

# Content Analysis of Lesotho' Secondary Religious Education Syllabus: Assessing the Dominating Ideology and its Implication for Promoting Social Justice Competences among Students

Lehlohonolo Kurata

Department of Language and Social Education, The National University of Lesotho, P.O. Roma, Lesotho

## ABSTRACT

Curriculum development encompasses specific beliefs or ideologies regarding what schools should teach and the interactions between educators and students. These ideologies are embedded in subject curricula in varying proportions based on the educational goals intended. One of Lesotho's educational objectives is the pursuit of a just society. This study examines the Lesotho Secondary Religious Education (LSRE) syllabus to identify its dominant curriculum ideology and assess its impact on cultivating social justice competences among students. The study is grounded in Schiro's ideologies, focusing on LSRE's aims, pedagogy, and assessment, with the inclusion of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) of 2009 to provide context. The findings aim to inform educational practices, LSRE curriculum development, and Lesotho's policies in promoting a socially just societal environment. The findings reveal a plurality of ideologies in the LSRE syllabus, with a particular emphasis on learner-centred (LC) and social-reconstructive ideologies within the aims. It was also revealed that the scholar's academic (SA) ideology dominates the assessment of the LSRE syllabus. The recommendation is that assessment methods within LSRE should include both theoretical assessments and practical evaluations, allowing students to demonstrate their understanding of social justice.

**KEYWORDS:** Religious Education, ideologies, social justice, competences

## INTRODUCTION

In the pursuit of national development, nations rely on their educational curriculum as a guiding framework to achieve overarching objectives. Matee (2019) emphasizes the crucial role of curriculum reform in addressing societal needs and expectations, including social concerns. The process of curriculum reform heavily depends on curriculum ideologies, which Schiro (2008) and Alanazi (2016) describe as personal convictions regarding what schools should teach and why, thus influencing the interactions between educators and students. Within the realm of curriculum ideologies, Schiro (2008) identifies four primary curriculum ideologies: scholar-academic, social efficiency, learner-centred, and social reconstruction. The presence of multiple ideologies within a curriculum is common in various subject curricula, including Lesotho. Raselimo and Mahao (2015) affirm that despite curriculum reforms often

representing a paradigm shift, each curriculum encompasses a variety of ideologies.

This paper aims to comprehensively analyse the Secondary Religious Education (LSRE) syllabus in Lesotho to assess the prevailing ideologies within it and understand their implications for the advancement of social justice education. Religious Education (RE) plays a pivotal role in shaping the beliefs, values, and worldviews of secondary school students (Hannam & May, 2022). By examining curriculum ideologies in the context of RE, critically evaluating the sections of the syllabus, and summarizing the findings, this analysis seeks to improve the teaching and learning of RE for the promotion of social justice. The paper undertakes this endeavour by discussing curriculum ideologies in relation to the RE syllabus, conducting a critical

**How to cite this paper:** Lehlohonolo Kurata "Content Analysis of Lesotho' Secondary Religious Education Syllabus: Assessing the Dominating Ideology and its Implication for Promoting Social Justice Competences among Students" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-7 | Issue-6, December 2023, pp.248-258, [www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd60133.pdf](http://www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd60133.pdf)



URL:

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analysis of the three sections of the syllabus (aims, pedagogy, and assessment) to identify the four ideologies and the most predominant ideology, and exploring its implications for the teaching and learning of RE to promote social justice competence.

### Background

Lesotho's government has made education a cornerstone of the nation's development and has implemented various policies and initiatives to enhance access to quality education (Ministry of Education and Training [MoET], 2009). One well-known initiative is the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) from 2000 through 2006, further anchored by legalizing the right to free and compulsory primary education in 2010 through the Education Act, 2010 (Government of Lesotho [GOL], 2010). Moreover, Lesotho implemented the Inclusive Education Policy of 2018 (LIEP 2018), founded on the principle of inclusive education that recognizes diversity in all respects (MoET, 2018).

Prior to this initiative, Lesotho underwent curriculum reform, giving rise to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework (CAP), 2009. This reform aimed to align Lesotho's education with contemporary needs such as the need for social justice (MoET, 2009). The framework aimed to address emerging issues pertaining to new demands, practices, and life challenges in the modern global world. These initiatives reflect Lesotho's commitment to providing access to education for all Basotho and promoting competencies, including social justice competences.

In 2009, Lesotho implemented a Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP), marking a departure from the subject and examination-oriented curriculum of the Cambridge Overseas Schools Certificate (COSC) adopted during the British colonial era (Mokotso, 2020; Kurata, 2023a). The CAP, 2009, is characterized as child-centred, encouraging active learner participation in the knowledge-creation process. Unlike the COSC curriculum, CAP, 2009 is organized into learning areas reflecting practical life challenges (MoET, 2009). Researchers, such as Raselimo and Mahao (2015), Selepe (2016), and Mokotso (2020), agree that CAP, 2009 represents a paradigm shift from the teacher-centred and exam-oriented COSC curriculum. To understand the concept of a child-centred curriculum, Siddiqui (2020) explains that such a curriculum places learners at the centre of teaching and learning processes, actively engaging them in the knowledge-creation process. The COSC curriculum was phased out due to its limited impact on adequately addressing Lesotho's socio-economic goals (MoET, 2009). CAP, 2009 on the other hand, is expected to yield positive results in

achieving the country's goals, including the creation of a socially just Lesotho nation.

The CAP, 2009 has a distinctive characteristic: it structures the curriculum into five learning areas. One of these learning areas aims to develop "appropriate skills and attitudes towards development and nurturing of positive relationships with others regardless of cultural, social, religious, or political differences and special needs" (MoET, 2009). The Personal, Spiritual, and Social (PSS) learning area focuses on the cultivation of social justice competences crucial for individuals to thrive in our pluralistic world. Notably, Religious Education (RE) is part of the PSS learning area within CAP, 2009. It is important to understand that RE is therefore considered an integral part of the national curriculum for the purpose of introducing students to world religious beliefs (Kurata, 2023c) and instilling moral values and principles in students, fostering social justice competences (MoET, 2020). It is clear from this description that RE within CAP, 2009, is not primarily aimed at indoctrinating learners with religious dogmas but at empowering students to become agents of change, fostering relevant competences, including a sense of morality and empathy to address inequality, discrimination, and social injustices.

### Statement of the problem

It has been noted that curriculum policies often encompass a variety of ideologies, and their influence holds the potential to positively contribute to achieving societal goals. Building on this perspective, Ball (1994) asserts that it is unquestionably ideal to unpack a curriculum and assess its suitability in addressing societal goals. Several studies, including those by Mnguni (2013), Marulcu and Akbiyik (2014), Moea (2022), and Makoa (2023), have explored ideologies and the dominant ideology in curriculum subjects. However, none have specifically focused on the Lesotho Secondary Religious Education (LSRE) syllabus.

It is important to emphasize that there is currently an overarching goal to promote social justice competences aimed at reducing the prevalence of social injustice in Lesotho (MoET, 2020). Therefore, it seems appropriate to scrutinize the Lesotho Secondary Religious Education (LSRE) syllabus for the dominant ideology and its potential implications for the promotion of social justice competences among students. This study might contribute to improvements in curriculum development, teaching practices, and educational policies towards the development of social justice competences among LSRE students.

### **Research questions:**

To ensure a full coverage of the work elaborated, the following questions will be addressed:

1. What is the dominant curriculum ideology present in the Lesotho Secondary Religious Education syllabus?
2. To what extent does the Lesotho Secondary Religious Education syllabus contribute to the cultivation of social justice competences among students?

### **Literature review**

#### **Curriculum ideologies**

When designing a curriculum, it's important to consider various educational beliefs to ensure the curriculum is suitable for the country's needs. This approach, which involves incorporating educational beliefs, is supported by Marulcu and Akbiyik (2014), who suggest that curricula should be enriched by drawing from certain sets of beliefs known as ideologies. Schiro (2008) identifies four distinct categories of these ideologies: Scholar Academic (SA), Social Efficiency (SE), learner-centred (LC), and Social Reconstruction (SR) ideologies. Each of these ideologies has its own set of assumptions regarding: first, the type of knowledge that should be taught in schools. Second, how learners should be taught in schools. Third, the roles of teachers and students. Lastly, the purpose of assessment (Mnguni, 2013; Marulcu & Akbiyik, 2014). These underlying assumptions form the foundation for each ideology, and we will delve into each of them in more detail below.

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#### **Scholar academic (SA) ideology**

The SA ideology encompasses a system of beliefs that serve as a guide for educational practices and the

organization of content knowledge, its delivery, and its assessment within the academic setting (Marulcu & Akbiyik, 2014). It is further clarified by Schiro (2013) that SA ideology is rooted in the notion that education should prioritize the intellectual development, the cultivation of critical thinking skills, and the pursuit of knowledge. Schiro (2013) summarises that the SA ideology distinguishes itself through certain key aspects which include its emphasis on academic disciplines, the transmission of knowledge, the processes of teaching and learning, matters pertaining to the curriculum, and the access of educational opportunities to everyone.

#### **Prescribed Content**

According to Schiro (2013), Scholar-academic ideology places a strong emphasis on well-organized content knowledge, which is usually considered objective. Knowledge is seen as something that can be transmitted and acquired, and content knowledge is typically organized into disciplines such as mathematics, science, literature, history, and the arts. Additionally, Cotti and Schiro (2004) point out that this ideology structures content knowledge using clear statements that highlight disciplinary expertise. It divides subjects into distinct areas and provides a structured curriculum that outlines what students should learn and the order in which they should learn it. This ideology highlights the importance of having a well-organized curriculum. Content knowledge is usually organized into various academic disciplines like mathematics, science, literature and REs, further divided into specific subjects and topics to help students build a solid foundational understanding in each field (Heywood, 2018).

#### **Teaching and Learning Activities**

Teaching in the Scholar Academic ideology tends to be more transmissive, where teachers are viewed as the primary sources of knowledge. Terms such as "acquire" and "supervise" may be used in instructional materials, indicating a more traditional, didactic approach (Heywood, 2018). Social interactions in this approach may be more teacher-centred, with students expected to listen and absorb information from the instructor. Even though discussions and group activities may be present, they may not be as central as in more interactive educational philosophies. Schiro (2013) adds that Scholar Academic curricula tend to be less flexible and may not provide significant room for teachers to adapt or modify content.

#### **Assessment**

In the Scholar Academic ideology, assessment primarily takes a summative approach, aiming to measure how well students have mastered the

prescribed content Mnguni (2013). Traditional assessment methods like end-of-year exams, standardized tests, and quizzes are commonly used to evaluate students' understanding of the prescribed material. The focus is on assessing students' knowledge and comprehension, with a greater emphasis on end-of-year exams over continuous assessment. Scholar Academics believe assessments should be objective and serve for ranking and evaluating students (Schiro, 2013).

### **The Social Efficiency ideology**

The Social Efficiency Ideology is an educational philosophy that places a strong emphasis on the practical and utilitarian aspects of education, with a focus on preparing students for specific roles in society (Schiro, 2013).

### **Prescribed Content**

In the Social Efficiency ideology, knowledge is seen as more subjective, with an emphasis on practical application and problem-solving. The goal is to equip students with skills and information that are directly applicable to real-world situations (Kasuga, 2020). Mnguni (2018) states that content knowledge in this ideology is often organized with an emphasis on practical skills and knowledge relevant to the workforce. The curriculum is designed to prepare students for specific careers and occupations, and it may be structured to align with the needs of the job market. According to Schiro (2013), SE educators believe that curriculum objectives must be stated in behavioural terms, as observable skills, capabilities for action, activities people can perform, or demonstrable things people can do. The need to state objectives this way is to prepare students for specific roles in society

### **Instructional process**

In the context of the Social Efficiency Ideology, the instructional process involves a more interactive and hands-on approach to teaching and learning. Emphasis is placed on practical skills and problem-solving (Alanazi, 2016). Teachers, as outlined by Moea (2022), often take on the role of facilitators, guiding students in applying knowledge to real-world situations. Social interactions within this ideology tend to prioritize collaboration and problem-solving, incorporating elements such as group projects, internships, and apprenticeships into the instructional process. Additionally, the curriculum under the SE ideology allows for some flexibility to adapt to the specific needs of industries and professions (Marulcu & Akbiyik, 2014).

### **Assessment**

Assessment of the Social Efficiency (SE) ideology, as described by Heywood (2018), is primarily diagnostic

and formative. It aims to assess students' readiness for specific careers and identify areas requiring further skill development. Assessments in this ideology are often performance-based, focusing on real-world tasks and skills. According to Mnguni (2013), they aim to measure students' ability to apply their knowledge and skills in practical contexts. Continuous assessment and practical evaluation typically hold more significance in the SE ideology than end-of-year examinations (Schiro, 2013).

### **Learner-Centred (LC) ideology**

The aim of this ideology is to create more conducive school settings for students to learn. The conducive environment implies that student interact freely with teachers in knowledge creation. The Learner-Centred ideology places a strong emphasis on individualized learning, personal growth, and the development of the whole child (Siddiqui, 2020; Francis, 2022).

### **Prescribed content**

In the Learner-Centred ideology, knowledge is seen as a means to foster the holistic development of the whole child, often viewed subjectively with a focus on personal growth and exploration (Schiro, 2013). Mnguni (2013) adds that content knowledge in the LC ideology is organized with an emphasis on the individualized needs and interests of each child. The curriculum may be more flexible to accommodate diverse learning styles and paces, encouraging teachers to adapt content to meet the specific needs of students.

### **Instructional process**

Teaching and learning in the Child Study Position Ideology are typically interactive and student-centred. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students in exploring their interests and learning at their own pace (Sha, 2020). The curriculum may incorporate project-based and inquiry-based learning. Additionally, group projects, discussions, and personalized learning experiences are common features of the instructional process. Learner-centred teaching creates an environment that encourages students to deeply engage with the material, develop a dialogue, and reflect on their progress. It represents a shift away from the traditional didactic approach and puts the students' learning at centre stage (Farahani & Maleki, 2014).

### **Assessment**

According to Schiro (2008), assessment in the Learner-Centred ideology is primarily formative and diagnostic. It aims to identify individual strengths and areas for growth, guiding the development of personalized learning plans. Assessments are often individualized and may include a combination of traditional tests and performance assessments,

measuring students' progress in relation to their individualized goals and interests. Continuous assessment and ongoing feedback play a significant role in this ideology, emphasizing personalized and ongoing evaluation rather than relying solely on end-of-year examinations (MoET, 2009).

### The Social Reconstruction (SR) ideology

The Social Reconstruction ideology is an educational philosophy that places a strong emphasis on social justice, equity, and the transformation of society through education. It views education as a tool for addressing social issues and empowering individuals to create positive change (Schiro, 2013).

### Prescribed content

In the Social Reconstruction ideology, knowledge is perceived as a tool to critically analyse and address societal problems, emphasizing a subjective understanding to uncover the root causes of social issues and drive change (Peña-Sandoval & Jiménez, 2020). The curriculum centres on social justice, activism, and scrutinizing existing social structures to empower students as socially conscious citizens, aligning with Freire's (1998) emancipatory curriculum model, which aims to cultivate critical consciousness. The Social Reconstruction ideology aims to create an educational atmosphere that prioritizes the unique needs and development of each learner, fostering a sense of social responsibility and critical thinking skills to tackle real-world issues

### Teaching and learning activities

Teaching and learning activities in the Social Reconstruction ideology are often inquiry-based, focusing on critical thinking and problem-solving (Kharbach, 2023) Teachers act as guides and mentors, helping students explore social issues, challenge existing norms, and develop a sense of social responsibility. Social interactions emphasize collaboration, critical discussion, and engagement with real-world problems. Group projects, debates, and community involvement are central to the instructional (Kasuga, 2020).

### Assessment

Assessment within the framework of the Social Reconstruction Ideology primarily assumes a formative nature, with the purpose of measuring students' comprehension of social matters, their ability to critically analyse issues, and their potential to effect social change (Mnguni, 2013). Common methods of assessment encompass performance evaluations, projects, presentations, and discussions, all of which serve as indicators of students' active involvement in social matters and their endeavours to generate positive societal influence. The emphasis lies on continuous assessment and ongoing evaluation, rather than relying solely on end-of-year examinations. The key objective is to assess students' contributions toward addressing social issues and their grasp of the consequences their actions bear on society (Marulcu & Akbiyik, 2014).

### Methodology

This paper employs Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) to analyse Lesotho's Secondary Religious Education (LSRE) syllabus, aiming to identify the predominant curriculum ideology and assess its potential impact on the development of social justice competences. As defined by Gribbs (2002), QCA is a technique for collecting and analysing textual content, chosen for its ability to provide rich descriptive data, as advocated by Stake (1995). This method facilitates an in-depth exploration of ideologies within the LSRE syllabus and their implications for promoting social justice competences.

For data collection, Document Analysis (DA) is utilized, defined by Bowen (2009) as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents. The Grade 11 RE syllabus is purposively selected and analysed, acknowledging the potential limitations of DA, as noted by Makumane and Ngcobo (2021). To address this, the CAP, 2009 is incorporated to supplement in the analysis. The curriculum analysis inventory by Schiro (2008) is employed for the analysis. It consists of six open-ended questions serving as the analysis guide, detailed in **Table 1** below:

**Table 1 An instrument for analysing grade 11 Religious Education syllabus**

Purpose of analysis	Data sources	Open-ended questions
To analyse the grade 11 Religious Education syllabus in order to determine the dominant ideology and its implication for the promotion of social justice competence	Grade 11 Religious Education syllabus	a) What is the aim of the curriculum? b) What kind of knowledge is prescribed in the curriculum? c) How is learning supposed to take place? d) What is the nature and the role of students in the learning process? e) What is the role of teachers during instruction? f) What is the purpose of assessment?

## Findings and Discussion

### Aims of the grade 11 RE syllabus

The examination of the objectives of the grade 11 RE syllabus reveals that RE encompasses a plurality of ideologies. The initial set of objectives, 1 and 2 as indicated in **Table 2**, are both in accordance with learner-centred and social reconstruction ideologies. These objectives highlight the cultivation of religious awareness, appreciation for religious diversity, and critical comprehension of how different belief systems address modern challenges, including social injustice. They encourage students to actively participate in interfaith dialogues, promoting tolerance, empathy, and respect for diverse cultures and faiths, thereby contributing to a more equitable and interconnected society. The SR ideology emphasized in this context suggests that students are developed to become valuable members of society, and actively involved in resolving societal problems, including social issues (Schiro, 2008). The LC ideology emphasized here urges students to be actively engaged in their learning process.

Furthermore, the second set of objectives has shifted towards scholarly academic ideology, although the fourth objective also encompasses a learner-centred ideology. This set of objectives redirects its focus towards the scholarly study of religious texts, particularly the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. They appear to promote instructional methods where a teacher would impart Biblical teachings to passive learners which is one feature associated with SA ideology. Even though this approach equips students with a theological comprehension of Christianity, it limits their development of social justice competences. As **Table 2** reflects, the fourth objective encourages a critical approach to biblical texts that promotes analytical thinking skills to interpret Biblical texts in order to address concerns, including social issues.

The three objectives of the syllabus in **Table 2**, namely objectives 5, 6, and 7, align with social reconstruction and social efficiency ideologies. Concentrating on objective 5, it specifically emphasizes fostering an understanding of the role of religion in shaping societal values and norms. This objective demonstrates how religion can contribute to the development of values, some of which are related to social justice. Furthermore, objectives 6 and 7 both emphasize the cultivation of competencies necessary for the professional world. Objective 6, in particular, emphasizes the practical cultivation of competences to navigate the complexities of the contemporary world. Such competencies would include social justice, conflict resolution, and resilience. Similarly, objective 7 focuses on the development of a range of transferable skills and attitudes to ensure that students are prepared for diverse challenges, equipping them to adapt to various life contexts such as the contemporary world which grapples with social issues.

**Table 2. Analysis of the aims of grade 11 RE syllabus**

Aims	Schiro's ideological perspective
1. Develop religious awareness and appreciation of religious diversity	Learner-centred, Social reconstruction
2. Reflect on religious responses to contemporary issues	Learner-centred, Social reconstruction
3. Acquire a knowledge and understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ through a study of Luke's gospel and the development of the early Christian church through a study of the acts of the apostles	Scholar academic
4. Develop and enquire critical approach to the study of biblical texts and the ideas they contain and the ways they may be interpreted	Learner-centred, Scholar academic
5. Recognise and appreciate the contribution of religion in the formation of patterns of beliefs and behaviour	Social reconstruction
6. Develop positive attitudes to social behaviour and the skills for coping with life challenges	Social efficiency
7. Develop a range of transferable skills and attitudes	Social efficiency

### Prescribed content knowledge of grade 11 RE syllabus

The organizational structure of the grade 11 RE syllabus also reflects a variety of ideologies. One such ideology that is apparent in the syllabus is the Scholar Academic ideology. This ideology is evident

in the categorization of the syllabus into themes and sub-themes. These themes, such as "What is religion?" and "Jesus and the early church," provide a framework for the study of religious content. Additionally, the sub-themes further explore Jesus' life and teachings through the study of Luke's gospel,

as well as the early church through the study of the Acts of Apostles (MoET, 2020). This organization provided an orderly structure RE curriculum reflecting the learning experiences to be learned and the suggested teaching and learning activities that guide how students should learn. Furthermore, the syllabus is well-structured into three categories, namely the syllabus overview, the Activity plan, and the suggested assessment strategies which are meant to guide on the content that has to be learned and how it should be learned. This categorization aligns with the trends of SA, where knowledge is presented in a structured manner as didactic statements that represent Religious Education as a discipline (Cotti & Schiro, 2004).

In addition to the SA ideology, the syllabus also reflects the Social Reconstruction (SR) ideology in its organizational approach. The content of the syllabus places emphasis on social issues, equity, and societal challenges. This emphasis can be seen in the various learning areas that focus on the development of skills, values, and attitudes aimed at addressing social issues such as discrimination, poverty, social injustice, and crime, among others. The syllabus promotes values such as sharing, compassion, charity, and acceptance as means to address these societal challenges (MoET, 2020). Thus, the syllabus reflects both the SA and SR ideologies in its organization content.

### **Instructional process grade 11 RE syllabus**

The pedagogy of the grade 11 RE syllabus is heavily influenced by learner-centred ideology, as evident in the majority of suggested learning experiences that encourage the active participation of learners. These experiences involve engaging learners in discussions, discoveries, and other activities that actively involve them. These practices align with the principles of LC ideology, which emphasizes the interactive relationship between teachers and students (Schiro, 2008). The dominance of learner-centred ideology is an inspiration from the CAP, 2009 which states that the “pedagogy must shift more towards methods that can develop creativity, independence and survival skills of learners” (MoET, 2009).

Conversely, the syllabus also reflects the influence of scholar academic ideology. The transmission of new knowledge is an integral part of the teaching and learning process as influenced by objectives 3 and 4 as indicated by **Table 2**. This is exemplified when learners are required to read and memorize Biblical texts. This ideology places much of the influence in the teaching and learning of LSRE as this part weighs 20% of the score marks in both paper 2 according to the assessment scheme of LSRE syllabus (MoET, 2020). What we need to understand is that paper 2

encompasses questions (a) and (b). In particular, question (a) targets Assessment Objective One (AO1), which requires students to relate, narrate, and describe Biblical stories. These demands apparently indicate that teachers ought to play the role of knowledge transmitters, allowing students to comprehend and master the subject matter, which aligns with the tenets of SA (Mnguni, 2013).

Moreover, the Grade 11 RE syllabus also encompasses the ideologies of social efficiency and social reconstruction. Some Suggested Learning Experiences (SLE) explore ways in which students can address societal issues such as racism, unemployment, and fraud. These experiences, which promote reflection, mirror the principles of social reconstruction ideology, suggesting that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge to actively participate in addressing contemporary problems in their communities (Schiro, 2008). On the other hand, some SLE focus on equipping students with practical skills such as information retrieval, reporting, analysis, leadership, and other skills relevant to the professional world. In this regard, it is accurate to associate these practices with social efficiency, as they indicate that students are provided with the skills required in the workplace (Mnguni, 2013).

### **The role of students in the instructional process of grade 11 RE syllabus**

The CAP of 2009 places a strong emphasis on learner-centred pedagogy. It proposes that learners should take on more responsibility for their own learning processes and be capable of independently identifying, formulating, and solving problems, as well as evaluating their own work (MoET, 2009, p. 18). This highlights the importance of actively engaging students in the RE, rather than simply providing them with knowledge while they remain passive. The SLE of RE also reflect this, as they encourage students to actively participate in the learning process and develop skills for personal and social development. For example, SLE in Learning Experience (LO) 5 suggests that learners should investigate the background of Luke, the evangelist (MoET, p. 3). These types of activities are common throughout the majority of the RE syllabus, indicating that LC ideology dominates the syllabus.

However, aim 3 and 4, as shown in **Table 2**, promote a remote learning strategy associated with Scholar Academic (SA) ideology. They emphasize the importance of rigorous intellectual inquiry, critical thinking, and deep engagement with academic subjects. The use of the verb ‘acquire’ implies the gaining of knowledge, skills, or understanding, with students being the recipients. Additionally, the

mention of a critical approach to Biblical texts aligns with the scholar academic ideology, which values questioning and challenging ideas (Schiro, 2008).

### **The role of teachers during instruction of grade 11 RE syllabus**

According to the CAP, 2009, learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning curriculum are encouraged. Teachers are encouraged to be facilitators in the learning process unlike experts by employing activity-centred, participatory, and interactive methodologies (MoET, 2009). The grade 11 RE syllabus also reflect such LC approaches since a significant number of SLE reflect the involvement of learners actively involved. For instance, the SLE in LO8 states that “learners share their experiences where they have repented and are forgiven and where they forgave others” (MoET, 2020, p. 6). The SLE such as these ones reflects the teacher’s role as only a facilitator to the learning process.

However, aim 3 and 4 as shown in **Table 2** suggest a scholar academic approach where a teacher has authority in the learning process. Raselimo and Mahao (2015) indicate that the use of verbs such as ‘acquire’ as used in aim 3 in **Table 2** are suggestive of SA ideology where a teacher is an expert who transmits knowledge and skills into passive students (Schiro, 2008). In the RE syllabus for example, a teaching and learning activity of learning experience 3 states, “Teacher explains types of religions: theistic and nontheistic” (MoET, 2020, p.2). The SLE such as these one indicates that a teacher is the source of information, which is one feature of SA ideology (Schiro, 2008).

### **The purpose of assessment for grade 11 RE syllabus**

Assessment in the CAP, 2009, places considerable emphasis on three modes of assessment. The initial mode of assessment is formative assessment, which encompasses both diagnostic and continuous assessment. The second mode is the monitoring of educational progress through national educational assessment. The final mode of assessment is a summative assessment, conducted for the purposes of selection and certification (MoET, 2009). The CAP, 2009, seems to take into account the diverse objectives of assessment. When considering the grade 11 RE syllabus, it becomes evident that there is a greater emphasis on the SA ideology. This is manifested in the fact that the grade 11 syllabus is evaluated through two written examination papers, namely papers 1 and 2, for the purpose of certification. The aim of this assessment is also to assess students’ ability to master the knowledge and skills they have acquired. Undoubtedly, this aspect

aligns with the SA ideology, which places importance on end-of-year exams, standardized tests, and quizzes (Sha, 2020).

Furthermore, the syllabus reflects the LC ideology, which incorporates continuous assessment as a means of providing feedback on the students’ progress in relation to their individualized goals and interests. This perspective is supported by the suggested assessments that are specifically designed for continuous assessment purposes. One crucial aspect that should not be overlooked is that since every SLE in the grade 11 syllabus is geared towards the development of skills and attitudes, it is evident that the assessment often measures the students’ acquisition of skills for the world of work and for self-improvement, which is one feature of SR ideology. For example, many of the suggested assessments require students to identify virtues and vices in miracles and parables. It is undeniable that such assessments are designed to evaluate the students’ ability to contribute to addressing social issues such as discrimination, crime, and social injustice. Additionally, these assessments aim to evaluate the students’ attainment of relevant skills that are essential in the world of work which is one feature of SR ideology. Although the assessment of grade 11 RE syllabus put more emphasis on SA, the influence of the LC, SR and SE ideologies is not overly pronounced. This is because, in the field of RE in Lesotho, assessment primarily focuses on the cognitive domain, as evidenced by the pen-and-paper assessments with little emphasis on authentic assessments which are characteristic traits of the SA ideology (Kurata, 2023b). However, the pen-and-paper assessments fail to adequately assess the moral development and skills that are crucial in the teaching and learning of RE in Lesotho for the purpose of promoting social justice competences.

### **The ideologies of the RE syllabus and the implications of the dominant ideology**

Based on the findings, the analysis demonstrates that the grade 11 RE curriculum encompasses a multitude of ideologies. With regard to the objectives of the grade RE curriculum, LC and SR ideologies are given more prominence than other ideologies. The LC ideology implies that the curriculum places greater emphasis on democratic teaching and learning, encouraging students to take ownership of their own learning (Schiro, 2008). This autonomy empowers students to be independent in exploring real-world issues including social justice. This is only possible since LC ideology puts emphasis on the practical application of knowledge to address real-life issues. This signifies that the objective of CAP, 2009 to

address contemporary issues, including those related to social injustice, could be accomplished.

Moreover, there is a notable emphasis on SR ideology in the objectives. This ideology enables students to critically examine social structures and power dynamics (Schiro, 2008). The prevalence of this ideology within the RE curriculum suggests that the grade 11 syllabus enhances students' ability to identify and understand the underlying causes of social injustices. The emphasis on SR ideology is further emphasized in the broader aim of the RE curriculum that RE aims to promote the application of biblical teachings to significant contemporary issues such as respect for life, prejudice and discrimination, equality, HIV/AIDS, human and substance abuse, divorce, poverty, unemployment, corruption, and environmental concerns (MoET, 2020). One notable aspect of SR ideology is the promotion of cultural sensitivity. The presence of SR ideology in RE syllabus therefore implies that RE curriculum can incorporate content that fosters an understanding of diverse cultures, thereby cultivating empathy and a global perspective on matters of social justice.

Another finding indicates that the instructional process of the RE curriculum is predominantly influenced by the LC ideology. This signifies that students are provided with opportunities for independent research, projects, and presentations related to social issues. Consequently, they develop competencies in the realm of social justice. The learner-centred ideology within the instruction of RE positions the teacher as a facilitator while students assume an active role in the learning process. These roles rendered to both a teacher and a learner encourage the employment of participatory, activity-centred and interactive methodologies such as Project-Based Learning (PBL), which necessitates the application of knowledge to real-world contexts in order to tackle social challenges. This approach nurtures practical skills and critical thinking abilities that pertain to social justice competences (Abubakar et al., 2020). One other important feature of PBL is that it initiates collaborative learning which also entails meaningful discussions among students where they share their experiences. Admittedly, this approach has the potential to foster social justice competences.

The findings suggest that the assessment of the grade 11 RE syllabus is primarily influenced by the SA ideology. The prevalence of this ideology carries certain advantages. However, these advantages are outweighed by the limitations. Firstly, the SA approach that dominates the syllabus enables the assessment of academic writing and communication

tasks, allowing students to clearly voice their thoughts, arguments, and claims on matters of social justice. It assesses their ability to construct arguments and substantiate social justice clearly and coherently. Despite the highlighted advantage, the challenges of the scholarly approach to RE may exclude certain students from participation. It is common knowledge that the utilization of Bibles, which serves as the primary source for teaching RE in Lesotho, is not included in the books rental scheme where the government of Lesotho buy books and rents to students for a year who also pay a certain amount of money. This neglect presents a formidable challenge for students with poor economic background to acquire a Bible. Consequently, students' involvement in social justice topics is hindered, limiting their complete and comprehensive engagement. Additionally, the SA approach frequently places significant emphasis on theoretical perspectives. In fact, the evaluation of RE solely centres around the cognitive domain, predominantly assessed through written quizzes and examinations. This particular approach appears to restrict students' capacity to effectively apply academic knowledge to real-life issues related to social justice. The likely result of this type of assessment is that there may be numerous students who achieve commendable academic results but lack the necessary social justice competences to actively participate in social justice initiatives.

### Recommendations

- The LSRE curriculum should be assessed periodically to ensure its alignment with evolving social issues and to accommodate emerging concerns related to social justice.
- There should be a balanced representation of curriculum ideologies within LSRE to foster inclusivity and broaden students' understanding of social justice.
- Assessment methods within LSRE should be aligned with curriculum ideologies and effectively measure social justice competences. The assessment should include both theoretical assessments and practical evaluations, allowing students to demonstrate their understanding of social justice.
- Religious Education teachers should receive continuous professional development to enhance their understanding of diverse curriculum ideologies and how to implement social justice-oriented pedagogies effectively.

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