



Review

## The contradictions of church-state partnership in education and the future of religious education in Lesotho

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Contradictions of church-state partnership in education has been a historical concern for local intellectuals and international agencies. However, the focus has been exclusively the schools management while religious education was marginally explored. The current review analyzes these contradictions with reference to religious education. It is more than a century since religious education has been introduced in Lesotho by the missionaries. However, it has not changed its chief aim of evangelistic perspective. This type of religious education has been accepted as having a statutory position in the curriculum. At the same time such religious education is not taught in government schools as it is believed that it does not comply with what can be referred to as civic education. The problem is that the professional religious education teachers who teach religious education are not evangelists. It is also not by choice that students attend church schools where they are provided with proselytism religious education or the government schools where they do not receive it. The paper theoretically analyzes these contradictions and finally recommends pluralistic approach to the teaching of religious education as a means to counteract these contradictions.

**Key words:** Religious Education, church-state partnership, conflict of interest, autonomy-based pluralism, pluralism

### INTRODUCTION

Attempts to examine the contradictions of partnership between government and church in education in Lesotho have been made by many, for example, Mafese (2000), Motaba (1999), Khatumane (1999), Lerchhoff (2007), The World Bank (2006) and LIVEAHO (2007). However, the main focus was always on the schools management. This paper takes a differing route from the common trend of focusing more on school management and administration, to analyze church-state partnership with special reference to Religious Education. The word "church" is used here to mean all Christian denominations that own schools in Lesotho.

The Western formal education in Lesotho was introduced by the missionaries in the 1830s who had a clear aim on

the teaching of religion in schools which was basically evangelism. The struggle for power in education on who should control the education system in Lesotho between the church and the government began during colonial period up until after independence in the 1960s when the education system began to be legalized as a "three-legged-pod" meaning a tripartite partnership between the Christian churches, the government and the parents. However, the tripartite partnership in education that was sought did not define the roles and responsibilities of each partner, which left the power struggle over control on education intact. In this struggle, the teaching of religious education has been at the center. The churches maintained their uncompromising stance on the original evangelistic aim of the teaching of religion in schools.

# The Problem Of Religious Contradictions

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