the western skills they acquired in school and were convenient to work in white farms and industries with less supervision. In other words, the education system provided by the Grey Plan prepared African children for an adult life of partaking in the wages economy as unskilled labours and accomplices in the establishment of the colonial legitimacy within the eastern frontier.

However, the hidden curriculum was not only passed to pupils through academic curriculum, rather it is also passed through practises and rationalities that took place within the school premises. Such practises and rationalities are often presented as being of natural occurrence and of best interest to the pupils. Natural in a sense that they happen every day and they are tied up to rules and governance of the school, while being presented as a worthy investment into the pupil’s future.<sup>79</sup> The notion of boarding schools, for instance, had a hidden curriculum attached to it, which is not visible at face value. Colin Bundy argues that in boarding schools “students were enclosed in the rhythms and rituals of quotidian European life for every waking and sleeping hour, internalising ‘a whole manner of being in time and space, one that would indeed make them “strangers” in many respects to their own kind.’”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curriculum for South African rural schools.” 82.

<sup>79</sup> Christie, Pam. “Changing regimes Regimes: Governmentality and Education Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa.” *International Journal of Educational Development* 26, no. 4 (2006). 374-375.

<sup>80</sup> Bundy, Colin. “Lessons on the frontier: aspects of Eastern Cape history.” *Kronos: Journal of Cape History* 30, no. 1(2004). 16.

Blythswood and its counterparts initiated African children into the timed lifestyle where there is a time for everything that should be done on a daily basis.<sup>81</sup> In this instance, the hidden curriculum can be read as the intended goal behind the introduction of African children to the timed lifestyle. Here they were just being prepared for the life of being servants in the colonial state or white industries, where they would have to be punctual, loyal, orderly and respectful. They were prepared so that upon graduation they would not find it hard to adjust to the demands of the job market, and the enclosed character of the school made it easier for this to happen as it mitigated the influence the students could draw from their respective communities. This was not a coincidence but a plan to fast-track and protect the production of the desired subjects.

Learning is not restricted to the classroom but all practices that take place within the school have a lesson. And such lessons are always targeted towards a certain end-goal and a certain compartment. This line of thinking is influenced by a conceptualisation of colonial education as not only restricted to “book-learning and acquiring of technical skills”, but a lifelong project where a “child acquired a philosophy of life, a way of thinking about time and eternity, a code of values, a tradition of culture.”<sup>82</sup>

In light of this reasoning, I am of a sentiment that besides conversion into Christianity there are other lessons imparted during church sermons and assembly sessions. Such practises were presented as being of benefit to African children in their transitioning journey from a lifestyle deemed as savagery into being a so-called civilised individual. It was tied up in the politics of creating subjects that will be silent servants in unchanging circumstances. Nadine Moore asserts that “to Christianise the African is the shortest way, and the surest, to make him put

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<sup>81</sup> Bundy, Colin. “Lessons on the frontier: aspects of Eastern Cape history.” 15.

<sup>82</sup> Garth, Abraham. “The Catholic Church and Apartheid, 1948-1957.” 91.

his hand steadily and willingly to work that is waiting to be done.”<sup>83</sup> She adds that “religious instruction also focused on teaching pupils values of passivity, fear, contentment in adversity, obedience and patience.”<sup>84</sup> The hidden curriculum passed through religious practices sought to inculcate fear and obedience towards authority, which domestic service, agricultural work and the private sector took advantage of when it came to remuneration and promotion. So the missionary school graduates were imagined to be patient and passive subjects in a colonial society that treated them as third-class citizens.

Missionary schools were engineered to be centres with uninterrupted learning. Even extramural activities had meanings that can be linked to the agenda of producing a useful African in the eyes of the colonial state and missionaries. A wide variety of sporting codes, for instance, were used to invoke the spirit of competition amongst pupils and to introduce boys to their defined future positions of serving in the army and government.<sup>85</sup> Deborah Gaitskell posits that “male public school athleticism aimed to foster manliness of character, embracing success, aggression and ruthlessness, yet victory within triumph, compassion for the defeated.”<sup>86</sup> Then Blythswood’s playing field also became an outdoor classroom to impart African children, especially boys, with lessons of being ruthless and aggressive within the constraints of the laws and regulations. This character was to be at play in their service as administrators for their communities, and as soldiers for the colony. Any sporting code played was not just about pupils competing against each other but more about building particular personas according to gender lines.

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<sup>83</sup> Moore, Nadine Lauren. “In a class of their own.” 24.

<sup>84</sup> Moore, Nadine Lauren. “In a class of their own.” 25.

<sup>85</sup> Gaitskell, Deborah. “Race, gender and imperialism.” 1.

<sup>86</sup> Gaitskell, Deborah. “Race, gender and imperialism.” 1.

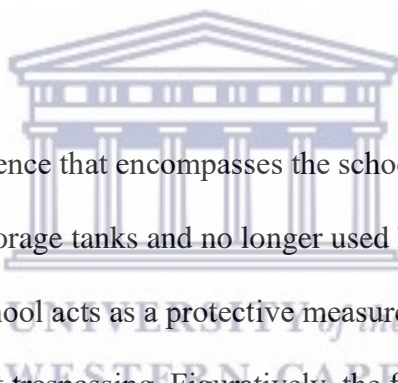
These concluding thoughts underscores the ways in which any history of colonial education must wrestle with the lingering legacies of colonial education's hidden curriculum. And thinking through Blythwood as an exemplar of a space in which particular thinking and imagining of the African Child was put to work.



## *SNAPSHOT 2*

### *The colonial present*

#### **The Fence**



The school is surrounded by a fence that encompasses the school's property that range from the building structures, water storage tanks and no longer used hectares of land. At a layman's level, the fence of the school acts as a protective measure towards the vandalism of the school's property and to prevent trespassing. Figuratively, the fence can be read as representing a bubble that on a consistent basis keeps African children from their respective communities. In this line of thinking, the fence functions as the enclosure that allows Blythswood to create the desired subject while managing the amount of external influence in the process of making the desired subject.<sup>1</sup> According to this narrative pushed by Colin Bundy, the school fences created a sterilised environment that enabled the schooling subjects to internalise "a whole manner of being in time and space, one that would indeed make them "strangers" in many respects to their own."<sup>2</sup> I think it is safe to conclude that Blythswood's fence acted as an enabler in the acquaintance of colonial lessons. And this can be attributed to

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<sup>1</sup> Bundy, Colin. "Lessons on the frontier: aspects of Eastern Cape history." *Kronos: Journal of Cape History* 30, no. 1(2004)." 15.

<sup>2</sup> Bundy, Colin. "Lessons on the frontier." 16.

its ability to create the division between the outside world and the institution. It is this aspect that imparted African children with superiority complex sentiments towards their illiterate fellow country-men. Unconsciously, the schooled were being crowned as the occupants of the elite class.

In the main, the fence can be read as giving legitimacy to the school's rituals and rhythms that are inspired by European modes of life.<sup>3</sup> This could be the case due to its duo ability to also function as a protection to any outside world disturbance that may occur to these rituals. The rituals range from the time for waking up to sleeping, when to eat breakfast or lunch. All these can be read as the preparation for the job market life. In the process of producing the desired subjects, the fence assumes the position of mitigating the amount of outside influence that gets to enter the school premises and when such influence should have effect on the schooling subjects. On the same hand, Zachariah Matthews in his autobiography relays a story of how "the white wooden gates at Lovedale...were symbols of both hope and failure, for if one failed to make necessary grades had to leave..."<sup>4</sup> In this scenario, the wooden gates acted as a figurative benchmark for accessing education and the settler economy. And it became a deciding factor of who gets to be part of the elite class.

### **The Bell**

As much as the fence played a huge role in the creation and protection of the colonial practices within the school, the bell also played a crucial role in the continuity of these practices. The bell represented a consistent reminder to pupils about the progress of their

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<sup>3</sup> Bundy, Colin. "Lessons on the frontier." 16.

<sup>4</sup> Matthews, Zachariah Keodirelang, and Monica, Wilson. *Freedom for My People: the auto biography of ZK Mathews, Southern Africa 1901 to 1968*. Cape Town: New Africa Books, 1983. 31.



journey of transforming into the state's desired subject. It was and is still used to signal how far the pupil has gone in acquainting with particular knowledge and behaviour patterns. This can be read as an initiation of pupils into the life of respecting time and always setting time for any activity, which feeds directly to the notion of the production of labour. And on a deeper level of conceptualisation, can be conceived as a subtler introduction of pupils into a variety of coercive agencies, and the unconscious giving of consent to hegemony.<sup>5</sup> This would manifest as students upon graduation would possess particular perspectives or world-views, a sense of being and behaviour patterns – which are all entrenched in the coercive agencies and hegemony that can be traced outside the classroom. Such agencies are maintained through practices that include signalling the time for the commencement of classes; when boarding pupils have to return to their respective dormitories; to signify the time for breaks and to change periods. This in some way gives an impression that there is time for everything and that people can act as they wish but they need permission for that.

The involvement of the bell in the imparting of European modes of life to African children is appalling considering how it landed up at Blythswood. History has it that it was a gift from a wealthy Mfengu man called Nogaga to the school. This aspect tells a story of participation of the victims in their bondage in “attempts to achieve freedom and self-preservation.”<sup>6</sup> So Nogaga unconsciously took part in the submission of his children to the missionary standards. According to the stories I have heard about the huge bell at Blythswood, he is argued to have donated the bell because he wanted his children to hear the bell from his homestead. Unfortunately, it was turned into a vital weapon in advancing the desires of the colonial state and that of the missionaries.

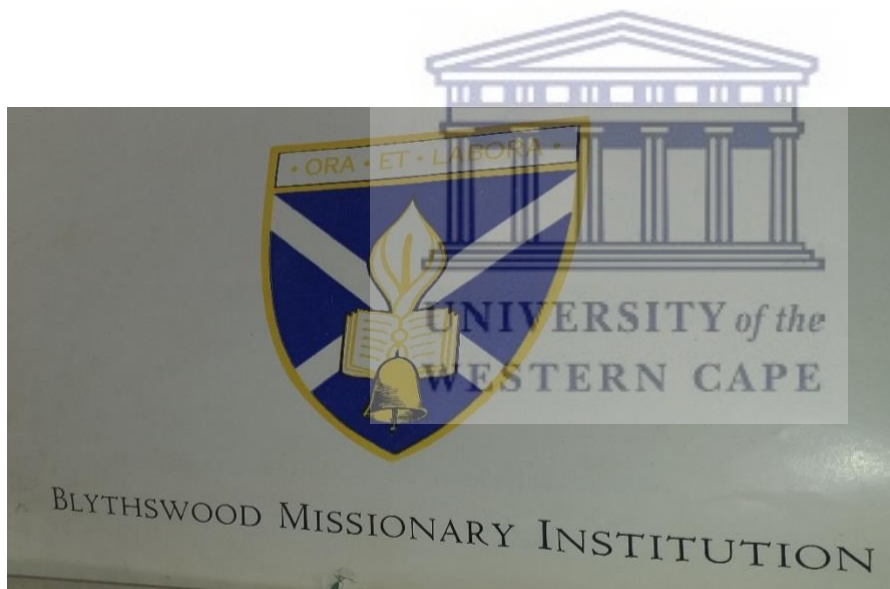
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<sup>5</sup> Duncan, Graham. “Coercive Agency.” 10 & 31.

<sup>6</sup> Duncan, Graham. “Coercive Agency.” 10.

In the main, it sheds a light on how welcoming amaMfengu were towards the colonial enterprises. And this can be attributed to various politics within the frontier. These include the handing of the former Gcaleka territories on a silver platter to amaMfengu; the covenants amaMfengu made at eMqwashini; the divide and rule effected by the colonialists alongside missionaries, to count the few. Each of these politics had its own fair share of influence in how amaMfengu perceived the state of being and relations with other groups of people.

### **The Emblem**



Blythswood's emblem tells a story similar to that which is relayed by the bell – a story of participation of amaMfengu in the establishment of colonial hegemony. It sheds some light on the unconscious participation of amaMfengu in the establishment of the colonial hegemony. For instance, all of my life I thought what is on top of the book (as illustrated on the emblem above) was a torch which may signal enlightenment – literally and figuratively. In my mind it was literally due to the fact that the school was the only place with electricity

for the longest time. And figuratively in a sense that it is an educational institution. Well the magazine I stumbled upon at the Western Cape Archives and Records Services proved me wrong about it being a flower. The magazine proudly narrates that “the arum lily is the emblem of Fingoland.”<sup>7</sup> I was not even aware of this emblem and it is no longer in use among the Mfengu chieftainship. In the main, this narration tells a story of consistent collaboration in the management of the school between missionaries and amaMfengu. And how the missionaries recognised, if not valued, the contribution made by amaMfengu in the mere existence of the institution. In the main, this can be read as a form of giving consent to the colonial enterprise while attempting to escape extinction in the face of the ever-changing colonial settler society.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the controversial aspects of the emblem enabled it to be more effective in the advancement of colonial and missionary enterprises. This was the case owing to its subtler sense in presenting colonial symbols in a blatant form and treating them as natural rationalities.<sup>9</sup> After learning the true representations of these symbols I felt like I have been ignorant. For the longest time I thought the blue and white colours in the background represented the colour of Blythswood’s blazer and shirts. To my eyes the background had no ulterior motives and were just normal colours. Little did I know that the background colours were tied up to the colonial project – that is transforming the school subjects into being almost members of the represented nation. My findings about the true interpretations of the emblem were shocking due to the fact that I was wrong all along. In a school magazine published in the 1930s, a whole story about the emblem is told. It is said that the “background consists of the St. Andrew’s Cross, signifying Blythswood’s association with the Church of

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<sup>7</sup> *Blythswood Missionary Institution Journal*. Blythswood Missionary Institution.

<sup>8</sup> Duncan, Graham. “Coercive agency.” 10.

<sup>9</sup> Duncan, Graham. “Coercive agency.” 10, 31.

Scotland.”<sup>10</sup> But the very same background resembles the Scottish flag. So there is a possibility that this is not a mere coincidence, but a technique to mark and commemorate Scottish missionary expeditions in a subtle manner. This can be another technique to naturalise domination and to create a conducive environment for assimilation. On the other hand, the use of the Scottish flag can be read as marking of Blythswood as a site responsible for producing Africans that will behave in Scottish way. Somehow, it tells a story of Blythswood as a place where African children undergo a process of annihilation of their Africanity which then opens them up to Scottish modes of life. This process is not achieved overnight but is gradually undertaken through practices and the hidden curriculum.

Through the compilation of this research project I have learnt that things are not what they seem to be and they have deep meaning attached to them. And to avoid this trap we need to ask very difficult questions about what we have assumed and always be willing to learn new information. Well knowing that Blythswood was once a missionary station, then one would simply make the connection between the bell and the church, and the bell and the school. As a matter of fact, the writer of the magazine fell into the trap of not asking questions or not being welcoming to new information. “The bell and the book” are said to “stand for school and church, symbolizing the spread of Christian knowledge.”<sup>11</sup> The writer’s conformity to the dominant narrative is reflected through the lack of digging deeply into the background of the bell. To be specific, there is no mention about the erection of the bell and where it came from. Their account is in line with the assumption that any school needs a bell to function, so Blythswood automatically had one.

On the contrary, as noted before, locally it is well known that a certain wealthy man known as ‘Nogaga’ donated the bell so that his children would be able to hear the school bell

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<sup>10</sup> *Blythswood Missionary Institution Journal*.

<sup>11</sup> *Blythswood Missionary Institution Journal*.

properly. Maybe having it on the school's celebrated the willing cooperation showed by amaMfengu in the management and operation of the institution. It is fascinating to learn that the very same bell used to legitimise the killing of the African within the African children to give room for the germination of the Scottish African was willingly donated by a local person. It is possible that Nogaga was not aware of the effect his donation would have on his children. Currently, his donation is being used to invite African children to enjoy their democratic right, instead of a privilege.

Lastly, as boys we used to think the school's logo was misprinted and we were puzzled as to why the school's management does not change it. To us it did not make any sense, but seeing it imprinted on the school blazer was some sort of realisation that it may be printed correctly. We could not even attempt to decipher it because it was not in English. The magazine asserts that "The motto "Ora et Labora" (pray and work) summarises the aim of the institution."<sup>12</sup> Which could mean exactly what the school has been doing until the early 2000s with a church and wood work classes on site. Wood-work is no longer offered but its section is still there, and I have been thinking what it mean to those attending school there. And also what does the aim to "work" means in the present moment? With minimal introduction to what the future holds, what did the institution mean to do? It is no secret that going to school nowadays is about becoming something rather than nurturing the God given talent of pupils. In the main, the praying aspect is at the centre of the institution's practices. During school assembly, bible verses are read and Christian hymns are sung. And this Christianisation of African children is on another level for those boarding in the school's dormitories, as they are forced to attend the church services on Sundays. So we can say that the praying aspect of the institution is still intact and visible for anyone to notice.

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<sup>12</sup> *Blythswood Missionary Institution Journal*.

## **The Gender Segregated dormitories**

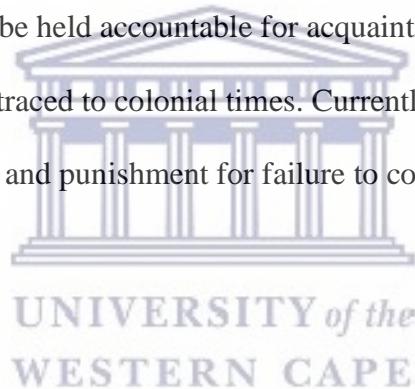
The dormitories within the school premises contribute to the peculiarity of Blythswood from other schools around Ngqamakhwe. They are divided according to genders and are famous for their abundance in ghosts. It is alleged that there are footsteps prancing the corridors of the dormitories at night. Blythswood is no stranger to being accused of being haunted by ghosts that roam around and within the school premises, and it has been like a norm that at night there should be no one passing Blythswood at night. For those living within the dormitories, the constant fighting or bullying and fear to encounter one of the ghosts is the day-to-day reality. At the boys' section bullying is very common and it is said that every night there are fights, but that does not deter parents from sending their children to stay at hostel.

I was always intrigued as to what people find so attractive about staying inside, because to me as an outsider the conditions were not that charming. But conversing to former boarders, they used to tell stories of pupils, mostly boys, who were sent there by their parents because of their unruly behaviours. So to some the dormitories functioned as the rehabilitation centre, maybe due to its partial detachment from the surrounding communities. The living conditions at the dormitories allow pupils to interact with a wide variety of people from the surrounding communities during the day, but at night it is completely closed-off from any outside activity. Meanwhile, the dormitories offer accommodation to pupils who cannot manage to travel from their homes to school every day for varying reasons.

I always wonder about the position of the dormitories in the imagining and configuring of the African child in contemporary times. And what could be the impact of the practices within the dormitories in this project? These questions are of an understanding that dormitories played a crucial role in the colonisation and assimilation of African children into the colonial

capitalistic society. At the core of this research project is the preoccupation with understanding continuities amongst discontinuities in the imagination of African children in contemporary times.

My probing on the matter also emanates from Colin Bundy's conceptualisation of dormitories as enclosures. He argues that "the boarding school closed its students off from the outside world, but opened them up to the flow of disciplines and routine."<sup>13</sup> Which means the rituals and practices that take place within the boarding schools are targeted at creating a certain behaviour amongst pupils.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the hidden curriculum pushed inside the classroom is related to that which is taught through the dormitory rules. So I think the dormitories at Blythwood can be held accountable for acquainting African children with behaviour patterns than can be traced to colonial times. Currently they have time for sleeping and waking-up; time for meals, and punishment for failure to comply with rules is guaranteed.



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<sup>13</sup> Bundy, Colin, "Lessons on the frontier." 15-16.

<sup>14</sup> Bundy, Colin, "Lessons on the frontier." 16.

## Chapter 2: Bantu Education and the Revitalising of Colonialism's

### Imagined African Child

#### Introduction

The victory of the National Party (NP) in the 1948 elections had different meanings for different groups of people within the borders of South Africa. Some welcomed the victory as it promised renewed Afrikaner brotherhood and a taste of dominion over other races, while those deemed not white felt deep anger as they prophesied extreme marginalisation and victimisation by the new regime. This anger was founded on the belief that the ascendance of the NP into power meant empowering the settler population and impoverishing Africans and other groups in South Africa.

Empowering the settler population took effect through the intensification of racial prejudice, colonial policies and its practices of segregation. In practice, this was undertaken through the re-engineering of South African racial, political and economic dynamics with an intent not just to segregate but to yield full control of the economy and access thereto for white South Africa. The policy of apartheid reflected Afrikaner nationalist attitudes and involved subjugating Africans as it passed laws that sought to disarm African political and economic aspirations and to intensify exclusion from a common society. It sought to further limit possibilities of resistance through repression, often by continuing the colonial strategy of divide and conquer. With regard to the latter, some Acts re-enforced 'tribal' lines that had been invented by colonial administrations.<sup>1</sup> These re-enforced 'tribal' lines exposed literate

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<sup>1</sup> On the invention of 'tribe' see Vail, Leroy. *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa*, Melton, Suffolk: James Currey Publishers, 1989 and Rassool, Ciraj. "The Politics of Non-racialism in South Africa." *Public Culture* 31, no. 2 (2019). 343–371.



and/or urbanised Africans to a new forms of subjugation, which centred mostly on framing them as ‘tribal’ subjects and not South Africans.

However, the apartheid regime was baptised under the fear of black domination coupled with the spectre of communism. The fears were justified by pointing to the growing support of communism by workers’ unions and the growing cooperation between liberation movements and trade unions that supported communism. The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 confirmed the government’s desire to break the fighting spirit of Africans as this Act made affiliation and activities conducted by the Communist Party of South Africa and other so-called communist oriented organisations illegal. It also imposed restrictions on leaders and members of these organisations, which often included trade unions. This is a clear indicator of the intent to destroy the fighting will of the people.

In many ways the apartheid’s project of modifying and tightening colonial laws can be read as a response to an era of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation in South Africa.<sup>2</sup> The nationalist regime inherited a state with a growing number of urbanised Africans who were redefining the meaning of being assimilated in ways best suited to their aspirations. The nationalists response to this was to weaken the economic and political capabilities of Africans and to impose further restrictions on their capacity to live and work in urban areas. This is evident from legislation that sought to cripple the socio-economic and political advancement of all those deemed as not white, but for this chapter the focus is on Africans. The legislation was constituted by Acts that included the Consolidation of Native Urban Areas Act, the Bantu Authorities Act, the Native Resettlement Act, the Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act, the Group Areas Act, the Separate Amenities Act, the Suppression of Communism Act and the Bantu Education Act. This legislation instilled a

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<sup>2</sup> Wolpe, Harold. “Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid.” *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1974): 425.

mentality that townships and villages were the only spaces where true Africans could inhabit in apartheid South Africa.<sup>3</sup> The idea of not being allowed to move-out of the township even if one could afford to, or to have a right to be in the urban areas, symbolised the stagnation and economic destruction of Africans. Each of these Acts had direct effects on the advancements of Africans and their effects can be much felt even at the present moment. The destructive extent of these Acts on the project of educating African children will be explored further in the sections below.

As much as apartheid targeted the economic capabilities of Africans, it also sought to give whites an unfair advantage in the economic sphere. It did that through engineering the competing field to be skewed to such an extent that the participation of Africans in the economy was extremely constrained. It passed Acts – the Native Building Workers Act of 1951, the Natives Labour Act of 1953 and the Environmental Act of 1967 – that placed restrictive measures in the economic sphere, which determined who could advance in their respective fields. Hence, I once argued that “the apartheid policies passed in the 1950s came into effect as the reaffirmation to the white community of the privileges that white men had been enjoying since colonial times”.<sup>4</sup> These Acts were enacted and enforced with an intent to protect white people’s economic security, which was argued to have been threatened by the Africans.

However, the NP government took a different stance from their predecessors, in the imagining of African children through education policies. It imagined them as lifetime subordinates in the white industries. The educational policy, Bantu Education Act, was structured in a manner that sought to frame Africans as a labour-force, and this logic of

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<sup>3</sup> Nogqala, Xolela. “Naming Apartheid and South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission: investigating apartheid as a ‘genocide of special type’.” Honours Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2018.47.

<sup>4</sup> Nogqala, Xolela. “Naming Apartheid and South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.” 46.

policy formation can be traced directly to the colonial administration. This can be seen from the fact that “schooling was geared towards instruction in basic communication, literacy and numeracy, and familiarity with the languages of employers was an important part of the curriculum.”<sup>5</sup> Under such circumstances, African children were being prepared for their pre-determined roles as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers in segregated white South Africa. Upon their entry at the job market, the white private sector wanted them to be familiar with the employer’s language of instruction. This aspect was to the advantage of the employers, as they were guaranteed to gain a cheap labour-force that would have been introduced to their language and could read and write. Upon graduation African children were prepared to serve in the segregated economic sphere as subordinates and were content with speaking the employers’ languages.

This chapter seeks to understand the complicity of colonial legacies in the framing and imagining of African children through education policies during the apartheid regime. In the main, I will be outlining continuities and discontinuities in the schooling of African children in the transition from the colonial administration to the apartheid regime. This will be achieved by discussing how the apartheid regime envisioned education and the nature of its educational policies, as well as comparing colonial and apartheid policies. All these themes will be explored within an understanding that the apartheid regime intensified colonial laws in ways that can be read as maintaining and renewing colonialism. This however is not to suggest that there was a seamless continuity of educational policies that extended from colonial to apartheid educational policies.

The educational policies introduced during the apartheid regime were engulfed in the post-1948 politics that ranged from the regrouping of Afrikanerdom, maintaining colonial

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<sup>5</sup> Christie, Pam, and Collins, Colin. “Bantu Education: apartheid ideology or labour reproduction”, *Comparative Education* 18, no. 1 (2012). 63.

legacies, introducing new norms, freezing Africans at the stage of defeat and landlessness, and also growing participation in the global Cold War. I think it is safe to point out that my utterances are in line with Peter Kallaway, who argues that “educational policies are an aspect of the struggle between different classes”.<sup>6</sup> Even though the post-1948 politics were aspects outside the classroom, they considerably shaped the administration of the apartheid regime by dictating the state’s priorities and attitudes on certain aspects of the country. These mainly sought to monopolise access to economic and political resources for whites and deny for Africans.

### **Apartheid and the Bantu Education Act**

The position of Africans within the apartheid state received scrutiny from the corridors of power and sparked heated debates within the settler population. The staunch Afrikaner nationalists understood that the best way to disturb the progress of Africans and to prevent them from taking over the political and economic capabilities, was through crippling their educational system. The Eiselen Commission was appointed by the Nationalist government in 1949 to investigate the usefulness of the mission education for Africans and make recommendations on how it could be formulated to fulfil the aspirations of Africans and to be in line with the government’s policy of separate development.<sup>7</sup> It reported that “...the aim of Bantu education is the development of a modern progressive culture, with social institutions which will be in harmony with one another and with the evolving conditions of life to be met in South Africa, and with the schools which must serve as effective agents in this process of

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<sup>6</sup> Kallaway, Peter, “Introduction”. In Kallaway, Peter (ed.), *The history of education under apartheid, 1948-1994: the doors of learning and culture shall be opened*. Cape Town, Maskew Miller Longman, 2002. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Rundle, Margaret. “Accommodation or confrontation? Some response to the Eiselen Commission report and the Bantu Education Act with special reference to the Methodist Church of South Africa.” MA. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1991. 107-108.

development.”<sup>8</sup> The commissioners added that “... the aims of Bantu education are the development of character and intellect, and the equipping of the child for his future work and surroundings.”<sup>9</sup> These perceptions about the educational project of African children tell a story of gearing education towards reconfiguring cultures and the repositioning of the school in the project of legitimizing new forms of subjugation and marginalisation. In the main they tell a story of continuous colonial imagining of Africans as having a predetermined future. It also tells a story of how the apartheid regime reconfigured the notion of citizenship by inculcating new ideas of being. The new notions of being were to be imparted through the engineering of schools to give a constant reminder “...that out of school hours the young Bantu child develops in a Bantu community, and when he reaches maturity he will be concerned with sharing and developing the life and culture of that community.”<sup>10</sup> They were reminded that they belong in ‘tribal’ communities and the aspirations and imaginations had to be constrained within the tribal communities. The imparting of constrained world view can be read as the preparation of the Bantustan system that was coming their way and they were expected to be psychologically prepared to only dream as far as the borders of their respective Bantustan states.

In Blythswood, for instance, the pupils were introduced to notions of being umXhosa, which fed directly to the project of legitimising the Transkei authority and limiting their sense of being within the constraints of Mzimkhulu and Nciba. Those enrolled in Blythswood were forced to be fond of Mathanzima’s Transkei authority as it was where they only had rights – their sense of being was reconfigured under the gaze of the separate development policy. The lesson to be fond of Mathanzima’s government would be imparted through his portrayal as

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<sup>8</sup> Rundle, Margaret. “Accommodation or confrontation?” 109.

<sup>9</sup> Rundle, Margaret. “Accommodation or confrontation?” 109.

<sup>10</sup>Rundle, Margaret. “Accommodation or confrontation?” 110.

harbinger of independence and the ‘national’ independence day

The constrained imagining framing of Africans is not surprising since its father, Hendrik Verwoerd, eagerly wished to reform the education for Africans “so that natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Africans is not for them... There is no place for him (the Black child) in European society above the level of certain forms of labour.”<sup>11</sup> This attitude of apartheid’s social engineers shows how obsessed the nationalists were with determining the future of African children in white South Africa. This was achieved by “centraliz[ing] control of African education from the churches and provincial authorities to the Bantu Education Department which was dedicated to keeping it separate and inferior.”<sup>12</sup> At the same time, missionary schools were put in a compromising situation of either closing down or receiving government funding with the condition that they accept a “racially discriminatory curriculum administered by a new department of Bantu Education.”<sup>13</sup> We should understand that the intended disturbance on missionary schools was another way of re-imagining African children in line with the nationalist agenda of total control and segregation. I then think it is safe to argue that the question of African people’s place in the apartheid regime was one of the state’s priorities as it somehow dictated the lifespan and manifestation of the apartheid project.

The policies introduced by the apartheid regime turned schools reserved for African children into sites to advance and maintain the colonial status quo. Education was not merely about the acquiring and acquainting of African children with knowledge deemed useful for their adult roles in the near future but it was reflective of 1948 politics and aspirations of the NP. Apartheid aspired to produce ‘tribal’ subjects that would have rights only within the

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<sup>11</sup> “Bantu Education Act – South Africa.” Overcoming apartheid, building democracy. <https://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/sidebar.php?kid=163-581-2>.

<sup>12</sup> South African History Online. “Bantu education and the racist compartmentalizing of education.”

<sup>13</sup> Shepherd, R. H. W. “The South African Bantu Education Act.” *African Affairs* 54, no. 215. 140.

homelands. They used Bantu education to “artificially resuscitat[e] outmoded ‘tribalism’” by inculcating ethnic philosophies in the minds of children.<sup>14</sup> This education system sought to create a sense of artificial ethnicity and a sense of being. Upon graduation, such educated subjects were imagined to be proud of their imposed identities, which would limit their rights within the borders of their so-called independent ‘homeland’. At Blythswood, for instance, children were acquainted with notions of being amaXhosa, which in turn meant that their citizenship was restricted within the Transkei borders.

However, this genocidal tool, the Bantu Education Act, has been studied by various scholars from different political affiliations and racial backgrounds. It is a genocidal tool owing to its complicit involvement in undertaking ideological manipulation and economic genocide by the apartheid regime.<sup>15</sup> This scholarship can broadly be divided into two camps, which are differentiated by the broad question they address. The first camp’s question is “why colour became such a critical fault line of social division”, while the second camp is preoccupied with “examin[ing] the ways in which rigid forms of racial discrimination have helped to facilitate capitalist growth and provide whites with material and political benefits.”<sup>16</sup> Both camps have contributed in and to the discourse of apartheid and the forgotten Bantustans.

The first camp of historians do not focus on the link between the educational training of African children and their access to the economy. Instead, they seek to understand the reason

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<sup>14</sup> Tabata, Isaac B. “Education for tribalism.” *Pall Mall* (1960). 11.

<sup>15</sup> There is a scholarship which contests the notion of limiting genocidal acts to physical destruction and an intent to wipe out an ethnic or national group of people. This definition is argued to be frozen in time as it came out of the Nuremberg Tribunals in 1945. The emerging scholarship argues for the expansion of the definition in international law so as to hold accountable regimes or groups of people who commit crimes outside the current framework. The proposed crimes include economic and cultural genocides. In this line of thinking the apartheid government is held accountable for perpetrating crimes that amounted to economic and cultural genocide. Please read Lemkin, Raphael. *Axis rule in the occupied Europe: Laws of occupation, analysis of government, proposals for redress*, Washington: Carnegie Endowment for the International Peace, 1944. Also Nogqala, Nogqala, Xolela. “Naming Apartheid and South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.”

<sup>16</sup> Beinart, William and Dubow, Saul. *Segregation and apartheid in twentieth-century South Africa* (New York: Routledge, 1995). 4.

why race become a point of departure for all the segregationist laws under the apartheid regime. With regards to understanding the Bantu Education Act as a segregationist policy, the first camp of scholars took it as their lifetime mandate to uncover how the educational training of African children has been tied up in the politics of legitimising racial superiority of whites and the preservation of the empire. Key scholars in this camp include Deborah Gaitskell and Sarah Meny-Gibert, to mention a few. Their contributions played a very significant role when formulating this chapter, in understanding how the apartheid state imagined the African child.

The second camp can be understood as including radical historians from a variety of racial and economic backgrounds, who produce histories that seek to question education's connection to the production of economic dependence and an African labour force. Beinart and Dubow label this camp "revisionist' scholarship" due to the fact that it "extended economic interpretation of imperialism and analysed the motivations for segregation in economic terms."<sup>17</sup> Here "racial beliefs were understood as the product or rationalization of economic imperatives."<sup>18</sup> Utterances about the Bantu Education Act being directly linked with economic imperatives can be spotted in the works of Peter Kallaway, Martin Legassick, Pam Christie and Colin Collins, to name a few. Kallaway has been bold enough to make remarks that "the investigation of educational issues has to be located within a broader context of political, social and economic change if we are to grasp the more general, structural significance of shifts in educational policy."<sup>19</sup> Duma Nokwe, although he preceded the revisionist school, viewed the subjects prescribed for African children to "have been oriented economically and socially with an aim to develop in the Bantu child social

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<sup>17</sup> Beinart, William and Dubow, Saul. *Segregation and apartheid in twentieth-century South Africa*. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Beinart, William and Dubow, Saul. *Segregation and apartheid in twentieth-century South Africa*. 7.

<sup>19</sup> Kallaway, Peter. "Introduction". *The history of education under apartheid*. 1.



consciousness and responsibility” which suggests the notion of inculcating a work ethic.<sup>20</sup>

This line of thinking deserves to be credited for hinting that the apartheid project was not entirely a political project, but rather a segregationist project intended to isolate Africans from economic and political spheres. They make it clear that the Bantu Education Act, as a segregationist policy, was tied up in the redistribution of wealth and the production of the labour force. The educational training of African children was specifically targeted at preparing them for an adulthood of labouring in white industries and farms as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers with no prospects of occupying any managerial position.<sup>21</sup> I think it is safe to point-out that the educational training of African children had nothing to do with acquainting and acquiring skills with value in the job market, but geared towards normalising dispossession and making labouring seem natural.

In the main, the revisionist scholars strongly argue for some continuities between colonial and apartheid administrations with regards to the sustenance of the capitalist system. Their point of departure is that “the measures introduced in 1953 were to a large degree a particular response to the needs of capitalist accumulation in the period as a whole.”<sup>22</sup> This argument converts the classroom into a site where class based struggles were introduced and manifested with the help of the academic curriculum coupled with the hidden curriculum. According to them “the reproduction of capitalist agents – capitalists and workers – needs to be secured for the continued functioning of capitalism.”<sup>23</sup> It is no coincidence that African children got to imbibe a doctrinaire curriculum that sought to fix them as working class subjects for life. Here schools under the apartheid regime are understood to be “designed to objectify the children and avoid any possibility of free and independent thinking, or critical

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<sup>20</sup> Nokwe, Duma. “Bantu education in action.” 16.

<sup>21</sup> Christie, Pam, and Collins, Colin. “Bantu education.” 69.

<sup>22</sup> Christie, Pam, and Collins, Colin. “Bantu education.” 62.

<sup>23</sup> Christie, Pam, and Collins, Colin. “Bantu education.” 61.

skills equipping them to question the white supremacist policies of the regime.”<sup>24</sup> This notion was not new in the South African education system as the previous regime had used it to rationalise domination and dispossession while framing African children as being in need of constant European supervision. The apartheid regime followed suit in framing Africans as lifetime subordinates and this fed directly to their agenda of centralising the economy and maintaining the production of a cheap labour-force.<sup>25</sup> This is one of the instances where the nationalists inherited an attitude in relation to the schooling of Africans from the colonial state, and they tweaked the notion objectifying pupils to best fit their aspirations. The end-goal of the whole ordeal can be traced directly to the idea of deciding who gets to be an employer and who is a servant. With that being said the Marxists – as they are often referred to for their probing on the interrelationship between state policy and the capitalist accumulation – believe that the educational training of the African children was specifically targeted at preparing them for the life of being the working force, and to normalise landlessness and socio-economic dependency.

Even though I am not a Marxist, I fully subscribe to their route of investigating the economic implications of the education offered to African children. Here it is largely accepted that the “investigations of educational issues has to be located within broader context of political, social and economic change if we are to grasp the more general, structural significance of shifts in educational policy.”<sup>26</sup> This means that recollections about the Bantu Education Act should be centred on the political and socio-economic realities of the time under study, not just some chronological relaying of historical events. It is because of this reasoning that I follow their methodology in understanding the connection between Bantu Education Act and

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<sup>24</sup> Serper, Alon. “Democratic education practices in South Africa: a critical reflection on a dialogic perspective.” Unpublished paper, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Serper, Alon. “Democratic education practices in South Africa.” 12.

<sup>26</sup> Kallaway, Peter. “Introduction.” *The history of education under apartheid*. 1.

the project of side-lining Africans in the country's political and economic spheres, as well as in having access to natural resources. The revisionist approach has helped me to unpack and understand the connection and discontinuities between the Bantu Education Act and the maintenance of colonial legacies in this chapter. In other words, to understand how such legacies continued to find relevance in a post-colonial era.

This route of investigation compelled me to think outside the box and always expect the unexpected with regards to the imagining of Africans through the schooling system, and what the white private sector sought to benefit from such conduct. It made me think of the unthinkable, such as education being not natural but entangled in a variety of issues. These include production of labour-force, the framing of citizenship and maintenance of the status quo. It is an unthinkable ordeal that the allergic reaction possessed by African children to being competitive with their white counterparts in the economic sphere was instilled during their schooling days. This was achieved successfully by portraying Africans as mere spectators in the infrastructural and economic development of South Africa. Duma Nokwe brings to the fore evidence asserting that “no mention is made of the fact that these industries (mining, commerce and industry) really exist by exploiting African labour. Throughout the whole course, the Africans are presented as lifeless clods of earth upon which mysterious forces are acting to shape their destiny.”<sup>27</sup> There is no way that African children could escape this psychological manipulation as it was encrypted in the history they were taught. Psychologically, this instilled a mindset that Africans do not take part in the economic spheres and it can only be whites who lead all the resources that generate income for the country.

In turn, the hidden curriculum imparted in schools aimed to turn classrooms of children with

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<sup>27</sup> Nokwe, Duma. “Bantu education in action.” *Liberation*, no. 13. 17.

different personalities, talents and aspirations into a single character. This single character was constituted by attributes ranging from lacking innovation to readiness to serve, which directly fed the agenda of directing the African youth to a labouring life. This was partly achieved through the structuring of Social Studies in a manner that celebrates the contributions made by the state and missionaries to the development of Africans and the country as a whole, while Africans featured as mere spectators in the whole ordeal.<sup>28</sup> Psychologically, this can be read as disciplining and limiting the imagination of African children, as they were only exposed to the notion of Africans as labourers and employees in white farms and industries. For those who managed to further their studies, their horizons could maybe stretch as far as serving in the Bantustan governments as teachers, nurses or functionaries of the Bantustan administration; the rest could only think of labouring in white farms and industries. They were only introduced to the life of an African as an employee or a subsistence farmer, so it was expected of them to only visualise themselves as future labourers and employees in white farms, mines and industries. The idea of owning land and industries or acquiring training in professions that would enable them to compete on a national or global scale was taken off the table at a tender age.

This aspect of limiting imagination of African children is one of attributes of Bantu Education that somehow got inherited by the democratic education. Currently, this aspect is packaged in a subtler manner and presented as advancing education. It is subtle in a sense that public schools focus mainly on imparting pupils with subject related knowledge, and exercises are presented as being of great importance in the advancing of pupils' comprehension and writing skills. In actual fact, they are limiting the world-view of pupils. I remember how shook I was when I got to university and learned that there were careers such

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<sup>28</sup> Nokwe, Duma. "Bantu education in action." 16-17.

as – just to count the few – geology, aviation, physiotherapy, pharmacology and medical bioscience. My shock was somehow not surprising considering that in high-school we were presented with careers such teaching, nursing, working in the agriculture sector or being lawyers. There were no mention about venturing into entrepreneurship and invention was off the table since our education had nothing to do with mentoring talents. My teachers were in a rush to finish the syllabus and maintain the school's pass rate.

Meanwhile, the history I did from grade 8 to grade 12 was a Western history with a little bit of South African history at the end of grade 12. In grade 8, for instance, we did the French Revolution and learned about the four great philosophers – Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Diderot – who were very influential in the revolution. For the longest time I never thought that there were African philosophers. The ordeal of being a philosopher was presented as a rare quality, so my teacher forgot to bring it home. She even framed Steve Biko as a mercenary of the African National Congress and it is funny today when I look back to how messed up things were back then. On the other hand, the activities that we were given for languages, isiXhosa and English, sought to instil the aspect of labouring but in a subtle way. In both courses, for instance, we were taught of the differences between the formal and informal letter. The most problematic aspect of this exercise was the contents of the formal letter as we had to write it as if we are looking for a job in particular company. It is only now that I realise that we were being prepared to be servants.

Seemingly, the apartheid regime introduced educational policies that sought to engineer the socio-economic spheres so as to accommodate their racist agenda. Scholars, such as I. B. Tabata and Duma Nokwe, have labelled the Bantu Education Act as a one way ticket to the retribalisation of the African child. Tabata argued that “Bantu Education became a means to

artificially resuscitating an outmoded tribalism” that belongs to an “outmoded tribalism”.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, Nokwe felt that the Bantu Education curriculum was “designed to inculcate a strong tribal consciousness, acknowledgement and acceptance of what has been prescribed for his tribe; obedience to the laws; and the function of education is to make him accept all these naturally and willingly.”<sup>30</sup> Seemingly, Bantu Education became a tool to acquaint African children with the life that awaited them in the 1960s – the life of Bantustans. And then the technique to ‘tribalise’ the education system fed directly into the plans of the apartheid state to isolate and marginalise Africans to the outskirts of the country. Here though, a different African subject was imagined, as the future elite, the African child was imagined to be the key player in the development and maintenance of its respective ‘tribe’. They were seen as half European and half tribesmen. To the eyes of the government they were fit to fill the administrative posts in Bantustans ‘governments’ due to their assimilation with the Eurocentric modes of life and close ties with their ‘tribes’. I think it is safe to conclude that African children were being programmed with a purpose to fit in their respective ‘tribes’ that were to be reinvented in the 1960s.

### **Apartheid vs. Colonial Education for Africans**

The comparison between educational policies for the African child, which were passed during the tenure of apartheid and colonial times, is often met with leniency towards the colonial administration from leading intellectuals such as Duma Nokwe and Tabata. Their leniency emanates from the relative possibilities it offered to African children in comparison to apartheid, which they felt was taking Africans ever backwards. Both regimes envisioned a

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<sup>29</sup> Tabata, Isaac B. “Education for tribalism.” 11.

<sup>30</sup> Nokwe, Duma. “Bantu education in action.” 16-17.

common end goal to educational training, which included normalising dispossession, creating a literate African workforce, assimilating Africans with European modes of life and so forth. In this regard, colonial education always emerges as toxic-friendly educational training for African children. The following section of this chapter will focus on a comparison between educational policies under apartheid and colonial administrations.

Before we can draw the differences between the educational policies put to the fore by the colonial and apartheid administrations, I see it fit to inform, and remind, my reader of how each administration understood the project of educating African children. This will enable us to fully comprehend why each administration adopted certain educational policies. In the main, this strategy will unveil how policy makers perceived and imagined African children in line with the mandate of the state at that particular moment in time. With that being said, the idea to educate the African children during colonial times emerged from a perspective that educational training came as motivation for self-development. “The Aborigines’ Protection Society” which was “a metropolitan humanitarian organisation that grew out of the Anti-Slavery Society” is said to have proposed that colonial administrations in “British colonies should offer education to the colonised people as a gift of civilization.”<sup>31</sup> Under colonial times, as discussed in the previous chapter of this mini-thesis, the educational policies came into effect as measures to transform or ‘civilise’ the colonised and to equip them with skills that were to enable them to live in ever changing capitalist colonies. The African child was imagined as being “transformed from savage to civilised, lazy to industrious and heathen to Christian.”<sup>32</sup> This can be read as meaning that the colonialists saw education as a long-term investment in their colonies and a viable instrument to Europeanise Africans. To them civilisation pertained to wiping-out every aspect of Africanicity from the subjects that went

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<sup>31</sup> Swartz, Rebecca. *Education and empire: children, race and humanitarianism in the British settler colonies, 1833-1880*. New York: Springer, 2019. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Swartz, Rebecca. *Education and empire*. 11.

through their educational centres.

On the other hand, the apartheid regime introduced educational policies that sought not to empower and develop Africans in any manner. In essence, the policies introduced by the apartheid government sought to eliminate any form of socio-economic independence in African communities. Its apologists claim that apartheid educational policies, especially the Bantu Education Act of 1953, were in line with their mandate “to deal with cultural and religious differences in the sphere of public education.”<sup>33</sup> Their educational intervention fed directly into their racist agenda of dividing the country according to ethnic lines. As a matter of fact, the “educational reformists were inspired by a desire to avoid conflict between black and white people in the economic and political spheres, rather than by [the] unequivocal desire to promote the educational interests of black South Africa.”<sup>34</sup> In the same breath, Linda Chisholm believes that the “intended curriculum of Bantu Education was primarily to limit and reorient Africans political, economic and social aspirations away from a common political and economic life and towards a separated, rurally-oriented, ethnically-based life.”<sup>35</sup> I think it is safe for me to conclude that Bantu Education Act became a tool to recapture Africans into a frozen state of tribalisation that can be traced as far back as the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>36</sup> Precisely, the Bantu Education’s hidden curriculum was to inculcate new notions of being and to disillusion African children from a life of attaining independence from white industries and the state. In other words, the apartheid educational policies served to engineer African children so that they would live their adulthood conforming to its agendas. It is this reasoning that compelled me to think that their educational interventions were premeditated

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<sup>33</sup> Peter Kallaway. “Introduction.” *The history of education under apartheid*. 13.

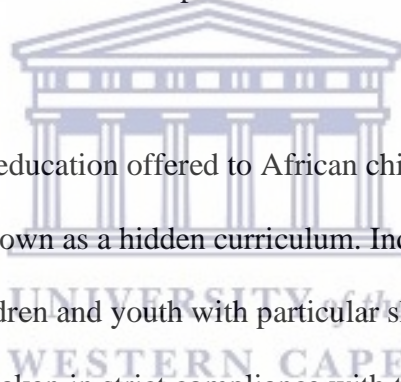
<sup>34</sup> Kallaway, Peter. “Introduction.” *The history of education under apartheid*. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Chisholm, Linda. “Bantustan education history: the ‘progressivism’ of Bophuthatswana’s Primary Education Upgrade Programme (PEUP), 1979-1988.” *South African Historical Journal* 65, no. 3 (2013): 408.

<sup>36</sup> See Vail, Leroy. *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa* and Rassool, Ciraj. “The Politics of Non-racialism in South Africa.”



and sequential and served to establish and defend the existing relationships to land and labour by both African and white communities. This argument resonates with the revisionist scholarship that argues that “for blacks who did attend schools, the overtly ideological dimensions of schooling were aimed at the reproduction of the sort of workers demanded by the capitalist system.”<sup>37</sup> In essence African children in schools were being accustomed to the labouring life that awaited them in their adulthood. The African child would grow up to be docile, comfortable with the life of being labourers in white farms and industries, naturally accepting punctuality, honesty, respect and courtesy as necessities of life, comfortable with being side-lined from the economic and politic affairs of the country, comfortable with the reality of landlessness, comfortable with European dominion and comfortable living restrictive lives.



The aforementioned aspects of education offered to African children during colonial and apartheid times form what is known as a hidden curriculum. Indeed, I regard this as the real agenda behind acquainting children and youth with particular skills and modes of life. Such acquaintance is carefully undertaken in strict compliance with the vision of the state and private sector. In the case of colonial administration, the African child had to endure educational programming for the colonial state to realise its vision to assimilate, dominate, divide and dispossess Africans.

Part of the colonial administration’s goal to divide and conquer Africans was achieved through an introduction of strategic educational schemes as discussed in Chapter 1. From these conditions of education one can conclude that the Cape Colony wanted to divide and assimilate Africans. Blythswood Institute, a missionary school, is no exception to this agenda due to the fact that it was built on the land that was dispossessed from amaGcaleka and later

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<sup>37</sup> Christie, Pam, and Collins, Colin. “Bantu education: apartheid ideology or labour reproduction?” 63.

awarded to amaMfengu for cooperating with colonisers. Assimilation would emerge as a prerequisite for enrolment and that Africans should denounce their ancestors and be born-again Christians. All the while dividing Africans by causing inter-national or inter-kingdom tensions by rewarding cooperation and punishing resistance to colonial domination.

The apartheid administration came into power to formalise and revitalise the successes achieved by the colonial administration with regards to the disillusionment of Africans. The Nationalist government's revitalising project in South Africa was geared towards the maintenance of power dynamics that had been put in place by their colonial predecessors. Apartheid educational interventions were mainly centred on redrawing the demarcation between who owns land and who works the land; who is the boy and who is the *baas*, and who is a first-class citizen and who is a subordinate. This is reflective from their "*baasskap* educational policy to ensure economic subjugation and continuance of a supply of cheap native labour force."<sup>38</sup> It is this perception that "schools were designed to objectify the children and avoid any possibility of free and independent thinking or critical skills equipping them to question the white supremacist policies of the regime."<sup>39</sup> The apartheid regime revived their predecessors' vision of normalising land dispossession and the life of being life-long boys. The homeland system was just another way of giving Africans false freedom and a distraction in the struggle for democracy. In the case of Transkei, it had all the characteristics of an independent state – national flag, anthem, prime minister, common history and a national identity – but it relied on the central state for finances, directives on education policies and other bureaucratic procedures. This was just a modernised version of custodianship, where white South Africa basically commissioned Kaiser Mathanzima to look after the land and subjects between uMzimkhulu and iNciba. His unquestionable compliance

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<sup>38</sup> Serper, Alon. "Democratic education practices in South Africa." 12.

<sup>39</sup> Serper, Alon. "Democratic education practices in South Africa." 14.

with directives from the white South Africa played into the racist perspective of Africa being in constant need of supervision.

### **Adaptation of education for African children**

Throughout time, the educational training of the African children has been kept in one position philosophically and has been modified through Acts so that the interests of the African child have never been paramount but always subordinated to the project of white domination. In other words, it has never been about the needs of the Africans, but it was centred on the Africans being trained to satisfy the needs of white industries and the central government. This information was and is rarely aired publicly – or at least not aired where it matters, on the ground – instead the central government continuously prescribes academic curricula in line with capitalist needs. As the largest population group on the land, the Africans are then brought into the picture but depicted as beneficiaries to the supposed progressive academic curriculums. Meanwhile they were destined to fall victims to the prescribed academic curriculums. It is this reasoning that compelled Rebecca Swartz to caution us that “all interventions in education need to be seen as a reflection of the social and ideological mores of a particular context and moments in time.”<sup>40</sup> So this utterance refutes the general assumption that education is natural and impartial. The next section will address in detail how the educational training of African children had adapted from colonial to apartheid times.

The timeline of educational policies passed since 1855 tells a story of how the state has imagined African children and how such imaginations have changed from time to time. The

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<sup>40</sup> Swartz, Rebecca. *Education and empire*. 4.

industrial and agricultural education, for instance, was reinvented by the Cape Colony governor Sir George Grey in 1895 in response to political and economic challenges of that time. At that time, the colonial state was faced with strong colonial resistance compounded by a high need for cheap labour in white industries and high consumption of European products. Hence, industrial and agricultural curricula had to be introduced into the curriculum in a way that provided “low forms of education for Africans to participate in a segregated colonial society in which their roles defined for them in a largely rural environment.”<sup>41</sup> This limiting curriculum was offered to “a specific group of Africans who were located within a strategic space as a buffer group on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony.”<sup>42</sup> And Blythswood thus came to be a factory to create an elite group among amaMfengu who would be comfortable with colonial domination; comfortable with labouring in white industries, and have a preference for consuming European products. Such moves had introduced the African family to further divisions as a new group of Africans, known as Amagqobhoka, emerged with a peculiar ideologies and belief systems.

The emergence of Amagqobhoka meant the introduction of amaMfengu to the life of not practising traditions; wearing European clothes, and commanding highest paying jobs across iNciba. Richard Davis defines Amagqobhoka as “those who had entered the cash economy, possessed some formal education, were Christians, or had assimilated prominent aspects of European culture.”<sup>43</sup> This drastic turn of behaviours and lifestyles was encoded into the DNA of those who attended at Blythswood and such distinctions still exist at the present moment. Even though education is accessible to everyone in my village, the families of those who became pioneers of ubugqobhoka still stand-out from the rest of the families. Such families do not take part in community activities, they do not practice traditions, they are Christians

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<sup>41</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curricula for South African rural schools.”72.

<sup>42</sup> Paterson, Andrew. “Agricultural and industrial curricula for South African rural schools.” 73.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Davis. ‘School vs Blanket and Settler.’12.

and they own huge pieces of land. It is still apparent who the early adopters of school attendance were. All of my grandfather's stories as a young boy revolved around herding livestock, stick-fighting with his peers and court-shipping with girls – there was no mention of him going to school or the church. Blythswood and the Grey Plan Scheme of 1855 created a two-world village where Amagqobhoka and abengubo<sup>44</sup> lived as neighbours who always accused each other of selling out and refusing to move on with times. In terms of the government's agenda this was an achievement, as the school had developed friends of colonialism, consumers of European products, Christians, and inter-kingdom frictions.

Meanwhile, the discovery of minerals in Kimberley and Johannesburg eventually led to the great demand for cheap labour to work on mines and further the lands that had been expropriated through the Land Act of 1913. It was in this context that the schools were turned into sites of grooming future labourers of white farms and industries geographically positioned far away from the rural areas. Their schooling was geared towards the inculcation of work ethics and values ought to be possessed by a typical cheap labour. In the main, the curriculum normalised the realities of living with all the arable land being owned by whites, Africans being bystanders in the administration of the country, and dependence being the order of the day.

Later, the educational training of African children had to adapt to politics of the 1920s. Such politics were reflective of the desires of the government and that of the white private sector. Both these entities desired to monopolise industrial education for whites only. As a matter of fact, “industrial education was envisioned as a strategy in the rehabilitation and upliftment of poor white classes, many of whose children were not in school.”<sup>45</sup> One can conclude that the government and the white private sector desired whites only to undergo industrial training

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<sup>44</sup> A term used in reference to African traditionalists.

<sup>45</sup> Paterson, Andrew. "Agricultural and industrial curricula for South African rural schools." 75.

and be absorbed to command high paying positions in white firms. As usual the educational training of African children had to take another knock by being weakened further with African children falling victims to the racist actions of policy-makers.

However, the visions and desires of the state took another turn in the early 1950s even though Blythswood and other missionary schools had been producing a labour force that aligned in many ways with its vision and desires. It was never enough for the Nationalist government that African children were enduring misinformation that was exposing them to exploitation and easy manipulation, the apartheid regime desired to ‘retribalise’ Africans while further excluding them in the political and economic spheres. This was achieved through the introduction of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 that laid the foundation for the desire to ‘retribalise’ African bodies. The Bantu Education Act came into existence to “limit and reorient Africans political, economic and social aspirations away from a common political and economic life and towards a separated, rurally-oriented, ethnically-based life.”<sup>46</sup> In a nutshell, both these Acts are reflective of what the state desired African children to be and how they ought to behave: the imagined African child was now also ‘tribalised’.

Psychologically, this hidden curriculum introduced African children to the illusion of how important it is to be loyal to their ethnic backgrounds. In Blythswood, for instance, the pupils were introduced to notions of being umXhosa, which fed directly to the project of legitimising the Transkei authority and limiting their sense of being within the constraints of Mzimkhulu and Nciba. They were schooled to be fond of Mathanzima’s Transkei authority as it was where they only had rights – their sense of being was reconfigured under the gaze of forming separate development policy. It feels unreal that Blythswood had been an active tool in the reintroduction of ubuXhosa and the establishment of new alliances to the supposed

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<sup>46</sup> Linda Chisholm. ‘Bantu education history.’ 408.

independences sponsored by Pretoria. I have always struggled to comprehend how an institution with such a history took part in the preparation of African children for their future of being led by the likes of Kaiser Mathanzima and Lennox Sebe, and being forced to be comfortable to live outside of South Africa while within her borders. I think I should just point out to my reader that Kaiser Mathanzima and Lennox Sebe were the prime ministers of ‘independent’ Xhosa Bantustan states – Transkei and Ciskei.

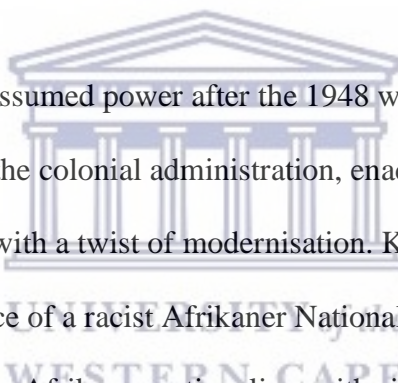
In turn, the ‘retribalising’ of African people fed directly to the agenda of the regime to deter Africans from partaking in the massive wave of decolonisation. This massive wave was coupled with global acquaintance with communism and most countries were beginning to gather support to fight colonial domination. In the South African case, African children were being hit with another form of domination where one’s ethnicity and racial classification played a major role. The schooling of African children was structured in a manner that naturalised allegiance to ‘tribalised’ puppet governments and distanced them from the goal of fighting for political and economic independence.

The viciousness of the apartheid policies caused a temporary amnesia as to how violent the colonial administration had been to Africans. Such amnesia created an impression that colonialists had the best interests of Africans at heart and that colonialism had ended.

Fortunately enough, there is an extensive scholarship that emanates from the debates about decolonisation. This scholarship brings to the fore a reality that colonialism did not end either with the establishment of Union of South Africa in 1910 or with the enactment of the Status of the Union Act in 1934, declaring sovereignty from imperial Britain; rather it continued to be the order of the day in South Africa post-1948 and even post-1994. In a nutshell, this chapter is in line with an argument that colonialism did not end and still exists in contemporary times but is wrapped and packaged in a different form. It changes faces under

each administration established – post-1910, post-1934 and post-1994 – but sticks to core mandates of the colonial enterprise. Such mandates include monopolising access to land and other economic infrastructures, securing the role of Africans in the country as labourers, defending and protect colonial legacies, disrupting any form of stability in the African family and creating an ever-lasting dependence on the state. The following section of this chapter seeks to trace and outline the colonial aspirations of relevance in restructuring the education system reserved for African children by the apartheid government.

## Conclusion



In many ways, the regime that assumed power after the 1948 white national elections assumed the responsibilities of the colonial administration, enacting laws that were in line with the desires of colonialism with a twist of modernisation. Keep in mind that at this stage colonialism had assumed the face of a racist Afrikaner Nationalist and that arguably colonialism had just evolved into Afrikaner nationalism with similar end-goals. I am cognisant of the fact that to many people I may sound as a conspiracy theorist. But tell me, is passing Bantu Education not being pro-colonialism? A quick recap, “the aims of Bantu Education was to facilitate the reproduction of the relations of reproduction in a docile form, so that these relations would appear natural and based on common sense.”<sup>47</sup> And this is what the colonial administration sought to keep as the hidden agenda behind the educational training of African children since 1850s.

Colonialism camouflaged under Afrikaner nationalism found relevance as the state and the white private sector desired to have an abundance of cheap labour that will be vulnerable to

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<sup>47</sup> Christie, Pam, and Collins, Colin. “Bantu education.” 69.



exploitation. Then the passage of Bantu Education Act, which was aimed at turning African children into nothing but docile and ever ready servants, must not shock us. But we should take this as an indicative of how colonialism reinvented itself in the 1950s and take time to think deeper about issues that could have given room for such reinvention. Accustoming African children to a life as lifelong subordinates and docility would benefit whites as they got to keep the land and there would be few possibilities of resistance. And we need to bear in mind that colonialism has zero tolerance to resistance hence African children were subjected to educational training that was aimed at silencing them.

Moreover, I think it is safe to make it clear to my reader that educational policies have direct relationship with access to land. Through this I wish that my reader and I could arrive at a common ground that in the 1950s colonialism was still very alive and that African bodies were racialised and ‘retribalised’ at the same time. Kallaway’s caution that “educational policies are an aspect of the struggle between different classes in society,” should also be taken very seriously.<sup>48</sup> The apartheid regime has proven this to be true when closely read in line with its educational policies. It passed the Separate Amenities Act in 1953 which made it legal to separate schools on racial lines, which forced African children into under resourced, underfunded and segregated schools. Thus the segregation of schools should be understood as establishing “the context within which children, differentiated on the basis of race, would be provided for unequally both in terms of the material environment of their schools and in terms of different curricula.”<sup>49</sup> Such legislated behaviours can be traced directly from colonial policy known as the 1905 Cape School Board Act. This Act was responsible for “formalizing segregation of schools”.<sup>50</sup> Under such circumstances the schooling subjects were being introduced to the life of segregation, and were being prepared for their places

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<sup>48</sup> Kallaway, Peter. “Introduction”. *The history of education under apartheid*. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Paterson, Andrew. ‘Agricultural and industrial curricula for South African rural schools.’ 75.

<sup>50</sup> Paterson, Andrew. ‘Agricultural and industrial curricula for South African rural Schools.’ 74.

within the apartheid state. For those attending Blythswood, these conditions sought to frame them as third class citizens, and they were being prepared for the reality that they were bound to receive services of inferior nature.

The move to segregate schools and other public amenities can be deciphered as a psychological preparation of the African children of the life that awaited them in the 1960s. A life where they were cut-off from the South African map for ethnically-based independent proto-states that were under-developed, under-resourced and under-funded like their schools. In lay-mans' terms, the segregationist Acts of the 1950s came into effect to lay a foundation for a reality that was to manifest in the 1960s where African children were to live in states formed on the basis of an invented and out-dated tribalism. Then the African children who went to school were imagined to be suitable to assume the bureaucratic roles of their respective Bantustans. Thus it was part of the plan to familiarise them with poverty and isolation in rural areas, so that they will not panic when faced with duties to manage their isolated and poor Bantustans. And this has everything to do with access to land, as Bantustans were strategically geographically positioned in lands that are destitute. In turn, this created an everlasting dependence on the state as Africans could not make any living on the land they were allocated within their respective homelands.

## *SNAPSHOT 3*

### *The colonial present*

#### **The Present Past at Blythswood**

Here we are living in times that were reached after tense deliberation between the delegation sent in by the African National Congress (ANC) and those representing the National Party (NP), to attend the Congress of the Democratic South Africa (CODESA) negotiations.

Amongst other matters, the distribution of power and the dismantling of racial lines were heavily debated in these meetings. And a rainbow-nation was said to be born after the 1994 democratic elections. This new regime came with benefits of living ‘freely’ as an African without being subjected to racist policies. I chose to put inverted commas on the notion of freedom to signal that it can be a coercive agency due to its ability to alter one’s perspective of self and being.<sup>1</sup> I am of the opinion that unquestionable acceptance of ideas may also limit one’s worldview, and as such I do not want to impose a single idea of being ‘free’ upon anyone.

However, schools also formed part of amenities that were waved as green flags for integration, which meant that an African child could be in the same classroom as the white

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<sup>1</sup> Duncan, Graham. “Coercive agency: Lovedale Missionary Institution Under Principal Arthur Wilkie and RHW Shepherd.” *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 38, no. 3 (2010). 13. 9-10.

child without the fear of racial discrimination and possible arrest. Once again Blythswood was at a juncture of changing the educational training it had been offering to its pupils since the second half of the 1800s. Such educational training under missionaries “promoted the notions of a congruence between the acceptance of ‘civilization’ (i.e. legitimacy of colonial rule) and the capitalist system that is represented, thereby incorporating the schooled into the elite labour market; they also helped to change social structures to fit in with European concepts of work and interpersonal relationships”.<sup>2</sup> One can conclude that Blythswood was offering an educational training that sought to normalise European domination and to forge an African elite group with European-like behaviour patterns. The normalisation of dispossession and domination fed directly to the idea of giving colonialism legitimacy. So in the colonial era Blythswood became an apparent site for expressing European values, norms and strategies, which included Christianity as the mark of ‘civilisation’ and how to rule Africans by dividing them. This thinking emanates from the conceptualisation of colonisation as “inhering less in political overrule than in seizing and transforming ‘others’ by the very act of conceptualising, and interacting with them on terms of their choosing...”<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, in the late 1950s the Blythswood’s classrooms witnessed the continuation of the colonial educational ideology, now sugar-coated as the Bantu Education Act. This Act gave life to the ‘outmoded’ colonial ideology on the educational training of the African children in times of mass-industrialisation and Cold War.<sup>4</sup> It is this reasoning that shaped the nationalists to believe that the education of Africans should be structured in a way that they “learn how to find their tribal place in white dominated society, therefore schooling must be centrally

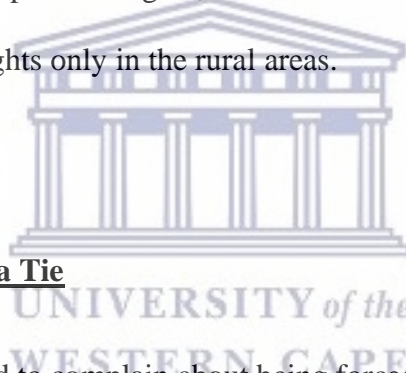
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<sup>2</sup> Kallaway, Peter (ed). *The History of Education under Apartheid, 1948-1994: the doors of learning and culture shall be opened*. Cape Town: Pearson, 2002. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Duncan, Graham. “Coercive agency.” 31.

<sup>4</sup> Wolpe, Harold. “Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid.” *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972), 427-428.

controlled.”<sup>5</sup> In a nutshell, the contents of the “intended curriculum of Bantu Education were to limit and reorient African political, economic and social aspirations away from a common political and economic life and towards a separated, rurally-oriented, ethnically-based life.”<sup>6</sup> This preoccupation to tailor the desires and aspirations of the African children can be traced as far back as the colonial times. Colonialist social engineers took it up as their mandate to programme the African children into conforming to what the colonisers declared as good and bad.<sup>7</sup> At this time Blythswood witnessed the roll-out of the camouflaged colonialism as apartheid education. Its classrooms became sites to normalise the life of landlessness and to legitimise European domination. All these politics were emanated from outside the school premises as the Africans had no political rights; no access to arable land; were permanent Peter Pans, and had property rights only in the rural areas.



### **The Wearing of a blazer and a Tie**

I remember how my sisters used to complain about being forced to wear a tie regardless of the weather conditions, but they all loved the blazer. The rule to wear a tie applied to everyone but the blazer at Blythswood was not compulsory in any way. I assume that the love for blazers might have emanated from the fact that owning one indicated one's affordability. So to them the blazer signified their financial statuses, as it was costly and not everyone had it. In this scenario, the blazer became the distinguishing effect between those who could afford the school's lifestyle and those who could not, while the tie stood as the common denominator.

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<sup>5</sup> Christie and Collins. “Bantu education.” 60.

<sup>6</sup> Linda Chisholm. “Bantu education history.” 408.

<sup>7</sup> Duncan, Graham. “Coercive agency.” 10.

At my school, J.S. Skenjana, the blazer and the tie were both compulsory to all pupils, but the blazer rules were more firm to boys. They used the culture card to force us into complying with the rule of wearing a blazer. Culturally, it is deemed a taboo in the Xhosa societies for men to walk around without a blazer or jacket covering their shoulders. We used to see this at ceremonies or community meetings, men have to firstly have something covering their shoulders before addressing the general public. In this instance, the blazer was used to trap boys into the stagnant culture that can have some colonial elements into it. This practice became a preparation for our roles as culture abiding adults. Meanwhile, the tie symbolised the adulthood life of being corporate occupants. We were sold the idea that wearing ties was going to help us fit in easily when working in offices.

In the main, the practice of wearing ties and blazers fed directly to the project of converting Africans into more ‘civilised’ individuals. The definition of who was civilised rested upon the mimicking of the European dressing code, and sums up the missionary efforts to transform African children into a peculiar breed of Africans.<sup>8</sup> Helen May argues that “re-clothing and often renaming of indigenous peoples are illustrative of missionary intentions to remake so-called Christians and to refashion peoples regarded as savages in the newly minted mould of civilization.”<sup>9</sup> So going to school for African children entailed learning how to behave and being in a colonial society, even the dress code became a huge part in being a reformed African. This practice can be read as a way of grooming African children into being individuals that will perfectly fit into the Eurocentric definition of what it means to be civilised.

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<sup>8</sup> May, Helen, Baljit Kaur, and Larry Prochner. *Empire, education, and indigenous education: Nineteenth-century missionary infant schools in three British Colony*. Routledge, 2016. Empire education and indigenous childhoods. 2.

<sup>9</sup> May, Helen et al. *Empire education and indigenous childhoods*. 3.

## **Blythswood Democratised**

The 1994 national elections did not only come with terms that sought to merge the supposed Bantu states, Transkei and Ciskei, into what is known as the Eastern Cape Province but also came with terms that democratised access to education. The democratisation of education eradicated the racial reservation of schools and academic curriculum. At this moment in our history all schools were labelled to be safe-zones to house children from different racial and economic backgrounds.

It is obvious that any government that argues to represent the masses would eradicate any aspect of discrimination in the education system. The democratic regime is endowed to have “rigorously eradicated any possibility for innovative thought or challenging the status quo” and being “designed to teach blacks how to be good tribal natives, and to halt their development.”<sup>10</sup> So it was expected of the democratic government to introduce a system that would be inclusive in nature and supportive towards the development of all citizens.

At this moment in our history, Blythswood experienced the equipping of African children with a peculiar ideology. Its classrooms were turned into sites of acquainting and equipping African children with the culture of democratic citizenry. It is this culture that the mere existence of the democratic state depends on for general support. As a matter of fact, Amy Gutmann and Sigal Ben-Porath add that “in democratic societies, schools bear a dual responsibility to help develop the in young people both the knowledge and skills that individuals need to live free lives and the shared values that citizens need to support the institutions that enable them to live freely.”<sup>11</sup> This move of incorporating the democratic

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<sup>10</sup> Alon Serper. “Democratic education practices in South Africa.” 16 & 17.

<sup>11</sup> Amy Gutmann and Sigal Ben-Porath. “Democratic education.” 1.

education into the academic curriculum can be read as the state's investment into its future. The future is then imagined to belong to the children they are educating in the present moment who will grow up with a better understanding of democratic processes. This effect guarantees the survival of the democratic regime in years to come.

In turn the democratic education program sought to follow on the footsteps of its predecessors by always having an agenda that is influenced by factors from outside the classroom. The culture of democratic citizenry has nothing to do with the academic curriculum or the educational training of the African children but it is centred on the government's objective of attaining an imagined future. Sonja Schoemann perfectly puts it that "an effective democratic citizenship education should not only provide learners with necessary knowledge but also provide opportunities for the development of desired traits of public and private character such as justice, respect for individual worth, fairness, co-operation, persistence, moral responsibility, empathy for others, caring, civility, respect for law, civic mindedness and honesty."<sup>12</sup> This can be read as the creation of desired subjects through the classroom which will have faith in the supposed democratic processes. The end-products of such program are imagined to be democratic citizens who will engage and participate in the democratic processes within the democratic confines. These processes include voting, legal strikes and so forth. And when narrowing down the argument into the Blythswood case, we can conclude that African children are being fed an ideology to be believers of the democratic dispensation.

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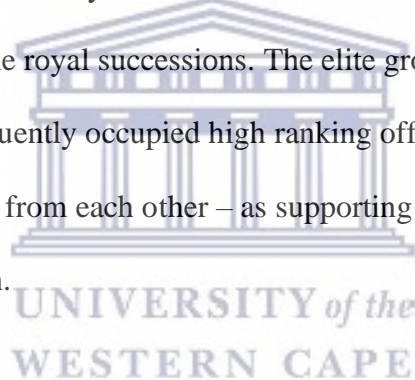
<sup>12</sup> Sonja Schoemann. "A blueprint for democratic citizenship." 130.



## Conclusion

In conclusion, this research project has attempted to draw a clear picture of how educational policies have been involved in the advancement of government aims since the nineteenth century, and how the South African white private sector have capitalised from the abundance of workers ever-ready to serve cheap labour. This line of thinking has led to the argument that educational training of Africans had nothing to do with acquainting them with valuable skills and good behavioural patterns. Rather it was all about advancing the desires of the missionary and colonial enterprises that included the neutralisation of anti-colonial resistance; the expansion of Christianity and the colonial Empire; the assimilation of African children so as to secure a life-time alliance and annihilating any hope of resistance; and, above all, to produce masses of aspiring servants. And the apartheid regime, when it assumed power, did nothing major aside from giving colonialism a new face and remodelling it to complement the capitalist desires of the second part of the twentieth century. In simple words, colonialism did not end but has been covertly operating through policies and Acts that seek to advance the colonial ideology. The Snapshots have outlined that the colonial legacies within Blythswood continue to live on. Although they focus on practices and symbols of colonialism, the Snapshots point out that it is very hard to get rid of colonial practices and rationales. Part of this reason is that they have been presented as natural and integral parts of the school's identity. This occurrence has rendered this hegemony immune to any form of disturbance. Moreover, I have learned that the African child was imagined to be fit to undergo an educational training that was geared towards instilling a mind-set of inferiority and always being in need of European supervision. This hidden agenda of education fed directly to the

vision of the state which revolved on the issue of blindsiding African children from their full potential in life. And when there is no sense of self-worth, then the individual in question is exposed to exploitation. In the case of African children, they were compelled to imbibe an academic curriculum buttered with side-effects that programmed them into possessing attitudes that were detrimental to their mere survival. They were offered an education that sought to “primarily limit and orient African political, economic and social aspirations away from a common political and economic life and towards a separated, rurally-oriented, ethnically-based life.”<sup>1</sup> This fed directly to the state’s agenda to establish ‘tribalised’ homeland systems which in turn further divided Africans and reshaped their politic and economic aspirations. The homeland system redrew the ‘tribal’ lines and positioned the elite African children at the top of the royal successions. The elite group was constituted by those who went to school and consequently occupied high ranking offices within the Bantustan states. This divided the African from each other – as supporting the homeland system meant accepting European domination.



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<sup>1</sup> Chisholm, Linda. “Bantustan education history: the ‘progressivism’ of Bophuthatswana’s Primary Education Upgrade Programme (PEUP), 1979-1988.” 408.

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