



“God is not Christian”: A case for decolonising of Religious education for inclusive education in Lesotho schools

Prof. Luvuyo Ntombana*

Department of Sociology, Anthropology and History
Nelson Mandela University
South Africa
Luvuyo.Ntombana2@mandela.ac.za

Rasebate Isaac Mokotso

National University of Lesotho and
Research Fellow in the Department of Religion Studies
University of the Free State
South Africa

Corresponding author*

Abstract

The main contention of this paper is that the current primary and high school curriculum in Lesotho is not much different from the colonial project. Although Lesotho is now a free country, the current curriculum still promotes Christianity over other religions. Even though more than 90% of school teachers are paid by the government, the curriculum on religious studies is still influenced by Christian churches and teachings. This paper traces the background of the current school curriculum on religious studies and further argues that what is considered “Religious Studies” is a continued indoctrination of Christianity which is exactly the same as the colonial project. We further contend that this situation is a serious violation of the Lesotho constitution and a lack of commitment to a number of other international protocols, international declarations and conventions on inclusive education of which the Lesotho government is a co-signer. We implore the Lesotho government to take responsibility and protect the cultural and religious rights of all citizens by introducing a more inclusive religious studies curriculum across the board.

Keywords: Religion, education, de-colonisation, Lesotho, inclusiveness

Introduction

Scholars agree that Christianity supported by European colonial powers and European culture reconstructed the face of religion, politics and culture in the African continent (Wanamaka, 1987; Nmah, 2010; Ntombana, 2015). Like in most African countries, the concept of formal education in Lesotho was introduced by Christian missionaries for whom Christian teaching was fundamental. Prior to the arrival of western education, African people had a more informal education which was embedded in various social practices, rituals and laws. For example, girls were taught and ushered by their mothers into womanhood, while boys were taught by their fathers on how to become a man. Moreover, there were rites of passage conducted through initiation schools to prepare girls for womanhood and boys for manhood. The main purpose was to cultivate good moral values expected in adulthood through an organised cultural education system.

On their arrival, western missionaries disregarded all African forms of knowledge, practices and spiritualities and as result introduced a western way of life and western methods of



thinking (Mills 1939:1). Missionary education systems were embedded in the Western Christianity. As a result, converts who were mostly educated became a group of elite African class. This elites group became detached from their traditional kinship-base and social structures, and entirely under missionary authority and influence (Pauw, 1975). Western schooling was associated with the religion of the “civilised”. African knowledge systems were systematically undermined during colonialism and the period of Apartheid in South Africa. Part of the process of undermining these knowledge systems was to instil a sense of inferiority among Africans (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1989). The western lifestyle was defined as enlightened or “better life”, which implied that the un-educated were living in darkness or were backward. The so-called Christian names in the form of Biblical names like “John”, “Joseph” and “Timothy” were a symbol of new identity amongst the educated and the Christianised. Pawl (2002:49) puts it so aptly that, “In Africa conversion and education or training went hand in hand. The teaching of missionaries and their control of education opened the way to the broader pressures of western expansion, to direct colonial rule and to “cultural imperialism”.

It was not only the African thinking and knowledge that was disregarded by western missionaries but also African religions and spirituality. From their arrival in the 19th century, missionaries perceived most African rituals and practices as evil and referred to African people as “worshippers of demons” (Anderson and Pillay, 1997:76). African spiritual beliefs and practices were considered barbaric and at times labelled “ancestral worship” or “worshipping the dead”. Therefore, it is a matter of fact that there was a thin line between colonisation and the Western Christianity. One can even argue that religion (in this case Christianity) was the leading vehicle in the transportation of colonisation and westernisation. Missionary societies that Christianised African people in the 19th century were financially funded by various western governments who were on the mission to colonise the “dark continent” (Pawl, 2002:49). Even though this may have been the case, scholars like Mbiti (1975:13) and others still argue that most African people still carried their religion with them because they only know how to live within their religious context (Mokhoathi, 2017). Therefore as much as the colonial project was to some extent successful in introducing western values and western morals through Christianity, even today most African people still adhere to their traditional ritual and religious practices.

It is undoubtedly a notable fact that the missionaries left their homes abroad to come to Lesotho and other African countries primarily to convert Africans into the Christian religion. However, they realised that conversion to Christianity was impossible among the illiterate Africans who could neither read nor interpret the Bible. As a result, education became essential to instruct Africans on how to read and write and how to live a new Christian life attuned to the Western civilisation. Arguably, the missionaries undertook the business of education not because they regarded education as good in itself, but because they realised they could not do their own major work of converting Africans without providing them with as much of the formal learning as was required for the study and translation of the Bible into vernacular. Christian education became essentially necessary to convert and increase the number of the Basotho converts (Ogunbado, 2012; Manala, 2013; Mgadla, 1997). As a result, Christian Religion did not only influence how religion was taught, but the general schooling system was entrenched within Christianity. In Lesotho, the teaching of Christianity as the sole religious education school subject persisted through the colonial period, to the post-colonial and to the present.

The school missionary religious education was denominationalism, that is, it was based on the affirmation of a particular denomination faith creed. Hence, it acquired different names congruent to separate denominations. The names included Bible study, religious knowledge, religious studies and moral instructions, based on the structure and scope aligned to the various denominational dogmatic teaching. Missionaries used their own syllabuses and taught what they wanted to teach. The teaching of religious education became a strategy to



indoctrinate people into particular denomination beliefs and practices. The teachers were to be confessional members of each denomination school, and what counted most was faithfulness to the teaching of respective denomination doctrine than qualification. This denominational approach to the teaching of religious education continued even during the British colonial rule from 1868 and spanned into the post-colonial period. By 1912, the missionaries considered professionalising their teaching occupation. Therefore, there was an establishment of teacher training colleges across Lesotho. Because denominational religious education was the main focus of missionary education, teacher training was denominationally based. Inevitably, the Catholic Church had its own three colleges; one for male students, another for females, and one for both male and female students. The Evangelical Church also had one male college and one female college while the Anglican Church had only one female teacher training college. Three systems of education existed in Lesotho with more emphasis on religious education and denominational Christian character. The primary aim of these colleges was to prepare teachers who would be qualified to impart religious education from denomination confessional point of view (Jobo, et all 2000; Mosisidi, 1981; Chirwa and Naidoo, 2014).

Although the Basutoland colonial considered taking control of education after the introduction of government grant-in-aid scheme for missionary schools, the Cape colonial rule could not support the decision. Cape Colonial rule also overturned other education reforms proposed by Basutoland colonial administration including the introduction of contest instruction methods, setting limits for religious education, defining useful instruction and setting the methods of assessment. Instead, education continued to be controlled by mission schools which continued the centrality of religious education. Religious education continued to be a dominant school subject until it formed the basis for higher education. The Roman Catholic Church founded Pius XII College in 1945, a Catholic university college (now the National University of Lesotho). The chief purpose of the establishment of Pius XII College was to provide African Catholic students with a post-matriculation education. Off cause students from other denominations were also admitted. The primary achievement in education reforms by the colonial government was the establishment of the department of education in 1927. The department was charged with the responsibility of the formation of a uniform syllabus in all subjects including religious education and a system of school inspection. There was also an introduction of standard examinations for both primary and post-primary schools. However, by 1953, Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland had to develop their education system different after the Cape Colony passed the Bantu Education Act for Black South Africans. Withdrawal from Cape Colony presented Lesotho an opportunity to develop its own curriculum for junior secondary classes, while the curriculum for senior classes was developed in Cambridge overseas (Jobo, et. all 2000; Mosisil, 1981).

The above background sets the basis for the argumentation of the current conceptual paper. The overriding purpose of this paper is to argue that inclusive education has not been extended to other areas of schooling aspects, mainly curriculum inclusivity with a special focus on religious education which its inclusiveness spells religious pluralism. Both inclusive education and religious pluralism are currently dominating scholarly debate internationally. It is interesting that the debate on inclusive education is gradually dying out in Lesotho and one could assume that this is because inclusive education policy has achieved its purpose. However that is not the case, religious pluralism does not seem to have been taken into account in Lesotho's education system. It may be argues that, the current curriculum on religious education is still a continuation of the colonial project.

Western formal education in Lesotho

Western formal education was introduced by the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEMS) missionaries in Lesotho in the 1830s well before in many other African countries (Rakotsoane



1996:16). The PEMS missionaries were later joined by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the Anglican missionaries. The chief purpose of education at the time was to produce people competent in reading, writing, interpreting. The key aim was to produce people capable of translating verbal and written information from English to Sesotho and vice versa. This form of education continued throughout the colonial period (Frankema, 2012). It was after Lesotho had gained independence in 1966 that education reforms were introduced. At the initial stage, the post-independence government used external commissions and task forces to assess and recommend the necessary reforms. These included UNESCO planning mission of 1967, British Overseas Development Administration which worked in Lesotho for a period of nine years (1968-76), British Overseas Development Administration that had been assigned to advise Lesotho since 1974, and a Lesotho/UNICEF Joint Evaluation Mission of 1976. Because a commission would generally consist of a group of educationists from abroad who came for a limited period of time to examine the whole or an aspects of the system, most of the reports and recommendations were not that binding and the government could implement them in part or even reject them totally. For example, most of them recommended that the government should assume absolute control of the education system. However, education continued being in the hands of the churches which maintained an uncompromising stance on the centrality of religious education in their schools. Nonetheless, one of the recommendations that Lesotho implemented was to amalgamate church denominational colleges into a single secular public college. The National Teacher Training College (NTTC) now called Lesotho College of Education (LCE) was then established in 1975 with representatives from church denominations to lecture on religious education. The church thus continued having influence in the teaching of religious education (Mosisili, 1981; Jobo, et. all 2000; Matooane, 1983).

The significant development in the history of the education sector in Lesotho was after the National Education Dialogue of 1978 (Ministry of Education, 1978). For the first time, this forum brought together Lesotho citizens from across all social levels to deliberate on the issues pertinent to the education system in the country. Even though church authorities withdrew from the forum, it achieved a major milestone in the history of education in Lesotho. It recommended the Education Sector Survey Task Force be established in 1980, mandated to review the views from the Dialogue and to draw up education policy recommendations (Ministry of Education, 1982; Matooane, 1983).

Among the recommendations made by the Task Force, was that the formation of the education sector tripartite system. The tripartite system recognised a partnership in education comprised of missions, the people and the government, even though it left their respective roles undefined. Education was thereafter officially referred to as a 'three-legged pot' consisted of missions, communities and the government. The partnership, nevertheless, allowed the church to exert its influence in education (Ministry of Education, 1982; Matooane, 1983). Another recommendation was the establishment of the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) which came into operation in 1980. The NCDC was mandated to regularly review the curricular and facilitate the development of a curriculum that responds to Lesotho's changing needs. The NCDC works collaboratively with the National Curriculum Committee (NCC) which is a mostly representative statutory body including representatives from the government, teacher associations, tertiary institutions and churches still positioned to wield their influence on religious education (UNESCO, 2010).

Is Lesotho a Christian Country?

The teaching of a single religious tradition in Lesotho is mainly based on the perception that Lesotho is a Christian country. Two main problematic assumptions made about Lesotho are:

- a. Lesotho is a Christian country.
- b. All Basotho are Christians.



The above is misleading and an improper assumption which leads to a conclusion that Lesotho is a “Christian country”. Yes, it is true that just like in other African countries, Christianity has had a great influence in Basotho society to an extent that most African countries incorrectly declared “Christian countries” (Mndende, 2006; Mdende, 2009:1)). Given the colonial history of Africa, none of the African countries should be regarded as “Christian countries”. Such a colonial past also brings to question the credibility of statistics of Lesotho on religious affiliation. For an example, the latest statistics on religious affiliation in Lesotho taken from the 2006 census indicates that out of the total population of 1.88 million, and 90% are Christians with an estimated 4 000 Muslim families, 150 Hindu families, and 800 Bahai’s, which combine to make up approximately 1% of the population. The remaining 9% of the population is said belongs to indigenous religious groups (Unites States Department of State 2013). Given the history of promotion of Christianity in Africa over other religion more especially African religions, there is a strong possibility that these statistics may be unreliable. It has to be taken into consideration that most of Basotho if not all practice syncretism of Christianity and African Indigenous Religion. Therefore, it cannot be said that there is a total of 90% Basotho Christians and 9% of Basotho adhering to African Indigenous Religion. Even when it comes to other religions, 1% may be too small to include all other religions. For example, a considerable number of Chinese have recently sought citizenship in Lesotho. The number of both Chinese Lesotho citizens and Chinese migrant workers is estimated between 5 000 and 20 000 which suggest an increased number of Buddhist adherents (Cobbe, 2015; Turner, 2013). Such statistics should not just be accepted without interrogations, more especially that the majority of Basotho people are still “traditionalists” and still adhere to various spiritual practices and rituals of their forefathers.

What is most striking is that, despite the visible reality that more and more Basotho people are openly practising their indigenous religion, the political and the government system is still pro Christianity and as a result Christian holidays such as Sunday, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day and Christmas as Public Holidays are still declared as public holidays. Further that, The Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL), an organisation that unites different Christian denominations in Lesotho has been recognised by the government and has been given special role in Lesotho political, social and economic issues (United States Department of State, 2013). All of these realities make a compelling case for Christians to regard Lesotho as a “Christian country” and therefore make a strong case for Christian curriculum over other religions. We are of the view that the main reason Lesotho has an education curriculum which excludes other religious affiliations represents the thinking that Lesotho is a Christian country maintaining the Christian holidays calendar.

One more problematic area is the established association between the Lesotho government and Christian Churches. Not only in the past but even today the Lesotho government maintains a formidable partnership with the Christian Churches in the education sector. The partnership between the Government and school proprietors (church groups) was ratified by the passing of the Education Act in 1995. The Act remains a legal document affirming collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Training and the churches in the education service delivery. This formidable partnership is even catered for in the Lesotho constitution where Christian Churches are given one of the most exceptional custodianships of being responsible for the education system in Lesotho. This partnership excludes other religions and instead places Christianity as the sole religion that exists in Lesotho. In essence, the argument that there is a religion for a particular country is unrealistic, although when looking at the issue of Saudi-Arabia, this nation only permits Islam. Christianity is illegal in Saudi Arabia and the state claims tolerance of private worship by non-Muslims – but there is death penalty for Christian converts from Islam (ACNUK Report, 2015-2107).



As Forman (1982) argues, no religion can be described as belonging to a particular continent or country any more. In fact, Christianity now said to be the religion of Lesotho found Basotho traditional religion already in existence. Moreover, there is enough evidence that even African religions are presently found in other parts of the world. Gerloff (2004) contends that following the intentional expansion of religious movements by mission, migration came to be one of the catalysts factors for religious spreading. This was facilitated by the movement of African individuals and communities beyond the shores of the African continent to other geopolitical contexts. The movement made possible the spreading of African religions to other contexts and therefore one can no longer make a claim about specific religions belonging to specific geographical areas. The reality hither is that Lesotho is not a Christian country but a pluralistic space with many religious affiliations.

The current structure of religious education in Lesotho

The current Lesotho education system can be traced from the late 1990s. During this period there were emergent fresh national, regional and international initiatives towards a more robust and comprehensive curriculum reform in the country. These initiatives gave impetus on how best the country can improve its education service. They also required the country to redefine its goals, objectives and priorities for the education sector. The regional initiatives which Lesotho ratified were the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Education and Training and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Human Resource Development Initiative (MOET, 2005).

In relation to SADC protocol on Education and Training, there were two critical issues raised by the Member States which made curriculum reforms inevitable. The structuring of the education system of Lesotho is in line with the SADC Protocol on Education and Training. The protocol recommends the basic education that covers a period of ten years of learning. Basic education is divided into two phases. The Lower Basic Education covers grades 1-7, Upper Basic or Secondary Education which covers Grades 8-10. In accordance with the newly revised Curriculum and Assessment Policy, the old Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) or Standard 7 qualification is phased out. It is replaced by Grade 7 to make the Basic Education a continuous program covering ten years period. The Upper Basic or Secondary Education comprises a period of five-year. The first three years of Upper Basic Education or Junior Secondary years of learning comprising Grades 8-10 are leading to the acquirement of Junior Certificate (JC). The last two years of Senior Secondary of schooling consisting of Grades 9-10 are leading to the attainment of Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE). The plans are at the advanced stage to change secondary education curricular with the phasing out of the JC. The JC will be replaced by a four-year schooling programme, leading to attainment of Advanced Subsidiary (AS). The AS will be followed by a one-year program towards A-Level qualification. All these reforms are intended to start in 2021 (Ministry of Education and Training, 2016).

Currently, in Lesotho, about 90% of primary schools are operated by Christian churches, while the Government exclusively operates 10%. The first largest proprietor is the Roman Catholic Mission which controls 36% of primary schools. The second is the Lesotho Evangelical Church with 33% of primary schools under its control, and third is the Anglican Church that owns 13% and other remaining Christian denominations share 4% of primary under their control. The Government exclusively operates 7% of secondary schools while the Roman Catholic Mission is operating 33% of secondary schools and the Lesotho Evangelical Church 30% (Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, 2012; Lerotholi, 2001). Prior to 2010, Lesotho schools classified in broad categories, namely church schools, community schools and government schools. With the passing of Education Act of 2010, the church schools acquired a new legal status of public schools.



The church schools possess all the legal characteristics of public schools. However, in practice, there has been up until now a difference between the church-owned schools and the government schools particularly when it comes to school management and choice of subjects. The curriculum of the church-owned schools (which represent the majority of the schools in Lesotho) continued to make Christian religious education compulsory for all learners. Christian religious education refers to "education into Christianity", which translates into education that involves teaching and learning of Christian beliefs, values, practices, and convictions. The aim of Christian religious education is to assist learners to adopt, hold and deepen these beliefs and values, and to embrace and engage in Christian practices (Astley, 2014).

The current Lesotho curriculum in both primary and secondary education is divided into five broad learning areas instead of subjects, namely linguistic and literacy; numerical and mathematical; personal, spiritual and social; scientific and technological; and creativity and entrepreneurial. Religious education in LGCSE syllabus is one of the core subjects under personal, spiritual and social learning area with other subjects including history, health, physical education and development studies. The compulsory subject in this area is life skills education meaning that schools are at liberty to take life skills and any other four from this learning area (UNESCO, 2011).

Religious Education in the new integrated curriculum for the first phase of Upper Basic Education/Junior Secondary learning, Grade 8, is within the social science learning area, under the broad topic of "Ethics and Religion". The expected learning outcomes are:

- a) appreciate the wonderful work of creation by God.
- b) explain the origin of sin.
- c) demonstrate respect in Worshiping.
- d) describe the importance of rites of passage both socially and religiously.
- e) demonstrate an understanding of fellowship as a religious and moral value.
- f) demonstrate obedience to authority (NCDC, 2013).

These learning outcomes are constructed mainly from Biblical teachings.

Within the Senior Secondary education, the new LGCSE syllabus 0186 covers the following topics:

- a) Definition of Religion/Introduction to Religious Diversity
- b) Jesus' Life and Teachings through the Study of Luke's Gospel
- c) The Early Church through the Study of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1-21:15)
- d) Religion in Society

LGCSE Religious Education Syllabus focuses on the teachings of the Christian religion as contained in Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. It also introduces students to the meaning of religion and differences in religious traditions. It encourages students to address contemporary issues through the teachings of Jesus and the practices of the early church (NCDC, 2013). It is important to note the curriculum as it stands channels the student into Christian religion and Christian values.

Why Lesotho should consider religious pluralism for Inclusive education

Religious pluralism and Inclusive education

To put it concisely, Religious pluralism represents a positive attitude towards the co-existence of diverse religions in a society (Riis, 2011). Inclusive education represents an educational approach that seeks to address all barriers to learning, and participation at schools setting that



is based on students' differences. It seeks to create a situation where all are provided with opportunities and resources that support their learning and participation in the education system. Even though available religion data suggests that Lesotho is a Christian country, the reality is that such statistics is misleading (This we have already argued in the previous heading). Lesotho remains a home for many religions including African religion. It is pluralistic religious country housing different of religions like Christianity, African religion, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hinduism.

The link between religious pluralism and inclusive education

There is a substantial relationship between religious pluralism and inclusive education. Inclusive education represents a way of thinking and acting that seeks to ensure that every individual feels accepted, valued, and safe within an education system. An inclusive education consciously develops mechanisms to respond to the needs of learners. In pursuit of inclusive education, the school system has to create an environment, structures, and programs where all educators, learners, and their families feel that they belong and are welcomed. Inclusive education proposes alternative educational approaches; as a result, a series of educational approaches including special education designed to address students with disabilities and multicultural education designed to include students with different cultural backgrounds have been recommended. It is ultimately within multicultural education where religious pluralism secures its place.

The primary goal of multicultural education is to transform schools so that all students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in a socially diverse nation. It addresses all forms of discrimination in schools and society and proposes the pluralism of the ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender among students and their communities (Hopkins-Gillispie, 2011).

Multicultural education proposes the inclusion of cultural elements including religion in formal education system. This proposed strategy possesses both educational and social values. Educationally, it is critical for students to participate enthusiastically in school and learning if they are expected to exhibit good performance and be prepared for a confident and valuable contribution to their society. It is argued that if students experience conflict between their school and their religious identities they normally feel alienated; as a result, their self-esteem suffers, and ultimately they become underachievers or disengage from learning altogether. This is the basic argument of multicultural education in general. It is argued that there is a link between school recognition of students' religious identity and academic if students experience religious exclusion in the school system. Both the content of the curriculum and the skill with which it is delivered provide key resources to engaging children and young people in learning. This can be particularly important for children and young people from minority ethnic groups.

A case for religious pluralism for Inclusive education in Lesotho

Here we raise three main reasons why Lesotho government should prioritise an inclusive curriculum on religious education. One of the obvious reasons, as we have already argued, is that Lesotho is a pluralistic country. The second reason is that the Lesotho constitution propagates the notion of religious and cultural rights of all citizens. Lastly, Lesotho is part of the countries that have signed various international declarations which propagates for inclusive school curriculum. As already noted, the government of Lesotho is a signatory to the following various International Conventions and Declarations on inclusive education (UNESCO, 2009).



The recommendations made such various Conventions and declarations differ but mostly they include but not limited to the following:

Rights to quality education, language, religion, political or other opinion

Elimination of discrimination

Rights to culture and needs of indigenous people

Equal dignity and respect to all

Equal benefits to education

The state as an essential vehicle for ensuring the rights to education for all

Being cosigner of such international declarations, conventions and recommendations, the Government of Lesotho is obliged to eradicate all forms of exclusion in education service delivery. Religious education should not remain an element contributing to the failure of the Government to meet its international commitments. The main problem is the Christian church schools continuation in the monism religious education approach, instead of religious pluralism, despite the fact that the government of Lesotho is a co-signer of series of international declarations, conventions and recommendations on inclusive education which also imply inclusive teaching of religious education. Also, Christian church schools seem reluctant to realise the fact of the existence of religious diversity in Lesotho and the desirability of religious pluralism as a response for inclusive education in a pure democratic, non-discriminative society like Lesotho.

Lesotho Constitution

With regarding the constitution of Lesotho, The constitution of Lesotho section 13 (3) stipulates:

Except with his own consent (or, if he is a minor, the consent of his guardian), no person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or to take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance if that instruction, ceremony or observance relates to a religion other than his own.

According to the preceding section of the Constitution, the current offered Christian education constitutes the violation of religious rights for those learners who are not necessarily Christians. Owing to the historical factors, that have given the Christian church an advantage in education, minority groups have little or no choice but succumb to the learning of Christianity. This is a pure infringement of their constitutional rights. Inclusion in religion, which is not one's own, violates one's constitutional rights. Exclusion from religious instruction on the other hand discriminates against non-Christian learners. As we argue in the section, whether Lesotho is described as a Christian country, it is a big mistake to assume that children register in Lesotho schools are all Christians, also some parents who are Christians might want their children to be exposed to other religions other than Christianity in order to make them globally conscious citizens who grow up tolerant of diversity in all its shapes and forms.

The Lesotho 2010 Education Act, section (2) upholds that it is the responsibility of the Minister of Education, Principal Secretary, Teaching Service Commission, proprietors of schools (church officials), teachers and schools' boards to promote and provide education to all the people of Lesotho. In the end, the sole responsibility of providing and making sure that religious and educational rights lie in the hands of the Minister of Education. The legal requirement for all involved in education is to ensure its inclusiveness. Minority religious groups should have a feeling of freedom and dignity. Provision of inclusive religious education can make a significant contribution to peace, openness to other religions, tolerance and respect for religious diversity as in many cases religion is a source of conflict and discrimination. It is doubtful whether the Christian churches are likely to comply with the legal



requirements of non-discriminatory education in the near future. Meantime, the Minister as the head of the education sector in Lesotho should assume this responsibility and provide a deliberated upon direction. It is considered to be challenging that the Church still maintains considerable influence in the curriculum development when there are also members of other faiths in schools.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate that as much as the Department of Education in Lesotho works closely with Christian Church organisations, constitutionally it is the responsibility of the Minister of Education to provide quality and inclusive education. As much as most schools in Lesotho are under the leadership and influence of Christians Churches, the chief custodian of Education lies with the minister of education. The government of Lesotho led by the minister of education cannot afford to take light such a huger responsibility considering that the government pays more than 90% of teachers (including those under Christian Church-owned schools). Religious pluralism remains an important aspect of inclusive education which has been neglected in Lesotho. In this sense, inclusive education is, therefore, an effective tool for transcending cultural, religious, gender and other differences. It espouses such educational approaches as multicultural, multi-religious, multilingual approaches.

Our primary contention is that, in the light of the current discussions on the decolonization of knowledge and pedagogy, it is imperative to recognise that without a discussion on religion, the pursuit for decoloniality would be an exercise in futility. The prime reason for this contention remains the fact that religion, connoting “Christianity”, was at the centre of the colonial project. In fact, one can even argue that the Christianisation of the indigenous peoples of South was the main engine which enabled and sustained the colonisation and thus the westernisation efforts perpetrated against the African people by the colonial powers. Consequently, in the process of Africa finding itself (including Lesotho), it is imperative to deconstruct the meaning of a “religious curriculum”. This process should consider how missionaries promoted Christianity over other religions (including African religions). African countries cannot afford to keep the status quo, Africans cannot denounce colonialism while at the same time still push its agenda of acknowledging Christianity as the only sacred religion in a world in which there are numerous religions. “God is not Christian” these words were uttered by Bishop Desmond Tutu at the time when his friendship with the ⁱDaila Lama of Tibet was questioned. On this point, Tutu offers Lesotho a classic example of what a school curriculum could look like, that is, the curriculum which can still tackle principles of justice, morality and values within the discipline of religion and spirituality without elevating any religious community. This could even go to the extent of giving the student a carefully crafted and accurate background of various religions and also show how religion and spiritually can enhance love and peace in the society, aspects which are sorely missing in a world of consumerism and capitalistic excesses.

ⁱ The Dalai Lama is a Buddhist spiritual figure of the Tibetan people. Many Christians questioned Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s close association with a non-Christian leader who was considered to divisive.

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