

# Religious Diversity in Lesotho's Secondary Religious Education Syllabus: Genuine Inclusion or Superficial Tokenism?

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## ABSTRACT

Religious diversity has become an increasingly prevalent phenomenon worldwide, extending its impact to Lesotho as well. Lesotho accommodates a wide array of religious beliefs, encompassing Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and indigenous religions. In response to this burgeoning religious landscape, the prominence of Religious Education (RE) in Lesotho's schools has grown, with the current secondary RE syllabus incorporating a theme on religious diversity. While the inclusion of this theme represents a positive step toward addressing societal continuous transformation, a critical evaluation of the genuineness of this theme is imperative. Therefore, this study employs a qualitative case study approach grounded in the theory of knowledge-constitutive interests to scrutinize the authenticity and efficacy of the theme of religious diversity within the syllabus. For data collection, document analysis is utilized to examine the RE syllabus, while purposive sampling facilitated the selection of two syllabus components: Learning outcomes and Suggested learning experiences. Findings emanating from the analysis revealed that while certain aspects of the religious diversity theme strive to foster an authentic portrayal of religious diversity, a portion of the theme falls short in providing substantive content or meaningful engagement. As a consequence, this study suggests that the review of the RE syllabus should ensure its alignment with the evolving understanding of religious diversity and its continued relevance to Lesotho's religious context.

**KEYWORDS:** *Religious diversity, genuine inclusion, superficial tokenism, paradigm*

## INTRODUCTION

Recent trends in religious diversity have led to a proliferation of studies across the globe. It is widely acknowledged that our societies are shaped by diverse religious traditions, each emanating from distinct human experiences regarding the transcendent or supreme reality (Bano, Hassan & Razaq, 2022). Contrary to the notion that religious pluralism leads to societal fragmentation and hostility, Banchoff (2008) asserts that religious diversity “often advocates convergence, harmony, and compatibility between different religious traditions” (p. 4). This perspective suggests that religious diversity rejects any form of injustice towards adherents of other religions, instead fostering peaceful interactions among different religious communities within a shared cultural space. In the context of Lesotho, a tapestry of beliefs exists, encompassing dominant Christian traditions, as well

as Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i, and indigenous religious groups. To respond to the inescapable religious plurality, the educational system in Lesotho endorses the significance of religious education in fostering competencies for dealing with diversity and a deeper understanding of diverse faiths as conveyed in the first aim of the RE syllabus. To accomplish this aim of RE, the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) introduced a theme on religious diversity in the educational curriculum (NCDC, 2013).

Before the current secondary Religious Education was established in Lesotho, it is important to note that the introduction of Western formal education in the country can be traced back to the arrival of missionaries in Lesotho in the 1830s. It is widely agreeable among researchers that the education system introduced by missionaries at that time was

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based on Christianity. It appears that the principal aim of missionaries' education was to teach Basotho how to read and write as a means to make conversion effortless which was to be attained through reading and interpreting the Bible (Mokotso, 2017; Kurata, 2023b). What seems worrisome about missionaries' deeds is that they neglected the reality that Basotho had their own indigenous religions and education system. Langley (1979) corroborates this view, revealing that missionaries imposed Western books on Africans, teaching them Western values and history as if Africa had neither history nor religion. Furthermore, indigenous religions were demonized, and Christianity was considered the sole valid religion for one's eternal salvation.

Over time, the credibility of the Missionary education system waned as a result of the prevalence of issues including religious diversity. Kurata, Mokhets'engoane and Selialia (2023) report that the independence Lesotho received from the British colonial rule triggered a renewed interest for Basotho to revamp the curriculum to align with the needs of the country. Among other needs that Lesotho needed to address was the issue of dealing with the complexities of diversity. To understand what sometimes perpetuates the influx of religious beliefs in a space, Matemba (2009) who states that in countries where there is no state religion like Lesotho, migrants are free to practice their religions freely. Although Christianity remains dominant in Lesotho, a significant portion of the population actively identifies with and practices religions other than Christianity. For this reason, it became imperative to reform the curriculum in Lesotho to ensure that the Religious Education curriculum fosters skills, attitudes, and knowledge relevant to the contemporary world. For this reason, it became imperative that curriculum reform in Lesotho should be a matter of urgency so that the RE curriculum should foster skills, attitudes, and knowledge relevant to the world of work (Kurata, 2023a). It is important to highlight that there was an initiative to introduce a RE syllabus that Molelle (2006) and Mokotso (2020) confirm was pluralistic in nature and encouraged learner-centered pedagogies for moral development. Nevertheless, it was rejected by the church and it remained at a standstill while the government of Lesotho and the Church still negotiated on the syllabus implementation tensions.

Despite all failed attempts to reform the curriculum that is relevant to the context of Lesotho, it was only in 2009 that Lesotho managed to publish a comprehensive Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP 2009). Notably, the RE curriculum underwent reform and there are several noticeable changes in the

current syllabus. One of the fundamental features of the secondary RE syllabus is that it has included the theme of religious diversity which is also intended to foster values, skills, and attitudes to tackle various life issues, including religious discrimination (NCDC, 2013). The inclusion of the theme of religious diversity is vouched by researchers including Beckford (2003) and Bano, Ahmad Hassan and Razaq (2022) who admit that religious pluralism is considered the preferable approach today than ever as it promotes harmonious relationships among people of different religions. However, questions have been raised about the effectiveness and authenticity of the inclusion of this theme of religious diversity in the RE syllabus. Some argue that it might be a mere token gesture, lacking genuine commitment to promoting religious pluralism and inclusivity. For instance, Mokotso (2021) argues that it is unjust to define religious inclusion on the basis that Christians and non-Christians learn in the same classroom. The gist of Mokotso's sentiments is that religious inclusivism ought to resemble the genuine paradigm shift the teaching of religious education where the teaching of religion includes learners from diverse belief systems which deviates from the current practice of religious education which is Bibliocentric.

The arguments presented here about religious diversity and inclusivism emphasize the importance of the theme of religious diversity in the RE syllabus. However, to effectively implement this theme, it is crucial to understand the paradigms that underpin its teaching and assess their effectiveness in fostering religious tolerance, respectful dialogue, empathy, and understanding of religious diversity among students. Paradigms serve as the foundation for any subject curriculum, including the current RE curriculum in Lesotho (Lee, 2020). They provide guidance and a framework for teaching and learning religious diversity within the curriculum. Scholars such as Roux (1998), Baumfield (2013), Barnes (2014), and Gearon (2014) adopt Kuhn's (1962) definition of a paradigm as a collection of beliefs, values, assumptions, and methodologies through which a subject is comprehended and approached. Within the realm of religious diversity, various paradigms, including technical, practical, and emancipatory paradigms derived from Habermas' theory of knowledge-constitutive interests (1972), can facilitate the effective teaching of religious diversity by promoting the inclusion of virtues that enable students to coexist harmoniously with others in schools and societies.

Identifying the underlying paradigms within the Lesotho secondary Religious Education syllabus will shed light on whether the representation of religious

diversity truly reflects a sincere effort to embrace and respect different religious beliefs or if it is merely a superficial attempt to appear inclusive. This analysis will also provide insights into the pedagogical strategies employed to ensure that the topic of religious diversity is effectively taught, striking a balance between academic rigor, cultural sensitivity, and inclusivity. Currently, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis and understanding of the theme of religious diversity which is embedded in the RE syllabus. This, therefore, poses a significant challenge in assessing its impact on the syllabus. What we have to understand here is that the dominant paradigm within the syllabus can either hinder or promote the exploration and recognition of students' ability to engage with and appreciate the richness of religious diversity in Lesotho (Larson, Pasandaran & Katuuk, 2019). Therefore, this study aims to critically analyze the syllabus and explore the extent to which religious diversity is genuinely integrated into the curriculum, fostering interreligious dialogue, promoting tolerance, and encouraging students to appreciate the plurality of beliefs and practices.

### Research objective

1. Evaluate the authenticity and effectiveness of the inclusion of religious diversity within Lesotho's secondary Religious Education syllabus.
2. Examine the teaching methodologies employed in the syllabus to promote interfaith understanding and dialogue.

### Literature review

#### The underpinning theory

This study is grounded in Habermas' theory of knowledge-constitutive interests (1972), which provides a theoretical basis for examining the topic of religious diversity in Lesotho's secondary Religious Education syllabus. Habermas argues that knowledge is influenced by the underlying interests that individuals and societies have in acquiring and validating knowledge. These knowledge-constitutive interests encompass technical, practical, and emancipatory interests. Technical interest refers to the desire for instrumental knowledge and technical control over the world (Bowen, 1994). In the context of curriculum development, this paradigm helps assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the syllabus in achieving its objectives related to religious diversity. Practical interest, also known as the praxis-oriented paradigm, emphasizes the practical application of knowledge and skills in real-world contexts (Hamman, 2018). Within religious education, this paradigm evaluates how students are equipped with competencies to navigate religious diversity in their everyday lives. Emancipatory interest focuses on utilizing knowledge and skills to

be critical and reflective in the face of societal challenges (Cranton & Roy, 2003). In the context of religious diversity, this paradigm explores whether the inclusion of religious diversity in the syllabus encourages students to critically engage with different religious perspectives.

The theory of knowledge-constitutive interests provides a framework for critically examining the extent to which the syllabus supports the theme of religious diversity, assessing whether it genuinely serves the interests of technical effectiveness, praxis, and emancipatory education. By employing this theory, this study moves beyond a descriptive analysis of the syllabus, delving into the underlying intentions and implications of including religious diversity in the curriculum. It enables an exploration of whether the inclusion is a genuine effort to develop a more nuanced understanding of religious pluralism or a mere token gesture.

### Paradigms and Paradigm Shifts

In the field of education, curriculum development plays a crucial role in shaping students' learning experiences and outcomes. Within this process, a curriculum paradigm serves as a foundational framework that guides the design, implementation, and evaluation of educational programs (Adirika, 2020). These paradigms provide curriculum developers and teachers with a lens through which they approach the teaching and learning of any subject, including religious diversity. The concept of "paradigm" can be traced back to Thomas Kuhn's work on scientific revolutions (1996), defining it as a set of theories and methodologies that enable the scientific community to identify and solve problems, paving the way for future discoveries.

A curriculum paradigm shift occurs when the dominant paradigm fails to address contemporary problems, such as religious illiteracy and exclusivism, leading to the adoption of a new paradigm (Kuhn, 1996). However, there are cases where a paradigm maintains extended dominance despite accumulating anomalies until a new paradigm emerges (Le Poidevin, 2021). Additionally, multiple paradigms can coexist within a subject curriculum, providing complementary perspectives (Joseph, 2010). This coexistence allows flexibility for teachers to apply different approaches based on the context, fostering a teaching environment that embraces religious diversity.

### The Technical-Cognitive Interest in Knowledge Creation

The first paradigm identified by Habermas (1972) is characterized by its focus on the interaction with the social and natural environment. It shares similar traits

with the objectivist paradigm, as noted by Ewert (1991), in terms of its creation of positive knowledge. The technical paradigm holds significant influence in curriculum planning and development, as it centers around individuals with a technical interest who aim to establish objectives and laws to predict and control the environment (Bowen, 1994). Bowen's description reinforces Tyler's (1949) illustration of the technical paradigm, which involves planning for the desired outcomes, determining the content to be covered, selecting effective activities and methods, and implementing assessment measures to evaluate the achievement of objectives.

In the context of religious education (RE), the technical paradigm aligns with the scriptural-theological approach described by Gearon (2014). This approach emphasizes denominational pedagogy that focuses primarily on the reading of biblical scriptures, with a strong emphasis on memorization to meet examination requirements. One could also associate the technical paradigm with Gearon's psychological-experiential paradigm, which highlights the importance of early biblical reading for children's spiritual and moral growth, preparing them for adulthood. Admittedly, the technical paradigm was evident in the previous Cambridge Overseas Schools Certificate (COSC) administered in Britain, characterized by a teacher-centered approach where teachers held authority over students, who were passive recipients of knowledge, thus limiting their opportunities to create knowledge (Mokotso, 2020; Kurata, Mokhets'engoane & Selialia, 2023). Habermas (1972) criticizes such syllabi for their inadequacy in addressing moral and ethical questions, which are indeed fundamental in teaching topics such as religious diversity. Habermas argues that the technical paradigm tends to produce narrow-minded students who possess recitation skills and lack high-order skills for dealing with issues of diversity in their communities.

### **The Practical-Cognitive Interest in Knowledge Creation**

The second knowledge-constitutive interest Habermas (1972) introduced emphasizes practical interests. Le Poidevin (2021) has compared this paradigm with the interpretive paradigm since it holds that knowledge is created through the understanding of meaning. This paradigm is based on communicative rationality and relies on the interactions of people to share ideas, beliefs, and values in the lifeworld which could be schools or communities. In other words, this paradigm values the understanding of the meaning of what others communicate to you and the reasons for their action. When one communicates, the rationality or irrationality of a statement is considered and it is

based on concrete evidence that can support the claims based on cultural values or lifeworld and also be in a position critically question these assumptions, morals, and beliefs. To be precise, this paradigm emphasizes learning that involves understanding the meaning of what is communicated (Habermas, 1987; Gouthro, 2006).

In a classroom context, this paradigm suggests that knowledge is created when a learner, content, and teacher interact and admits the entire classroom culture as the curriculum. (Bowen, 1994). In other words, the curriculum is said to be anything that influences students' values, beliefs, and assumptions. According to Stenhouse (1975), this paradigm is against predetermined objectives but holds that a teacher has the liberty to change the pedagogical plan based on the context. Admittedly, this paradigm actively engages students in a knowledge-creation process and denounces the excess power of a teacher who is considered an expert in teaching religious diversity. Contrarily, Ord (2004) accentuates that a teacher assumes a role of a facilitator who guides through democratic methodologies that call for the active participation of students. On the basis that this paradigm considers students' experiences, it supports the teaching of religion as a phenomenon as it suspends a dogmatic and denominational approach to religious education. More importantly, it emphasizes an empathetic recognition of the experiences and intentions of students in a RE class and encourages the equality of their religions (Smart 1996; Barnes, 2001). The notion of equality for all religions also supports the historical-political paradigm which instills an understanding of the role of RE in achieving political goals such as the promotion of tolerance among culturally and religiously diverse populations such as in the case of Lesotho.

### **The Emancipatory-Cognitive Interest in Knowledge Creation**

Habermas (1972) introduced the paradigm known as the emancipatory paradigm, which centers on knowledge derived from self-reflection and the cultivation of consciousness. This paradigm holds that self-reflection leads to the realization of autonomy and responsibility, denoting a state of emancipation (Hamman, 2018). Its primary focus lies in sensitizing individuals on the influence of their past experiences on their present lives and shedding light on power dynamics within their societies. Through this process of realization, individuals achieve a state of enlightenment, which is considered a vital prerequisite for emancipation. It enables individuals to exercise their freedom and take informed action to challenge ideologies that perpetuate subjugation, encompassing areas such as sexuality, religion, and

education (Mezirow, 1981; Ewert, 1991; Cranton & Roy, 2003). Furthermore, the emancipatory paradigm underscores the significance of self-reflection as a crucial element for emancipation, as it allows individuals to recognize the underlying causes of their problems, including social and cultural structures that exert dominance over them.

In dealing with the theme of religious diversity, the emancipatory paradigm takes into account diverse religious affiliations, school contexts, and the socio-cultural backgrounds of students. As a consequence, RE teachers are obligated to foster a democratic classroom environment that empowers learners and contributes to the reconstruction of their societies (Dewey, 1980; Grundy, 1987). Within this context, teachers engage students in mutual communication and present challenges that encourage critical thinking about issues of social injustices. By consistently creating pedagogical scenarios and facilitating informed investigations into meaningful life challenges, teachers enable learners to engage in reflective practices. What can be observed is that this approach aligns with the philosophical pedagogy advocated by Wright (2007) for religious education, which emphasizes critical thinking and the pursuit of truth, as opposed to an approach focused on the rote memorization of information.

### Method

This employs a qualitative case study (QCS) approach to assess the authenticity and effectiveness of the inclusion of religious diversity in Lesotho's secondary Religious Education syllabus, as well as to examine the teaching methodologies employed in the syllabus to promote interfaith understanding and dialogue. According to Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer (2012) and Selialia, Mokhets'engoane and Kurata (2023), QCS enables a researcher to indulge in an in-depth collection, examination and presentation of data concerning a particular incident to learn more about it. For this reason, this approach is used to enable the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of the authenticity of the inclusion of the theme of religious diversity in secondary RE in Lesotho. For data collection, document analysis was employed to produce relevant data. Bowen (2009). stated that in the document analysis method "researchers analyze already available documents and data to explore a problem" (p.38). In this regard, the Lesotho secondary Religious syllabus was subjected to the analysis.

Purposive sampling was employed to select specific sections of the syllabus for analysis. The selected sections include learning outcomes (LO) and suggested learning experiences (SLE) related to the theme of religious diversity. The selection of these

sections is based on the notion that they entail adequate information for understanding how the topic of religious diversity is presented and taught. A coding scheme was developed to systematically analyze the content of religious diversity within the syllabus. The coding scheme consists of four main codes aligned with the research objectives. First, *Code 1* focuses on assessing the authenticity of religious diversity inclusion, considering aspects such as genuine representation and depth of coverage. Second, *Code 2* evaluates the effectiveness of religious diversity inclusion, examining whether there are suggested activities for students to engage in dialogue and interaction with peers from different religious backgrounds. Third, *Code 3* addresses teaching methodologies for promoting interfaith understanding and dialogue, exploring whether the syllabus encourages students to explore and discuss different religious beliefs and values respectfully. Lastly, *Code 4* aims to identify instances of superficial tokenism, such as symbolic references without substantive engagement.

The coding scheme was applied to the relevant sections of the syllabus. The data analysis follows a qualitative approach, which involves organizing, accounting for, and explaining the data to make sense of participants' perspectives and identify patterns, themes, categories, and regularities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The data extracted from the selected sections are systematically organized, allowing for the identification of patterns, trends, and relationships between the codes and the research objectives. Furthermore, the alignment between the stated intentions in the syllabus and the actual implementation of religious diversity is scrutinized. Lastly, the findings are considered based on the research objectives and their implications for broader educational practices.

### Findings and discussions

This current chapter presents the findings and discussions obtained from the analysis of the theme of religious diversity which is included in the Lesotho secondary Religious Education syllabus as Table 1 and Table 2 convey. It is worth noting that the findings of this study sought to address the two objectives of the study to (1) Evaluate the authenticity and effectiveness of the inclusion of religious diversity within Lesotho's secondary Religious Education syllabus and (2) Examine the teaching methodologies employed in the syllabus to promote interfaith understanding and dialogue.

*Objective 1: Evaluate the authenticity and effectiveness of the inclusion of religious diversity within Lesotho's secondary Religious Education syllabus*

**Table 1**

Code	Category	Relevant learning outcome (LO) and statement	Description
1	The authenticity of religious diversity inclusion	LO1- Teachers and learners discuss different meanings of religion. LO2- Teacher and learners consolidate common characteristics of religion. LO4- The teacher explains the importance of studying religion.	Clearly defines religion and its characteristics and states the importance of understanding different religious traditions and their practices
2	Effectiveness of religious diversity inclusion	LO1- Learners give examples of supreme beings in different religions. LO2- In groups learners find out common characteristics of religion. LO4- Learners name careers that can be followed by a person who has studied religion.	Suggests activities for students to engage in dialogue and interaction with peers from different religious backgrounds

The objective of evaluating the authenticity of the syllabus focuses on determining whether it provides a clear and accurate understanding of religion and its characteristics while avoiding favoritism towards any specific religious belief. The analysis examines how the definition of religion is portrayed and the consolidation of common characteristics within the RE syllabus. What stands out in Table 1 is that the theme of religious diversity in the syllabus aims to promote a genuine portrayal of religious diversity. It presents an inclusive understanding of the concept of religion and its characteristics, rather than promoting any particular belief system. This is a rather remarkable result as it aligns with the practical paradigm, which is accentuated by the RE syllabus for its potential to engage students in hands-on activities emphasizing as a result of learners' understanding of the meaning of communicated knowledge (Habermas, 1987; Gouthro, 2006). The approach taken in the syllabus is crucial in ensuring that students are exposed to a wide range of religious beliefs and practices, fostering a deeper appreciation for the diversity of religious traditions. This inclusivity is in line with the practical paradigm's emphasis on equality among all religions (Smart, 1996; Barnes, 2001).

Further analysis of the data as seen in Table 1 is that the syllabus incorporates activities that encourage students to explore examples of supreme beings in different religions, identify common characteristics of religion in group settings, and recognize career opportunities for individuals who have studied religion. The most interesting aspect of this result is that they are suggestive of students' engagement in meaningful interactions and dialogues with peers from diverse religious backgrounds. As mentioned in the literature review, practical and emancipatory paradigms advocate that teachers should assume the role of facilitators in the learning process (Ord, 2004; Dewey, 1980), and this seems to be reflected by the analysis. The likely outcome of adopting this facilitative role is that students explore various religious beliefs and values and connect them to real-world applications for addressing practical issues

*Objective 2: Examine the teaching methodologies employed in the syllabus to promote interfaith understanding and dialogue.*

**Table 2**

Code	Category	Relevant learning outcome (LO) and statement	Description
3	Teaching methodologies for interfaith understanding and dialogue	LO1- Learners find out information on the meaning of religion. LO2- In groups learners report their findings. LO4- Teachers and learners discuss different careers that can be followed by a person who has studied religion.	Encourages students to explore and discuss different religious beliefs and values in a respectful manner
4	Superficial tokenism	LO3- Teacher and learners describe theistic religion and non-theistic religions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher and learners refer to these Biblical texts: Acts: 17: 22-23, Exodus: 20:3-5, 1 Kings: 11:3-5 as examples of where mono-theistic and polytheistic religions were used.</li> </ul> LO4- Learners find out the background of Luke, the evangelist. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher explains reasons for Luke writing the Acts of Apostles.</li> </ul>	Only briefly mentions other religious traditions without providing substantive content or engagement.

The second objective of this study is to critically evaluate the teaching approaches and strategies employed in the Lesotho secondary religious education syllabus to foster interfaith understanding and promote tolerance, respect, and dialogue among students from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. The analysis conducted in Table 2 reveals noteworthy findings. Category 3 of the syllabus focuses on students finding information about the meaning of religion, sharing their findings in group settings, and engaging in discussions regarding different career paths associated with the study of religion. What is significant about this teaching approach is that it conveys the teacher's intention to encourage students to explore and discuss various religious beliefs and values respectfully. The alignment between this approach and the principles of multicultural and cooperative learning, as advocated by the practical paradigm, is evident. These findings also accord with our earlier observations, which showed the adoption of dialogical approaches is crucial in addressing religious diversity in contemporary societies (Jackson, 2019). This category demonstrates that the Lesotho secondary religious education syllabus employs teaching methodologies that effectively promote interfaith understanding and dialogue.

However, category 4 in Table 2 reveals a somewhat disconcerting finding. A significant type of religion, it is specifically stated that students should possess substantial knowledge about these other religions rather than merely identifying them. This finding is contrary to the aims of RE which posit that the subject aims to equip students with “the necessary skills to be able to lead constructive lives in the modern world (NCDC, 2013). It is surprising that while it is anticipated that students should delve deep into understanding other religions and their practice to foster inclusion competencies, they are only in learning about them. These findings corroborate the traits of the technical paradigm, emphasizing memorization (Gearon, 2014). These results raise questions regarding how a topic as complex as religious diversity can receive adequate attention in a syllabus that primarily focuses on a Biblicentric approach, as observed in the secondary education curriculum. It is fitting to suggest that this category reflects a potential weakness in the syllabus, where superficial tokenism may be present due to a lack of in-depth exploration of other religions hence, resulting in a superficial understanding of other religious traditions.

Further analysis shows that learners are encouraged to explore the background of Luke, the evangelist, and the reasons for his writing of the Acts of the Apostles.

While these activities offer insights into biblical knowledge, they limit the exploration of diverse religious traditions and may not sufficiently promote interfaith dialogue and understanding. Admittedly, this approach predominantly focuses on biblical knowledge, neglecting the in-depth study of other religions. Drawing from the perspectives of the scriptural-theological approach and the psychological-experiential paradigm as expounded by Gearon (2014), it is evident that this approach to religious education reflects a denominational perspective. The most disturbing part of these results is that the RE curriculum is claimed to have undergone a paradigm shift. However, it contradicts the parameters of a paradigm shift as the syllabus still mimics the anomalies of exclusive traits of the old COSC RE curriculum. As a result of this extended dominance of the denominational approach to religion, this could hinder the development of a comprehensive understanding of religious diversity and impede the effective promotion of intended competencies targeted by RE.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the Lesotho secondary religious education syllabus demonstrates positive aspects in promoting interfaith understanding and dialogue through certain teaching approaches. However, it also reveals weaknesses, particularly in the superficial treatment of other religious traditions and the limited exploration of diverse religious perspectives.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The analysis indicates that the RE syllabus incorporates teaching methodologies that encourage students to explore and engage in respectful discussions about different religious beliefs and values. This approach aligns with the multicultural and cooperative learning principles advocated by the practical paradigm. It emphasizes empathetic recognition of the experiences and intentions of religious participants and promotes equality among all religions. The inclusion of such methodologies in the syllabus is commendable as it promotes interfaith understanding and dialogue, which are essential for religious diversity education in contemporary societies (Barnes, 2001; Jackson, 2019).

However, the analysis also highlights a concerning finding in Category 4, where a significant portion of the theme of religious diversity is briefly mentioned without substantive content or engagement. This reflects traits of the technical paradigm, which emphasizes the memorization of religious texts for examination requirements. This approach does not foster inclusion competencies and inhibits the in-depth exploration of other religious traditions. It

raises questions about the comprehensive representation and meaningful engagement with religious diversity within the syllabus.

Furthermore, the emphasis on biblical knowledge and the neglect of other religious traditions limit the exploration of diverse beliefs and may hinder the promotion of interfaith dialogue and understanding. This approach aligns with the scriptural-theological approach and psychological-experiential paradigm, which can be denominational in nature and may hinder the development of a comprehensive understanding of religious diversity.

In conclusion, while the Lesotho secondary religious education syllabus makes efforts to provide a clear and accurate understanding of religion and its characteristics, some areas require improvement to ensure genuine inclusion of religious diversity. The findings suggest the need for a paradigm shift and a comprehensive review of the syllabus to balance the representation of various religions and foster a deeper exploration of religious traditions. Authentic inclusive religious education may require reengineering the entire syllabus to reflect a more inclusive and comprehensive approach. Based on the findings, the study therefore recommends that the ongoing review of the syllabus through consultation with stakeholders, including educators, religious institutions, and government bodies should ensure that the Religious Education syllabus remains relevant to the evolving understanding of diversity and aligns with the goals of the syllabus. contemporary religious education.

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