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JURNAL STUDI AGAMA-AGAMA

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Abstract

This article examines the potential of Basotho Indigenous Religion (BIR) as a culturally grounded resource for decolonising and transforming citizenship education in Lesotho secondary schools. Drawing on a qualitative interpretive documentary approach, the study critically examines scholarly literature, historical and missionary accounts, education and curriculum policy documents, and literature on indigenous knowledge, decoloniality, transformative pedagogy, and peacebuilding. The analysis focuses on the ways BIR has been represented and marginalised within colonial and contemporary educational knowledge systems and considers its potential contribution to citizenship formation. The article argues that BIR should not be understood merely as a set of traditional religious beliefs and practices but as an indigenous knowledge system encompassing relational personhood, botho, communal responsibility, moral accountability, intergenerational learning, and harmonious relationships between people and their social and natural environments. These dimensions provide culturally meaningful resources for developing learners' capacities for dialogue, social responsibility, peaceful coexistence, and democratic participation. The article further argues that the critical inclusion of BIR in citizenship education can contribute to epistemological justice and a more culturally responsive and transformative curriculum. Such inclusion, however, requires critical engagement with BIR alongside democratic values, human rights, religious pluralism, and contemporary educational principles. The study proposes that reclaiming BIR can broaden the epistemological foundations of citizenship education and contribute to the formation of socially responsible, culturally grounded, and peace-oriented citizens in Lesotho.

Keywords: Basotho Indigenous Religion; decoloniality; citizenship education; transformative pedagogy; peacebuilding.

INTRODUCTION

Education in Lesotho is positioned not merely as a means of acquiring literacy and employable skills but as a foundation for national development, social responsibility, moral formation, and sustainable peace. This aspiration is reflected across the country's national development, education, curriculum, and social-protection frameworks. The *Lesotho Education Partnership Compact 2024–2026*¹ situates its reform agenda within this broader policy architecture, including the *National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II) 2018/19–2022/23*², *Education Sector Plan 2016–2026*³, *Education Sector Operational Plan 2020/21–2023/24*⁴, the 2022 *Transforming Education Summit*⁵ commitments, and subsequent education reforms. The *NSDP II* identifies the quality of education and the mismatch between education and the skills required for national development as important concerns. In response, the *Education Sector Plan 2016–2026* seeks to reform curriculum and assessment to meet the needs of Lesotho, while the *Education Sector Operational Plan 2020/21–2023/24* emphasises equitable access, quality and relevant education, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability. The 2022 *Transforming Education Summit* further calls for diverse learning pathways, expanded secondary education, continuous teacher development, multisectoral coordination, research-informed planning, and policy harmonisation. These reforms demonstrate a sustained national commitment to making education both effective and responsive to the needs of Lesotho.

The state's role in shaping these educational priorities is also important. The Lesotho Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework⁶ makes clear that education is expected to serve broader national purposes, including self-realisation, better human relationships, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, and national unity. In this sense, citizenship education is not peripheral to education provision but forms part of the state's wider project of developing socially responsible and nationally conscious citizens. More recent developments demonstrate that this aspiration is being

¹ Kingdom of Lesotho, Ministry of Education and Training, *Education Partnership Compact: Enhancing the Quality of Teaching and Learning for Improved Learning Attainment at Basic Education, 2024–2026* (Maseru: Government of Lesotho, 2024).

² Kingdom of Lesotho, *National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II), 2018/19–2022/23* (Maseru: Government of Lesotho, 2018).

³ Kingdom of Lesotho, Ministry of Education and Training, *Education Sector Plan 2016–2026* (Maseru: Government of Lesotho, 2016).

⁴ Kingdom of Lesotho, Ministry of Education and Training, *Education Sector Operational Plan 2020/21–2023/24* (Maseru: Government of Lesotho, 2020).

⁵ United Nations, *Transforming Education Summit: 2022*, 2022.

⁶ Kingdom of Lesotho, Ministry of Education and Training, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework* (Maseru: Government of Lesotho, 2009).

translated into curriculum practice. Mosoeunyane⁷ reports that the Ministry of Education and Training, through the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), in partnership with International IDEA, implemented a Training of Trainers programme to integrate Civic and Voter Education into History, Development Studies, and Religious Studies. The initiative seeks to strengthen participatory democracy by preparing learners to become informed and active participants in electoral and governance processes, while also using participatory pedagogies, curriculum adaptation, assessment, observation, and monitoring to strengthen the curriculum during piloting. This development is significant for the present argument because it shows that citizenship education in Lesotho is increasingly being conceived as an integrated, participatory, and transformative process rather than simply as the transmission of civic information.

These developments also sharpen the question of cultural and epistemological grounding. If the state expects education to cultivate effective citizenship, national consciousness, unity, peace, tolerance, democracy, and good governance, the knowledge resources used to achieve these purposes require critical consideration. The integration of Civic and Voter Education into Religious Studies, within a curriculum historically shaped by Christian educational traditions, alongside other subjects, creates an important opening for asking how indigenous knowledge can contribute to the formation of citizens who are not only informed about democratic processes but are also socially responsible, morally grounded, and connected to their cultural context. BIR is therefore relevant not as a substitute for civic and democratic education, but as a culturally grounded resource that can enrich its moral and relational dimensions.

The same aspiration is evident in the *Education Act 2010*⁸, the *Basic Education Curriculum Policy 2021*⁹, and the *National Social Protection Strategy Action Plan II 2021*¹⁰. Together, these frameworks address access, curriculum relevance, competencies, inclusion, and the social conditions affecting learners' participation and progression. The *Education Partnership Compact* brings these priorities together in its vision of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, improving attainment, retaining learners in school, and strengthening psychosocial health and well-being. Significantly, it describes the educational aspiration as producing citizens who are "literate and productive, with grounded moral and ethical values."

⁷ Katiso Mosoeunyane, "Empowering Trainers for Piloting Civic and Voter Curriculum in Lesotho," *International IDEA*, July 27, 2026.

⁸ Kingdom of Lesotho, *Education Act 2010* (Maseru: Government of Lesotho, 2010).

⁹ Kingdom of Lesotho, Ministry of Education and Training, *Basic Education Curriculum Policy* (Maseru: Government of Lesotho, 2021).

¹⁰ Kingdom of Lesotho, *National Social Protection Strategy Action Plan II* (Maseru: Government of Lesotho, 2021).

Despite growing attention to citizenship education, indigenous knowledge, and curriculum relevance in Lesotho, limited scholarly attention has been given to how BIR can be critically reclaimed and pedagogically mobilised as a resource for citizenship formation in secondary schools. It is within this context that Basotho Indigenous Religion (BIR) becomes significant. Understood not simply as a collection of beliefs and rituals but as an indigenous knowledge system, BIR encompasses historically grounded Basotho understandings of personhood, community, moral responsibility, reciprocity, respect, communal well-being, and relationships between human beings and their environment. Its marginalisation within formal education therefore represents not only a curricular omission but also an epistemological concern. If education is expected to be relevant to Lesotho and to produce citizens grounded in moral and ethical values, greater attention needs to be given to the indigenous knowledge systems through which Basotho have historically understood moral personhood and communal responsibility.

This article does not propose BIR as a replacement for democratic citizenship, human rights, gender equality, religious pluralism, or contemporary educational principles. Rather, it argues for its critical reclamation and placement in dialogue with these values. Such an approach can reposition BIR as a legitimate indigenous epistemological and moral resource through which learners can critically engage questions of responsibility, relational personhood, communal obligation, social harmony, and moral accountability.

The article therefore argues that reclaiming BIR can contribute to a more decolonised and transformative conception of citizenship education in Lesotho secondary schools. It examines how BIR can be repositioned not as a return to an idealised past, but as a culturally grounded resource for rethinking moral formation, social responsibility, cultural identity, and transformative citizenship in contemporary Lesotho.

The study is guided by two questions: how has BIR been represented and marginalised within formal educational knowledge systems in Lesotho, and how might its indigenous epistemological and moral resources contribute to decolonised and transformative citizenship education in secondary schools?

Literature Review

Existing scholarship on Basotho Indigenous Religion (BIR), indigenous education, and the Lesotho curriculum suggests that indigenous knowledge has historically played an important role in moral formation, social responsibility, and preparation for communal life. Studies of Basotho indigenous education indicate that education was closely connected to everyday life and sought to cultivate virtues such as respect, humility, perseverance, hard work, service to the nation, and patriotism. Indigenous education also relied on

participation, observation, practice, and repetition, thereby linking knowledge acquisition with the development of practical and moral competencies.¹¹

Literature on Basotho Indigenous Religion further demonstrates that religion was not confined to formal rituals or a separate sphere of life but was embedded in family, community, social organisation, customary practices, and relationships with the wider environment.¹² This understanding challenges representations of BIR as merely a collection of beliefs and ceremonies and supports its consideration as an indigenous knowledge system with implications for moral and social formation. Research on the teaching of Basotho Traditional Religion and Christianity in Lesotho schools has also argued for greater recognition of the existing interaction between indigenous religious traditions and Christianity within Basotho society.¹³

Scholarship on the Lesotho curriculum provides a further basis for reconsidering the place of indigenous knowledge in education. The 2009 Curriculum and Assessment Policy represented an attempt to move beyond an examination-oriented system towards a more integrated and relevant curriculum directed towards individual and social development. Its broader educational aspirations include personal development, social responsibility, effective citizenship, national consciousness, and national unity.¹⁴ However, studies of the policy have identified tensions between its progressive intentions and the challenges of curriculum implementation.¹⁵

Recent scholarship on citizenship education in Lesotho similarly points to the importance of connecting citizenship with the curriculum and with learners' social and cultural contexts. Research examining the possibility of integrating History and Citizenship in secondary schools indicates that citizenship education has been recognised in various national policy and curriculum documents, although its place and implementation have not always been consistent.¹⁶ This is particularly relevant to the present study because citizenship education is not simply concerned with knowledge of political institutions; it also involves the development of dispositions, values, and competencies for responsible participation in society.

¹¹ Mocketsi Letseka, "Educating for Ubuntu/Botho: Lessons from Basotho Indigenous Education," *Open Journal of Philosophy* 3, no. 2 (2013): 337–344, <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2013.32051>

¹² Stephen J. Gill, *A Short History of Lesotho: From the Late Stone Age until the 1993 Elections* (Moriya: Morija Museum & Archives, 2010).

¹³ Letseka, "Educating for Ubuntu/Botho," 340.

¹⁴ Kingdom of Lesotho, Ministry of Education and Training, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework*.

¹⁵ Mohaeka Raselimo and Mahao Mahao, "The Lesotho Curriculum and Assessment Policy: Opportunities and Threats," *South African Journal of Education* 35, no. 1 (February 2015): 1–12.

¹⁶ Walter Sengai and N. L. Ntlama, "Teacher Perceptions on the Possibility of Integrating History and Citizenship in the Lesotho Curriculum: A Case of Three Secondary Schools," *Yesterday & Today*, no. 31 (July 2024): 87–109, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2024/n31a5>

Although these bodies of literature provide important insights into indigenous education, BIR, curriculum reform, and citizenship education, they have not sufficiently brought these strands together to examine BIR as a potential resource for decolonised and transformative citizenship education in Lesotho secondary schools. Existing scholarship establishes the educational significance of Basotho indigenous values and the national commitment to citizenship, moral formation, and relevant education, but less attention has been given to how BIR can be critically reclaimed and brought into dialogue with contemporary democratic citizenship, human rights, religious pluralism, and peacebuilding. This study addresses this gap by examining BIR not as a replacement for contemporary educational and civic principles, but as a culturally grounded epistemological and moral resource that can enrich their interpretation and pedagogical application.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive documentary approach¹⁷ to examine the potential of Basotho Indigenous Religion (BIR) as a resource for decolonised and transformative citizenship education in Lesotho secondary schools. The approach is appropriate for examining meanings, representations, and epistemological assumptions surrounding BIR, indigenous knowledge, citizenship, and moral formation. The documentary corpus comprises scholarly literature on BIR, Basotho culture, indigenous knowledge, and African religious thought; historical and missionary accounts of Basotho religious beliefs and practices; Lesotho education and curriculum policy documents; and literature on decoloniality, transformative pedagogy, citizenship education, and peacebuilding. Documents were purposively selected according to their relevance to the study's objectives and research questions.

The documents were analysed through iterative thematic analysis¹⁸ involving close reading, comparison, interpretation, and thematic organisation. Attention was given to the representation of BIR and indigenous knowledge and to themes relevant to citizenship formation, including *botho*, relational personhood, communal responsibility, reciprocity, moral accountability, respect, social harmony, and human–environment relationships. These themes were examined in relation to contemporary principles of democratic citizenship, human rights, equality, religious pluralism, and transformative education.

¹⁷ Claudia Wiesner, "Doing Qualitative and Interpretative Research: Reflecting Principles and Principled Challenges," *Political Research Exchange* 4 (2022): 1.

¹⁸ David L. Morgan and Andreea Nica, "Iterative Thematic Inquiry: A New Method for Analyzing Qualitative Data," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 19 (2020): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920955118>

The analysis was reflexive and dialogical,¹⁹ recognising that documentary sources are produced within particular historical, cultural, and ideological contexts. Sources were therefore read critically and comparatively, with attention to representation, omission, and contextual differences. Triangulation across scholarly, historical, and policy sources supported the interpretation of the findings.

Theoretical Framework

The study is informed by three complementary theoretical perspectives: decolonial theory, transformative pedagogy, and peacebuilding theory. Decolonial theory²⁰ provides the primary lens for examining how coloniality has influenced the construction, classification, and marginalisation of Basotho Indigenous Religion (BIR) and indigenous knowledge within formal education. It enables the study to question Western epistemological assumptions and consider the legitimacy of Basotho ways of knowing, believing, and transmitting knowledge.

Transformative pedagogy²¹ complements this perspective by viewing education as a process through which learners critically engage with knowledge, question dominant assumptions, and develop the capacity to participate meaningfully in social transformation. In this study, the perspective is used to consider how the inclusion and repositioning of BIR might move Religious and citizenship education beyond the reproduction of inherited knowledge towards critical reflection, cultural affirmation, moral formation, and responsible participation in society. Peacebuilding theory²² further extends the analysis by focusing attention on the potential of education and indigenous knowledge to address structural and relational forms of violence and promote peaceful social relations. Particular attention is given to BIR concepts such as botho, communal responsibility, relational personhood, moral formation, and interdependence, which provide resources for understanding citizenship in terms of mutual respect, social responsibility, and peaceful coexistence.

Taken together, these perspectives provide an integrated framework for interpreting the documentary evidence. Decolonial theory addresses epistemological marginalisation, transformative pedagogy considers the educational implications of reclaiming indigenous

¹⁹ Harvy Joy Liwanag and Emma Rhule, "Dialogical Reflexivity towards Collective Action to Transform Global Health," *BMJ Global Health* 6 (2021): 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2021-006825>

²⁰ Damián Pachón Soto and Karen Yolima Tafúr Torres, "Decolonial Theories: Origin, Categories, and Critical Intents," *Análisis* 55, no. 102 (2023): 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.15332/21459169.8603>

²¹ Patrick Farren, "Transformative Pedagogy in Context: Being and Becoming," *World Journal on Educational Technology: Current Issues* 8, no. 3 (2016), DOI 10.18844/wjet.v8i3.622.

²² Longpoe Hentuang Henry, "Peace Building: Theories and Practice," *International Journal of Innovative Research & Development* 9, no. 3 (2020): 151–56, <https://doi.org/10.24940/ijird/2020/v9/i3/MAR20057>

knowledge, and peacebuilding theory highlights its potential contribution to social cohesion and non-violent citizenship. The framework therefore supports the study's broader argument that repositioning BIR within Lesotho secondary education can contribute to epistemological justice, transformative learning, peacebuilding, and more culturally grounded citizenship education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The marginalisation of Basotho Indigenous Religion (BIR) in formal education needs to be understood as more than the absence of indigenous religious content from the curriculum. It reflects a deeper epistemological problem concerning what forms of knowledge are recognised, legitimised, and transmitted through schooling. As established in the introduction, Lesotho's education reforms emphasise relevant education, moral and ethical formation, social responsibility, and the development of productive citizens.²³ Yet the knowledge systems through which Basotho historically understood personhood, morality, communal responsibility, and social relationships remain insufficiently recognised as educational resources.

From a decolonial perspective, this situation illustrates the persistence of coloniality in education. Colonial education did not merely introduce new institutions and curricula; it also established hierarchies of knowledge in which Western forms of knowing were positioned as rational and legitimate, while indigenous knowledge was frequently classified as traditional, primitive, superstitious, or incompatible with modernity.²⁴ Consequently, the marginalisation of BIR can be interpreted as part of a broader pattern in which indigenous epistemologies are displaced from formal systems of knowledge production. This observation is particularly important in the context of citizenship education. If schooling is expected to develop citizens who possess grounded moral and ethical values, the question cannot be limited to what values should be taught. It must also ask whose knowledge and cultural resources are considered legitimate foundations for those values. The present study therefore argues that the decolonisation of citizenship education requires an epistemological reconsideration of the sources from which moral and civic knowledge is derived.

The analysis suggests that BIR should be reconsidered beyond its conventional representation as a set of beliefs, rituals, or religious practices. Its significance lies partly in the ways it embodies understandings of personhood, community, reciprocity,

²³ Kingdom of Lesotho, Ministry of Education and Training, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework.

²⁴ Johannes Seroto and Philip Higgs, "African Indigenous Education in the Postcolonial Period: A Critical Reflection," *Journal of Education*, no. 95 (2024): 148–67, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i95a08>

responsibility, respect, moral accountability, and relationships between human beings and their environment.²⁵ Viewed in this way, BIR constitutes an indigenous epistemological resource with potential relevance to contemporary education. Reclamation, however, should not be understood as the uncritical restoration of everything associated with the precolonial past. Such an approach could romanticise indigenous traditions and overlook internal tensions, historical changes, or practices that may conflict with contemporary principles of equality and human rights. The argument here is instead for critical reclamation. This means identifying knowledge and values within BIR that can contribute constructively to contemporary education while subjecting them to critical reflection and dialogue.

Such an approach is consistent with the article's argument that BIR should not replace democratic citizenship, human rights, gender equality, religious pluralism, or contemporary educational principles. Rather, BIR can enter into dialogue with these principles as a culturally grounded epistemological resource. Decolonisation, therefore, becomes an additive and dialogical process: it expands the epistemological resources available to education rather than simply reversing existing hierarchies by replacing one knowledge system with another.²⁶ One of the most significant contributions of BIR to citizenship education lies in its potential to broaden the understanding of what it means to be a person and, consequently, what it means to be a citizen. The indigenous emphasis on relational personhood challenges highly individualised understandings of social responsibility by locating the individual within networks of family, community, ancestry, and the wider natural environment.

The concept of *botho* is particularly useful in this regard. Understood as a relational orientation towards others, *botho* foregrounds qualities such as respect, compassion, reciprocity, responsibility, and concern for communal well-being. These qualities resonate strongly with the objectives of citizenship education, particularly where citizenship is understood not simply as knowledge of political institutions and individual rights but as the development of dispositions for responsible participation in society.²⁷

The relevance of BIR therefore lies not in providing a ready-made curriculum of moral rules but in opening culturally meaningful ways of engaging learners with questions such as: What obligations do individuals have towards others? What makes a person a morally responsible member of a community? How should disagreements be addressed?

²⁵ Thomas Lesaoana Manyeli, *Phenomenological Perspectives of Basotho Religion* (Mazenod: Mazenod Institute, 1995)

²⁶ Betty Keji Khamis, "Decolonization of the African Education System: Reclaiming Indigenous Knowledge, Language, Curriculum, and Epistemic Agency," *British Journal of Contemporary Research* 1, no. 4 (September 2026): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.67693/BJCR-Q3YRG27E>

²⁷ Letseka, "Educating for Ubuntu/Botho," 340

What constitutes social harmony? What responsibilities do present generations have towards future generations? Such questions can connect indigenous understandings with contemporary concerns about social cohesion, violence, inequality, environmental responsibility, and peaceful coexistence. In this respect, BIR has the potential to shift citizenship education from an emphasis on knowing about citizenship towards learning how to live responsibly with others. The educational significance of reclaiming BIR becomes clearer when considered through a transformative conception of citizenship education. Transformative education seeks not merely to transmit established knowledge but to enable learners to question assumptions, interpret their social realities critically, and participate in transforming unjust or harmful conditions.²⁸

BIR can contribute to this process by providing learners with culturally familiar concepts through which contemporary social problems can be examined. For example, communal responsibility can provide a basis for discussing social exclusion and inequality; reciprocity can inform discussions of mutual responsibility; respect and relational personhood can support reflection on interpersonal violence and social conflict; while human environment relationships can provide a culturally grounded entry point into environmental responsibility. The significance of this approach is that it connects citizenship education to learners' cultural worlds. Rather than presenting citizenship as an abstract body of knowledge imported into the classroom, learners can encounter civic responsibility through concepts that have historical and cultural resonance within Basotho society. Such pedagogy can potentially make citizenship education more meaningful while simultaneously challenging the assumption that legitimate educational knowledge must originate outside indigenous contexts.

The approach also supports the broader aspiration of Lesotho's education system to provide education that is relevant to the country's social and developmental realities. Reclaiming BIR can thus be understood not simply as a cultural exercise but as part of the broader project of making education more contextually responsive. A significant implication of the argument is that the reclamation of BIR should occur through dialogue rather than cultural replacement. Contemporary Lesotho is religiously and socially diverse,²⁹ and citizenship education must prepare learners to participate respectfully in such diversity. Consequently, BIR should not be presented as the exclusive or superior basis of citizenship.

²⁸ Peter Dankmeijer, "My ID to Be Myself: A Transformation of Schools from Disciplinary Knowledge Factories to Cooperative Spaces for Emotional Self-Development and Activism," in *Transformative Education: Meanings and Policy Implications*, ed. Vernor Muñoz Villalobos and Luis Eduardo Pérez Murcia (Global Campaign for Education), 33–54.

²⁹ Hinckley, Bryant. "Law and Religion in Lesotho." *International Center for Law and Religion Studies*. 2026.

Instead, BIR can be placed alongside democratic citizenship, human rights, gender equality, religious pluralism, and other knowledge traditions. Learners can be encouraged to identify areas of convergence and tension between indigenous values and contemporary principles. Such an approach makes the classroom a space for critical dialogue rather than cultural indoctrination. For example, the communal emphasis within BIR may enrich understandings of social responsibility, while human-rights discourse can provide an important framework for evaluating practices that may conflict with contemporary understandings of individual dignity and equality. Similarly, indigenous understandings of social harmony can be placed in conversation with democratic approaches to disagreement, participation, and conflict resolution.

This critical dialogue is central to the study's understanding of decolonisation. Decolonisation should not produce a new epistemological absolutism in which indigenous knowledge is shielded from critique. Rather, it should create conditions in which previously marginalised knowledge can participate equally in the production of meaning and knowledge while remaining open to critical examination. The discussion has important implications for citizenship education in Lesotho secondary schools. Reclaiming BIR requires more than adding a few references to indigenous beliefs or practices in existing textbooks. It calls for a pedagogical reorientation in which learners encounter indigenous knowledge as a legitimate source for inquiry, reflection, ethical reasoning, and civic engagement.

Teachers could, for example, use Basotho concepts, narratives, proverbs, community practices, historical accounts, and indigenous understandings of social responsibility as starting points for critical discussion. These materials could then be connected to contemporary issues such as human rights, democracy, gender equality, environmental sustainability, peacebuilding, and social justice. Such pedagogy would allow learners to move between cultural knowledge and contemporary civic questions, rather than treating the two as separate domains. The recent initiative to pilot the integration of Civic and Voter Education provides a particularly relevant illustration of this pedagogical direction. The Training of Trainers programme reported by Mosoeunyane³⁰ emphasised participatory teaching methodologies, curriculum adaptation, lesson design, assessment, micro-teaching, observation, documentation, monitoring, and reporting. These features resonate with a transformative pedagogy in which learners are expected to engage actively with civic issues rather than merely receive information.³¹ Within such an approach, BIR could provide culturally meaningful concepts and narratives through which learners

³⁰ Mosoeunyane, "Empowering Trainers for Piloting Civic and Voter Curriculum in Lesotho."

³¹ Thelma Chansa Chanda, "Transformative Approaches to Teaching and Learning Civic Education: A Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Lusaka District, Zambia," *International Journal of Research* 11, no. 7: 20–35, <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.12684375>

critically explore democratic participation, responsibility, tolerance, peace, social cohesion, and the common good. Its inclusion would therefore complement, rather than compete with, the emerging civic and voter education agenda.

Teacher preparation would consequently become important. Educators require sufficient knowledge of BIR and indigenous epistemologies to avoid reducing them to stereotypes or presenting them merely as historical curiosities. They also need pedagogical competence to facilitate critical dialogue in religiously diverse classrooms. The goal should be neither the promotion of BIR as a particular religious commitment nor its exclusion from education because of its religious character. Instead, it should be treated as an object of knowledge and a source of culturally grounded ethical reflection. Ultimately, reclaiming BIR can contribute to a conception of citizenship education that is simultaneously indigenous, critical, inclusive, and transformative. It allows learners to draw upon their cultural heritage while engaging critically with the demands of contemporary citizenship. The argument is therefore not for a return to the past, but for bringing historically marginalised knowledge into the educational present so that it can participate in shaping a more socially responsible and culturally grounded future for Lesotho.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that reclaiming Basotho Indigenous Religion (BIR) offers an important opportunity to rethink citizenship education in Lesotho secondary schools. The central concern is not simply the absence of BIR from the curriculum, but the deeper epistemological marginalisation of indigenous ways of knowing within formal education. This is particularly significant in an education system that seeks to develop citizens who are morally grounded, socially responsible, and responsive to the needs of Lesotho. The documentary analysis indicates that BIR can be understood as more than a collection of religious beliefs and practices. Its understandings of botho, relational personhood, communal responsibility, reciprocity, respect, moral accountability, social harmony, and human environment relationships provide culturally grounded resources for engaging contemporary questions of citizenship and moral formation. Critically reclaiming these resources can help connect citizenship education with learners' cultural worlds while challenging inherited assumptions about whose knowledge is legitimate within formal schooling.

However, such reclamation should neither romanticise the past nor position BIR as an alternative to democracy, human rights, gender equality, religious pluralism, or other contemporary educational principles. Its educational value lies precisely in its capacity to enter into critical and dialogical engagement with these principles. Such an approach allows learners to examine both the strengths and limitations of indigenous traditions

while developing the capacity to negotiate cultural identity, difference, responsibility, and social change critically. The article therefore proposes a shift from citizenship education that primarily teaches learners about citizenship towards one that also develops their capacity to live responsibly with others. Reclaiming BIR can contribute to this shift by providing culturally meaningful resources for discussing social responsibility, peaceful coexistence, inequality, interpersonal relations, environmental responsibility, and communal well-being.

Ultimately, decolonising citizenship education in Lesotho requires more than curriculum revision. It requires reconsidering the epistemological foundations upon which education, moral formation, and citizenship are constructed. The critical reclamation of BIR provides one avenue through which this can be pursued. By bringing historically marginalised indigenous knowledge into dialogue with contemporary democratic and human-rights values, Lesotho's secondary education system can move towards a form of citizenship education that is culturally grounded, critically engaged, inclusive, and transformative. Such an approach does not seek a return to an idealised past; rather, it seeks to draw responsibly on the past to address the educational and civic challenges of the present and contribute to a more socially responsible future for Lesotho.

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