A QUEST TO INTERROGATE DELIVERY OF THE MULTI-RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN BOTSWANA SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This article argues that pedagogical strategies used for the implementation of the multi-religious Religious Education (RE) curriculum in Botswana colleges of education need to be examined for efficacy and appropriateness. There is need to see whether these strategies are effective in promoting religious tolerance in the classroom, which can later spill over to younger generations and the world at large. The article discusses religious tolerance and intolerance, ethnic diversity in Botswana and the role of education in engendering religious tolerance. The article also presents an extensive discussion on phenomenological and interpretive approaches of delivery in RE classroom and attempts to argue that these delivery approaches need further examination to assess their efficacy and appropriateness in the Botswana context.

Keywords: Phenomenological approach, interpretive approach, religious tolerance, religious intolerance, student-teacher, inclusive Religious Education curriculum.

1.0 Introduction

This article argues for the need to interrogate the implementation of an inclusive Religious Education (RE) curriculum in Botswana schools, with particular focus on the colleges of education. It argues that there is need to interrogate the delivery of a multi-religious Religious Education (RE) curriculum in Botswana schools because religious intolerance evidently still exists in Botswana even though Botswana is considered a secular state (Dinama, 2011). Religious intolerance is inability to accept others' religious beliefs and practices, and often leads to conflicts. Religious tolerance is the ability to relate cordially irrespective of differences in beliefs, ideas, and intentions (Oyetoro & Talabi, 2023). Tadjibaeva and Oblmuradova (2020) describe religious tolerance to mean that people who have different religious beliefs live on the same ground, in one homestead, as partners and co-exist. Verkuyten and Koller (2021) further describe tolerance as endurance and putting up with things one dislikes and disapproves of, and an open-mindedness and willingness to accept a broad range of practices one may disapprove, and even embracing and celebrating the practices and behaviours of dissenting others. Tolerance is self-control towards what others believe and practice in an effort to realize co-existence in a pluralistic society.

Since the declaration of Principles on Tolerance after World War II, the push to be tolerant has become ideal for many people around the world (Benson, 2016; UNESCO, 1995). What makes

religious tolerance pivotal in Botswana is the fact that the country, like many other countries of the world, is ethnically diverse with about 3 million diverse speckled and wide-ranging communities. As outlined in Chebanne (2022) ethnic groups in Botswana are distributed across five broad groups: (1) Sotho-Tswana, who are peoples of the Tswana extraction, Bakgalagari, Babirwa, Balozi, and Bagwapong, (2) Shona-Nyai who comprise Bakalanga, Banambya, the Ndebele, and the Shona, (3) Herero-Kavango who comprise Ovaherero, Wayeyi, Kwangale, Vekuhane (Basubiya), Mbukushu, and Rumanyo, (4) San who comprise the !Xóõ, Ju'haonsi, ǂHuan, and the Sasi, and finally (5) Khoe who include the Gana, the Gui, the Naro, the Shua, Danisana/Danisani, the Cua, the Goro, the Tshwa, the Cire-cire, the Ts'ixa, and Khwedam communities of Anikhwe, Bugakhwe, Anda and Khwe. This is a fact that requires mutual respect amongst the citizens (Jeremiah, 2005), the promotion of shared values and unshared values, tolerance for differing views and alternative religious beliefs and (cultural) practices, freedom of worship, respect of identities (Botswana Government, 2016; Nkomazana & Setume (2016).

2.0 The role of education in engendering religious tolerance

The impact of religious tolerance in Religious Education in the school system is not avoidable. The world is desperately in need of religious tolerance for peaceful co-existence, and the UN recommends that religious tolerance should be infused in all subject areas in the school. Numerous wars, deep hate statements, xenophobia and other social ills keep occurring because of the epidemic of intolerance. RE student-teachers' mastery of delivering religious tolerance for peaceful coexistence must be seen as critical. Learners need to be taught about tolerance and reconciliation for healing of wounds caused by intolerance to be realized, even to some extent, in the global world. Student-teachers' understanding, appreciation and tolerance of people who differ with them could contribute towards the elimination of conflicts and differences caused by religious intolerance in the learners at school and this could over time spill over to the wider society. Seeds of peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance could be planted in the hearts of student-teachers and carry with them the hope of raising new generations of peace-loving citizens of this country and the world at large, as they become role models to their learners. This necessitates a study to examine the extent to which student-teachers are prepared to deliver tolerance in diversity of religious beliefs for peaceful coexistence in the classroom and in a global world.

3.0 Multi-religious RE curriculum and its pedagogy

Botswana adopted a multi-religious RE curriculum in 1994 and recommended the phenomenological approach as its teaching approach at junior secondary schools (Botswana Government, 1994). However, the multi-religious RE curriculum was also introduced in the Colleges of education without any prescribed pedagogy and this is the situation even now. Therefore, there is need to interrogate the phenomenological approach to determine whether religious tolerance can be developed by using this approach in classroom teaching and learning in Botswana schools, both secondary schools and colleges of education. The article also discusses

the interpretive approach to appreciate these two modes of pedagogy and their suitability for adoption in Botswana classrooms.

3.1 The phenomenological approach

Acquah (2017) describes the phenomenological approach as the personal participation of a scholar in the religion he seeks to study to understand the essence and the manifestations of the religious phenomena of the religion. Simsek (2017) explains that the phenomenological approach is an interfaith approach to religious teaching that predicts the religious phenomena in an impartial and unbiased way. The approach aims to help learners of all religious backgrounds to observe and understand the nature of religious beliefs of any religion according to the experiences of the adherents. The phenomenological approach concerns the experiential aspect of religion in which the orientation of the worshippers plays a major role in understanding their religion in terms of beliefs and practices. This approach was developed by Ninian Smart as a methodology for the study of religion in a descriptive and broad range, without stress putting emphasis on accepting a particular faith (Barnes, 2011). In terms of the teaching of a multi-religious curriculum, the approach encourages the presentation of religions in a manner that shows beliefs and practices objectively as its adherents would prefer it. When using the phenomenological approach, the RE teacher is expected to teach various religions with no intention of influencing students towards the beliefs and morals of any religion and to teach the religion as it is practiced by its followers. The RE teachers must therefore suspend their own beliefs and preconceptions as they enter empathetically into the worlds of the religious believers (Acquah, 2017; Barnes, Davis & Halstead, 2015; Barnes, 2002).

The phenomenological approach stresses bracketing out the issue of religious truth and freeing students to enter the situation and experience of others to help them to develop liberal values such as tolerance, openness, autonomy, and social justice which prepare students for life in a multi-religious society (Barnes, 2002; Barnes, 2018). The capacity to grasp the essence of religious phenomena by means of empathy and imagination is critical for the students to enter creatively into the subjectivity of others to understand the phenomenon under study and to tolerate diversity of beliefs and practices for mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. Barnes (2011) states that Ninian Smart's use of empathy means a kind of warm distancing of oneself to envision what the believer sees when trying to project into the thought world of the adherents of a religion not necessarily with any criticism but for understanding as they learn about this religion. For the students to experience the thought world of the adherents, religious feelings are out of the ordinary and are too deep to be understood by discursive reasoning, as in most cases it is evocative to the spirit world which the students may not be familiar with as they probe to understand the actions of the adherents (Barnes, 2002; Barnes, 2018; Barnes, Davis & Halstead, 2015). The above argument sounds logical because if the believer has transformed into the spiritual world, then it would mean that students are supposed to seek the experience of the sacred rather than to describe what they see with their natural observation skills as they would not be on the same level of

spiritual experience. There is, therefore, the need to understand how the RE lecturers' train student-teachers to be able to project into the thought world of the adherents of a religion, which is very critical in this study. In any case, failure to understand the experiences of the adherents as they are transformed may create a gap that may lead to phenomenological approach not addressing tolerance in diversity in teaching the multi- religious RE curriculum.

Another concern is that the phenomenological approach treats all religions as universally sacred and puts them on an equal footing by grading them all as valid before students, and this has the capacity to cause confusion. Also, student-teachers are not allowed to compare their own beliefs and practices as they must suspend their own beliefs and study the religion of the adherents of that particular religion (Barnes, 2002; Barnes et al., 2015). This impartial approach treats students as if they are people without worldviews who can share their experiences as well. There are seemingly reduced to studying religious traditions by distancing their beliefs (Casson & Cooling, 2020; Jackson & Everington, 2017; Roebben, 2009; Roebben, 2016). The study of religious tolerance has to be about students' experiences as individuals living within their communities since this may instil in them a sense of sympathy and empathy especially towards the marginalised hence leading to religious tolerance for peaceful existence. However, it is not clear how students with beliefs and those without beliefs are able to suspend their beliefs, which appears to be a mammoth task. With all the theoretical discussions above, we shall consider an empirical study done using the phenomenological approach in the RE classroom teaching to illustrate its practical use.

A qualitative case study was carried out by Masango (2019) on the phenomenological approach to the teaching of RE teacher training at Mkoba in Zimbabwe, Southern Africa. The study aimed at establishing the applicability of the phenomenological approach and used unstructured interviews, field work, focus group discussions and observation to collect data from student-teachers who had negative attitudes towards the African religion as they were Christians from different denominations. The study findings are that the phenomenological approach increased the participants' knowledge of the African indigenous religions and significantly changed their attitudes towards it. Uniquely, despite the students' strong Christian background, they were able to separate the demands of their commitment to personal faith and the requirements of their profession when applying the phenomenological approach in teaching the multi-religious curriculum.

The study by Masango (2019) did not show how student-teachers were prepared on the procedures of applying phenomenological approach although this was one of its aims in the teaching and learning of the multi-religious RE curriculum. Furthermore, the results of the findings may not necessarily be a true reflection of the study. To begin with, it is not stated as to how students were helped to be able to separate the demands of their commitment of personal faith and the requirements of their profession, but, surprisingly, they changed their attitudes towards African

religion. Further, the study did not come up with ways of achieving this aim which is a demand of the phenomenological approach. Therefore, there is need to follow all the necessary procedures to help students understand how to study religions from phenomenological approach to gain authentic results.

The statement by Masango (2019) that after independence African countries had to re-educate the African child to value their own religion and cultural values appears to express the attitude of the author towards African Indigenous Religions as the study continued to state that the African child has to redefine, rediscover his/her history and believe in himself or herself (Masango (2019). Although this may be true, if an African child has converted to Christianity, it means that Christianity is his religion. So, to emphasize that African children must value their African religion and cultural practices sounds biased. After all, the teaching of the multi-religious curriculum must help student-teachers appreciate and tolerate diversity for peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society. Evidently, despite neutrality that is required by the phenomenological approach, teachers' prejudices and religious preferences cannot be underestimated as they are likely to show up. There is need to interrogate the phenomenological approach in such a way that your position as a scholar should not be overemphasized even if results are not in agreement with your position.

Some participants in the study by Masango (2019) who expressed fear to enter the shrines where African Religion was practiced and there is no clear measure that was put in place to protect these student-teachers. This claim of fear in places where African Religion is practiced is contrary to the claim that the study changed the attitudes of students positively which makes one to wonder if it really happened or the researcher simply expressed personal wishes. Fear goes with an uncomfortable atmosphere which cannot positively change students' attitudes to the religion under study. Equally important is the need to allow voluntarism by student-teachers to enter some of these 'feared' religious places in order to be strengthened, convicted and assured in their religious preferences and understanding to avoid a situation where it may be interpreted as risk exposures which may endanger the student-teachers spiritually. This calls for intensive professional training that could help the RE student-teachers to master both the content and the application of pedagogies suitable for learning about and learning from religions without any struggle of personal religious attachment. This learning from religion is contrary to the phenomenological approach as it does not allow student-teachers to personalize their religious identity and shared experiences. Because of this weakness of the phenomenological approach discussed above, Jackson (1997) came up with the interpretive approach.

3.1 The interpretive approach
The interpretive approach promotes collaborative thinking based on students' perspectives as they share their experiences and personal knowledge. This approach allows students to critique each other constructively reflecting on whatever they discuss to understand and appreciate the diversity across cultural beliefs and practices with the aim to develop tolerance. Thus, the

interpretive approach allows students' religious beliefs and practices to be discussed in the classroom and this is the major difference with the phenomenological approach. In addition, learning about and learning from religion develop students' reflection on and response to their own experiences and their learning about religion (Hellaa, & Wright, 2009; Teece, 2010). What makes the interpretive approach more acceptable is the fact that it speaks to the spirituality of the learner in the classroom and accommodates both learning from and learning about religions in the classroom setup.

Furthermore, according to Jackson (2006), the interpretive approach acknowledges that both the RE lecturer and the students are living within social and historical contexts so they should not superimpose preconceived meanings on new material as interpretation takes place. Rather, both the RE lecturer and the students must understand symbols of language used by adherents in their proper contexts. With that in mind, the interpretation is done by comparing unfamiliar terms used by adherents with one's own familiar concepts. Additionally, interpretation requires placing examples of religious beliefs and practices within a wider context. By so doing, the educator and the students will be able to understand the new religion under study, coupled with reflexive and dialogical processes which involve questioning even one's own understanding and the use of terminology and its historical development. In this case, the interpretive approach helps students to find their own positions within the key debates about religious plurality which can develop religious tolerance for a peaceful coexistence. Jackson (1997) points out that the method involves examining the interplay of the individual insider's experience and behaviour with the wider symbolic context of language, imagery, and practice. If the interpretive process is well articulated following good techniques and with the sensitivity that it deserves, the students will have a clear interpretation of religious diversity. Thus, the diversity of adherents is presented as accurately, sensitively, and engagingly as possible to writings and presentations that are a true representation of the individuals' contributions.

The interpretive approach also encourages RE lecturers to be facilitators and allows the use of student-centeredness as they openly talk about their religions without any intimidation from those who differ with them. As student-teachers talk about their religions, they reshape culture through creating new synthesis from others' ideas which help them deal with misconceptions about the religions of others. When students shape and reshape their beliefs, it may open concerns for bias to elements of indoctrination from the facilitator as there is an allowance that the beliefs and practices of the facilitator may be overemphasized (Sabrina & Arzina, 2019; King, 2013). The interpretive approach should encourage RE lecturers to teach students the skills of interpretation with reflexivity to allow new learning of beliefs and values, and to apply critical judgment in a constructive, rational, and informed manner (Jackson, 2005). According to Glazier and Flowerday (2003), interpreters view religion from the standpoint of the participants which could lead to false interpretation and could sometimes reveal things that the religious believer may not be aware of. Furthermore, sometimes the religious interpreters may be intellectual which shows that whoever

is doing it may always apply bias which may be influenced by religious beliefs of those individuals. There is therefore need to examine how student-teachers are trained to apply such teaching skills to attain religious tolerance.

If the interpretive approach is not applied properly, the student-teachers who often express themselves as atheists may humiliate those students with religious beliefs in classroom discussions by joking negatively about other religions (Muir, 2017; Flesner, 2015). The above argument necessitates the need for mastery of the interpretive approach in the multi-religious RE classroom to develop empathy and tolerance for peaceful coexistence in the classroom and in the society at large. Again, there is need to examine how differences of beliefs and practices are handled in classroom teaching and learning to promote tolerance in diversity as envisioned by Vision 2036.

Everington (2013) conducted action research on the interpretive approach to bridge the gap between theory and practice of teaching RE using student-teachers in England. Data were collected from sixteen students of differing religious background which involved four Sikhs, one Hindu-Sikh, three Christians, two atheists and six agnostics with degrees in religious studies, philosophy and social sciences and were pursuing their master's degree in teaching religious education. After six weeks of school experience, interviews, observations, written and verbal responses were analysed. In addition, the lecturer facilitated in discussions which allowed the student-teachers to express deeply held personal and professional views and exposed the weakness of the method towards the less able students who would be confused by complex representations of religions; those who were quieter, and those with personal objections. The findings also pointed to rejections of other religions by the student-teachers though they developed constructive criticisms and suggested other possible ways to reflect on or to cater for the problems they encountered during their teaching. This gave the participants the opportunity to differ and finally arrive at some kind of agreement which proved the significance of the richness brought by the diversity within the group. After several sessions, the student-teachers displayed experiences of personal learning from others which relate well to the concept of edification from an in-group learning that promotes religious tolerance.

The above study results relate well with teaching religious tolerance as it allows student-teachers to learn from each other through dialogue which also develops the 21st century skills of cooperation, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity and innovation that leads to positive attitudes towards other people's views (Moses & Hassanat, 2023; Pentury, Bu'tu & Malatuny, 2023). The results also identify with the constructivist view of learning as it allows student-teachers to incorporate new ideas into already existing knowledge. Significantly, engaging student-teachers in dialogue will expose their attitudes, feelings and values either positively or negatively depending on the phenomenon observed to reflect on values developed towards beliefs of others different from theirs (Moses & Hassanat, 2023). As student-teachers display their knowledge, it assists the RE lecturer to deal with any misconceptions first before addressing the concepts to be

taught in that topic (Whitworth, 2017). Student-teachers can apply their own creativity in teaching as they come up with their own strategies of teaching RE using the interpretive approach. The other thing that is clear about the interpretive approach is that it allows both learning from religion and learning about religion and is thus open to real life experiences both of individual students and to the society they live in.

At the same time, the use of both learning from and learning about religions through the interpretive approach provides student-teachers with mutual respect and understanding for the diverse religious beliefs, practices, and worldviews (Jackson, 2008). In addition, the student-teachers are allowed to compare their beliefs with others to develop positive criticism which trains them to address other religions with respect regardless of how much they differ with their own. As it is, the interpretive approach has the capacity to develop competencies and attitudes that enable the student-teachers to respect the rights of others, and to have their own religious beliefs by developing critical empathy and fostering dialogue with others of different religious backgrounds (Jackson, 2008; Council of Europe, 2008). Moreover, the use of learning from and learning about religion exposes student-teachers to both religious and secular diversity which helps them to devise means of peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society. Consequently, the Council of Europe (2008) stipulates that intercultural dialogue and its religious dimensions are essential preconditions for the development of tolerance and a culture of living together. The interpretive approach through learning from and learning about religions helps student-teachers to develop impartiality, open-mindedness and critical thinking in their approaches to teaching religious tolerance for peaceful coexistence as they are exposed to dealing with both their beliefs and those of others in a balanced and inclusive manner.

Aldabbus (2020) cautions that serious gaps on lack of cooperation between student-teachers, lack of confidence by the facilitator, and lack of classroom management skills, among others, may pose serious challenges in a multi-religious classroom teaching and learning. To avoid all the weaknesses mentioned above, the facilitator must guide the student-teachers with emotional intelligence skills on how to conduct a controversial lesson successfully for them to develop confidence in teaching religious tolerance for peaceful coexistence. Student-teachers who explored their own religions and those of others empathetically, reflectively, and dialogically applying emotional intelligence skills during training to respect religious diversity are always better placed to handle any discrimination from their learning experience (Jarvis, 2021; Mu'ammar, Tolchah & Hadi, 2019; Berghout, 2012).

Furthermore, teaching tolerance takes it further in that educators must be role models in the tone and words they choose to use, how they treat others during moments of disagreement and above all, by decrying comments of prejudice in classroom teaching and learning and always determining the success or failure of the lesson objective. This is so because the attitudes of the facilitator play a critical role at this stage. If impartiality is not adequately exercised by the

facilitator, the student-teachers who are on his/her side may take advantage of the situation and joke negatively about religious beliefs and practices of others. Students should listen and observe how others reason for their choices of religious beliefs, values and create a deeper understanding of their own heritage under an impartial atmosphere which transfers specific work competencies to the RE student-teachers (Muir, 2017; Petrovska, Sivevska, Popeska & Runcheva, 2018).

The application of emotional intelligence plays a greater role on the confidence of the RE lecturer to deal with behaviours that may be displayed by students for mutual relationship even if they do not agree with their position. According to Edannur (2010), emotional intelligence means the ability to retain emotional impulses, to read other person's innermost feelings and to handle relationships smoothly. Siddique, Taseer and Siddique (2020) describe emotional intelligence as the capacity for perceiving things, understanding phenomenon, and evaluating various emotions, while Gong, Chen, and Wang (2019) view emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize the feelings and emotions of one's own and others, and to make a distinction among them, and to guides one's thinking and actions. As explained above, the fact that understanding ones' emotions as well as others could lead to the development of mutual relationships in the midst of differences is a major skill that is essential for RE lecturers of a multi-religious RE curriculum. Edannur (2010) further argues that RE students must be taught to read emotions in others, to value others' needs, to show compassion and to exercise self-restraint. These are qualities that have proven beneficial and are relevant to and appreciated in all human societies and which need to be incorporated in a multi-religious RE classroom teaching. An individual who has control over a surge of emotions will be able to accept another person's perspective and could be demonstrative of (religious) tolerance. That individual appreciates differences that are crucial in an increasingly pluralistic democratic world for mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. To help students acquire the skills of emotional competencies, in the first place, RE lecturers need to be trained in emotional intelligence to enable them to manage their own emotions and those of others.

3.3 A study by Madden (2020)

A study by Madden (2020) is also extending its horizon by putting up an argument on the influence of teacher pedagogical choice in the classroom teaching. Madden (2020) carried an exploration of documents on the dialogue in community conditions and enablers for teacher professional development in Catholic schools in Australia. To start with, the teachers' held beliefs influence the pedagogical choices they make in the classroom as members of the Catholic community. The study emphasizes the importance of engaging in ongoing professional learning that explores the complexity of learning how to teach in context to explore opportunities to bring to light beliefs and assumptions that influence pedagogical choices. In addition, the study embraces engagement of teachers with the world and other faith perspectives and claims a dialogical which is open to change and grow through spiritual realities experienced by all. Secondly, the study calls for new ways of teaching and learning about tradition which empowers students to interpret the tradition for their time and context to help answer questions of life and current issues. Such calls

emanate from the ever-changing religious landscape influenced by global context to nurture students into religious diversity as enshrined in inclusive public policy in Australia.

A study by Madden (2020) is in line with the multi-religious RE curriculum which develops religious tolerance for acceptance of diversity for coexistence. The study could have used either qualitative or quantitative research approaches to collect data on other stakeholders for a more inclusive perspective of the Australian population. The use of documents only as source of data might also fail to give up-to-date information as it takes time to update such sources like policies and others. Furthermore, the study tries to be unique by running away from common teaching pedagogies like phenomenological and interpretive approaches while in context a picture of the interpretive approach is painted through engaging in dialogical discussions which is open to change and growth through spiritual realities experienced by all.

To sum up, the interpretive approach inculcates democratic values in the RE classroom teaching and learning though it is not yet introduced in Botswana RE Colleges of Education. The use of learning from and learning about religion in the interpretive approach gives the RE classroom teaching the opportunity to expose student-teachers to practice the 21st century skills with vigour as they apply critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills, promote values of autonomy, justice, cooperation, open- mindedness, impartiality and respect for individual differences in order to develop respect for diversity (Thornhill-Miller, Anaelle, Maxence, Jean-Marie, Tiffany, Samira, Florent, Stephanie, Myriam, & Florence (2023). Furthermore, the use of the learners' own beliefs and values as a resource encourages active participation in classroom discussions, in terms of sharing their belief systems and it is a sign of recognition of their experiences which touch on their attitudes of the religion discussed. By talking about others' beliefs and practices, student-teachers are equipped with social skills and the ability to prevent prejudice and hatred towards others; and if it happens that a controversy arises, it gives them the opportunity to apply emotional intelligence skills on how to settle such disputes for religious tolerance to thrive in a multi-religious democratic classroom (Estrada, Lomboy, Gregorio, Amalia, Leynes, Quizon & Kobayashi, 2019; Brackett, Rivers & Salovey, 2011). However, both the phenomenological and interpretive approaches are informed by liberal thinking which does not promote conformity and sameness, and where independent thinking is emphasized. A major concern in the use of the interpretive approach is whether it does not open gaps for the confessional approach where facilitators could emphasize their own beliefs and practices which might lead students to switch from their beliefs. In view of these reasons, there is need to critically examine the interpretive approach in developing religious tolerance as a viable alternative in the teaching of the multi-religious RE in colleges of education.

4.0 Conclusion

This article argued for the need to examine modes of pedagogy in teaching a multi-religious RE curriculum in Botswana classrooms. RE lecturers should be capacitated with appropriate and efficient delivery methods to discuss controversial issues calmly in the classroom, with all respect

for differences in faiths. They should be able to apply emotional intelligence skills which could help the society develop religious tolerance for a peaceful coexistence as this is still lacking according to the literature reviewed. Quality RE teacher training programs that help student-teachers develop the 21st century skills such as critical thinking, cooperation, problem-solving can contribute significantly towards religious tolerance. There is dire need to investigate how religious tolerance is developed in the classroom for social harmony as enshrined in Vision 2036 and beyond. For the pillar of a moral and tolerant nation in Vision 2036 and beyond to be realized the RE multi-religious teaching and learning is an aspect worth significant consideration.

Furthermore, studies by Masango, (2019), Everington (2013) and Madden (2020) demonstrate that there are gaps in the training and development of RE lecturers in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired. This has a bearing on whether RE lecturers can effectively impart requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes about the concept of religious tolerance to their own students at tertiary level. Although the studies did not specifically focus on the training of student-teachers on the delivery of religious tolerance, they nonetheless shed light on the ineffectiveness of the training of teachers at colleges of education. This again demonstrated the necessity of finding out how RE lecturers train student-teachers on the application of pedagogies to develop religious tolerance for peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society.

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