

Werner D, Esterline D, Kang N & Raja J (Eds,) 2010. *Handbook of theological education in world Christianity: Theological perspectives, ecumenical trends, regional surveys*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster. xxix + 759 pages. ISBN 978 1 875053 87 2. Price ZAR

This monumental book is perhaps one of the least known but most important works emanating from the preparations for the Edinburgh 2010 world missionary conference. It's inspiration took only two years to materialise making it a work of substantial commitment. It is probably the most comprehensive exercise in gathering material on theological education on global perspective with a focus on the major themes at issue, contextual regional surveys and denominational perspectives ever undertaken within a positive ecumenical climate. Three markers define the approach adopted – quality biblical-theological education, authentic contextualisation and creativity. To these can be added various perspectives which mark recent developments in this field – interfaith dialogue, those with disabilities, HIV/AIDS, women, race, power and migration, post-colonial theological education and its relationship to the *missio Dei*. All of this comes under the umbrella of the framework of the Kingdom of God which is the prime objective of theological education.

The first section is devoted to significant themes including mission, gender, ecumenicity, innovative educational approaches and race, power and migration which reflect the enormity of change that has taken place during the twentieth century and into the twenty first. Not the least of these is the role of spiritual formation in education for the ministry, a very necessary yet much contested theme depending on the denominational perspective promoted. Then there is the *of bête noire* of theological education - finance. The second part moves to consider regional surveys. This part demonstrates the durability of ministerial formation in situations fraught with social,

political economic, cultural, ecumenical and inter-faith issues. Part three picks up the themes of denominational and confessional approaches to theological education and, strangely there are interesting common features throughout.

It is strange that there is not a greater emphasis on the viability and benefits of distance education. Yet, in addition to Mabuluki (chapter 14), it is good to have Nico Botha's (chapter 8) contribution on recent developments at the University of South Africa (UNISA) which attracts students from the global community. Outcomes based education has received much deserved criticism, although a more balanced critique would also reveal some of its benefits, particularly when aligned with a constructivist approach as Botha promotes.

This book will find a ready market among the target audience of theological educators, theological institutions and associations, church leaders, denominational boards, theologians as well as those who are involved in curriculum development and reflect on the history, diversity, challenges and opportunities provided by the need to prepare candidates for the wide variety of ministries that need to be exercised today.

It is apparent that while traditional approaches to ministerial formation are still prevalent, these have not remained unchallenged and transformed in many contexts. If ever there was an area of church life which demonstrates the ecumenical *semper reformanda* principle of the church universal it is the dimension of theological education in all its splendid variety. In addition, the low cost of this South African manifestation of the book makes it an extremely attractive purchase. In addition to being an excellent reference book it is provocatively stimulating and gives hope for the future of the church. All who read this can only offer strong support to the intention of the editors: 'May this book contribute to ecumenical networking, mutual solidarity and cross-cultural learning between theological educators around the world as they seek to work for the Kingdom of God and the unity of God's church on earth' (:xxvii).

*Reviewer: Prof GA Duncan, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, PRETORIA, 0002.*