Redirecting attention towards moral evaluation to improve the assessment of Religious Studies attainments in Lesotho

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DECLARATION

I, Mosemotsana Adam, declare that this dissertation entitled: "Redirecting attention towards moral evaluation to improve the assessment of Religious Studies attainments in Lesotho" is my own work and it has not been previously submitted to any other academic institution. Additionally, I declare that all information and concepts included in this study, whether quoted directly or paraphrased, have been appropriately acknowledged through accurate citations and references.

Researcher_____   _____

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DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this study to myself, for the sleepless nights that I had and overcoming all the hardships I came across during the academic journey. I would also like to dedicate this study to my parents: Tankiso Adam and Malerato Adam and my entire family: Sekhotseng Adam, Moleboheng Adam, Mohale Adam, Nkhathatseng Adam, Keneuoe Adam, Lisemelo Adam and Tau Adam. Without their love and support, it would not have been easy to complete my studies.

ABSTRACT

The assessment of learners' moral development in Religious Studies is currently focused on cognitive assessment even though one of the curriculum aims of Religious Studies is to promote socially and culturally acceptable behaviour. These moral competencies are challenging to assess effectively through cognitive evaluation alone, as it fails to address observable moral character. This is a misalignment with the aims of Religious Education, which aims to promote a holistic moral development. Hence, this study intended to redirect attention towards the evaluation of learners' observable moral development in order to improve assessment in Religious Studies. This study was underpinned by Kant's deontological ethical theory which proposes that individuals have a moral duty to behave in a manner that conforms to a certain set of principles and regulations, irrespective of the consequences. In addition, the study adopted qualitative approach and phenomenological design. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews with ten Religious Studies teachers who were selected purposively from five church secondary schools in Maseru. The key finding of this study indicate that evaluating learners' observable moral growth is significant in determining their behavioural transformation. The findings further show that despite the aims of the Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy to introduce portfolio assessment to assess affective competencies, Religious Studies teachers have not implemented portfolio assessment in to their assessment practices when assessing learners' moral development. This indicates that assessing the attainment in the affective aspects of moral growth is not currently prioritised. It is therefore recommended that Religious Studies teachers receive ongoing in-service training on the use of portfolio assessment and other methods of assessment aimed at assessing affective competencies. Finally, the study emphasises the need for the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) to consider incorporating other qualitative methods of moral evaluation and allocating resources that will ease the implementation of methods of moral evaluation.

Keywords: *Moral development, Moral evaluation, Effective assessment, Evaluation, Assessment*

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAP - Curriculum and Assessment Policy

ECoL - Examinations Council of Lesotho

LBECP - Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy

MoET - Ministry of Education and Training

NCDC - National Curriculum Development Centre

T - Teacher

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Religious Studies is a subject that is widely acknowledged for its importance in fostering students' overall growth and promoting their spiritual development (Scovia & Margaret, 2023). Consequently, it is crucial to base Religious Studies' attainments on these two dimensions. It is therefore essential to assess learners' spiritual growth and moral development for a comprehensive evaluation. Thus, this study emphasises the importance of incorporating moral evaluation for effective assessment in Religious Studies. The research plan outlined in this study includes several key components: introduction, background information, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, limitations, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, study rigour, and ethical considerations.

Assessment in Religious Studies is authentic and effective if it covers all three areas of competencies namely, attitude, knowledge, and skill assessments (Ofsted, 2013). NIT (2013) further demonstrates that assessment in Religious Studies should encompass all three learning domains: cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains in order to enhance students' learning. For example, in the context of Religious Studies, learners may be assessed on the knowledge of religion and Biblical texts. On the other hand, the affective domain should relate to students' behaviour. In this case, learners' behaviour and attitude can be observed by their teachers or peers. Lastly, when assessing learners in the psychomotor domain, the major goal should be to see how well they can use the skills they have learned from Religious Studies in real life situations.

Effective assessment is therefore necessary for Religious Studies attainment. Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education that a person has successfully completed. Successful completion of a level of education refers to the achievement of learning the objectives of that level, typically validated through the assessment of acquired knowledge, skills and competences (Schneider, 2011). The highest grade achieved at the primary and secondary school levels, regardless of secondary school completion, is referred to as educational attainment. In other words, the standard method for assessing educational attainment is by comparing it to the highest degree of education that has been successfully completed, generally verified by a recognised certification. Novo (2013), on the other hand, contests the idea that educational attainment is a more inclusive term than academic success. Academic and cognitive abilities are only one aspect of educational achievement; other factors include personal, interpersonal, and institutional factors

that play a role in the process of moving up the educational ladder. A student is said to have attained educational achievement when they have acquired the essential skills to become independent and creative adults. With these skills, students continue to learn new things and develop new knowledge and new life perspectives. Novo's conceptualisation of educational attainment is the one adopted in this study.

In a nutshell, Religious Studies attainments refer to the knowledge, understanding of religious beliefs and acquisition of moral character (Iqbal, 2019). According to ECoL and NCDC (2020), Religious Studies attainments include reading Luke's Gospel in order to gain knowledge and insight into the life and teachings of Jesus Christ; reading Acts of Apostles to learn about the growth of the early church. By reading the Biblical texts, learners are also expected to learn about moral values in order to develop noble characters. In this regard, acquisition of moral values is another attainment target in Lesotho's Religious Studies.

1.2 Background to the study problem

Schools are meant to raise morally upright persons, and subjects offered in secondary schools, such as Religious Studies, promote moral principles in students so that they may conduct themselves decently in society (Ndumia, 2016). Although Religious Studies is taught in Lesotho secondary schools and teaches moral principles, there is no model of assessment designed to assess learners' moral development. Consequently, learners' moral development is assessed through reasoning where they have to think about right and wrong and how they acquire and apply moral rules through writing not by doing. This probably indicates that the current assessment in Religious Studies, which is in the form of summative and formative assessment, only assesses cognitive skills. However, according to Pakpahan (2019), the degree to which learners apply experiences or practices they have acquired in their daily lives determines their achievement in Religious Studies. Learners must be able to digest and apply knowledge learned through actions.

It appears that the assessment tools used in Religious Studies may not be valid because learners are assessed on their moral development through moral reasoning, leaving out observable moral character. According to Pakpahan (2019), Christian Religious Studies, which is the type of Religious Studies taught in Lesotho, refers to the Christian teaching about God and His work. For that reason, studying Religious Studies seeks to develop students' spiritual potential and mould them into morally upright individuals who believe in God. While noble character encompasses

ethical behaviour and moral growth as an expression of Christian Religious Studies, increasing spiritual potential comprises the introduction, knowledge, cultivation, and application of religious principles in individual or community life.

Furthermore, studying Religious Studies involves more than just learning theory; it also involves learning how to obtain, understand, and apply Religious Studies information in the actual world. This means that in the learning of Religious Studies, students follow the process of moral and faith development. Consequently, learning in Religious Studies is geared more towards psychomotor and affective competencies while still maintaining cognitive skills (Abidin, 2014). Therefore, it is important to emphasise what is done rather than just what learners know when determining their progress in the Religious Studies learning process. As a result, the method of assessment ought to focus more on applying knowledge to everyday situations. However, such assessment may not be done through writing essays but through other modes of assessment designed to assess learners' attitudes and skills (Pakpahan, 2019).

Furthermore, the commonly used mode of assessment in Religious Studies may fail to meet the curriculum targets of Religious Studies, which aims at providing students with socially and culturally acceptable moral behaviour (MoET, 2009). The implication of not assessing an observable moral development is that the attainment in that area may not be known. According to NAHT (2014), the examination requirements have taken precedence over all other goals in Religious Studies, where teachers are required to help learners to prepare for examinations. Concentrating on the requirements of the test may result in a shallow approach to topics that may not accomplish the goal of Religious Studies. In a similar vein, Ofsted (2013) brought attention to the fact that the majority of Religious Studies instruction for GCSE students falls short of achieving the examination specification's goal of empowering students to approach the study of religion with a critical and reflective attitude.

According to Radhakrisman (2007, cited by Obwana, 2021), pen-and-paper methods may not allow for an accurate moral assessment. One of the shortcomings of the scoring system assessment is that it primarily assesses knowledge proficiency without the attitude and the character. The attitude and character are assessed through reasoning in essay writing. These objective assessment techniques fall short in creating indicators, attitude instruments, rubrics, and assessments of skills and attitudes (Kunandar, 2014). According to Obwana (2021), the incomplete assessment of

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learners' moral growth can lead to a situation where they are proficient in recalling religious facts or scriptures but lack the necessary skills to apply and practise what they have learned in Religious Studies. This discrepancy in moral development may be attributed to the failure of Religious Studies learning episodes to effectively shape learners' attitudes and beliefs. Again, when moral acquisition is not emphasised on, this may result in Religious Studies being learned but not lived out. When this happens, the society will be awash with all sorts of violence including cultural, structural and direct violence. Therefore, there is a need for authentic or effective assessment that will fully assess the moral development of learners.

The method of assessment relevant for morality is evaluation as opposed to examination and tests. According to Roberts and Weir (1994), cited by Yambi, (2020), evaluation originates from the word "value," which describes the worth of anything. Evaluation is the methodical objective act of gauging or watching something or someone in order to make judgments based on criteria that are often determined by comparison or specified standards. Evaluation measures the success rate of an individual, finished project, procedure, or product to ascertain its value or importance. More precisely, methods of evaluation in the education sector involve observing or measuring the process in order to determine the product's worth by contrasting it with others that meet a certain standard (Yimbi, 2020). Grades are not the main emphasis of the evaluation. Instead, it is the final process that is determined to understand the quality of a process. Hence evaluation is more advantageous than other modes of assessment.

According to Nwankwo and Agama (2023), evaluation is advantageous in that it is an objective-based process. Teachers in schools could be curious to learn about the personal growth and academic accomplishments of their learners. These are expressed in terms of the instructional objectives or desired learning outcomes. Evaluation has to be focused on these learning objectives in order to be meaningful (Shinde, 2022). The direction for both teaching and evaluation comes from the instructional aim. The purpose of instruction is to help students accomplish the learning objectives, and evaluation is done to determine whether or not the objectives have been met and to what degree. The goals of the evaluation also influence the choice of evaluation approaches and resources.

Moreover, evaluation is a comprehensive procedure. Learners grow in intellectual, emotional, and physical domains in diverse ways. Shinde (2022) presents these features in the form of several aims. An evaluation cannot be deemed complete until it includes information on every facet. As a result, both academic and extracurricular components of learners' development are evaluated by a quality evaluation programme. Comprehensive evaluation includes not only assessing every potential goal but also gathering data on many facets of personality development using a variety of instruments and methods. Along with written exams, these also consist of oral exams, observational methods, interviews, practical exams, rating scales, schedules, inventories and profiles (Prakash et al., 2015)

Yimbi (2020) stipulates that evaluation is the process of comparison. The instructor cannot obtain all the necessary evidence on students' improvement on their own since comprehensive evaluation looks for evidence on all facets of learners' development. The cooperation of learners and their parents, other teachers, and everyone else who observes learners grow and develop is necessary in order to gather evidence on social relationships, emotional behaviour, initiatives, scientific views, social attitudes, likes and dislikes. Evaluation is therefore seen as a more scientific procedure that aims to ascertain what is known and could be done regarding performance capabilities and the most effective way to quantify them. It addresses problems with reporting, analysis, validity, accuracy, and reliability.

This study therefore advocates moral evaluation. Through moral evaluation, the teaching and learning of Religious Studies, that promotes moral values and their application by learners, can be evaluated. In this case, learners' behaviour will be assessed based on the set principles of morality in order to achieve Religious Studies attainments. Both Ploto and Dewery, cited by Obwana (2021), expressly linked philosophy of practice with education. This means students should not only have strong academic credentials but also be able to handle challenging situations. Therefore, in order for students to develop moral principles, they must get instruction in ethics and moral philosophy and be able to apply those lessons to their daily lives.

Moral evaluation is needed for effective assessment in Religious Studies. Rewinding to Europe's classical era, according to Obwana (2021), moral growth was evaluated in Religious Studies based on an individual's public display of religiosity; knowledge alone was insufficient. This resulted in a stronger devotion to values than could be possible purely from knowledge. Hence, it is in this

study's best interest to reposition moral assessment as a focal point of evaluation in Religious Studies.

1.3 Statement of the problem

For an extended period, Lesotho secondary schools have primarily relied on pen-and-paper assessments, emphasising intellectual educational achievements, which predominantly focus on cognitive capabilities, for the moral growth of students. However, the Lesotho Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework (CAP) (MoET, 2009) underscores the significance of social education subjects, including Religious Studies, in instilling desirable attitudes, ethical and moral values, thereby contributing to personal and social development. In the same manner, the Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy (LBECP) (MoET, 2021) places emphasis on moral competencies, such as respect, tolerance, trustworthiness, honesty, cooperation, and conflict resolution. These moral competencies are challenging to assess effectively through cognitive evaluation alone, as it fails to address observable moral character. This is a misalignment with the aims of Religious Studies, which aims to promote a holistic moral development.

The existing Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy (2021) promotes the integration of portfolios as a means of continuous assessment to foster the development of higher-order skills and attitudes. This strategic approach aims to tackle the challenge of fostering observable moral development, as portfolios inherently encompass observable instances of moral decision-making. This study specifically intends to determine whether teachers in their instructional assessment in Religious Studies employ portfolios and other modes of assessment when assessing learners' moral growth and, if not, thus exploring the feasibility of introducing other alternative assessment methods designed to evaluate learners' moral development within the framework of Religious Studies in Lesotho. According to Giyean (2017), the existing cognitive measurement of moral growth confines moral education to moral reasoning, rendering it overly abstract and neglecting learners' practical moral conduct. Prominent moralists, such as Driver (2022), Termini and Golden (2007), and Gurvitch (1943), propose observable moral development assessment techniques as potential solutions to this problem. Consequently, there is a pressing need for an evaluation model that can facilitate a more comprehensive and profound understanding of moral values, as advocated by Religious Studies within the Lesotho context.

1.4 Research questions

In order to address the above-described problem, the study was guided by the central research question and several sub-questions. The key question is:

How can effective assessment in Religious Studies be achieved in order to evaluate learners' moral development?

The sub-questions are as follows:

1. What are teachers' perceptions on effective assessment in Religious Studies attainments?

2. What are teachers' views on the importance of assessing moral development promoted by the teaching and learning of Religious Studies?

3. What are the possibilities that the emphasis could shift from cognitive assessment to moral development evaluation?

1.5 Objectives of the study

The study aimed to examine teachers' perceptions on evaluation of learners' moral growth in moulding secondary school learners' moral development in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in order to achieve the curriculum aim of Religious Studies. The following are the research sub-objectives:

1. To explore teachers' perceptions on effective assessment in Religious Studies attainments.

2. To investigate teachers' views on the importance of assessing moral development of learners in Religious Studies.

3. To discover ways of strengthening moral development evaluation as the measurement of achieving aims of Religious Studies.

1.6 Significance of the study

The results of the study might not only be beneficial to the Lesotho context, but also across countries that offer Religious Studies. The study intended to provide new insights on effective assessment in Religious Studies. As such, different stakeholders in Lesotho, including the research community, Religious Studies teachers, Examinations Council of Lesotho, National Curriculum Development Centre, learners and communities of Lesotho might benefit from the findings of the current study.

1.6.1 Significance of the study for the research community

Upon doing a comprehensive search of the literature, no published empirical investigations were found on effective assessment in Religious Studies in the context of Lesotho. Therefore, this study attempted to make a contribution to the awareness of moral evaluation for effective assessment in Religious Studies attainment. The study could also influence scholars to further investigate on the issues of Religious Studies.

1.6.2 Significance of the study for Religious Studies teachers

Teaching moral principles, as part of secondary school Religious Studies curriculum, moulds learners' behaviour. Therefore, the findings of this study could raise awareness for teachers on the necessity of moral evaluation of learners in Religious Studies. Most importantly, the findings could also help Religious Studies teachers to realise that the current modes of assessment in Religious Studies undermine the curriculum aims of the subject as they mainly focus on the cognitive domain of learning. Hence, there is a need for moral assessment.

1.6.3 Significance of the study for the Examinations Council of Lesotho

The findings of this study might help the Examinations Council of Lesotho to develop strategies for assessing the moral growth of learners in order to achieve the curriculum aims of Religious Studies.

1.6.4 Significance of the study for the National Curriculum Development Centre

The study's findings might also benefit the curriculum developers in designing assessment techniques aimed at evaluating moral growth alongside the cognitive assessment.

1.6.5 Significance of the study for learners

The goal of the study was to provide new insights into moral evaluation in Religious Studies. Therefore, the findings could help learners to discover the necessity of being morally upright and the need for moral evaluation in order to obtain the educational attainment of Religious Studies.

1.6.6 Significance of the study for communities of Lesotho

The findings from this investigation might increase awareness to communities about the intended role of Religious Studies in raising morally upright learners. Most importantly, parents might also be aware that if there is no moral evaluation, Religious Studies may not have significant impact on learners' behaviour.

1.7 Operationalisation of terms

Evaluation- is the measurement or observation of a process in order to determine its worth by comparing it to an established standard.

Moral development- refers to the principle of cultivating good behaviour, goodness or righteously being upright.

Moral evaluation- entails evaluating how well learners are taught moral concepts and how they apply those ideas in their daily lives.

Assessment- is the methodical, ongoing process of gauging, tracking, and enhancing the quality of education.

Effective assessment- refers to evaluating whether the intervention produces the intended results.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the contribution of other scholars and researchers towards effective assessment in Religious Studies. The primary emphasis is to review the literature concerning the assessment of observable moral growth in learners, particularly as influenced by the teachings of Religious Studies. To deepen the understanding of effective assessment in Religious Studies, this chapter reviews research done in education systems on the types of assessment employed in Religious Studies, nature of effective assessment in Religious Studies, linking moral assessment with effective assessment in Religious Studies and preferable modes of moral evaluation used in other countries. Examining contexts beyond Lesotho is crucial to position the study within the general debate on the use of appropriate assessment instruments that can be effectively utilised for evaluating the moral growth of learners. Lastly, this chapter discusses the theory that underpins the study. For a logical discussion, the chapter is divided into the following sub-headings:

1. Theoretical framework

2. Definition of assessment

3. Types of assessment in Religious Studies

4. Discussion of assessment in Religious Studies

5. The nature of effective assessment

6. Preferable modes of moral evaluation

7. Linking moral evaluation and effective assessment in Religious Studies

8. Summary of literature review and identification of gaps in literature relating to moral assessment in Religious Studies.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The study employed deontological ethical theory for ontological engagement with the entire study. The Greek word deon, which means obligation, is the origin of the word deontology (Moore, 2020). One of the key normative theories of contemporary moral philosophy, deontology explains what choices are morally obligatory, forbidden, or permissible. In other words, deontology falls under the group of moral theories that assess and guide individuals' judgments on what they should

do, rather than those that assess and establish what kind of people we are and should be (Arneson, 2019). Immanuel Kant is the proponent of deontological theory.

According to Lazar (2019), the deontological theory posits that individuals have a moral duty to behave in a manner that conforms to a certain set of principles and regulations, irrespective of the consequences. For instance, religious deontology holds that moral obligations to uphold religious rules include refraining from stealing, lying, and cheating. These concepts are derived from divine precepts. The values in Kant's deontological theory originate from human thinking, in contrast to religious deontological theories whose principles are derived from divine mandates (Moore, 2020).

In line with Kant, this study used the deontological theory as justification for moral assessment in order to conduct an efficient assessment in Religious Studies. According to this theory, one has a moral obligation to act in accordance with a particular set of rules and regulations regardless of the results (Thomas, 2015). Therefore, learners' moral growth needs to be evaluated in accordance with obedience or disobedient to the set moral principles in order to achieve the attainments target in Religious Studies. The moral principles set may either be religious, cultural or social because the aim is for learners to be morally upright.

Moreover, the deontological moral theory is distinguished by its emphasis on and rigorous observance of autonomous moral laws or obligations. Understanding these moral obligations and the appropriate laws that govern them is necessary in order to make morally sound decisions. By definition, a deontologist is acting morally when they fulfill their obligations. Immorality results from disobedience to one's responsibility (Kant, 1985 referenced by Moores, 2020). In the context of teaching and learning of Religious Studies, learners should be provided with a code of conduct or set of rules to follow on daily basis as their duty. Learners should be told how to act accordingly in order to behave in a desired manner. Therefore, evaluation will be based upon living in accordance with such rules. Failure to behave in accordance will imply that one is immoral and thus rendering the teaching and learning of moral values in Religious Studies unproductive, while behaving in accordance with the good moral behaviour will imply success of teaching and learning of Religious Studies. The purpose of evaluation is to determine whether the Religious Studies attainment targets are achieved or not.

According to Kant's moral theory (Lazar, 2019), the ability to reason is a special attribute of humans. Since all species, other than humans, rely on instinct, no other animal has the same

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predisposition for reasoned cognition and behaviour. Because of this capacity, humans must act morally and for the purpose of moral law of duty. Secondary school students are human beings, and as such, they should use reason and moral principles to steer their acts in the correct path. They have a duty to observe moral rules. In other words, students must act morally and logically by abiding by the moral rules. Thus, they possess reason just like any other human. Religious Studies is therefore responsible for instilling rational moral behaviour that creates learners with noble characters. Evaluation is a catalyst to influencing rational development of moral character.

According to Kant, the only object in the universe that can be deemed good without qualification is the human will, which determines the moral worth of an action. One can demonstrate goodwill by abiding by the law or moral obligations. People have an obligation to behave in line with categorical imperatives since moral law is composed of a set of maxims that are categorical in character (Kant, 1985 quoted by Ndumia, 2016). Therefore, humans must act in conformity with the categorical imperatives that Kant established. One of the requirements is to act in a way that one treats humanity, whether in their own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end but always at the same time as an end. Every rational action, according to this imperative, must be viewed as both a principle and a goal in itself. An end must be read thoroughly in order for it to be objective. All logical acts originate from the free will, but only moral actions may be attributed to the antonymous will (Moore, 2020).

2.3 Definition of assessment

Within the literature it is agreed that there are three principal forms of assessment in which learning is assessed, namely, formative, diagnostic and summative assessment. These terms were first introduced to suggest a distinction concerning the assessment that provides specific information about individual weaknesses and strengths and proceed with remedial teaching (diagnostic assessment), evaluation that intended to foster development and improvement (formative assessment), and evaluation that intended to assess whether the stated goals were met (summative assessment) (Richard, 2013). It has been suggested that because of this separation of purposes, these assessment categories have evolved into unique subtypes of assessment and are now often utilised as measurements of learning (Wood-Wallace, 2016). Formative and summative assessments are the two primary types of assessment that the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho recognises as being important (MoET, 2021) As a result, like all other subjects,

Religious Studies is mainly assessed through both formative and summative methods. Therefore, these are the two types of assessment that need to be explained further.

2.3.1 Formative assessment

Formative assessment is the process of gathering information and providing feedback on what learners know and can do, with the intention of identifying learning challenges for prompt remediation and reinforcement of good teaching and learning practices (Bhat & Bhat, 2019). Formative assessment includes student work analysis, classroom discussion and instruction and observation of assignments and assessments. Assessment becomes a formative process when data is actively used to customise instruction and learning methods, meet the needs of each individual student, and promote ongoing development. Teachers can attempt different instructional techniques, re-teach, or provide extra practice opportunities by using formative assessment to make the appropriate instructional modifications. Teachers may be able to increase students' achievement through these activities (Santos & Fil, 2013). In relation to Religious Studies, formative assessment would mean an assessment intended to obtain and analyse data on students' learning and applying that data to inform decisions about the course of action with regard to religious concepts, and more importantly, religious moral values as the focal point of this study.

2.3.1.1 Purpose of formative assessment

Formative assessment serves to guide learners through any necessary actions to improve their learning by giving them feedback so that they can identify any gaps within their current knowledge, understanding, or skills and the desired goal (Santos & Fil, 2013). Understanding what students know and don't know is the goal of formative assessment, according to Trimbull (2013), so that teaching and learning may be adjusted appropriately. Test and assignment analysis should be done in addition to other strategies like instructor observation and classroom discussion. As a result, Wood-Wallace (2016) advises teachers to take advantage of questioning and classroom discussion as a means of enhancing students' knowledge and comprehension. A primary focus of formative assessment, therefore, is to identify any areas that may need improvement. In the context of Lesotho, the LBECP mandates the utilisation of continuous assessment, portfolios, and checkpoints to monitor the progress of learners as part of formative assessment (MoET, 2021). Therefore, the relevance of continuous assessment, portfolio and checkpoints in assessing affective competences promoted by Religious Studies will be discussed below.

2.3.1.2 Portfolio assessment

The LBECP advocates for utilisation of portfolio as assessment tool for cognitive, affective and psychomotor competences (MoET, 2021). As stated by Naraya (2023), portfolio assessment is the compilation of a student's chosen work produced over an extended period of time. Despite the theoretical differences between the different types of portfolios, empirical evidence indicates that their practical implementation tends to overlap. According to Joshi et al. (2015), there are essentially three different kinds of portfolios. The first kind is the learning portfolio, where the student keeps a journal of their experiences and thoughts. Here, the student decides what should be included in the folio, giving them authority over it. This portfolio's disadvantage is that it could just benefit the student and not be appropriate for evaluation during the instruction period.

The second type is the showcase portfolio which only includes the student's greatest work. Similar to a learning portfolio, this portfolio's contents are fully under the learner's control, albeit they often only feature their best work. The primary purpose of this type of portfolio is summative evaluation. The last kind of portfolio is the assessment portfolio, where the information is documented according to the learner's acquired knowledge. As a result, the teacher or portfolio designer must incorporate comments on the particular learning outcomes, which should cover knowledge, attitudes, and abilities. When creating a portfolio of this type, the instructor or designer must be extremely careful to provide adequate proof to assess the degree of acquired learning. In summary, Narayan (2013) states that all of these portfolios have the option of being documented electronically or on paper.

Portfolio functions as a working library where teachers conduct a thorough study and compile the most important items to be entered into a folder or file. Evaluations, grade reports, and test results may also be included (Lynch & Shaw quoted in Huang, 2012). Portfolios seem to be among the different forms of evaluation that have become more and more common in 21st-century learning and education. Given that they offer proof of students' development and their acquired knowledge, portfolios are seen to be the best instrument for evaluating moral development in Religious Studies. The fact that Religious Studies is concerned with moral education, learners' moral growth may be profiled in the portfolio and thus evaluated.

Hanifa (2017) states that a portfolio is one of the main tools used in today's classrooms for assessment, and it plays a crucial role in giving a comprehensive assessment of students' growth.

Nevertheless, as practice demonstrates, there is still a need to take into account instructors' comprehension of utilising portfolios as a method to evaluate students' learning. Pilot research carried out in some schools found that portfolio assessment is not widely utilised. Teachers could thus still be unfamiliar with this form of alternative evaluation. Additionally, traditional and standardised testing continue to have a significant effect on certain teachers. Some teachers even lack a clear understanding of the student work that can be utilised for projects similar to portfolios. Authors like Tangdhanakanond and Wongwanich (2012), Chere-Masopha and Mothetsi-Mothiba (2022), and Eridafithri (2015) have all revealed similar findings about teachers' lack of the necessary knowledge and abilities for the successful implementation of portfolios. Therefore, the intention of this study was to find out if Religious Studies teachers have implemented portfolios assessment in assessing the moral growth of learners.

2.3.1.3 Advantages of portfolio assessment

According to Narayan (2023), portfolios provide teachers with more opportunity to get to know every student in the class and help them recognise each one's unique abilities and qualities as they work on their portfolios. Furthermore, it provides teachers with crucial insights into identifying students' strengths and shortcomings so that they may help them enhance their performance (Mokhtaria, 2015). To put it another way, the portfolio evaluation as a tool may support a range of learning styles for every student, enabling them to successfully realise their full potential. More importantly, learners may develop their ability to work independently and critically as they create objectives and reflect on their experiences.

Furthermore, Huang (2012) states that portfolios are helpful because they allow students to track changes in their growth over time and motivate them to pursue self-directed learning for personal empowerment. In addition to reflecting development, parents and significant others may also watch and remark on accomplishments as well as areas that need work. Hence, when assessing learners' moral growth in Religious Studies, teachers, parents and learners can have the opportunity to observe changes in the moral growth of learners. It becomes feasible to develop a variety of unintentional abilities, including reflectiveness, introspection, lateral and divergent thinking, inventiveness, and note-taking. Portfolios are more importantly a tool for a community of learners to collaborate while exchanging and discussing individual ideas. As the utilisation of portfolio is at the core of this study, its further discussion will be addressed in the subsequent sections.

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2.3.1.4 Checkpoints assessment

Checkpoints are a series of assessments for use at the end of each phase to enable schools to identify and address teaching and learning needs. Checkpoints at key academic stages are administered to determine learners' level of proficiency in selected subjects that are fundamental for supporting learning of other subjects in the next phase. These checkpoint tests are still national tests and should be conducted under examination conditions (MoET, 2021). Therefore, in respect of this study, checkpoints would imply learners being assessed through writing tests and examinations. Although this assessment type may not contribute to observable moral growth, it may assess the general moral growth, by giving scenarios, using theories of moral development such as Piaget and Kohlberg.

2.3.1.5 Advantages of checkpoints assessment

According to MoET (2021), checkpoints can be used to:

1. Help learners understand more about their strengths and weaknesses in the selected subjects at the end of foundation, intermediate and lower secondary phases.
2. Help teachers identify their strengths and weaknesses, which can then act as a basis for improvement of teaching and learning.
3. Enable teachers and schools to help learners make the most of their educational opportunities.
4. Inform relevant stakeholders on the needed interventions and enable cooperative action planning.

2.3.2 Summative assessment

Summative is the last form of assessment discussed in this study. Summative assessments are intended to assess student learning through comparing it to a benchmark or standard at the completion of an instructional unit. Moreover, summative assessment occurs after learning has occurred and offers data and comments that encapsulate the process of teaching and learning. This is usually the last step of formal education (Santos & Fil, 2013). Summative assessments are therefore used to reflect performance and development by providing a summary of what students know or are capable of doing at a given point in time. Thus, in relation to this study, summative assessment is viewed as a tool for evaluating and reporting learners' attainment in the Religious Studies programme, that is, learners' knowledge and understanding, skills, values and attitudes which reflect both curriculum expectations and learning skills.

Summative assessment can be classified into aspects such as internal and external. Internal summative assessment is used for regular grading, recording, informing decisions about courses to follow where there are options within the school, and reporting to parents and to the students themselves (Bhat & Bhat 2019). The external component of summative evaluation is utilised for educational accountability, occupational qualification, certification by examination, and employment selection. Summative evaluation is used to systematically document students' overall performance (Santos & Fil, 2013). In the LBECP, MoET (2021) asserts that summative assessment should be used in the form of public examination for selection of learners to higher education levels. Therefore, summative assessment is used to assess learners' moral reasoning in Religious Studies. In general, the aforementioned types of assessment must be included in any legitimate Religious Studies for effective assessment. Therefore, full details on effective assessment in Religious Studies are discussed in the following section.

2.4 Effective assessment in Religious Studies
2.4.1 Definition of assessment in Religious Studies
This section focuses on the discussion of assessment in Religious Studies in order to improve learning. The assessment of Religious Studies, according to Macdonald (1995 as cited by Santos & Fil, 2013), is the methodical gathering and interpretation of different kinds of information about knowledge and skills related to the content of the religious tradition and learners' self-assessment of attitudes, values, and behaviour in order to define the amount or degree of change in individual students as well as to ascertain whether certain changes are occurring in the learners as a group. Instead of trying to evaluate a student's spiritual response, assessment's main goal is to give decision-makers reliable and pertinent data to help them decide how well the teaching and learning process is working (Buchanan, 2012). For the purpose of this study, assessment in Religious Studies encompasses evaluating learners' development of positive attitude to social behaviour.

In addition, Religious Studies must evaluate students' knowledge about the fundamental truths of Christianity (Alba, 2013). Grant and Yonah (2013) state that assessment in Religious and Moral Education is based on three main dimensions or strands namely, beliefs, values and issues and practices and traditions. Buchanan (2012) emphasises also that the Christian faith as well has a part to play in Religious Studies of students in the classroom and broader school context. Hence, Religious Studies teachers assess not only knowledge of the faith but also skills, attitudes and values. Teachers can assess students' attitudes and values by continually observing their behaviour

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and attitudes towards different categories of people such as classmates, teachers, and parents. The most important part of assessment in Religious Studies is monitoring day by day knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. The attitudes and values component of Religious Studies focuses on encouraging students to develop greater self-awareness, understanding, appreciation, tolerance and respect for all human beings in the classroom environment and wider society (Santos & Fil, 2013). In other words, assessment in this domain has to do with the development of the appropriate social attitudes, behaviour and values.

According to Santos and Fil (2013), the purpose of assessment in Religious Studies is to identify important aspects of learning, such as: developing a more profound knowledge and comprehension of the faith; realising the relevance of the faith to questions about justice, truth, peace, and the meaning of life; fostering values, attitudes, and practices in line with a positive response to the invitation to faith; honing the skills of reflection, discernment, and critical thinking; feeling nurtured through participation in prayer as a member of the school community; being able to understand and appreciate important aspects of other Christian traditions and major world religions; making a positive difference in the world by putting beliefs and values into action (Alba, 2013). Therefore, the focus of this study is on the evaluation of how learners practise the moral values they have learned in Religious Studies in real life situations.

Authors such as Alba (2013) emphasise the coherent relationship between knowledge, faith and attitudes in assessing Religious Studies. Curriculum online emphasises the formal criteria of Religious Studies assessment: "Linking of modes and techniques of assessment to the aims of the syllabus; structuring the assessment around stated objectives; assessment that has a positive effect on teaching and learning; assessment that is valid and reliable; assessment that are fair" (Santos & Fil, 2013: 9). Hence this study seeks to establish alignment of curriculum aims of Religious Studies with assessment modes through incorporation of moral evaluation.

Furthermore, Alba (2013) states that assessment in Religious Studies supports the development of important skills and attributes which enable students to engage in meaningful reflection and a deepening understanding of the faith and their personal response to God's invitation to relationship in classroom and wider community. Rigorous, reliable and challenging assessment in Religious Studies supports students to reflect on their own personal search for meaning and truth in life (Santos & Fil, 2013). Evaluation aids students in truly understanding what it means to be a believer

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in terms of one's relationships with God and others. Therefore, in addition to helping students get a deeper knowledge and comprehension of Christianity, high-quality feedback on their replies helps them to build critical reflection and self-awareness abilities.

Religious studies assessments must record learning outcomes and offer feedback in order to help students. Feedback and evaluation in Religious Studies specifically aims to increase knowledge and the understanding of faith in order to ensure a coherent understanding of faith and life. It means Religious Studies has an important task to develop the four pillars of the catechism which are faith professed, faith celebrated, faith lived and faith prayed (Santos & Fil, 2013). The development of skills to research, interpret, analyse and reflect on what it means to make moral decisions with an informed conscience (Alba, 2013) is a crucial aspect of Religious Studies. Therefore, through assessment, students are able to evaluate their understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. Their learning and assessment in Religious Studies guides them into the wealth of Scripture and moral development.

According to Ilechukwu (2014), some teachers simply evaluate students' religious knowledge and understanding when it comes to Religious Studies. That is, giving the other learning areas little or no consideration and just assessing students on their cognitive abilities. However, as attitudes and values are significant to students, assessment in Religious Studies is meant to be inclusive. Consequently, merely evaluating the cognitive domain isolates knowledge and understanding from attitudes and values. According to Santos and Fill (2013), the aim of assessment in Religious Studies is to help learners and give them the inspiration they need to put what they have learned into practice because Religious Studies has two main areas that require consideration and these are knowledge and skills, and virtues and attitudes. The foundation and essential component of Religious Studies is premised on virtues and attitudes. Since this domain involves the development of self-awareness, emotional well-being, and the route towards maturity, assessments in this area call for a special level of sensitivity. It would be proper for teachers to talk about and provide reports on how involved, cooperative, and interested their students are in the study of Religious Studies. The essential elements of virtues that may guide teachers towards a systematic approach to assessing learners' virtue acquisition are discussed in the subsequent section.

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2.4.2 Characteristics of virtues

Attaching oneself to and pursuing the good because it is good is a necessary component of virtue. When learners' needs for autonomy, competence, and mutually affirming relationships are met, they become attached to or internalise values that produce healthy self-regulation or fully integrated motivation. They also recognise and accept the true significance of something for themselves or have come to identify with its value (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Students require an "autonomy supportive" environment that gives them the freedom to weigh arguments without feeling compelled to comply in order for them to completely grasp the worth of something for themselves (Jayawickreme & Mendl, 2014). Based on available data, it appears that imposing high stakes testing on students' virtues would have a direct negative impact on the social environments in schools, which are crucial for kids to develop their virtues and recognise the intrinsic worth of commodities.

Virtues also have an affective component. They come with feelings that are appropriate for action, such as love in friendship or empathy in compassion (Kristjansson, 2013). The motivations behind actions are connected to these feelings. Loving a friend inspires one to behave impulsively in ways that advance the friend's well-being. The extent to which the agent's motivations and feelings align with their behaviour is a crucial component of a thorough virtue evaluation. Most importantly, virtues are consistent over time, and this consistency is necessary to living a good life (Curren, 2015). In other words, a single evaluation is rather restrictive when it comes to comprehending virtues. A thorough evaluation of virtue necessitates several evaluations across time.

Apart from emotions, a person must be aware of what is morally right and deliberately choose to act morally in order to possess virtues. A thorough evaluation of virtue should have a cognitive component to gauge how well the actor comprehends the virtue and acts in accordance with that understanding (Fowers, 2014). In other words, virtues demonstrate practical insight. The ability to discern what matters in a particular circumstance and select the appropriate course of action is known as practical wisdom. A particular form of virtue is practised in circumstances that are unique to it. For instance, bravery is crucial in risky situations, while generosity is crucial in giving and receiving scenarios (Jayawickreme & Mendl, 2014). A complete evaluation of virtue includes details on how well a person understands the main aspects of a circumstance and reacts suitably to it.

Moreover, for the purpose of some good, virtues are practised, for instance, wisdom or justice. Goods are ends that, given the nature of humanity, are worthy of human choice (Fowers, 2014). Justice and friendship are desirable choices for humans since they are social creatures. Goals are the concrete, specific instantiations of goods. For instance, reading a series of books or enrolling in a study programme are two ways that one could pursue the good of knowledge. Accordingly, a key component of virtue assessment is examining the objectives that spur behaviour. Therefore, virtues cannot be restricted to ideas, attitudes, or self-ascribed characteristics; they must manifest in visible behaviour. Acting bravely is what it means to have bravery, and justice is a virtue that one possesses only when one behaves justly (Curren & Kotzee, 2014). Therefore, a behavioural component is required for virtue assessment. One can self-report or observe behaviours.

Concisely, all of these components: goals, behaviour, consistency, affect, cognition, and practical wisdom will be included in a thorough evaluation of virtue acquisition. The focus of this study is on assessing learners' observable moral progress, which appears to have been overlooked. It is evident that no single measure or study will cover all of these components of virtue (Fowers, 2014). This framework's central idea is that moral qualities show themselves in deeds that are motivated by good intentions in the actual world. Consequently, it is imperative that researchers explore options outside global self-report measures that are mostly composed of questions pertaining to self-ascribed qualities, attitudes, or inclinations (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Effective assessments that incorporate at least a few of the six components must be created in order to advance virtue evaluation. This will help to better understand virtues as they show up in human behaviour and make it easier to integrate research efforts.

2.4.3 Nature of effective assessment in Religious Studies
Assessment is a crucial component of education and is used to determine both the efficacy of the learning process and the actual learning outcome. However, the result of learning itself, whether it is good or not, is largely determined by and dependent on effective and accurate assessment (Manda, 2018). One way to find out the progress of learners' moral growth in accordance with the purpose of learning Religious Studies is by conducting an assessment that can capture data and provide information that is able to describe and predict the moral growth of both the present and the future. One assessment that contributes to Religious Studies attainment is effective assessment. An effective assessment is one in which students must complete practical activities that show how they have applied their knowledge and abilities (Mueller, 2005 cited by Abduh et al., 2018). Most

importantly, assessment is effective when measuring products or performances that 'have meaning or value beyond success in school.' Thus, in Religious Studies, learners need to be assessed on how they practise the values they have acquired in Religious Studies, such as how they practise respect for others.

Effective assessment is defined as an evaluation procedure that is founded on reflection on the teaching, learning, accomplishment, motivation, and attitudes of learners throughout the process (O'malley & Pierce 1996 referenced by Abduh et al., 2018). Effective assessment depends on the various sources and evidence gathered in a period or context. Using multifaceted assessment methods may guarantee that all of the objectives are covered by allowing every student to show what they know and are capable of. The likelihood of obtaining an accurate picture of student learning increases when information is compiled from many sources. As such, choices about students' education in effective assessments must to be based on the convergence of data gathered from many sources. Assessment tasks should be in line with the information they are intended to test, and results should be consistent. These factors determine the quality of assessments about students' knowledge. Clarity of vision or comprehension of the qualities to be evaluated is necessary for a sound evaluation.

Effective assessment centres around holistic assessment. Holistic assessment, often known as integrated assessment, concentrates on evaluating the entirety of work activities as opposed to individual tasks. A unit of competency is assessed holistically when several facets of the abilities are included within the assessment activities. Hence, holistic assessment can be utilised to evaluate various aspects of learning (Akubuile, 2012). Accordingly, teachers must use a variety of assessment strategies, including performance-based tasks, portfolios, and observation, to gauge students' progress on a range of the subject objectives. In relation to this study, all competences promoted by the teaching and learning of Religious Studies, such as knowledge and moral competences, need to be assessed and such assessment should be done through different modes such as testing and observation for effective assessment. With the use of these various assessment tools, learners may be given the opportunity to actively participate in creating and recognising improvements in their own learning, leading to assessments that are rated as extremely "good" or 'excellent' (Ilechukwu, 2014). There may also be a minimal assessment of moral growth using the

discussed forms of assessment. This viewpoint suggests that a shift from conventional methods should be made in favour of more efficient methods of evaluation.

In addition, effective assessment and learning are two components that cannot be separated in achieving educational goals. The learning process is an effort to achieve the learning objectives based on the basic competencies that have been determined. Meanwhile, effective assessment is used to determine the results of learning activities significantly during and after the learning process. Therefore, it can be the basis for decision making, and improving the next learning process (Yunus, 2018). Alternatively, good evaluation depends on the idea that students must acquire the skills necessary to carry out the essential duties they will encounter as workers, citizens, and other members of society. According to Abduh al. (2018), effective learning and assessment highlight the need for learners to learn and then exhibit the ability to apply knowledge and skills in the real world or authentic context.

McKown (2017) outlines some of the fundamental characteristics of effective moral assessment in the Journal of Research in Character Education. It states that the description of character must be made clear, assessments designed for actual use by actual teachers and the rationale behind character assessments have to be explained, and assessment strategies that are appropriate for the character being evaluated have to be addressed when discussing ways to measure learning in moral education. Researchers, teachers and schools must define what they mean by character before attempting to assess it. Character evaluation tools must also be examined to see if they are applicable in both real-world and classroom settings. The goal of moral education evaluations is to inform instruction, and this must be made apparent to teachers and schools. Furthermore, the manner of moral assessment should correspond with the content being evaluated, just like it does for evaluations of other competencies. According to McKown (2017), certain dimensions of character are more accurately assessed using questionnaires, whilst others are best assessed through observation or peer reviews. Therefore, with regard to this study, there is a need for effective moral assessment; the assessment that will satisfactorily evaluate learners' moral growth.

It is essential to create accurate measurements for moral development. According to Card (2017), accurate assessments of moral behaviour need to take into account the three core psychometric characteristics. Measurement equivalency, validity, and reliability are these attributes. When the same criteria are met, an evaluation that is deemed credible will yield consistent results. If an

assessment assesses what it is supposed to measure properly, it is considered valid. Measurement equivalency states that an evaluation has to function consistently regardless of the situation. It might be challenging to develop moral behaviour measures that are reliable, valid, and have measurement equivalency. This is due to the fact that moral behaviour has ambiguous definitions, is subject to interpretation in many settings, and is changeable. Nevertheless, high levels of validity, reliability, and measurement equivalency should still be sought for in moral behaviour assessments (Hickman, 2019). Therefore, this study seeks to establish a valid, reliable and measurement-equivalent tool of moral evaluation for effective assessment in Religious Studies. Going forward, it is essential then to unpack the preferable strategies of moral evaluation.

2.5 Methods of moral evaluation

This section addresses six moral evaluation techniques designed to improve the standard of moral evaluation in Religious Studies. These techniques are significant not only for evaluating the efficacy of the teaching and learning of Religious Studies, but are also important in communicating institutional goals, expectations and practices with regard to value outcome. Recording these aspects can provide invaluable formative input to assist institutional efforts in this area and enhance overall results. Although Religious Studies uses both qualitative and quantitative assessments, this study has focused on qualitative assessments.

According to Gupta (2023), various assessment tools have been developed to evaluate moral development in students. The Values in Action (VIA) Classification of Strengths, based on positive psychology, identifies character strengths such as courage, honesty, and perseverance. The Character Growth Index (CGI) assesses character development through self-report surveys and measures traits like empathy, gratitude, and integrity. The Social Emotional Learning Assessment (SELA) evaluates social-emotional competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These assessment tools provide valuable insights into students' moral development but may differ in their specific focus and measurement approach.

2.5.1 Moral judgement interview assessment

The first method of moral evaluation is moral judgement interview assessment. Griva and Kofou (2017) list several categories of interviews. A "structured interview" is one in which the questions are predetermined and there are only a few possible replies. In contrast, an unstructured interview involves discussing in-depth topics with interview participants without predetermined questions

or responses. The structured interview is relatively objective because of the well-organised questions and consistent inquiry. Moral assessment, through open-ended inquiries and probing interviews, is a qualitative evaluation tool that examines people's moral thinking. It seeks to comprehend the fundamental moral principles and thought processes that guide moral judgment. The interview yields rich qualitative data and enables a thorough investigation of participants' moral viewpoints. An interview guide covering important subjects including moral decision-making, societal responsibility, personal development, and healthy relationships must be created. Asking thoughtful questions might encourage individuals to consider events or circumstances that shaped their moral development (Gupta, 2023). In relation to this study, interviews serve as an evaluation tool for gathering learners' views on moral judgement in order to judge whether moral education as embedded in Religious Studies was successful or not.

The main advantage of interviews is that, because they take place in-person, they may offer instant feedback on the interviewee's responses. Asking "why" frequently allows the interviewer to elicit the interviewee's motivation for answering questions, especially in an unstructured interview. This allows for a thorough understanding of the interviewee. With regard to this study, teachers might get evidence on moral interests and attitude changes, which are a sign of value development, by interviewing students about moral topics (Cho, 2015). Nevertheless, assessment by interview has restrictions in that it may not give a true picture of value acquisition since interview is done through talking. As a result, learners' observable moral development may not be assessed.

2.5.2 Observations

Secondly, when evaluating value acquisition and identification, observations are also encouraged. As per Kofou and Eleni (2021), observation is the methodical documentation of observable behaviours or occurrences in a natural environment. Unlike interviews, which have a longer history, observation aims to immediately record the subject's behaviour. Using a checklist of a variety of values the learner is expected to display, observations can be made directly or indirectly. The type of observation can be determined by the role of observers. One can act as an observer while the other the participants (Lee, 2017). Direct observations, in accordance with Gupta (2023), offer insightful information about learners' activities and behaviours pertaining to moral development. A variety of contexts, including schools, extracurricular activities, and community service projects, can be used for observations. To document certain behaviours linked to moral

qualities, teachers might use coding schemes or observation checklists. Observation is a more appropriate way to measure the performance of aspects of the actions (moral acting).

Teachers should create a rating scale or checklist that includes observable behaviours linked to character development if they want to use observer ratings. Teachers should also provide regular training to observers on the rating scale and periodically conduct calibration exercises to guarantee inter-ratter reliability (Gupta 2023). In the context of this study, observation is seen as an assessment technique that teachers use to gauge their students' moral development and maturity levels. The premise is that observations show how committed a learner is to a value. Therefore, rather than relying just on interviews to gauge moral thinking, observation might be a useful tool for assessing learners' moral development patterns.

For instance, in one research by Robertson-Kraft and Austin (2015), Character Education sessions were prepared for and then carried out by teachers. Eighty-five percent of the lessons had some practice component that allowed the learners to put what they had learned about a character attribute into practice. During the lesson, the teacher gave the learners a grit exercise where they had to force themselves to perform a prank for as long as they could. In this case, the teacher would gauge the learners' understanding of the grit character characteristic by seeing how they approached the work. When opposed to other approaches, observation has the advantage of not being impacted by response bias and may be used to directly verify one feature of character (Alexander, 2016).

However, there are also drawbacks. The primary challenge is that an observer's subjective interpretation and recording may taint the outcome and reduce its dependability (Lee, 2017). As a result, researchers must carefully consider both the theoretical and practical aspects when determining what should be evaluated and what the criteria could be. Prior permission of the interpreting procedure is crucial. Once more, educators must remember that participants have the ability to alter their behaviour while they are being observed. Consequently, Bollich et al. (2016)'s Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR) is a potential tool for this domain in order to get over this constraint while employing observation to evaluate learners' morality. Mehl (2017) claims that EAR is an ecological behavioural observation technique. Technically, EAR is a handheld audio recorder that captures brief clips of background noise. Participants don't know when precisely the

gadget is recording as they go about their daily lives. The EAR creates auditory diaries of their days by monitoring the background noises in their lives.

2.5.3 Self-report

Self-generated techniques including self-reports, personal goal-setting, and journaling are additional ways to evaluate moral development using qualitative approaches. In their assessment of the character traits taught in schools, Park and Peterson (Lee, 2017) make the case for these self-generated techniques. In this kind of character assessment, learners utilise a descriptive evaluation to pinpoint their areas of strength and development. The learners can then choose a character quality they wish to develop and set goals to put it into practice. Learners can self-report their improvement by journaling about their progress on character development (Hickman, 2019).

One learner may wish to improve their honesty, for instance. A goal specific to the student's life may be something like: "I will be honest about how I am feeling with at least one friend every day." The learner would then have the chance to write candidly in a notebook about any challenges they had faced or personal development they had experienced. Teachers may help learners take responsibility for their own moral development and learn about the learners' views on their own morality even though these approaches do not yield grades or scores. Hence in relation to this study, through self-repot, learners may have journals where they daily record their moral growth based on the moral values they have learned in Religious Studies.

2.5.4 Other reports

An other-report test is one in which the participant is asked to be evaluated by those in their immediate vicinity. It is helpful in situations when the participant is not competent to self-report, when the self-report's reliability is insufficient, or when having a wide range of raters can improve the evaluation's correctness (Lee, 2016). Nevertheless, once the self-report is available, it might be utilised. By yielding a more objective outcome, this approach can partially address the reliability problems with self-report. However, just as it cannot be determined if a person's self-awareness truly reflects his or her character, it can also not be stated with certainty that the opinions of others surrounding the participant are always accurate.

Individuals who are close to someone may have mostly positive opinions of them, whereas those who are not in a good connection may have more negative opinions. In certain cases, a poor score may also result from raters having high expectations for a participant they are not satisfied with

(Berkowitz, 2014). To get beyond these restrictions and improve the validity and calibre of assessment, one might engage professionals who can see the problem impartially as a third party. For the purpose of this study, teachers from different disciplines may be involved in the evaluation of learners' morality for precise results. Evaluation from different teachers would indicate agreement with the moral qualities of generosity, honesty, compassion, and fairness.

2.5.5 Portfolio

Affective competency evaluation has made active use of portfolios. Portfolio assessment has been utilised as an alternate formative evaluation method in secondary schools in Kenya. A student's portfolio is a daily compilation of their completed assignments and related documents that demonstrate their progress in a subject and the activities they were engaged in. The collection includes documentation of learners' reflections and individual assessments, processes for choosing portfolio components, and a technique for gauging the quality of work (Nungari, 2020). Teachers and students have endorsed the use of portfolios as an effective alternative evaluation method because they encourage reflection in learners. As mentioned earlier, the intention of this study is therefore to find out whether portfolios are being used in assessing the moral growth of learners in Religious Studies since LBECP prescribes the utilisation of portfolio when assessing affective competences.

2.5.6 Practical task assessment

Practical tasks assessment is the last method of moral judgment. According to a study by Chris and Barbara (2010), titled "An Examination of the Effectiveness of a College Character Education Program," moral achievement can be evaluated by involving students in a work programme that is well-designed to allow them to demonstrate various values when interacting with others. It is said that this may be accomplished under the close supervision of moral tutors who will evaluate students as soon as they have completed their allotted tasks. Similarly, Obwana (2021) notes that in East Africa, value evaluation was customarily carried out by assigning practical activities to learners. That was the place where they were supposed to acquire virtues like love and respect, among many others. Learners would be taught the virtue using a variety of techniques, such as folktales and stories about how being honest brought good fortune or how being dishonest brought bad luck. The next step was to set assignments that required a virtue like honesty to be shown. As a result, a learner would either receive praise for demonstrating the value or receive punishment for not doing so. Thus, in respect of this study, learners may engage in projects or student unions

where they are expected to display the moral values they have learned in Religious Studies, and the evaluation of moral growth will be based on learners' behaviour.

According to Lum (2018), the assessment process should be centred on problem solving connected to real-life scenarios in order to maximise the effectiveness of the influence of evaluation on the Moral Education teaching process. Instructors who engage their students in problem solving that mirrors real-world scenarios help them develop moral thinking, which improves behaviour. Children's moral growth will also be aided by being exposed to a variety of individuals, either directly through social interaction or indirectly through exposure to innovative ideas at school.

To put it briefly, the information above from the relevant literature shows what pedagogical practitioners of value education recommend for use in assessing value acquisition. Value evaluation may not take place adequately while using pen and paper in Asia. Obwana (2021) contends that the best indicator of moral competency in Africa is a learner's performance that demonstrates a good, practical character. According to Lee (2017), practical assignments as well as pen-and-paper exercises should be utilised wherever feasible to assess value acquisition. However, the researcher is of the view that when it comes to observable moral development, only alternative methods of assessment need to be established for effective moral assessment. If not, learners' moral development may end up not being captured properly. Therefore, at this point, it is pertinent to briefly look at the relationship between moral evaluation and effective assessment.

2.6 Linking moral evaluation with effective assessment
There is a link between moral evaluation and effective assessment in Religious Studies. According to Alexander (2016), the main factor in evaluating moral growth is determining if moral education has achieved its "good." Learners who study Religious Studies are additionally required to demonstrate the impact of this subject. Since fostering moral behaviour in individuals is the primary goal of Religious Studies, demonstrating the modifications in an individual's behaviour would seem to be the most apparent method of determining the efficacy of the Religious Studies programme (Lee, 2017). Thus, it is crucial to encourage moral reflection in pupils, and assessment might be a more systematic way to carry out this critical "Know thyself" exercise. Students may get the outcome of a long-term, ongoing evaluation as feedback rather than a report card, which they could then evaluate to make changes. The findings of the moral assessment of the classroom environment, school culture, teaching techniques, and instructional methods can help teachers to

improve the way they teach (Lee, 2017). The findings of a study conducted by Barus (2017) indicate that the majority of teachers are aware of the significance of Character Education assessments and their necessity. This is consistent with their requirement to gather the information required to evaluate the character, behaviour, and attitude components of the report card.

Moreover, evaluation is necessary in linking the gap between the intention and the effect of education method. As per Alexander (2016), education is commonly understood to be "the planned change of human behavior." Even while nearly anything a person encounters has the power to alter their behaviour, unplanned, accidental, or random education excludes a lot of learning opportunities. The planned education has a well-defined objective on the skills that are expected to be acquired, as well as a well-defined theoretical and empirical foundation for its implementation. By serving as a link between the purpose and results of education, evaluation can make the planned education possible. The findings of the study conducted by Barus (2017) show that the purpose of effective assessment in Character Education is to evaluate the Character Education programme that has been accomplished. Thus in this study, moral evaluation will determine whether the acquisition of moral values, as promoted by the teaching and learning of Religious Studies, has been attained.

Furthermore, through the process of moral assessment, Religious Studies' efficacy is established, which helps in the creation and distribution of effective educational programmes. Moral education, which is a component of Religious Studies, might be erratic and faddish in the absence of a systematic and scientific evaluation system (Beatty, 2017), and students might be exposed to programmes that lack support as described by Harrison and Davison (2014). According to Lee (2017), one evaluates what one values, and one values what one evaluates. This is how assessments and the educational importance placed on Character Education are related. Some people think that since moral education is important, educators and schools should show this by measuring how morally mature their pupils have become (Davidson, 2014). As such, an understanding of the efficacy of Religious Studies will be based on data from moral judgment, just like in different subjects.

Several empirical studies have explored the measurement of character development in high school students. For example, Jones et al. (2019) used self-report surveys and qualitative interviews to assess character strengths and virtues in high school students. They found that students reported

growth in various character traits, including resilience, empathy, and leadership skills. Another study by Smith et al. (2020) employed behavioural observations and student self-assessments to measure character development in the context of service-learning projects.

Bipoupout and Lum (2018) investigated the relationship that exists between 'evaluation of learning in teaching Moral Education process in schools and pupils' behaviour'. The findings verified that there is a noteworthy correlation between students' behaviour and the assessment of moral education-related learning. Stated differently, effective assessment practices are critical to the development of acceptable student behaviour. Tchombe examined assessment and its impact on students' behaviour, as reported by Bipoupout and Lum (2018). It was discovered that student performance is motivated by feedback from assessments hence triggering it to improve. When implementing behavioural theories in the classroom, the instructor fortifies the desired behaviour through positive reinforcement. Children who behave well, for instance, receive rewards. Positive penalties encourage behaviour by rewarding those who follow the rules and serve as a reminder to others of the advantages of acting in accordance with expectations.

Finally, a research by Zuchdi et al. (2012) demonstrates that the majority of the practice of evaluating learning outcomes to date has been cognitive evaluation. The rank and score on their exam indicate how much students value it. Teachers are aware that education has cognitive, emotional, and psycho-motor (behavioural) components. Nevertheless, in actual practice, they tend to overlook the affective and psychomotor aspects, particularly when it comes to learner assessment (Khilmiyah et al., 2015). Teachers are not used to evaluating changes in their learners' social attitudes, or their "affective spheres." This is not the result of teachers being hesitant; rather, it is a result of their incapacity to articulate the affective domain of accomplishment indicators. Consequently, the evaluation fails to accurately represent the learners' total competence level. Hence this study intends to improve the quality of moral assessment in Religious Studies because moral assessment is necessary to determine the achievement of learners in the affective domain of learning. It is evident that the evaluation of moral development cannot be conducted using the same methods as the cognitive domain, such as questioning. Evaluation of moral development is primarily focused on documenting socially engaged physical actions rather than just the capacity to respond to a series of questions (Partini et al., 2018).

2.7 Appraisal and gap

In summary, the reviewed literature has illustrated the necessity of moral evaluation in assessing the moral growth of students in Religious Studies and Moral Education. Most importantly, the review has also demonstrated the usefulness of proposed techniques in assessing the moral growth of students. However, in Lesotho, no studies have been done to establish the assessment method of observable moral development. Hence, in an attempt to fill this gap, this study seeks to establish the possibility of introducing moral evaluation for effective assessment in Religious Studies in order to achieve the curriculum aims of Religious Studies as explicated by Lesotho Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework of 2009.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological approaches that were followed when conducting this study. The chapter consists of the following sub-topics: the study orientation, research design, research approach, sampling strategies, data generation method, method of data analysis, study rigour and ethical considerations.

3.2 Study orientation

Study orientation or research paradigm is a basic belief system and theoretical framework underpinned by interpretivism, positivism, critical theory and pragmatism with assumptions about ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Rehman, 2016). The current study followed the interpretive paradigm, which is a response to the over-dominance of positivism. Putnam and Scott (2017) claim that the interpretative paradigm includes social theories and viewpoints that support the idea that reality is socially constructed or given meaning by the interpretation of events by actors. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the primary goal of interpretivist paradigm is to comprehend the subjective realm of human experience. As a result, interpretive paradigm makes an effort to get into the head of the participants being studied so to speak, and to understand and interpret the meaning they are making of the context. Therefore, interpretive paradigm focuses on the distinctive features of meanings and interpretations. Hence in the present study, interpretive paradigm was adopted to interpret teachers' views on moral evaluation in Religious Studies. The interpretive assumptions adopted in this study are discussed below.

The research utilised the interpretivist ontological perspective of relativism. The relativist perspective holds that reality is subjective and varies from person to person. When a researcher adopts a relativist ontology, it indicates that they consider the situation under study to have multiple realities, each of which can be explored, given meaning, or rebuilt through interactions between the researcher and research participants, as well as between research participants themselves (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2019), in an ontological viewpoint, reality is viewed through inter-subjectivity by taking into account meanings as well as comprehensions of social and experiential factors in the research. Guided by this principle, the researcher appreciated the fact that the participants in the study had different perspectives on the object of this study, which encompasses the effective assessment in Religious Studies, hence there are different realities concerning effective assessment in Religious Studies.

The term "interpretive epistemology" describes subjective knowledge derived from actual occurrences. Assuming that people cannot be divorced from their knowledge, this technique establishes a clear connection between the research and research participants (Saunders et al., 2012). As a result, the interpretative paradigm embraces participants' beliefs without challenging them (Scotland, 2012). Thus, this study did not question or argue against the participants' ideologies, but rather accepted them as contributing to the construction of new knowledge.

Furthermore, different people may construct meaning in different ways (Crotty, 1998 cited by Scotland, 2012), but the truth is consensus formed by co-constructors. In this case, since the researcher understands that every Religious Studies teacher has a different point of view regarding effective assessment in Religious Studies, the researcher together with research participants reached an agreement on what constitutes effective assessment in Religious Studies in order to achieve the attainment targets in the subject.

According to Rehman (2016), interpretive methodology necessitates understanding social phenomena from the perspective of the participants instead of the researcher. Understanding social phenomena in the context of their surroundings is the aim of interpretative approach. Interpretivists therefore primarily gather qualitative data from research participants (Chowdhury, 2014). Interpretive researchers use methods that provide qualitative data. While numerical data may be used, it is not their primary source of information. Observations, documents, and open-ended interviews with different levels of structure (standardised, semi-standardised, and informal conversational interviews) are a few examples of data generation techniques that provide qualitative data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This study therefore used semi-structured interviews to generate qualitative data. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher had interaction with research participants to establish their opinions on the possibilities of shifting from cognitive assessment of morality to other modes of assessment for effective assessment in Religious Studies.

3.3 Research approach

In pursuing the current research, a qualitative approach was adopted. By definition, a qualitative research approach is an interpretive, naturalistic method that aims to comprehend the meanings that individuals assign to behaviours, decisions, beliefs, and values in the context of their social environments (Kandel, 2020). Qualitative research is detail-oriented and analyses a range of experiences and meanings to provide further understanding (Alhaija et al., 2019). According to

Petty et al. (2019), researchers play a significant role in the creation of knowledge in qualitative research since their perspectives influence their understanding. Sampathirao (2016) further explains that the goal of qualitative research is to provide the researcher access to the viewpoints of the target audience by immersing the researcher in the culture or circumstance and interacting directly with the participants of the study. This suggests that the researcher in a qualitative study becomes a tool for generating data, and that the findings might vary significantly depending on the researcher. As the researcher in this study intended to explore the Religious Studies teachers' perspectives on moral evaluation and the value of moral evaluation, using the qualitative research approach was appropriate in this case. The approach was adopted because the intention was to gather participants' views and opinions with regard to the use of different assessments methods for the purpose of evaluating moral development through the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. Most importantly, opinions and views cannot be analysed through statistics or any form of measurement but through interpretation.

3.4 Research design

This study used phenomenological research design. Phenomenology has its roots in philosophy and its aim is to investigate consciousness as experienced by the participants. According to Sarfo (2021), Phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon. The phenomenological research focuses on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon and learn shared meanings and empirical distinction of a certain phenomenon. The main goal of phenomenology is to reduce human experience of phenomena into an explanation of its fundamental qualities (Buriro, 2020). Therefore, the phenomenological approach was preferred in this research since the approach allowed the researcher to describe and interpret the participants' meanings associated with effective assessment in Religious Studies based on their practical experience in the discipline. The design also enabled the researcher to communicate with participants who demonstrated ineffective assessment in Religious Studies on the possibilities for effective assessments methods for demonstrable moral development in order to attain the curriculum aims of Religious Studies.

3.5 Sampling techniques

According to Stephen (2015), sampling technique involves the process of choosing a representative portion of a population in order to ascertain attributes or features of the entire population. Purposive sampling, often referred to as judgmental sampling, according to Etikan

(2016), is the intentional selection of participants based on the attributes the participant possesses. It is a non-random approach that does not require a predetermined number of participants or underlying ideas. To put it briefly, the researcher determines what information is required and then searches for sources who can provide information based on their expertise or experience. Therefore, in qualitative research, purposive sampling is commonly employed to locate and choose the information-rich cases for the most proper utilisation of available resources. This entails locating and choosing an individual or group of individuals who are knowledgeable and skilled in a subject of interest. Purposive sampling aims to focus on individuals with specific traits who are more likely to be able contribute to relevant studies (Zhi, 2014). Through purposive sampling, the researcher was able to choose teachers who have insights on the teaching and assessing of Religious Studies. These participants were selected because they teach Religious Studies and they were deemed capable of responding to the questions accurately, especially teachers who had been in to teaching for over five years since they were likely to be more knowledgeable about the subject and well-informed about assessment. Therefore, ten Religious Studies teachers were purposively selected.

3.5.1 Site sampling

Convenience sampling was used to select schools. Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, selects participants based on their appropriateness for contributing to study-related data as well as their availability and accessibility (Sarfo et al., 2022). Convenience samples are occasionally referred to as "accidental samples" since sample components may be chosen just because they are administratively or physically close to where the researcher is located. In addition, convenience sampling is inexpensive, simple, and has a large pool of participants (Golzar et al., 2022). Through convenience sampling, five church-owned secondary schools around Maseru were selected. The convenient selection of the schools was driven by both time and financial constraints.

3.6 Methods of data generation

According to Goldkuhl (2019), data generation in qualitative research refers to the conditions that researchers set up in order to generate data that they deem valuable for further data analysis given the stated study interest. This current study therefore utilised interviews for data generation.

3.6.1 Interviews

According to Taherdoost (2021), the interview is a technique that involves asking questions in order to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data. As a consequence, interviews are utilised to

get detailed information by analysing the participants' experiences. There are three different forms of interviews: semi-structured, open-ended, and structured. The semi-structured approach was the most suitable for this study, even though the open-ended and structured approaches represent opposite extremes of a continuum (Maree, 2011). Semi-structured interviews consist of a combination of unstructured and structured questions. The questions do not have to be asked in a specific order or with a specific wording, even though the interviewers have a basic idea of what they want to ask. Semi-structured interviews, thus, provide a more flexible method for conducting interviews. Semi-structured interviews enable the use of open-ended questions to reveal concerns and unexpected replies, even though the interviewer may follow a prearranged interview schedule for some topics (Adams, 2015). A semi-structured interview's flexibility allows the interviewee to go through a sequence of less planned questions and investigate any spontaneous concerns the interviewer raises. Parallel to this, the way questions are phrased allows the interviewer to employ a variety of language levels and provide explanations (Frances et al., 2019).

It was determined that semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this study since they gave the researcher the opportunity to gain insight and interpret the views of Religious Studies teachers on effective assessment in Religious Studies attainment, thus allowing emerging issues from the participants to be discussed further. One-on-one interviews were conducted where participants were asked about their opinions with regard to possibilities of shifting from cognitive assessment of morality to evaluating observable moral development of learners in Religious Studies.

In preparation of one-on-one interviews, the guidelines suggested by Bryman (2019) were followed. First, the introductory letter from the university was issued to the selected church-owned secondary schools seeking permission to conduct interviews. Secondly, after the permission was granted, a private and quiet classroom was prepared for interviews. The researcher explained to the interviewees the aims of the interview, the rationale for selecting them and the issues of confidentiality. Afterwards, the informed consent forms were issued to participants and they were allowed to ask questions before the interview commenced. A tape recorder was used with the permission of the participants. For my reference during transcribing, the interviews were audio recorded. Recording an interview is important since it enables the researcher to play back the audio files repeatedly when necessary or when analysing the data (Al-Yateem, 2012). Every interview

session, which took place at the teachers' schools, lasted around thirty-four minutes. In order to successfully conduct the semi-structured interviews, an interview guide was used.

3.6.2 Interview guide
Qualitative interview guide involves using memory prompts to ensure that the main topic is remembered as the interview progresses and different topics emerge. An interview guide may contain a larger list of topics to be covered or real questions to ask during a semi-structured interview. The questions in this interview guide are based on the researcher's interest in a certain topic. To avoid excluding alternative ideas that are pertinent to the social context they are researching, researchers should be open to potential variations in their research questions (Bryman, 2019). For the present study, the primary research questions were addressed in the interview guide so that the answers obtained from the participants would be able to address the research questions.

3.7 Methods of data analysis
Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the generated data. Thematic analysis is a technique that systematically finds, arranges, and provides insights into meaning patterns within data sets. Thematic analysis, by concentrating on meaning across datasets, enables the researcher to see and interpret shared or collective meanings and experiences (Braun, 2019). Thematic analysis may be used to bridge the gap between the following three broad categories of qualitative research approaches: inductive versus deductive or theory-driven data coding and analysis, an experiential versus critical orientation to data, and an essentialist versus constructionist theoretical perspective (Alhojailan 2012). This study specifically used inductive thematic analysis.

According to Clarke and Braun (2016), an inductive thematic analysis is a bottom-up strategy that is guided by the data itself. This indicates that the codes and themes are derived from the actual content of data, meaning that the researcher's mapping of the data during analysis closely corresponds to the content of the data. Inductive thematic analysis was used to generate themes. Thus, in analysing data, I first familiarised myself with the recordings. Secondly, I transcribed each interview, coded transcripts and categorised them in order to identify the recurring themes that allowed me to highlight connections or differences in the responses of the 10 participants. Finally, an analysis of the data was conducted with respect to the research questions that guided this study.

3.8 Study rigour

In qualitative research, rigour is a means of establishing confidence or trust in the findings of the study. Rigour enables the researcher to demonstrate long-term methodological consistency. Additionally, it offers a precise depiction of the population under study (Thomas, 2014). Furthermore, it has been proposed that rigour in research is a better standard by which to   judge qualitative studies. Maher et al., (2018) suggests that four requirements should be met by the study to guarantee trustworthiness. These are confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability. These measures of trustworthiness were employed in this study as explained below.

Credibility

In quantitative research, credibility is the counterpart of internal validity and addresses the truth-value component. Credibility is the equivalent of internal validity in quantitative research and is concerned with the aspect of truth-value. Credibility is a construction on the part of the reporter and the subsequent reader. According to Korstjens et al. (2017), methods for ensuring credibility include triangulation, member checking, extended participation, and continuous observation. Strategies to ensure credibility are prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and member check (Korstjens et al., 2017). The current study used triangulation to ensure credibility. Triangulating is the process of continually establishing recognisable patterns utilising data or procedures from several sources in the field. Thus, data triangulation from different church-owned schools was used to ensure credibility.

Transferability

Transferability, according to Kajamaa (2020) is the degree to which the results of one study may be used in different contexts. It is hard to show that the results of a qualitative research are relevant to other circumstances and populations since they are limited to a certain set of people and environments. Stake (2014) contends, however, that even though every instance is different, it is still an example within a larger group, and as such, the possibility of transferability should not be disregarded. According to Norman et al. (2020), transferability can only occur when a detailed description offers a sufficiently comprehensive depiction of the situation to be applied to other scenarios, and typically at the request of the local stakeholders. Applications for transfers like this one depend on the researcher's detailed accounts, which would contain background knowledge about the fieldwork location. A "thick description" of the unique study setting is crucial since

qualitative research is context-specific. This enables the reader to determine whether or not the findings apply to their own situation (Maher et al., 2018). In this case, I provided a thorough explanation of the methodology used for carrying this study so that other researchers might evaluate it and apply its findings to other researches. This means the findings from this research are relevant and applicable in schools teaching Religious Studies in Lesotho and even beyond, however, the findings may not be overgeneralised.

Dependability

Dependability is the capacity to demonstrate that comparable results would be attained if the study were conducted again under the same conditions, using the same methods and participants. However, Kajamaa (2020) points out that these kinds of rules are difficult for qualitative researchers since the phenomena they study is dynamic. The procedures used in the study should be described in full so that a researcher may replicate the work, albeit perhaps not with exactly the same outcomes, in order to address the dependability concerns more directly. The study design may therefore be considered a prototype model. According to Maher et al. (2018), dependability guarantees that the procedure is sufficiently detailed to enable a different researcher to carry out the same work. A thorough audit trail is necessary for this. Hence, the researcher has reported in detail all the procedures undertaken in conducting this research. In other words, under the study methodology, the researcher has provided all the necessary details which were followed in conducting the study such as the research design, research approach, sampling selection, sampling size and methods of generating data so that if the same study could be conducted, the same procedures may be followed for similar results.

Confirmability

Confirmability demonstrates that the qualitative study is objective and unaffected by the researcher's preconceptions or prejudices. Trustworthy studies ought to yield results that fairly represent data gathered from participants (Mattick, 2018). Norman et al. (2020) state that there has to be some objective reality for one's study to be audited. Qualitative researchers who believe in and strive for objectivity concentrate on concepts like correctness and precision in their research practice and the collaboration of other researchers, rather than creating a reality in their results. It seems appropriate to aim for non-involvement in these qualitative situations, with the least amount of environmental contamination caused by researchers in pristine settings. Since this is an

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academic research, the completed research was submitted together with the records that were kept regarding what was done in generating and analysing data. The following information were included in the audit trail: raw data, data reduction and analysis and methodological notes. A summary of how trustworthiness was ensured is presented below.

Table 1: **Summary of study rigour**

Rigour criteria	Indicators	Current research
Credibility	Data triangulation	Participants from different church schools
Transferability	Transfer of results/findings	Clear methodological procedures
Dependability	Authentic findings	Research audited by the supervisor
Confirmability	Neutral findings	Provision of raw data
		Provision of methodological notes

Table 1: Summary of study rigour 1

2.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are the principles that govern the design and procedures of research. When gathering information from participants, the researcher is required to follow certain guidelines. Important ethical factors come into play when deciding what to research and how to conduct the study (Caccittolo, 2015). It is crucial to obtain consent from participants prior to starting data collection (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Therefore, the required ethical considerations were considered when conducting this research as detailed below.

Informed consent

Participants must willingly volunteer to engage in research after fully understanding the goals of the study, any potential dangers, and any potential benefits. This is known as informed consent. A key component of informed consent is providing potential participants with information about the study, including what they will be asked to perform, what will happen to their data, how it will be managed, and their rights as participants (Mauldin, 2020). Consequently, the participants are

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required to give clear, active, and written consent to participate in the study. They must also have knowledge and awareness regarding their right to access the information they provided, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. According to Fleming and Zegwaard (2018), the informed consent procedure may be viewed as the agreement between the participants and the researcher. When conducting this study, the researcher issued the informed consent letters to Religious Studies teachers from the selected church secondary schools so that they were aware of all the necessary details to make informed decisions about participating. The information included the purpose of the study and institutional approval. Therefore, participation was voluntary.

Confidentiality

In research, confidentiality, according to Bos (2020), refers to safeguarding participant privacy and data against loss, theft, unauthorised use, disclosure, and alteration. The fundamental ethical principle of confidentiality in research requires the researcher to make sure that any use of data collected from or shared by participants respects their autonomy and dignity and does not conflict with the interests of the individual or community. In actuality, maintaining confidentiality requires the researcher to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. By default, research participants maintain their anonymity.

2. Private information is not obtained by researchers unless there is a compelling cause to do so.

The researcher guaranteed confidentiality by refraining from gathering any personally identifiable data, including names, phone numbers, email addresses, and physical attributes. As a researcher, I followed these guidelines by ensuring that the schools' and participants' identities remained undisclosed in the study by using pseudonyms in place of their actual names. Lastly, I was aware that all the participants had the right to privacy, hence their personal information was safeguarded until the study was completed.

Potential harm

While there should be no harm done to study participants, they may experience harm in a number of ways, according to Rana (2012). The harm may be of a physical, emotional, reputational nature, or loss of resources (including time). As a result, the researcher must take into account the

possibility of harm to the subjects, the institution, and the larger community. According to Fleming and Zegwaard (2018), the study method should prioritise minimising, isolating, and eliminating risks - in descending order - of possible damage, while ensuring that participants are fully aware of the risks involved. When conducting the interviews, all possible sources of harm to participants were considered hence sensitive questions were avoided. Care was also taken not to report sensitive information that could lead to legal risks.

3.9.1 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and discussed the paradigm that informs the study, along with the research design, approach, and methods of data generation which were employed in conducting the research. Phenomenological qualitative approach was used to address the research questions and thematic analysis was used to analyse data.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the interpretation and analysis of data generated from semi-structured interviews with 10 Religious Studies teachers. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' perceptions on evaluation of learners' moral growth in moulding secondary school learners' moral development in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies.

This study adopted inductive thematic analysis. Prior to transcribing every single interview recording, I listened to each recording to become acquainted with what was said before starting the analysis. Since "active listening" was required during the initial replay of each interview tape, I did not take any notes at this time. I engaged in this active listening to comprehend the main topics covered in each conversation before transcribing. Every interview was immediately followed by an active-listen recording, which I personally transcribed. It is important to note that the transcriptions in this chapter are solely based on the audios without considering participants' gestures.

The data analysis is organised into themes and sub-themes, which correspond to the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions on effective assessment in Religious Studies attainments?

2. What are teachers' views on the importance of assessing learners' moral development promoted by the teaching and learning of Religious Studies?

3. What are the possibilities that the emphasis could shift from cognitive assessment to moral development evaluation?

In this chapter, symbols or numbers 1-10 were employed as pseudonyms for Religious Studies teachers while 'A-E' denotes the names of the schools. Lastly, this chapter is organised into the following topics:

1. Demographic characteristics of participants

2. An overview of data presentation, interpretation and analysis

3. Teachers' perceptions on effective assessment in Religious Studies attainment

4. Teachers' views about the importance of assessing moral development as promoted by the teaching and learning of Religious Studies

5. Shifting emphasis of assessment from cognitive assessment to moral development evaluation.

4.2 Demographic characteristics of participants

Religious Studies teachers were purposively selected to participate in this study. The participants ranged, in teaching experience, from 10 to 41 years. In terms of gender, there were five females and five males. All the participant teachers in this study hold Bachelors' Degree in Education and one of their majors is Religious Studies. Considering their qualifications, it was assumed that these teachers possess all the required expertise in teaching Religious Studies.

Interviews with participants were conducted for five days at their workplaces. The interviews with participants lasted between 28 minutes and 34 minutes. The summary of information about teachers who participated in this study is presented in the table below which includes dates of interviews with participants, interview duration, participant and school labels, participants' specialisations, qualifications and teaching experience.

Table 2: Profile of participants

Date of interviews	Interview duration	Participant Labels	School Labels	Sex	Specialisation	Qualification	Teaching experience
22/11/2023	28:13 minutes	Teacher 1	School A	Female	Religious Studies & Sesotho	Bachelor of Education	25 years
22/11/2023	33:38 minutes	Teacher 2	School A	Female	Religious Studies & Sesotho	Bachelor of Education	16 years
01/02/2024	27:10 minutes	Teacher 3	School B	Male	Religious Studies	Bachelor of Education	41 years

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01/2/2024	32:00 minutes	Teacher 4	School B	Female	Religious Studies	Bachelor of Education	10 years
01/02/2024	31;02 minutes	Teacher 5	School B	Male	Religious Studies	Bachelor of Education	22 years
16/02/2024	30:10 minutes	Teacher 6	School C	Male	Religious Studies & English	Bachelor of Education	22 years
19/02/2024	29:16 minutes	Teacher 7	School D	Female	Religious Studies	Bachelor of Education	10 years
06/03/2024	31:01 minutes	Teacher 8	School E	Male	Religious Studies & English	Bachelor of Education	18 years
06/03/2024	34:15 minutes	Teacher 9	School E	Female	Religious Studies & Sesotho	Bachelor of Education	19 years
06/03/2024	29:09 minutes	Teacher 10	School E	Male	Religious Studies	Bachelor of Education	24 years

Table 2: Profile of participants 1

4.3 An overview of data presentation, interpretation and analysis

This chapter presents the data analysis for each teacher per school based on data obtained from five semi-structured interview questions. Under each interview question, the sub-themes that emerged from the participants' responses are grouped under different themes. The themes were constructed based on the general idea that the sub-themes relate to. After analysing data from the interviews, tables are used to present themes, sub-themes and participants' responses from which the sub-themes were generated. The topics of data presentation and interpretation are based on the research objectives which correspond to the research questions that inform this study. The research objectives are as follows:

1. Teachers' perceptions on effective assessment in Religious Studies attainments;

2. Teachers' views on the importance of assessing moral development as promoted by the teaching and learning of Religious Studies; and

3. Shifting emphasis of assessment from cognitive assessment to moral development evaluation

Data analysis is depicted with a table under each topic, featuring arrows at the top of the table to illustrate the procedure of analysis.

4.4 Teachers' perceptions on effective assessment in Religious Studies attainments

The first research question intended to explore and understand teachers' views and interpretations of effective assessment in assessing learners' achievements in Religious Studies. The first research question was: "What are teachers' perceptions on effective assessment in Religious Studies attainments?" The focus was on gathering qualitative insights into the teachers' opinions and beliefs regarding the best practices and approaches for assessing learners' learning in this subject area. Moreover, the goal was to uncover what teachers consider to be the most effective and appropriate assessment methods for assessing learners' knowledge, skills, and moral development in Religious Studies. The first interview question to address the first research question was constructed as follows:

Interviewer question 1(a): Can you elaborate on your understanding of effective assessment in Religious Studies?

This interview question focuses on teachers' conceptual understandings, beliefs, and interpretations of what constitutes effective assessment practices in the context of Religious Studies. The focus includes understanding how teachers perceive the role of assessment in supporting and evaluating learners' learning, as well as the extent to which assessment is aligned with the broader teaching and learning objectives of this subject.

School A

School A comprised of two teachers: Teachers 1 and 2. To answer the question concerning the teacher's understanding of effective assessment in Religious Studies, Teacher 1 stated:

> *The assessment in Religious Studies is effective if it assesses learners' knowledge and understanding of religion, Biblical texts, values and vices.*

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Teacher 1 considers effective assessment as assessing learners' knowledge and understanding of religion, biblical texts, values, and vices. This suggests a content-focused conceptualisation of effective assessment. The response further indicates that Teacher 1 believes the primary role of assessment is to assess and in the core content areas of Religious Studies. On the other hand, Teacher 2 expressed the following in relation to effective assessment in Religious Studies:

> *The assessment in Religious Studies is effective if it assesses learners' knowledge of religion, skills and application of the skills that learners have acquired in Religious Studies. Not forgetting that Religious Studies aims to build a person holistically, that is, it promotes learners' moral growth and changes their perspectives. So if the assessment is effective, it should assess all these aspects.*

Teacher 2 emphasised that Religious Studies aims to build learners holistically, promoting moral growth, behavioural change, and perspective transformation. Furthermore, the teacher suggests effective assessment should measure not just content knowledge, but also the broader personal and behavioural outcomes associated with Religious Studies. Teacher 2's view is that effective assessment in this subject should encompass cognitive, skill-based, and affective or behavioural dimensions of learners.

Summary of data in School A

Teacher 1 defined effective assessment in Religious Studies as assessing learners' knowledge of religion, biblical texts, values, and vices. This suggests a focus on assessing learners' mastery of subject-specific content and concepts. In contrast, Teacher 2 believes that assessment in Religious Studies should assess not just learners' knowledge, but also their skills, application of skills and moral growth. This aligns with the broader aim of Religious Studies to develop learners holistically. Teacher 1 emphasises assessing learners' grasp of religious facts and concepts, while Teacher 2 advocates a more comprehensive approach.

School B

There were three Religious Studies teachers from School B who participated in this study. To respond to the question "Can you elaborate on your understanding of effective assessment in Religious Studies?" Teacher 3 said:

Assessment is effective if it is based on theory and practice. Assessment which is based on theory should focus on the study of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts of Apostles. As a result, learners should be assessed on the knowledge of these two books and other concepts of religion. The assessment on the practical should target how Religious Studies has transformed learners' moral behaviour.

Teacher 3 believes that effective assessment in Religious Studies constitutes two dimensions being assessment based on theory and practice. This response indicates that the assessment based on theory should assess learners' knowledge and understanding of religious facts as presented in the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts of Apostles. On the hand, practical assessment should assess the behavioral transformation of learners.

When Teacher 4 was asked about effective assessment in Religious Studies, the response was a follows:

I do not know about effective assessment, but I think assessment in Religious Studies is effective when learners give correct answers to the question asked. The assessment is also effective when learners are given opportunity to express their views for example in a debate or through oral tests.

Teacher 5 understood effective assessment as:

The assessment that assesses learners in such a way that it covers all learning areas. In other words, effective assessment in Religious Studies does not only assess learners' understanding of religion but it also assesses learners' application of what they have learned in real life practices. If learners are assessed effectively, they should write test and have practical.

Based on the above teachers' excerpts, Teacher 4 explained that assessment in Religious Studies is effective when learners are assessed on the expression of their views. Expression of views can be done through approaches such as oral assessment. This response shows that there should be incorporation of different assessment approaches for the assessment to be effective.

In the same manner, Teacher 5 highlighted that in order to strive for effective assessment, there should be written tests and practical assessment. Through these approaches, learners can be

assessed on all learning areas being learners' understanding of religious facts, application of values and positive attitude. This response also indicates the incorporation of different assessment approaches.

Summary of data in School B

Teachers from School B had common views concerning effective assessment in Religious Studies. They all explained effective assessment as incorporation of different assessment approaches. For example, Teacher 3 understood effective assessment as the assessment based on both theory and practical aspects of Religious Studies. This response indicates that the assessment on theory denotes assessing learners' knowledge of religious facts while assessment on practical designates the assessment of learners' moral growth. Similarly, Teachers 4 stipulated that the assessment is effective when it assesses learners' expression of views. Expression of views can be done through oral assessment. Lastly, Teacher 5 stated that effective assessment is the assessment that covers all learning areas. This suggests that assessment should be based on religious knowledge, application of moral values and positive attitudes. In other words, the assessment on all learning areas should be done through written tests as well as practical assessment.

School C

One teacher from School C participated in this study. When asked about their understanding of effective assessment in Religious Studies, Teacher 6 explained:

> *For assessment to be effective, learners should be assessed on different levels. If learners are able to give out examples, life experiences and their opinions, then they have reached the peak of the assessment. It shows that learners have internalised what they have learned.*

Teacher 6 understood effective assessment as assessment of learners on different levels. This response indicates that assessment in Religious Studies is effective if it assesses learners on different levels of understanding of religious facts and concepts. Such assessment requires learners to give out examples, life experiences and opinions on certain topics. When learners are able to meet all the mentioned requirements, this would indicate they have understood what they were taught.

School D

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School D had only one participant. Teacher 7 said the following when asked about effective assessment in Religious Studies:

> *The assessment is effective if it assesses learners' knowledge of religion and the application of moral values to their lives.*

Teacher 7 understood effective assessment as the assessment on knowledge of religious facts and related concepts as well as application of moral values to learners' lives. The application of moral values can be seen through learners' behaviour. This response shows that assessment is effective if it assesses all the objectives of Religious Studies.

School E

The following excerpts are the responses of teachers from School E. There were three teachers in total at the school. When asked about their understanding of effective assessment in Religious Studies, Teacher 8 said:

> *The assessment in Religious studies is effective if it assesses learners' knowledge and understanding of religion and how they apply their knowledge to their everyday life.*

Teacher 8 expressed that effective assessment is one that assesses learners' understanding of religion. The teacher further highlighted that effective assessment focuses on the application of learners' knowledge in their lives. This indicates the application of moral values in learners' everyday lives. In short, Teacher 8 interprets effective assessment as one that assesses the knowledge of religious facts and moral development. In the same manner, Teacher 9 explained effective assessment as:

> *The assessment is effective if it assesses the aims of Religious Studies. For example, in Religious Studies, learners are expected to have the knowledge and understanding of religion through the study of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts of Apostles. Religious Studies also aims to transform learners' behaviour through learning of moral values. As a result, the assessment in Religious Studies is effective if it assesses all the above objectives.*

The response from Teacher 9 stresses that effective assessment is the assessment of the aims of Religious Studies which include the knowledge and understanding of religious facts as presented in the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts of Apostle. Furthermore, Teacher 9 highlighted that

the assessment is effective if it assesses the moral growth of learners. In the same light Teacher 10 defined effective assessment in this way:

> *If assessment is effective in Religious Studies, it should produce positive results, that is, after the assessment, learners' behaviour should change from bad to good. The assessment is effective if it assesses both theory and practice part of Religious Studies.*

Teacher 10 further stated that the assessment is effective if it assesses both the theory and practical aspects of Religious Studies. In other words, the assessment which is based on theory is about assessing the knowledge and understanding of religious facts, while the practical part focuses on how learners practise the moral values that they have learned. Therefore, this response indicates assessing the attainment of the objectives of Religious Studies.

4.3.1.1 Summary of data from School E

Teachers from School E have similar views on what constitutes effective assessment. Teacher 8 understood effective assessment as the assessment of knowledge and understanding of religious facts and application of moral values to learners' lives. Teachers 9 in the same manner regarded effective assessment as assessing all the objectives of Religious Studies. Lastly, Teacher 10 defined effective assessment as the assessment of religious facts and practice of moral values. In short, teachers understood effective assessment as assessing the objectives of Religious Studies.

The second interview question that addressed the first research question was:

Interview question 1(b): Why do you think effective assessment is important in Religious studies?

The interview also explored the importance of practising effective assessment in Religious Studies. The objective of this interview question was to investigate teachers' awareness of the significance of assessing all the objectives of Religious Studies as well as using appropriate assessment tools for a comprehensive assessment.

School A

When asked about the importance of effective assessment in Religious Studies, Teacher 1 highlighted the major role that effective assessment plays in attaining the objectives of Religious Studies. This can be seen from the following excerpt:

Effective assessment is necessary to assess the curriculum objectives of Religious Studies. The objectives are not only meant for learners to pass but they are also intended to help learners develop into independent human beings in the future. Therefore, effective assessment is important in order to reach the aims of Religious Studies and to help learners to be disciplined and independent in the future.

The response above shows that Teacher 1 believes effective assessment is significant in assessing the objectives of Religious Studies as stipulated in the curriculum. Most importantly, Teacher 1 holds the belief that effective assessment is necessary to raise morally upright and independent learners. In the same manner, Teacher 2 explained the importance of effective assessment in the following excerpt:

Effective assessment is needed in order to know whether the objectives of Religious Studies have been achieved because if there is no effective assessment, the achievement of some of the objectives may not be known including the moral growth of learners.

Teacher 2 believes that effective assessment is important in determining the achievement of the objectives of Religious Studies. Teacher 2 further stated that moral development is one of the objectives of Religious Studies. This indicates that effective assessment is necessary to assess the moral development of learners and other content-based objectives of Religious Studies.

Summary of data from School A

Both Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 believe that effective assessment is significant in assessing the objectives of Religious Studies. Teacher 1 stated that assessing learners effectively encompasses assessing the curriculum aims of Religious Studies, while Teacher 2 explained that effective assessment is important in assessing the achievement of the general objectives of Religious Studies.

School B

The following excerpts are the responses of teachers from School B. When asked about the importance of effective assessment, Teacher 3 said:

Effective assessment is important in order to know if learners have really understood what was taught. Moreover, effective assessment is necessary to assess whether Religious

Studies has transformed learners' moral behaviour through the teaching and learning of moral values.

Teacher 3 stated that effective assessment is important to assess what learners have been taught, which can be translated as assessing learners based on the syllabus objectives of Religious Studies. Again, Teacher 3 emphasised the significance of effective assessment in assessing the moral growth of learners which is promoted by the teaching and learning of moral values.

Regarding the importance of effective assessment in Religious Studies, Teacher 4 said:

Effective assessment is necessary to evaluate the curriculum aims of Religious Studies. It through effective assessment that the efficiency of the subject can be evaluated.

In the same manner, Teacher 5 stated the following when asked about the importance of moral evaluation:

Effective assessment is necessary to determine effectiveness of teaching and learning of Religious Studies.

Teacher 4 and Teacher 5 have similar ideas regarding the importance of effective assessment. They view effective assessment as necessary to assess the efficiency of teaching and learning of Religious Studies. Teacher 4 further added that effective assessment is important in assessing the curriculum aims of Religious Studies.

Summary of data from School B

Teachers from School B have various interpretations relating to the importance of effective assessment in Religious Studies. For example, Teacher 3 holds the belief that effective assessment is important in assessing the syllabus objectives of Religious Studies including assessing the moral growth of learners. This indicates that the comprehensive assessment needs to encompass all the objectives of this subject. Teacher 4 and Teacher 5 have a similar idea that effective assessment is necessary to assess the efficiency of teaching and learning of Religious Studies. Lastly Teacher 4 has a broader perception of the importance of effective assessment which she says is necessary for assessing the curriculum aims of Religious Studies.

School C

When asked about the importance of effective assessment in Religious Studies, Teacher 6 from School C stated the following:

> *It is important to assess learners effectively so that we know how Religious Studies has changed learners' behaviour.*

Teacher 6 from School C considers effective assessment to be important in assessing the moral development of learners which is the fundamental aim of Religious Studies. Moral development encompasses moral reasoning, moral behaviour and moral feeling. Religious Studies plays a major role in transforming learners' behaviour through the teaching and learning of moral values.

School D

Teacher 7 from School D expressed the following in relation to the importance of effective assessment in Religious Studies:

> *Effective assessment is important in order to assess all objectives of Religious Studies as stated in the syllabus.*

Teacher 7 emphasised that effective assessment is important in assessing all the syllabus objectives of Religious Studies.

School E

When teachers from School E were asked about the importance of effective assessment in Religious Studies, Teacher 8 said:

It important to assess learners on all learning areas such as cognitive, affective psychomotor.

Teacher 8 stated that effective assessment is important for assessing learners on all learning areas; cognitive, affective and psychomotor. In other words, this response indicates that effective assessment assesses learners' knowledge and understanding of religious facts and concepts, moral development and skills acquired from studying Religious Studies. On the other hand, Teacher 9 stated:

> *It is important to know the progress that learners are making.*

In the same light, Teachers 9 perceives effective assessment to be significant in assessing the learning progress of learners. This is to say progress in both the comprehension of content in

Religious Studies as well as the acquisition of moral values and application of skills. Lastly, Teacher 10 expressed the importance of effective assessment as:

Effective assessment demonstrates the knowledge, skills and attitudes of each student.

Teacher 10 holds the same view as Teacher 8. Teacher 10 believes that effective assessment is needed to demonstrate the achievement of learners' knowledge, skills and attitudes. This response suggests that practising effective assessment will determine learners' knowledge of religious facts, skills and positive attitudes.
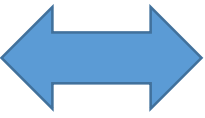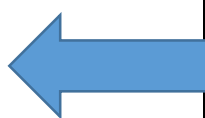
Summary of data from School E

Teachers from School E view effective assessment as necessary in assessing attainment of the objectives of Religious Studies through assessing learners on cognitive, affective and psychomotor competencies. This is evidenced by the responses of the three teachers and shows that they have similar viewpoints.

4.4.3 Summary of the interviews for the first research question
The first interview question extracted from this research question sought to investigate teachers' understanding of effective assessment in Religious Studies. Therefore, teachers who participated in this study understood effective assessment as the assessment of the objectives of Religious Studies which include the study of the Gospel of Luke and Acts of Apostles and the assessment of moral growth. Teachers also emphasised that one way to strive for effective assessment is through employing different assessment approaches such as oral tests and practical assessment. Teachers again understood effective assessment as assessing learners on different levels of understanding.

The interviews also explored the significance of effective assessment in Religious Studies. Teachers noted that effective assessment is important in assessing all the syllabus objectives of Religious Studies such as knowledge and understanding of religious facts and acquisition of moral values. In addition, teachers stated that effective assessment is helpful in determining the efficiency of teaching and learning of Religious Studies. The table below presents the themes that were generated from the interview responses, the responses that build up to the themes, sub-themes as well as the participants who provided those responses.

Table 3: Themes generated from research question 1

Research Question 1 (RQ1)	Interview questions	Themes	Sub-themes	Responses	Participants
What are teachers' perceptions on effective assessment in Religious Studies?	**(IQ1A)** Can you elaborate on your understanding of effective assessment in Religious Studies?	Comprehensive knowledge and understanding	Knowledge of religious facts, concepts and moral development	Teachers stated that assessment is effective if it assesses learners' knowledge of the Gospel of Luke, book of Acts of Apostles, religious concepts and the application of moral values.	T1, T2, T3, T5, T7, T8 & T9, T10
		Holistic assessment approaches	Diverse Assessment Methods	Teachers also highlighted that learners should be assessed through written tests	T4, T5

				and practical assessment.	
			Application and Expression	One teacher stated that learners should be assessed on their ability to provide examples, apply knowledge to real life experiences and express their opinions.	T6
	(IQ1B) Why do you think effective assessment is			Teachers emphasised that effective assessment is important to assessing the aims of	

| | | | important in Religious Studies? | Achieving educational aims | Achieving Religious Studies aims | Religious Studies. | T1, T2, T3, T6, T7, T8, T9, 10 |

important in Religious Studies?	Achieving educational aims	Achieving Religious Studies aims	Religious Studies.	T1, T2, T3, T6, T7, T8, T9, 10
			Teachers noted that effective assessment is necessary to establish effectiveness of teaching and learning of Religious Studies.	
	Assessing the effectiveness of the teaching and learning			T4, T5

Table 3: Themes for research question 1

4.5 Teachers' views on the importance of assessing moral development as promoted by the teaching and learning of Religious Studies

The second research question aimed to explore teachers' views on the importance of assessing learners' moral development. The research question is framed thus: "What are teachers' views on the importance of assessing moral development promoted by the teaching and learning of

Religious Studies?" This research question examined teachers' awareness of the role that Religious Studies plays in developing morally upright learners, as well as the need for assessing their moral growth in order to achieve the objective Religious Studies. Therefore, in order to achieve the aims of this research question, the following interview question was constructed:

Interview question 2: In your opinion, why is it important to evaluate learners' moral growth basing yourself on the curriculum aims of Religious Studies?

The interviews with Religious Studies teachers also investigated the importance of moral evaluation on the basis that Religious Studies aims to promote socially and culturally acceptable moral behaviour. The responses of teachers from the five secondary schools are presented below.

School A

When teachers from School A were asked about the importance of evaluating learners' moral growth in Religious Studies, Teacher 1 said:

> *It is important to evaluate learners' moral growth because one of the curriculum aims of Religious Studies is to develop the moral behaviour of learners through the teaching of moral values. Therefore, moral evaluation is important to find out if this aim is attained. To find out if Religious Studies has changed learners' moral growth.*

Teacher 1 explained that the one of the curriculum aims of Religious Studies is to develop the moral behaviour of learners through acquisition of moral values. For Teacher 1, it is important to assess learners' moral growth in order to find out whether the aim of developing moral behaviour is attained. Concerning the importance of moral evaluation, Teacher 2 explained:

> *As I have already mentioned that Religious Studies focuses on instilling moral values in learners and promoting positive attitude, moral evaluation will assess the success of this objective.*

Teacher 2 stressed that moral evaluation is important in determining the success of instilling moral values and promoting positive attitude. Teacher 2 further highlighted that the goal of Religious Studies is to instill moral values in learners in order to promote positive attitude.

Summary of data from School A

Teachers from School A pointed out that the importance of moral evaluation is to assess the attainment of developing moral behaviour. Interviews conducted at School A revealed that moral evaluation is very important in shaping learners' moral growth, as evidenced by the teachers' responses. Moreover, it is important to assess the success of instilling moral values and positive attitude. In addition, Teacher 2 emphasised that moral evaluation is important in determining whether there is a behaviour change among learners. In general, the teachers' responses show that the importance of moral evaluation is to assess the achievement of developing learners' moral behaviour.

School B

Teacher 3 from School B stated the following when asked about the importance of evaluating learners' moral growth in Religious Studies:

> *It is important to evaluate learners' moral growth because the aim of teaching Religious Studies is to change learners' behaviour, so evaluating learners' moral growth will help them to transform their behaviour and thus be good citizens.*

For Teacher 3, moral evaluation is significant in determining whether there is behavioural change among learners. Furthermore, Teacher 3 acknowledges that Religious Studies aims to transform learners' behaviour thereby promoting good citizens. Teacher 4 also explained the importance of moral evaluation in Religious Studies and said:

> *It is important to know how learners are developing morally and the evaluation in this area will help teachers to know the objectives that are achieved from the syllabus. Again teachers will know how Religious Studies has changed learners' behaviour.*

In the same manner, Teacher 5 stated that moral evaluation determines the behavioural change of learners. This is captured from the following response:

> *It is important in order to know how the teaching and learning of moral values has changed learners' behaviour since the ultimate aim of Religious Studies is to promote morally upright learners.*

Teacher 5 views moral evaluation as important in assessing the moral development of learners. In addition, the teacher stated that moral evaluation determines the transformation of learners' moral

behaviour. Teacher 5 also mentioned that the ultimate aim of Religious Studies is to mould morally upright learners. In short, both teachers view moral evaluation as significant in assessing the attainment of developing morally upright learners.

Summary of data from School B

In summary, teachers from School B have a common view regarding the importance of moral evaluation. The common idea among them is that moral evaluation assesses the attainment of moral development. Moreover, they mentioned that the main aim of Religious Studies is to develop morally upright learners.

School C

When asked about the importance of evaluating learners' moral growth in Religious Studies, Teacher 6 explained:

> *To make sure that learners develop morally because Religious Studies instills moral values.*

Teacher 6 from School C indicated that moral evaluation is important in enhancing the moral development of learners. The teacher also highlighted that the role of Religious Studies is to instill moral values in learners.

School D

Teacher 7 stated the following when asked about the importance of evaluating learners' moral growth in Religious Studies:

> *Moral evaluation is important in order to know how far teachers have reached the objective of the syllabus.*

Teacher 7 from School D emphasised that evaluation of moral growth is necessary in assessing the objective of Religious Studies as stated in the syllabus**.** In short, the response indicates that it is through moral evaluation that promoting moral development can be attained.

Data from School E

Teachers from School E were also asked about the importance of evaluating learners' moral growth and Teacher 8 said:

It is important to evaluate learners' moral growth because we want to see learners' behaviour improving. We want to strive for a positive attitude, and make learners aware of the bad and good habits. Religious Studies aims to equip learners with the spirit of cooperation so the assessment of moral growth will determine whether this was achieved or not.

Teacher 8 detailed that moral evaluation enhances learners' moral behaviour. Evaluating moral growth aims to strive for acceptable moral behaviour. In addition, the teaching and learning of moral values and vices does not only enhance learners' awareness of good and bad habits but it also equips them with the spirit of cooperation. Teacher 9 also holds a similar view in relation to the importance of evaluating learners' moral growth, as seen in the following excerpt:

Religious Studies aims to shape learners holistically, so that they do not only master the content of Religious Studies but they also become disciplined. Learners' moral growth needs to be assessed so that they can practise moral values that they have learned. They should show respect and love to others.

Teacher 10 also explained the importance of evaluating learners' moral growth in Religious Studies as follows:

It is important to know if learners' moral development is improving or not.

Teacher 10 noted that moral evaluation demonstrates whether learners practise moral values or not such as showing love and respect. In the same manner, Teacher 10 stated that moral evaluation is important in assessing the behavioural change of learners.

Summary of data from school E

Teachers from School E expressed one common idea in relation to the importance of moral evaluation in Religious Studies. In their discussion, they have stated that moral evaluation assesses the achievement of learners' moral growth. In other words, moral evaluation demonstrates whether learners practise moral values such as showing love and respect.

4.5.2 Summary of the interviews for the second research question

As the interview data demonstrated, teachers expressed their views regarding the importance of moral evaluation. They explained that moral evaluation is important in assessing the behavioural

change of learners. They also emphasised that moral evaluation will improve the moral development and positive attitude of learners. Teachers also acknowledged that Religious Studies aims to promote morally upright learners. Hence, moral evaluation will determine the achievement of this objective. The table below summarises the themes and sub-themes from the second research question, together with the responses provided by the participants.

Table 4: Themes from research question 2

Research question 2 (RQ2)	Interview question (IQs)	Themes	Sub-themes	Response	Participants
What are teachers' views on the importance of assessing moral development promoted by the teaching and learning of Religious Studies?	**(IQ2)** In your opinion, why is it important to evaluate learners' moral growth in Religious Studies?	Determining the attainment of moral development	Evaluate the behavioural transformation of learners	Teachers said it is important to evaluate learners' moral growth in order to find out if teaching Religious Studies has changed learners' behaviour Teachers explained that evaluating learners''	T1, T2, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10 T3, T8

		Responsible citizens	Development of morally good citizens	moral growth will influence learners to improve their behaviour and be good citizens.	

Table 4: Themes for research question 24.6 Shifting emphasis of assessment from cognitive assessment to moral development evaluation

The third research question was: "What are the possibilities that the emphasis could shift from cognitive assessment to moral development evaluation?" The aim of this research question was to investigate Religious Studies teachers' viewpoints on the possibility of evaluating the observable moral growth of learners. Additionally, the question explored how attainment of moral behaviour is currently being assessed in practice. The intent was to understand whether the teachers employ portfolio assessment in assessing learners' moral growth and if they have recommendations for improving the assessment of Religious Studies. Therefore, the key questions posed to teachers during the interviews revolved around the methods of moral assessment as well as the contribution of such methods to the improvement of the teaching and learning of moral values in Religious Studies. Thus, in order to fulfil the intentions of this research question, the following interview question was constructed:

Interview question 3(a): Do you use portfolio assessment when assessing the moral behaviour of learners and which strategies, in your opinion, should be implemented to evaluate learners' observable moral growth?

This interview question intended to explore teachers' opinions on incorporating alternative methods of assessment that can effectively assess learners' moral growth, focusing specifically on their moral behaviour. Furthermore, this interview question aimed to find out if teachers use portfolio assessment in assessing the moral growth of learners. Lastly, the question sought to investigate whether teachers consider observable moral growth evaluable or not.

School A

When teachers were asked whether they use portfolio assessment when assessing moral behaviour, and which strategies can be implemented to assess the observable moral growth, Teacher responded:

> *Learners' moral growth can be observed and in this case, parents can be involved in the assessment of their children, but currently we do not use portfolio.*

Likewise, Teacher 2 explained that portfolio is not used in assessing moral behaviour and recommended observation as a method of assessing moral behaviour. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

> *There is no portfolio assessment in Religious Studies, so I think the best way to assess moral behaviour is by observing learners, then we can see if they behave well or not.*

Summary of data from School A

Teachers from School A demonstrated lack of knowledge on portfolio assessment in Religious Studies. However, they shared the perception that observation is the appropriate method of moral evaluation. Their viewpoint is based on the fact that moral behaviour can easily be observed. Moreover, Teacher 2 emphasised that observation as a method of assessment cannot only be carried out by teachers but that parents can also be involved in the assessment of their children for objective results. Lastly, teachers stated that portfolio assessment is not used in Religious Studies.

School B

Teachers from School provided their views on portfolio assessment and also recommended ways of evaluating learners' moral behaviour. During the interview, Teachers 3 stated the following:

I never heard of portfolio assessment and I do not think there is any strategy of moral evaluation.

Teacher 3 stated that there was no method of moral evaluation and portfolio was not used in Religious Studies. This response demonstrates the teacher's lack of knowledge regarding alternative methods of assessment. The response also indicates that Teacher 3 is not aware that the observable moral behaviour can be evaluated. On the other hand, Teacher 4 said:

There is no portfolio assessment in Religious Studies. I think moral evaluation can be done through charity. Learners should be encouraged to share with those who are in need. Then we can evaluate them based on whether they are capable of sharing or not.

Teacher 4 stated that there is no portfolio assessment in Religious Studies. The teacher went on to suggest work programme as a strategy of evaluating learners' moral growth. This response revealed that learners should be engaged in a work programme such as charity where they can share anything with the needy. In that case, learners will be evaluated on their willingness to share. In the same manner, Teacher 5 explained that portfolio assessment is not used, and went further to suggest practical assessment when assessing learners' moral behaviour. This was captured from the following response:

I do not know about portfolio. However, I think there should be practical assessment. Religious Studies is about teaching moral values so learners need to do practical tasks such as providing services to the community, for example by helping the elders. So the assessment should be based on the behaviour of learners towards others.

The above response shows that Teacher 5 views practical assessment task as the basis of moral evaluation. For Teacher 5, practical assessment tasks include providing services to the community, such as helping the elders. Through practical tasks, the moral behaviour of learners can be evaluated based how they act around other people. Teacher 5 emphasised the aim of Religious Studies which focuses on teaching moral values. As a result, it is imperative that learners practise those moral values. However, teachers have shown they have no knowledge of portfolio assessment.

Summary of data from School B

Teachers from School B are unfamiliar with portfolio assessment. However, they provided their viewpoints in relation to the methods of moral evaluation. For Teacher 3, there is no method of moral evaluation. However, Teacher 4 outlined work programme as one way through which learners' observable moral growth can be evaluated. For example, learners can be assessed on how they practise virtues such as sharing through engaging in charity programmes. In the same manner, Teacher 5 identified practical assessment tasks as methods of moral evaluation. Learners can do practical tasks such as providing services to other people. Based the on these responses, it can be

seen that both Teacher 4 and Teacher 5 have a common view. They are both concerned with engaging in hands-on activities such as sharing and helping. Therefore, it can be concluded that the assessment associated with their view is practical assessment task.

School C

Teacher 6 raised the following in relation to whether portfolio assessment is used when assessing learners' moral behaviour:

> *We do not use portfolio, but I think moral behaviour can be evaluated through observation. Learners can be observed by the way they conduct themselves in the school premises.*

Teacher 6 stated that they do not use portfolio. Again, the teacher views observation as a method of moral evaluation. Observation assessment can be carried out based on how learners behave on daily basis while on school premises.

School D

When Teacher 7 was asked whether portfolio assessment is used when assessing learners' moral behaviour, and which strategies of moral evaluation can be implement, this was the response:

> *By observing learners' actions, whether they behave in a desired manner or not. There is no portfolio assessment.*

Teacher 7 regards observation of learners' actions as a method of moral evaluation. Behaving in a desired manner or bad manner can be the basis of moral evaluation. Lastly, Teacher 7 stated that there is no portfolio assessment in Religious Studies.

School E

Teacher 8 was also asked whether there is portfolio assessment in Religious Studies and which assessment strategies could be implemented to evaluate learners' moral behaviour. The response was as follows:

> *I am not quite sure, but I think role playing and dramatisation can be implemented as assessment methods of moral evaluation. When learners act out stories from the Bible, they get familiar with how they should behave towards other people. As for now, we do not use portfolio assessment.*

Teacher 8 expressed that role paying and dramatisation are the suitable methods of moral evaluation. Teacher 8 further explained that when learners role-play and dramatise biblical stories, they can easily understand the moral values. From this response, it can be seen that role play and dramatisation are the effective methods of teaching moral values. On the contrary, Teacher 9 stated the following regarding the same matter:

> *We do not use portfolio assessment, but I think through oral assessment, learners can express their opinions on certain topic. I think learners should be given opportunity to talk not always write tests.*

Teacher 9 said the best way to evaluate moral evaluation is through debate. In this case learners' moral growth can be assessed on their expression of moral values. In other words, this response shows that Teacher 8 views oral assessment as the method of promoting moral growth. However, Teacher 9 stated that portfolio assessment is not integrated in assessment of Religious Studies. On the other hand, Teacher 10 recommended the observation method. This was captured from the following response:

> *There is no portfolio assessment in Religious Studies. But I think observation with relevant people such as parents and schoolmates. Observation can be done based on learners' behaviour on daily basis.*

Teacher 10 stated that there is no portfolio assessment in Religious Studies. On the other hand, the teacher outlined observation assessment as the appropriate method for moral evaluation. According to Teacher 10, for observation to be objective, several people should be involved such as teachers, parents and a schoolmate.

Summary of data from School E

Teachers from School E demonstrated unfamiliarity with portfolio assessment in Religious Studies. On the other hand, they provided suggestions concerning the methods of moral evaluation. Teacher 9 recommended oral assessment such as debate, while Teacher 10 stated observation as a method of moral assessment. Teacher 8 however, emphasised that role playing and dramatisation are the best teaching methods that enhance learners' understanding of moral values.

The second interview question from the third research question is as follows:

Interview question 3(b): How would the strategies of moral evaluation contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning of moral values in Religious Studies?

The objective of this interview question was to investigate teachers' opinions on how the suggested methods of moral evaluation could enhance value acquisition. Furthermore, this interview question aimed at exploring teachers' views on how the methods of moral evaluation could improve assessment in Religious Studies. The following are the responses the teachers gave.

School A

When asked about the contribution of strategies of moral evaluation, Teacher 1 said:

> *Observation will influence learners to behave well since they will know that they are being watched.*

Teacher 1 stated that observation, as a method of moral evaluation, deepens the acquisition of moral values. When learners are aware they are being observed, they can behave in a desired manner. In this case, this will lead to achievement of acceptable moral behaviour as one aim of Religious Studies. In the same light, Teacher 2 said the following concerning the contribution of strategies of moral evaluation to the improvement of teaching and learning of moral values:

> *Observation as a form of assessment can lead to morally upright learners because after correcting learners' behaviour, they will become disciplined and sometimes they may be examples to others.*

Teacher 2 considered observation to be capable of correcting learners' behaviour, especially after assessment, since they will be made aware of good and bad attitudes. Teacher 2 further stated that when learners are disciplined, they can become role models for other children.

Summary of data from School A

Based on the above responses, both Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 have common views on the benefit of employing observation to assess moral growth. For Teacher 1, observation deepens the acquisition of moral values. The fact that learners will know they are being observed could influence them to change their behaviour. In the same manner, Teacher 3 explained that through observation, learners are bound to be disciplined, as a result they can even become role models for other children.

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School B

When Teacher was 3 asked whether there is portfolio assessment in Religious Studies and how the strategies of moral evaluation could contribute to the teaching and learning of moral values, the response was as follows:

> *Like I said there is no strategy of moral evaluation, so I do not have any idea of how they may contribute to the teaching and learning of moral values.*

Teacher 3 showed lack of knowledge regarding the contribution of strategies of moral evaluation to the teaching and learning of moral values. Teacher 4 explained the advantages of methods of moral evaluation in enhancing the moral development of learners. This is evident from the following response:

> *I think this can conscientise learners about their choices and actions when they come across certain challenges in life. Learners will also know how best they can deal with or solve problems. In other words, learners will become disciplined.*

Teacher 4 explained that the strategies of moral evaluation will result in learners being mindful about their choices and actions. This response indicates that methods of moral evaluation will influence learners to be emotionally intelligent and know how to act virtuously. Teacher 4 further explained that learners will be disciplined. Teacher 5, on the other hand, said:

> *Practical assessment will lead to helpful learners in the future. When learners practise these moral values at school, such as sharing with others, they will do the same thing after they complete secondary school.*

Teacher 5 explained that through practical assessment, learners will acquire moral values such as sharing and being helpful. Acquisition of these values will not only benefit learners while at school, but they will also be applicable in the future.

Summary of data from school B

Teacher 4 explained that the methods of moral evaluation will lead learners to be emotionally intelligent as well as knowing how to act virtuously. This indicates that learners will be mindful

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of their choices and know how to best act. Similarly, Teacher 5 stated that practical assessment will deepen the acquisition of moral values such as sharing and helping other people. However, Teacher 3 had no idea how the strategies of moral evaluation can contribute to the teaching and learning of moral values.

School C

Teacher 6 emphasised the importance of observation to learners. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

I think learners can benefit from observation because they will know to behave as moral beings.

Teacher 6 indicated that observation has a positive contribution to the teaching and learning of moral values in Religious Studies. The teacher also stated that it is through observation that learners' behaviour can be transformed due to the fact that they are evaluated. In general, observation as a method of evaluation is capable of promoting well rounded learners.

School D

Teacher 7 explained how observation can lead to morally upright learners. Evidence can be seen in this quote:

> *Observation can improve learners' moral behaviour because they will know that someone is watching them.*

Teacher 7 believes that observation can transform learners' moral behaviour. Since learners will know that they being observed, they will behave in a desired manner.

School E

Teachers from school E were asked whether they use portfolio assessment when assessing learners' moral behaviour and which strategies of moral evaluation can be implemented to assess learners' moral behaviour, Teacher 8 explained:

> *Role playing and dramatisation can benefit learners and the community as well because when learners complete secondary school, they will know how to share and help people in general.*

Teacher 8 explained that role playing and dramatisation are important in teaching moral values such as sharing and helping others. Teacher 8 went on to clarify that instilling such moral values will help learners to know how to live peacefully with other people. Teacher 9 also explained the importance of oral assessment in the following excerpt:

> *Giving learners opportunity to express their opinions through debate can enable them to know how to express their views.*

Teacher 9 explained that giving learners the opportunity to express their views will empower them with communication skills, which will enable them to express their views. Lastly, Teacher 10 said the following regarding the contribution of strategies of moral evaluation on the improvement of teaching and learning of moral values:

> *Observation can bring a lot of change in learners' moral growth. Learners will practise the moral values that they learned in Religious Studies and this will help them to develop morally, that is to say, learners will become respectful, responsible and helpful.*

Teacher 10 explained that observation will influence learners to internalise moral values such as respect, responsibility and being helpful. When learners practise these moral values, they will develop acceptable behaviour.

Summary of data from School E

Teachers from School E provided different views on how strategies of moral evaluation can contribute to the teaching and learning of moral values in Religious Studies. For example, Teacher 8 stated that role playing and dramatisation are the best methods for teaching moral values while Teacher 9 explained that debate empowers learners with communication skills. Lastly, Teacher 10 believes that observation influences learners to internalise moral values such as respect and responsibility. Based on these responses, it is clear that it is only Teacher 10 who is aware of the importance of methods of moral evaluation.

4.6.3 Summary of interviews for the third research question
The interviews investigated whether teachers use portfolio assessment to assess learners' moral behaviour. Teachers showed lack of knowledge on portfolio assessment. They explained that they had no idea of portfolio assessment and had never used it. On the other hand, the interviews explored teachers' suggestions on the strategies of evaluating learners' observable moral growth.

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Teachers suggested observational assessment as the appropriate method for evaluating learners' observable moral development. They further emphasised that for objective results, observation should be carried out by several people such as teachers, schoolmates and parents. Teachers regard observation to be suitable for moral evaluation due to the fact that moral behaviour is easily observable. Practical assessment tasks were also recommended by teachers as methods of moral evaluation. Teachers stated that practical assessment tasks involve engaging learners in some work programme such as providing services to the community, thereby assessing them based on how they conduct themselves when they are around people. The last method is oral assessment which focuses on moral judgement.

In addition, the interviews also explored teachers' opinions on how the suggested methods of moral evaluation could contribute to the teaching and learning of moral values. In this case, teachers stated that observation, as a method of moral evaluation, will influence learners to practise moral values such as respect and responsibility. Furthermore, the teachers indicated that practical assessment tasks will influence learners to be emotionally intelligent and know how to act virtuously. The table below summarises the themes from the interviews. The participants' responses are also summarised.

Table 5: Themes generated from research question 3

Research question 3 (RQ 3)	Interview questions (IQs)	Themes	Sub-themes	Responses	Participants
What are the possibilities that the emphasis could shift from cognitive assessment to moral development evaluation?	(IQ3A) Do you use portfolio assessment when assessing the moral behaviour of learners and which strategies, in your opinion, should be implemented to evaluate learners' observable moral growth?	No portfolio assessment	Lack of knowledge on portfolio assessment in Religious Studies	Teachers stated that there is no portfolio assessment in Religious Studies and they had never heard of it.	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10
		Observational assessment	Assessment on moral behaviour and actions	Teachers recommended that learners' moral behaviour should be evaluated through observing their behaviour and actions.	T1, T2, T6, T7, T9, T10

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| | | | Practical assessment | Assessment on application and practise of moral values | Teachers emphasised that learners should be engaged in work programmes where they live out moral values, therefore, their behaviour can be evaluated based on how they practise moral values such as respect towards other people. | T2, T5 |
| | | | Oral assessment | Moral judgement | One teacher said learners can be evaluated on their moral judgement through oral assessment. | |

				assessment technique		T8
	(IQ3B)					
	How would the strategies of moral evaluation contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning of moral values in Religious Studies?	Enhancement of learners' moral growth	Strengthening acquisition of moral values	Teachers stated that practical tasks assessment and observation will help learners to acquire and practise moral values and this will result in morally		T1, T2, T4, T5, T6, T7, T10

				upright and disciplined learners since they will know that they are being watched.	

Table 5: Themes for research question 3

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the presentation, interpretation and analysis of data in response to the research questions posed in this study using inductive thematic analysis. This data presentation, interpretation and analysis was done for each teacher per school based on data obtained from five semi-structured interview questions. From this chapter, the following themes were generated: comprehensive assessment, holistic assessment approaches, achieving educational aims, assessing effectiveness of teaching and learning, determining the attainment of moral development, responsible citizens, no portfolio assessment, observational assessment, practical assessment, oral assessment and enhancement of learners' moral growth.

The emerging sub-themes are: knowledge of religious facts, concepts and moral development, diverse assessment methods, application and expression, achieving Religious Studies aims, evaluate the behavioural transformation of learners, lack of knowledge on portfolio assessment in Religious Studies, assessment on moral behaviour and actions, assessment on application and practice of moral values, moral judgement assessment technique, strengthening of acquisition of moral values. The generated the themes and sub-themes are discussed in detail as findings in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The findings of this study are discussed in this chapter in relation to the primary research questions. The findings are supported with the literature and theoretical framework as presented in Chapter Two. The theoretical framework, deontology, explains what choices are morally obligatory, forbidden, or permissible (Arneson, 2019). Therefore, this chapter will discuss the themes and sub-themes that were generated in the previous chapter as the findings.

It is crucial to note that, in this study, Moral Education is linked to Religious Studies since the two subjects support learners in developing and reflecting upon their values and their capacity for moral judgement. For example, the Lesotho Religious Studies curriculum stipulates that through the teaching and learning of the subject, learners should demonstrate competences in moral development by showing values such as respect, tolerance and trustworthiness (MoET, 2021).

5.2 RQ1: What are teachers' perceptions on effective assessment in Religious Studies attainments?

The first research question aimed at exploring teachers' perceptions on effective assessment in Religious Studies attainments. Under the first research question, the following themes will be discussed: comprehensive assessment, holistic assessment approaches, achieving educational aims, assessing effectiveness of teaching and learning. While the subthemes include: knowledge of religious facts, concepts and moral development, diverse assessment methods, application and expression and achieving Religious Studies aims.

5.2.1 Comprehensive knowledge and understanding

Teachers perceive effective assessment in Religious Studies as assessment of *comprehensive knowledge and understanding of Religious Studies*. Alba (2013) suggests that comprehensive assessment in Religious Studies should promote the understanding of the relevance of the faith to questions about truth, justice, peace and the meaning of life as well as fostering the values, attitudes and practices compatible with a positive response to the invitation to faith. From the participants' point of view, it is clear that assessment - to be comprehensive enough for Religious Studies - has to focus on the overall understanding of religious concepts and moral development. This links to Ilechukwa (2014) who suggests that the unique assessment of Religious Studies covers all competences to include knowledge, understanding, values and attitudes. Therefore, this gives a

link to the sub-theme that emerged: *knowledge and understanding of religious facts, concepts and moral development.*

5.2.1.1 Knowledge and understanding of religious facts, concepts and moral development

The findings further revealed that comprehensiveness of effective assessment refers to the *knowledge of religious facts and concepts as presented in the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts of Apostles and moral development.* For example, in relation to assessment of knowledge and understanding of religious facts, concepts and moral development, Teacher 7 from School D emphasised: *"Knowledge of religion and the application of moral values to their lives."* In the same manner, Teacher 9 from School C affirmed the assessment of *"Knowledge and understanding of religion through the study of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts of Apostles."*

According to Alba (2013), Religious Studies must evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of the fundamental truths of Christianity. Instead of trying to evaluate a student's spiritual response, assessment's main goal is to give decision-makers reliable and pertinent data to help them decide whether the teaching and learning process of Religious Studies is developing desired moral competences. Buchanan (2012) also emphasises that the Christian faith teaching and learning or Religious Studies has the role to play through instilling moral values of justice, obedience, respect and humility to the society and broader school context. Hence, this supports the idea that Religious Studies teachers should not only assess knowledge of the faith tradition but also attitudes and values.

The idea of incorporating moral development assessment in Religious Studies is equally highlighted by Santos and Fil (2013), who state that the most important assessment technique in Religious Studies is monitoring day-by-day learners' attitudes and values. Santos and Fil (2013) mention that teachers can assess students' attitudes and values by continually observing their behaviour and attitudes towards other social groups such as classmates, teachers, and parents. The attitudes and values component of Religious Studies, according to Buchanan (2012), focuses on encouraging students to develop greater self-awareness, understanding, appreciation, tolerance and respect for all human beings in a classroom environment and wider society. Based on this discussion, it is evident that teachers recognise the notion of effective assessment because their interpretations centre around assessing learners on all the aspects of Religious Studies.

5.2.2 Holistic assessment approaches

The findings revealed that in order to strive for effective assessment, the assessment in Religious Studies should encompass *holistic assessment approaches*. Holistic assessment, also called integrated assessment according to Akubuile (2012), focuses on the assessment of the whole work activities, rather than specific elements. When assessing a unit of competence holistically, the assessment activities integrate a number of competency aspects. Ilechukwu (2014) states that in order to tap students' attainment on a range of subject outcomes, teachers need to apply a range of assessment techniques such as: performance-based task, portfolios and observation. With the use of these various assessment tools, learners may be given the opportunity to actively participate in creating and recognising improvements in their own learning, leading to assessments that are rated as effective and holistic. Ilechuwu (2014), supported by Grant & Yonah (2013), proposes to diversify assessment methods in order to achieve effectiveness in Religious Studies evaluation process. The holistic, effective assessment therefore, as constructed in this study, includes *diverse assessment approaches* and *assessment based on application and expression*, as highlighted by the participants.

5.2.2.1 Diverse assessment approaches

This study has demonstrated that holistic approach for effective assessment involves the incorporation of *different assessment approaches such as oral test and practical assessment.* For instance, concerning the diverse assessment approaches, Teacher 5 from School B explained that the effectiveness of assessment is the one in which *"Learners write test and have practicals."* It is evident that teachers are completely aware of the need for a full range of information from various sources that is required to establish the effectiveness of assessment in Religious Studies. This relates to Ilechukwu (2014) who supports that teachers of Religious Studies currently use a range of formal and informal modes and techniques of assessment for evaluation purposes which include gathering information on performance and achievement in Religious Studies and reporting feedback to parents. Employing different assessment methods is of major importance, more particularly in Religious Studies that intends to shape students' moral behaviour. This point is supported by Abduh et al. (2018) who argue that different forms of assessment can allow all students to demonstrate what they know and can do, and, thus, ensure that the full range of objectives are addressed. Assembling evidence from a variety of sources is more likely to yield an

accurate picture of student learning. Therefore, in effective assessments, decisions concerning students' learning should be made on the basis of a convergence of information obtained from a variety of assessment sources.

5.2.2.2 Application and expression

The findings also revealed that effective assessment focuses on assessing learners on different levels of understanding which include learners' *application of knowledge, providing examples and expression of views*. For example, Teacher 6 from School C expressed the following in relation to application and expression: *"If learners are able to give out examples, life experiences and their opinions."* This interpretation of effective assessment focuses specifically on cognitive assessment as it is about learners' ability to demonstrate comprehension of what they have learned. This point was argued by Ilechukwu (2014) who says that the assessment of Religious Studies by many teachers has been limited only to religious knowledge and understanding. That is, testing students only on cognitive with little or no emphasis on the other domains of learning. However, assessment in Religious Studies is supposed to be all inclusive because attitudes and values are important for students. The assessment of only cognitive domain divorces knowledge and understanding from attitudes and values.

Assessment of Religious Studies, according to Santos and Fil (2013), is the methodical gathering and interpretation of different kinds of information about religious knowledge, related to the content of the religious tradition and learners' self-assessment of attitudes, values, and behaviour. The purpose is to define the amount or degree of change in individual students as well as to ascertain whether certain changes are occurring in the learners as a group. Thus, it is clear that the assessment should also incorporate acquisition of values and attitudes, as Grant and Yonah (2013) argue that assessment in Religious and Moral Education is based on three main dimensions or strands, namely, the beliefs, values and issues related to the practices of religious traditions.

5.2.3 Achieving educational aims

On examining the importance of effective assessment in Religious Studies, the study uncovered that the importance of effective assessment is to *achieve educational aims.* This corresponds with Lum (2012) who states that the importance of assessment is to measure student achievement and attainment of educational objectives. In doing this, assessment accomplishes a number of goals,

including finding out what students have learnt. That is, determining what learners know or what they can do. According to Hyde (2013), by providing judgement on the success of learning objectives, assessment allows feedback on the success of teaching and curricula. As a result, assessment is a useful tool in teachers' self-reflection, allowing them to improve practice. This correlates with the findings of this study which suggest that the importance of effective assessment is necessarily for *achieving aims of Religious Studies*.

5.2.3.1 Achieving Religious Studies aim

The findings have disclosed that one of the importance aspects of effective assessment in Religious Studies is to *assess the achievement of Religious Studies aims*. The findings demonstrate teachers' ability to see the link between effective assessment and the need to attain all the aims of Religious Studies. Curriculum online emphasises that the formal criteria of Religious Studies assessment is "Linking of modes and techniques of assessment to the aims of the syllabus; structuring the assessment around stated objectives; assessment that has a positive effect on teaching and learning; assessment that is valid and reliable; assessments that are fair," (Santos & Fil, 2013: 11). Teachers' views about the importance of effective assessment correspond to that understanding put forward by Alexander (2016) that effective assessment is necessary in linking the gap between the intention and effect of education. Evaluation can make the planned education possible by being a bridge between the intention and effect of education.

5.2.4 Assessing the effectiveness of teaching and learning

Another important element of effective assessment has been attributed to *assessing the effectiveness of teaching and learning*. This view is supported by Santos and Fil (2013) who argue that the ultimate aim of assessment is to provide accurate and relevant information for decision-making concerning the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Moreover, effective assessment allows educational institutions to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. By understanding students' strengths and weaknesses, targeted support and interventions can be developed to address areas that may require additional attention (Gupta, 2023). Based on the findings, it is evident teachers are aware that when learners are assessed effectively, this may provide feedback on whether the teaching and learning of Religious Studies serves its purpose or not. These findings are similar to those obtained by Barus (2017) in the study "The Implementation of Assessment Character Education Results in Secondary School," which show that the purpose

of effective assessment in Character Education is to evaluate the Character Education programme that has been accomplished. As well, this study affirms that effective assessment is important to evaluate the success of teaching and learning of Religious Studies.

5.3 RQ2: What are teachers' views on the importance of assessing moral development promoted by the teaching and learning of Religious Studies?

The second research question intended to investigate teachers' views on the importance of evaluating learners' moral development. From the second research question, the following themes and sub-themes were generated: determining the attainment of moral development and a responsible citizen. The sub-themes are: evaluating the behavioural transformation of learners and development of morally good citizens. These themes and sub-themes are further discussed.

5.3.1 Determining the attainment of moral development

The major findings of this study have unearthed that the moral assessment is necessary to *determine the achievement of learners' moral development*. Partini et al. (2018) contends that moral development cannot be evaluated using the same methods as the cognitive domain, such as by posing questions. Assessing moral development involves more than just answering questions; it also involves documenting socially relevant physical activities. Gupta (2023) also supports the view that assessing behavioural development provides a comprehensive understanding of students' growth and development during their educational journey. It enables educators, policymakers, and parents to gauge the effectiveness of moral education initiatives, interventions, and curricular approaches implemented in schools. Teachers are required to evaluate changes in their students' attitudes, values, feelings, and emotions due to the nature of assessment, which includes continuous, precise, timely, and correct feedback. Thus the findings indicated that determining the attainment of moral development can be achieved through *assessing the behavioural transformation of learners*.

5.3.1.1 Evaluating the behavioural transformation of learners

In Religious Studies, moral evaluation is very important in *evaluating the behavioural change of learners* due to the fact that one of the aims of Religious Studies is to develop morally upright learners. It is worth noting that when teachers explained the significance of moral evaluation, they kept referring to the aims of Religious Studies in moulding learners' behaviour. This shows that teachers are well informed about both the curriculum and syllabus objectives of Religious Studies.

According to National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECoL) (2020), the Religious Studies syllabus aims to equip learners with positive attitudes to social behaviour. In the same manner, curriculum and assessment policy designates Religious Studies as a subject which provides learners with religious knowledge and attitudes to promote socially and morally acceptable behaviour (MoET, 2008). For example, in relation to evaluating the behavioural transformation of learners, Teacher 1 from School A emphasised that the curriculum aim of Religious Studies is *"Developing moral behaviour of learners through the teaching of moral values."*

Alexander (2016) asserts that students who study Religious Studies are expected to show effect of this subject. Since the essential purpose of Religious Studies is to cultivate one's moral behaviour, showing how someone's behaviour has changed would be the most obvious way to discover the effectiveness of the Religious Studies programme (Lee, 2017). According to Lazar (2019), in line with the deontological ethical theory, humans have the predisposition for reasoned cognition and behaviour and, because of this capacity, humans must act morally and for the purpose of the moral law of duty. As a component of deontological ethical theory, Religious Studies recognises the ability of learners to use reason and moral principles to steer their acts in the correct path.

5.3.2 Responsible citizens

The study uncovered that moral evaluation is capable of promoting *responsible citizens*. According to Gupta (2023), moral development plays a vital role in shaping students into responsible and ethical citizens who contribute positively to society. By evaluating moral development, teachers can promote the development of qualities such as empathy, respect, and civic engagement, fostering a generation of individuals who are committed to ethical behaviour and social responsibility. Furthermore, the deontology ethical theory states that "people are morally obliged to act in accordance with certain set of principles and rules regardless of the outcomes. In religious deontology, the principles derive from divine commandments so that under religious laws, people are morally obliged not to steal, lie or cheat," (Moore, 2020: 1). Evaluation might therefore be used in a more methodical way to ascertain the moral growth of students. Students may get the outcome of a long-term, ongoing evaluation as feedback rather than a report card, which they could then evaluate to make changes. Through the outcomes of moral evaluations on the school environment, class culture, teaching techniques, and instructional methods, instructors and

students may both be directed to improve their instruction (Lee, 2017). According to Lum (2018), teaching Moral Education in the classroom effectively and evaluating student progress will have a good impact on students' behaviour. The findings of this investigation clearly showed that moral evaluation is important in *improving morally upright learners* for the promotion of *responsible citizens*.

5.3.2.1 Development of morally upright learners

The sub-theme of responsible citizens indicates that moral evaluation plays a major role in the *development of morally upright learners.* Bipoupout and Lum (2018), in their study "Evaluation of Learning in Moral Education and Pupils' Behaviour," tested the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between evaluation of learning related to moral education and pupils' behaviour. The findings verified that there is a noteworthy correlation between students' behaviour and the assessment of Moral Education-related learning. Stated differently, effective assessment practices are critical to the development of acceptable student behaviour. The success and steady progress of pupils' behaviour is assured only through constant evaluation. Hence learners should be evaluated on a daily basis to ensure a good trend in behaviour. Tchombe examined assessment and its impact on students' behaviour, as reported by Bipoupout and Lum (2018). It was found that feedback from assessment motivates pupils to behave better. When implementing behavioural theories in the classroom, the teacher fortifies the desired behaviour through positive reinforcement. Children who behave well, for instance, receive rewards. Positive penalties encourage behaviour by rewarding those who follow the rules and serve as a reminder to others of the advantages of acting in accordance with expectations. When learners' become morally upright, this will lead to responsible and good citizens.

5.4 RQ3: What are the possibilities that the emphasis could shift from cognitive assessment to moral development evaluation?

The study also investigated whether teachers use portfolio assessment when assessing learners' moral growth, and uncovered several suggestions on particular approaches of evaluating learners' moral behaviour. From the third research question, the following themes were generated: no portfolio assessment, observational assessment, practical assessment, oral assessment and enhancement of learners' moral growth. The sub-themes are: Lack of knowledge on portfolio assessment, assessment on moral behaviour and actions, assessment on application and practice of

moral values, moral judgement assessment technique and strengthening the acquisition of moral values. These themes and sub-themes are discussed in the subsequent sections.

5.4.1 No portfolio assessment

The findings of the study revealed that portfolio assessment is not currently utilised by teachers when assessing learners' moral development. All the participants in this study disclosed that *they do not use portfolio assessment*. For instance, regarding the utilisation of portfolio assessment, Teacher 2 from School A said: *"There is no portfolio assessment in Religious Studies...."* To further support this assertion, Teacher 3 from School B also stated: *"I have never heard of portfolio assessment...."*

Hanifa (2017) states that a portfolio is one of the main tools used in today's classrooms for assessment, and it plays a crucial role in giving a comprehensive assessment of students' growth. However, the findings of this study demonstrate that there is still a need to take into account teachers' knowledge of utilising portfolios as a method to evaluate students' learning. Lack of using portfolios in assessing students is supported by the study conducted by Hanifa (2017) on teachers' views on the use of portfolio assessment in secondary schools in Indonesia. Teachers could thus still be unfamiliar with this form of alternative evaluation. Additionally, Eridafithri (2015) states that teachers are still heavily influenced by traditional and standardised testing. Some teachers even lack a clear understanding of the students' works that can be utilised as a portfolio like projects. This became apparent in this study when it was discovered that *teachers do not use portfolio assessment because they lack knowledge of portfolio assessment*.

5.4.1.1 Lack of knowledge on portfolio assessment

Although portfolio assessment is prescribed in the Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy (LBECP) as the assessment tool for competencies in the affective and psychomotor (MoET, 2021), the findings uncovered that Religious Studies teachers have not put in to practice portfolio assessment when assessing learners' moral growth because teachers do know about portfolio assessment. Authors like Tangdhanakanond and Wongwanich (2012), Chere-Masopha and Mothetsi-Mothiba (2022), and Eridafithri (2015) have all revealed similar findings about teachers' lack of the necessary knowledge and abilities for successful implementation of portfolios. Thus, it is evident that the moral behaviour of learners in Religious Studies is assessed partially.

In the LBECP, a portfolio assessment is described as a profile of learners' academic history which reflects their weak and strong competencies in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. It gives learners an opportunity to reflect on their progress and growth over a period of time, rendering them accountable for their learning (MoET, 2021). Huang (2012) claims that portfolios are helpful because they allow students to track their growth over time and motivate them to pursue self-directed learning for personal empowerment. In addition to being able to reflect change, parents and other relevant individuals may also watch and provide feedback on areas of success or potential development.

5.4.2 Observational assessment

Teachers recommended several approaches to implementing moral evaluation. The findings show that one way to evaluate learners' moral behaviour is through *observational assessment* method. According to Lee (2017), observational assessment method involves directly observing students' behaviours in real-life contexts. Gupta (2023) stipulates that teachers use structured observations, behavioural checklists, or coding systems to assess the demonstration of character traits and behaviours. This approach provides objective data on students' actual behaviours and allows for the assessment of character in action. Observations can be both direct and indirect, through a checklist of a range of values the learner is expected to exhibit by demonstration of character traits and behaviours. The type of observation can be determined by the role of observers. One can be a complete observer while the other a participant observer. The premise is that observations show how committed a learner is to a value. Therefore, observation might be viewed a useful tool for assessing learners' moral development patterns. The observational assessment can be done through *observing learners, actions and behaviour*.

5.4.2. 1Assessment on behaviour and actions

Through *assessment of behaviour and actions*, teachers can evaluate if learners' behaviour has changed or not. According to Gupta (2023), direct observations provide valuable insights into students' behaviours and actions related to moral development. Observation is a more appropriate way to measure the performance of aspects of the actions (moral acting). In addition, observing learners' behaviour and actions can be conducted in various settings, such as classrooms, extracurricular activities, or community service events. Teachers can create observation checklists or coding schemes to record specific behaviours associated with character traits. If observer ratings

are employed, teachers should develop a rating scale or checklist that captures observable behaviours associated with character development. In addition, teachers should train observers on how to use the rating scale consistently and ensure inter-ratter reliability through periodic calibration exercises.

5.4.3 Practical assessment

Practical assessment is another approach of moral behaviour evaluation suggested by teachers. According to Lum (2018), the assessment process should be centred on problem solving connected to real-life scenarios in order to maximise the effectiveness of the evaluation's influence on the Moral Education teaching process. Teachers who engage their students in problem solving that mirrors real-world scenarios help them develop moral thinking, which improves behaviour. Children's moral growth will also be aided by being exposed to a variety of individuals, either directly through social interaction or indirectly through exposure to innovative ideas at school. According to Engelen et al. (2018), practical assessment is very important in all learning processes. It is recommended that emphasis be laid on what learners can do in real life with what they learn in school. When learners are placed in real life problem situations, they employ all strategies to solve the problem. It is therefore evident from the findings that learners' moral behaviour can be evaluated based on their *application and practice of moral values*.

5.4.3.1 Application and practice of moral values

It has been discovered that learners' observable moral growth can be evaluated through engaging them in practical activities where they can exhibit the acquired moral values. In their study "An Examination of the Effectiveness of a College Character Education Program," Chris and Barbara (2010) discovered that moral achievement can be measured by having students participate in a programme that is well-designed to help them demonstrate various values when interacting with others. It is claimed that this may be accomplished while being closely observed by moral tutors who will offer grades as soon as the students have completed the task at hand. In the same manner, in East Africa, Obwana (2021) states that value evaluation was historically carried out by assigning pupils practical tasks. It was expected that the students would grow in virtues like love and respect among many others. Students would be taught the virtue using a variety of techniques, such as folktales and stories about how being honest made one lucky or how being dishonest made one unlucky. Afterwards followed the assignment of tasks requiring the demonstration of virtues like

honesty. Thus, a student would either receive praise for demonstrating the value or criticism for not doing so. That is, they would be graded on their *application and practice of moral values.*

5.4.5 Oral assessment

The last method of moral evaluation proposed by the teachers is *oral assessment*. Oral assessment focuses on evaluating learners' moral judgement. The deontological ethical theory emphasises reasoning as the special ability that humans have. Since all species other than humans rely on instinct, no other animal has the same inclination for reasoned cognition (Lazar, 2019). Evaluation is therefore a catalyst to influencing the rational development of moral reasoning. According to Gupta (2023), oral assessment can be done through semi-structured or structured interviews to allow in-depth exploration of students' experiences, perspectives, and narratives related to moral development. When conducting interviews with learners, interview guides or focus group protocols that explore relevant topics, and analyse the data using qualitative analysis techniques such as thematic analysis can be employed. Probing questions can help participants reflect on specific incidents or situations that influenced their moral development. Participants proposed oral assessment in order to *evaluate learners' moral judgement*, that is, as a *moral judgement technique*.

5.4.5.1 Moral judgement technique

The findings of this study show that the assessment of learners' moral development can be done through moral judgement technique. For example, in relation to moral judgement technique, Teacher 9 from School E explained that "*learners should be given opportunity to talk not always write tests."* Therefore, oral assessment seems to be only appropriate when assessing the cognition of moral development. Gupta (2023) also proves that the moral judgment assessment method explores individuals' moral reasoning through open-ended questions and probes. It aims to understand the underlying cognitive processes and values that inform ethical decision-making. Through oral assessment with learners on moral issues, it is possible for teachers to secure evidence concerning moral interests and change in attitude which is a manifestation of value acquisition (Cho, 2015). One way to assess learners' moral judgement, according to Gupta (2023), is through interviews. The interview allows for in-depth exploration of participants' moral perspectives and provides rich qualitative data. Teachers use interview guide to cover key topics such as personal growth, ethical decision-making, social responsibility, or positive relationships. Probing questions

can help participants reflect on specific incidents or situations that influenced their character development.

5.4.6 Enhancement of learners' moral growth

This research revealed the contribution of methods of moral evaluation to the teaching and learning of moral values. Teachers seem to have positive views regarding these methods. The findings indicated that methods of moral evaluation enhance learners' moral growth. For instance, Teacher 10 from School E expressed: *"Learners will practise the moral values and this will help them to develop morally."* In relation to how methods of moral evaluation enhance learners' moral growth, Gupta (2023) states that various assessment tools have been developed to evaluate moral development in students. These include the Values in Action (VIA) Classification of Strengths, based on positive psychology, which identifies character strengths such as courage, honesty, and perseverance. The Character Growth Index (CGI) assesses character development through self-report surveys and measures traits like empathy, gratitude, and integrity. The Social Emotional Learning Assessment (SELA) evaluates social-emotional competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Amin (2006, cited byBipoupout & Lum, 2018), show that the reliability of assessment in the affective domain may be enhanced by teachers who skillfully use a variety of methodologies, including checklists, inventories, close observation, and interviews. Teachers must employ a variety of strategies to evaluate students' behaviour in a satisfactory manner. These assessment tools provide valuable insights into students' moral development but may differ in their specific focus and measurement approach. Therefore, from the findings of the study, it was discovered that methods of moral evaluation are capable of *strengthening learners' acquisition of moral values.*

5.4.6.1 Strengthening the acquisition of moral values

As mentioned above, the methods of moral evaluation will *lead to morally upright learners* due to the fact that they are being evaluated. Several empirical studies have explored the measurement of character development in high school students. For example, Jones et al. (2019) used self-report surveys and qualitative interviews to assess character strengths and virtues in high school students. They found that students reported growth in various character traits, including resilience, empathy, and leadership skills. Another study by Smith et al. (2020) employed behavioural observations and student self-assessments to measure character development in the context of service-learning

projects. The findings revealed positive changes in students' social responsibility, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings of this study based on three research questions. The findings indicate that teachers are well informed with the concept of effective assessment in Religious Studies. From the discussion, teachers defined effective assessment as assessing learners on all the objectives of Religious Studies as well as the incorporation of different strategies. The findings have also revealed that moral evaluation plays a major role in improving assessment in Religious Studies.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the findings of this study as discussed in Chapter Five. The recommendations and limitations of the study are also presented.

6.2 Conclusion

The study investigated teachers' perceptions on effective assessment in Religious Studies. The study concluded that teachers are well informed with the notion of effective assessment in Religious Studies. From the discussion, teachers perceive effective assessment as assessing learners' knowledge and understanding of religious facts and religious concepts through the study of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts of Apostles as well as learners' moral development. The findings further revealed that effective assessment comprises of holistic assessment approaches which include incorporating different assessment strategies, assessing learners on application of knowledge along with expression of views.

The importance of moral evaluation in improving assessment in Religious Studies was also explored in this study. The perceptions of teachers indicated that evaluating learners' observable moral growth plays a very significant role in determining the attainment of learners' moral development as one of the curriculum aims of Religious Studies and thus enhancing responsible citizens.

The study also investigated whether teachers use portfolio assessment in Religious Studies when assessing learners' moral behaviour. The findings showed that Religious Studies teachers do not use portfolio assessment when evaluating the moral development of learners even though the LBECP recommends the use of portfolio when assessing the affective and psychomotor competencies. Failure to use portfolio assessment has been attributed to teachers' lack of knowledge. Therefore, it is worth noting that currently, teachers do not fully assess learners' moral development.

Lastly, teachers suggested certain methods of evaluating learners' moral behaviour. Such methods include observational assessment, practical assessment and oral assessment. These methods are believed to improve assessment in Religious Studies and enhance learners' moral development.

6.2 Recommendations

The recommendations of this study extend beyond academia and are aimed at the research community, teachers, Examinations Council of Lesotho, National Curriculum Development Centre, learners and Lesotho communities.

6.2.1 Recommendations for the research community

In order to improve assessment in Religious Studies, this study recommends that future researchers examine the validity of portfolio assessment when assessing learners' moral development in Religious Studies. The study recognises the significant value research plays in advancing debates and scholarship on different curriculum issues hence regular research studies are recommended to support teaching and learning in Religious Studies.

6.2.2 Recommendations for teachers

The study highlighted that teachers lack knowledge of portfolio assessment. Therefore, this research recommends ongoing in-service training for teachers on the use of portfolio assessment and other methods of assessment aimed at assessing affective competencies. In view of the fact that teachers are the key curriculum implementers and require regular capacitation to support their work, they could also create clusters where they support one another on several issues including those related to assessment.

6.2.3 Recommendations for Examinations Council of Lesotho

The study recommends that the Examinations Council of Lesotho develop strategies that assess the moral growth of learners in order to achieve the curriculum aims of Religious Studies as well as providing guidelines on how to assess moral development competencies.

6.2.4 Recommendations for National Curriculum Development Centre

From this study, it is evident that the learners' observable moral growth is currently not assessed. As a result, the study emphasises the need for NCDC to revise the LBECP and consider incorporating qualitative methods of moral evaluation and allocating resources that will ease the implementation of such methods.

6.2.5 Recommendations for learners

Since moral evaluation enhances learners' moral development, it is recommended that learners participate in activities that foster the development of desirable character traits such as clubs and community service designed by teachers. These activities can serve as platforms for learners to develop and practise moral values such as leadership and teamwork.

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6.2.6 Recommendations for communities and Lesotho

The findings of this study demonstrate how important families and communities are to learners' moral development. Parents may encourage their children's participation in school-sponsored activities that foster moral development, model desirable character traits for their children, and have discussions with them regarding their moral development promoted by the teaching and learning of Religious Studies.

6.3 Limitations of the study

In this study, data was generated only from church-owned secondary schools, meaning that private schools that offer Religious Studies were not included. This could have meant that important information about how teachers perceive moral evaluation in various schools was missed, and as a result, the findings of the research cannot be generalised. Another limitation is that the duration of data generation was prolonged because some teachers initially agreed to participate, but when it was the actual time for interviews, they would say they were busy. Again, teachers from School C and School D were reluctant to participate in this study. Nevertheless, even though it took some time, they ultimately consented to participate after being fully informed about the purpose of the study and its ethical implications.

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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: Interview questions
Participant's information

Teacher's names: (pseudonyms)
Name of the school: (pseudonyms)
Sex: F/M:

Introductory Questions:

A) Can you tell me about your teaching of Religious Studies?

B) Can you explain to me the methods that are used to assess learners' moral development?

Research Objective 1: Teachers' Perspectives on Effective Assessment in Religious Studies:

A) Can you elaborate on your understanding of effective assessment in Religious Studies?

B) From your viewpoint, why do you think effective assessment is necessary in Religious Studies?

Research Objective 2: Teachers' Views on Assessing Moral Development in Religious Studies:

A) Why do you believe it is important to evaluate learners' moral growth basing yourself on the curriculum aims of Religious Studies?

B) What is you view on the assessment of learners' moral growth which is solely through moral reasoning?

Research Objective 3: Shifting Emphasis from Cognitive to Moral Development Evaluation:

A) Do you use portfolio assessment when assessing moral behaviour of learners and which strategies, in your opinion, should be implemented to evaluate learners' observable moral growth?

B) How could these strategies contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning of moral values in Religious Studies?

Closing Questions:

A)   Would you like to share something significant that we haven't talked about?

B)   Is there anything you would want to know?

APPENDIX B: Letter of introduction

The National University of Lesotho

Telephone: +266 22340601/3631
Fax: +266 22340000
http://www.nul.ls

P.O. Roma 180
Lesotho
Africa

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

13/11/2023

Dear Principal

A letter of introduction to undertake research

This letter serves to introduce Mosemotsana Adam (student number 201305100) – a masters student in the Faculty of Education at the National University of Lesotho (NUL). She is undertaking research on "REDIRECTING ATTENTION TOWARDS MORAL EVALUATION TO IMPROVE THE ASSESSMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS IN LESOTHO." The study requires her to interview the relevant participants at   school. Other data collection methods may also be used as the study dictates. Kindly accord the student the necessary assistance to enable her to conduct this study which has the potential to generate useful data and information in the field of education.

Your cooperation and assistance are most highly appreciated.

Sincerely

M. Makumane (PhD)
Head of Department
Language and Social Education

APPENDIX C: Letter to the Ministry of Education and Training

The Ministry of Education and Training

Senior Education Officer

Box 14

Maseru 100

Dear Sir/Madam

Request to conduct a study in Maseru secondary schools

My name is Mosemotsana Adam. I am a Master's degree student as National University of Lesotho. I wish conducting a research as part of the requirement for my master's degree. The research I wish to conduct involves: Redirecting attention towards moral evaluation to improve assessment in Religious Educational attainments in Lesotho. The purpose of the study is to examine teachers' perspectives on evaluation of learners' moral growth in the teaching and learning of Religious Education in order to achieve the curriculum aim of Religious Education. Therefore, I am writing to ask for your permission to generate data from three Maseru secondary schools.

The study requires 10 Religious Studies teachers to be interviewed through semi-structured interviews which should take 30 to 40 minutes for each participant. The interview is scheduled to occur on the campus at a time that does not conflict with classes. It is planned that the research will be undertaken from November, with a two-week timeline for completion.

The information obtained from this study will be recorded in a research report, and its findings will be utilised for publishing and presentations at academic conferences. The names of the schools will not appear in any publications, and all information submitted will be treated with the highest secrecy.

Your consent to carry out the research would be much appreciated. If you have questions or quires concerning the study, please conduct me at: 50471788 or email me at:

adammosemotsana@gmail.com

I eagerly await your response whenever it is convenient for you.

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Yours faithfully

Mosemotsana Adam

APPENDIX D: Letter to the Principal
Dear Principal

<u>Request to conduct a study at your school</u>

I am I'm writing to ask for your approval to carry out a research at your school. I am a student at National University of Lesotho studying Master of Arts in Education. I am conducting a research as a prerequisite for my master's degree. My study is entitled: Redirecting attention towards moral evaluation to improve assessment in Religious Studies attainments in Lesotho. My study aims to examine teachers' perceptions on evaluation of learners' moral growth in the teaching and learning of Religious Education in order to achieve the curriculum aim of Religious Studies.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Teachers who are interested in taking part in the study must teach Religious Studies. The interviews will take place on the campus at a time that works best for you. Once I sent the consent form to the teachers to sign, the interviews will be audio taped with their permission. It will take between thirty and forty-five minutes to complete the interviews. The research is scheduled to occur in November, with an estimated two weeks needed to complete the process.

This school has been purposefully selected on the basis of being a church school that offer Religious Education. The given information will all be used for academic reasons and maintained in the strictest of confidence. No publication that comes out of this study will include the identities of the respondents or the name of the institution.

Your consent to carry out the study at your school would be really appreciated. If you have questions or quires concerning the study, please conduct me at: 50471788 or email me at:

adammosemotsana@gmail.com

I look forward to hearing from you whenever it is convenient for you.

Yours faithfully

Mosemotsana Adam

APPENDIX E: Principal's informed consent

Please complete and submit the form below to express your interest in taking part in the study.

I, …………………………. the principal of……………………………….

Authorisation to carry out research

I consent to research being done at my school. AGREE/DISAGREE

 Signature………………………………. Date………………………………

APPENDIX F: Letter to the Teachers

Dear Religious Studies Teachers

<u>Invitation to participate in the research</u>

I'm inviting you to take part in my research. I am a student at National University of Lesotho studying Master of Arts in Education. I am conducting a research as a prerequisite for my master's degree. My study is entitled: Redirecting attention towards moral evaluation to improve assessment in Religious Studies attainments in Lesotho. The aim of my study is to examine teachers' perceptions on evaluation of learners' moral growth in the teaching and learning of Religious Education in order to achieve the curriculum aim of Religious Studies.

I would want to do a 30- to 40-minute interview with you if you would be willing to voluntarily participate in my study. You must be a Religious Studies teacher with a minimum of three years of experience in order to take part in the research. Semi-structured interviews will be used to generate data. The interviews will take place on the campus at a time that works for you. After I have given you the consent form to sign, the interviews will be audio recorded with your permission.

The given information will all be treated with the strictest of confidence and used exclusively for educational reasons. No dissertation or publication will contain your names. There are no known or expected dangers associated with taking part in this study.

Your involvement would be much valued. If you have any inquiries about the study, do contact me at: 50471788 or email me at:

adammosemotsana@gmail.com

Yours faithfully

Mosemotsana Adam

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APPENDIX G: Religious Studies teachers' informed consent

Please complete and return the following reply form to express your willingness to take part in the study.

I, …………………………the teacher of……………………………….

Consent to take part in the study

I consent to taking part in the study. AGREE/DISAGREE

Consent to be interviewed in the study.

I consent to be interviewed in the study. AGREE/DISAGREE

Consent to be audio taped.

I agree to having my audio recorded throughout this interview. AGREE/DISAGREE

I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the questions asked. AGREE/DISAGREE

I accept that neither my identity nor the name of my school will be disclosed, and that all of my information will be kept private and secure. AGREE/DISAGREE

I am aware that I can end my participation in the study at any moment. AGREE/DISAGREE

Sign_____ Date_____

APPENDIX H: Similarity index

APPENDIX I: Turnitin digital receipt