The Evolution of Professional Education in Swaziland and the Making of an Elite Class of Swazi Women 1925-1947

Shokahle R. Dlamini

Abstract
The year 1844 is one of the important dates in Swazi history, a time when the country witnessed the arrival of two Wesleyan missionaries, Rev. James Allison and Richard Giddy. Their arrival is not only important because it marked the beginning of Christianity in Swaziland, but is also important because it spurred other important social changes. These social changes included healing and education. The primary goal of missionaries in Swaziland, like other parts of Africa, was preaching and converting Swazis to the Christian religion. But this could not be successfully achieved without healing and education. As prerequisites to successful evangelization, healing and teaching were given the same amount of attention given to evangelization. As a result, by 1920, Western education was firmly established in Swaziland. But the Swazi system of formal education was still incomplete without professional institutions. In 1925, a Nazarene missionary made a break-through in the Swazi system of education by beginning nursing education. This paper therefore seeks to examine the evolution of professional education in Swaziland. It further explores the education system against which elite women emerged. It also demonstrates the relationship between the genesis of professional education and the emergence of this small class of professional women. As this connection is shown, the Swazi attitude to evangelization and the far-reaching effects of missionary education on women are clearly revealed.

1 Institute of Distance Education, University of Swaziland, P/B 4, Kwaluseni, Swaziland, Email: Shokahle@yahoo.com