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Considering the Basotho indigenous education and school system as resources for peace-building education in Lesotho

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Lesotho faces political, economic, social, cultural, religious, institutional and interpersonal violence, a situation that prompted the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to introduce a peace-building education program. This indigenous auto-ethnography inquiry arose as the result of the investigator's realisation that the UNESCO strategy to establish peace education in Lesotho is an exclusive, narrow approach based on the formal Western education system. While UNESCO's initiative to instil a culture of peace via education is commendable considering the seriousness of the violence in Lesotho, the article contends that the approach excludes many out-of-school youth from learning about developing a culture of peace. The article also reveals some characteristics associated with the Western educational system that contribute to its inability to incorporate all eligible groups in peace-building education. Guided by the theoretical framework of critical interculturality, this article highlighted the Basotho *lebollo* education system as having the ability to extend peace-building education beyond the confines of Western schooling and education to include out-of-school adolescents. The compatibility of the *lebollo* school system with peace-building education was proved by its indigenous epistemology and pedagogy. The article recommends a nonviolent strategy devoid of colonial violence and based on mutual respect that can bring *lebollo* on board for peace-building education, as has happened in response to the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

Transdisciplinarity Contribution: This paper contributes to the broad debate that Western formal education ensnared in colonial power structures, has difficulty meeting the educational needs of the African child, despite its noble intentions. Using Basotho indigenous education system as a framework for calling for recognition of indigenous education, the paper makes the case for peacebuilding education as a potential model for indigenous education.

Keywords: Basotho; education; indigenous; interculturality; *lebollo*; peace.

Introduction

Currently, Lesotho is afflicted with multiple forms of violence, including direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. Direct violence includes behaviour that undermines life itself and/or decreases one's ability to meet basic human needs. Examples of direct violence are killing, maiming, bullying, sexual assault and emotional manipulation. On the other hand, structural violence refers to the systematic denial of access to goods, services and opportunities for some groups of society. Cultural violence represents the prevailing or prominent social norms that make direct and structural violence seem 'normal', 'just' or at least 'acceptable'.[1] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) responded to this situation in the country by introducing a peace-building education program. The UNESCO educational program aims at fostering peace, resilience and the avoidance of violent extremism. The project's main objective is to teach young people about peace, global citizenship, resilience and the avoidance of violent extremism through education. As one of the African Union's (AU's) established agenda items, the intended objective of the initiative is to eliminate all types of wars, civil disputes, gender-based violence and violent conflicts on the continent.[2]

In collaboration with the Japanese government, UNESCO held seminars for teacher educators from universities and teacher training colleges, as well as secondary school teachers, as part of the project's execution. The seminars were meant to increase teachers' ability by informing and empowering them on why and how to educate for peace. Peace education aims to examine ethical issues and transformative pedagogy and offer practical tools that encourage learners to alter the world around them. Transformative pedagogy is optimised to empower both teachers and learners.

It is intended to enable students to become introspective and critical thinkers who can make a positive contribution to their local and global societies.[2] This article wholeheartedly supports UNESCO's action, especially given the severity of the violence in Lesotho. Lesotho is currently beset with political, social, economic, cultural, religious, institutional and interpersonal violence.[3,4] However, the article argues against the current approach on two grounds: firstly, the program is focused on the formal Western schooling system. Victims and perpetrators of domestic and cultural abuse are not recognised and targeted in this way. The formal Western education system does not serve a sizable number of Basotho youth. As a result, the scope is narrow, and the impact is likely to be limited. Lesotho did, in fact, introduce free primary education in 2000 and made it mandatory with the passing of the Education Act of 2010.[5] However, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)[6] recorded a total of 3% out of school at the primary level, 14% at the lower secondary level and nearly 36% at the upper secondary level nationwide in 2021. Also, the legal term 'compulsory' appears to be ineffective. According to Lekhetho,[4] the government of Lesotho lacks the capacity to prosecute parents who do not send their children to school because of the complexities of the issue, which involves some cultural beliefs and practices. A sizable proportion of Basotho youth are not served by the formal Western education system.

Second, peace education promotes and supports a culture of peace by teaching children, youth and adults the skills of peaceful living. A culture of peace entails a set of values, attitudes, behaviours and common lifestyles characterised by respect for life and human rights, avoidance of all forms of violence and observance of the principles of peace, such as justice, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation and equality.[7] Peace-building education or education for building a culture of peace, according to Navarro-Castro and Nario-Galace,[8] serves to cultivate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in order to shape people's mindsets towards living out peace. Peace-building education, simply put, aims to create a culture that reflects human nature as peaceful people.

However, Western education has always been associated with preparing people for the labour market, rather than education for a life orientation. That is, the value of a child's education is weighed against the potential for future employment. As Western education was introduced to Africa, Africans have found it particularly appealing on account of its economic benefits and social prestige, according to Ukpabi.[9] Western education is frequently viewed as a means to an end, with the end being the acquisition of white-collar jobs that require men and women with educational credentials. In a study of the meaning of schooling in Lesotho, Dungey and Ansell[10] discovered that, while formal education is thought to contribute to moral and physical well-being, the primary purpose of schooling is usually linked to economic survival. Education is seen as a key to gaining access to formal sector jobs, which pay well and allow people to live comfortably. This means that education in Western school systems is mainly seen as a commodity that can be purchased by consumers for the purpose of building 'skill sets' to be used in the marketplace, rather than as a set of skills, attitudes and values necessary for everyday life.

The second point of the education–employment linkage adds to the first by increasing the number of dropouts and child labour. With unemployment reaching 24% in 2019,[11] affecting individuals both with and without degrees, conventional schooling has gradually lost influence. Young people are seeking alternative work and self-employment opportunities that do not require formal education. Many young boys work as herders in order to become self-employed farmers in the future.[10] According to recent media reports, a chief from the Thaba-Tseka district in Lesotho, which has one of the highest out-of-school child rates at 29% as compared to the other nine districts, visited his villages to discover why eligible children are denied access to education. Both the children and their parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the Western schooling system. They stated that their focus is on the expanding wool and mohair farming industry, as well as the booming illegal mining industry in South Africa.[12] Indeed, according to the Central Bank of Lesotho,[13] only half of college and university graduates are working, while the other half are job seekers. The majority of those employed are in the low-paying private sector, which does not recognise their college credentials.

Based on the importance of peace-building education and the above expressed doubts about Western formal education, the author proposed expanding the scope of peace-building education by incorporating indigenous Basotho educational approaches. The major goal is to use an intercultural approach in which global perspectives on a culture of peace are taught through indigenous education systems, with the goal of reaching out to out-of-school children and adults. Navarro-Castro and Nario-Galace[8] argue that peace-building education is more successful and meaningful when it is tailored to the social and cultural context of the country in which it is conducted. Indigenous education and pedagogy proposed in this article are strategies to tailor peace-building education congruent to the social and cultural context of Basotho.

A methodological guide

In pursuant of the mentioned objectives, the author used indigenous auto-ethnography. Auto-ethnography, according to Grist,[14] differs from standard ethnography on purpose. Traditional ethnographers focused on recording the mysterious 'Other' by participant observation, living in close proximity to indigenous peoples to observe and record that behaviour new to the 'civilised' world. In the majority of cases, ethnographers distorted the 'Other' by failing to comprehend the indigenous culture and knowledge systems they documented. By contrast, auto-ethnography refers to a piece of research that looks at personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (graphy).[15] In the auto-ethnographic method, the researcher retroactively and selectively writes about past experiences. The researcher

does not live through these experiences solely for research purpose; instead they are assembled using hindsight. In this article, indigenous auto-ethnography plays a particularly important role, as it allows recreation of stories that reflect cultural differences caused by colonialism within a state or ethnicity.

This indigenous auto-ethnography was written from the perspective of the 'self', that is, presenting personal experience while retaining indigenous identity. Using Anderson's auto-ethnography techniques, the following five steps were followed: '(1) complete member researcher status (CMR), (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's identity, (4) dialogue with informants beyond oneself and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis' (p. 378).[16] In the first instance, the author played the role of an opportunistic CMR, being indigenous to Basotho culture. The views imparted are essentially through long-term cultural insider experiences, not necessarily recorded for this particular article. Regarding the second aspect of analytic reflexivity, The researcher invested some meanings in Basotho cultural practices. The author entered into the discussion as the 'self' within the community of 'others'; that is, the author reflected on the meanings of cultural schooling and indigenous education as an insider cultural representative within the community of different cultures, the indigenous and Western cultures. The author maintained the third element of the visibility of the researcher's self in the text by organising the discussion through experience rather than imminent recorded information, as epiphanies in order to disqualify the 'normal'. The author upheld the fourth item of dialogue with others beyond the 'self' through triangulating self-experiences with the literature relevant to issues of discussion. The last tenet of commitment to theoretical analysis was enhanced through the use of a critical interculturality analytic framework.

Analytic and transformational framework

In this study, critical interculturality, which is compatible with the indigenous auto-ethnography, was applied to provide an analytical framework. Walsh[17] describes critical interculturality as a different perspective from relational interculturality that views cross-cultural contact as a natural process of syncretism and transculturation. Critical interculturality also contrasts with functional interculturality in that the latter is based on the acceptance of cultural differences and their incorporation into social structures, and it attempts to encourage dialogue and tolerance without examining the origins of asymmetry and sociocultural unfairness.

Critical interculturality, according to Fleuri and Fleuri,[18] concerns colonial constructs of cultural differences within a nation state or ethnicity. Its focus is not necessarily on ethnic and cultural diversity but cultural differences created as the colonial power pattern infused virtually all layers of life. Critical interculturality poses the question of why there is a cultural divide between modernity and traditional cultures within a single nation-state. According to critical interculturality, the answers to this question lie in the history of colonialism, where a colonial political system existed in which one country was conquered by a foreign power. According to Santos,[19] critical interculturality exposes the realities of colonialism, which include cultural estrangement, self-denial and the desire to become acquainted with the superior culture, while ignoring the valuable contribution that subaltern culture can make in addressing current national and global social, political and cultural formations. As an analytical instrument, critical interculturality enhances our awareness of the historical and structural nature of imperial, colonial injustices that shape modern cultural diversity.

Critical interculturality identifies collective actors that may transform asymmetrical relations by developing new channels of participation and recognition. It is an attempt to bring indigenous thinking into the space of social action. It is an ideological paradigm that guides indigenous social and political thinking and activity.[20] As Walsh[20] indicates, it is a new critical thought for divergence from dominant culture and convergence with indigenous culture as one mode of decolonisation process. Such divergence and convergence, according to Walsh,[21] entails not only relativising indigenous culture and ideas but also enacting their political and decolonial character, putting them in the proper place of their relevance with the supposed superior culture. It necessitates a radical change by engaging in a process of transforming, reconceptualising and refounding national structures and institutions in ways that put varied cultural logics, practices and ways of knowing, thinking, doing, being and living in an equitable (but still conflictive) relationship.[17]

Critical interculturality served as a springboard for this study, which began by examining the current state of Basotho indigenous schooling and education systems, specifically why they are at a nonexistent stage in preparing Basotho for current global knowledge demands, particularly knowledge on how to build a culture of peace. The intention was to locate them and bring them forward with the ultimate goal of using them in UNESCO's planned peace education program. The reasoning derives from worries about the extent and coverage of Western education, as well as its transformational approach. The other reason was that Basotho education was deemed to be better capable of attaining the required effects than Western education. All of these doubts originate from knowledge politics or the struggle for a place and value for Basotho indigenous knowledge systems, which are colonially subjugated. This article is an act of activism for the 'other' knowledge, that is, indigenous knowledge, within epistemic interculturality, with a firm trust in its ability to produce the intended outcome.

Entering the world of Basotho indigenous education

The world of Basotho indigenous education is the world of subaltern education, the education that suffered marginalisation, exclusion and disqualification. However, it

continued to survive and seek its place within the current colonial order as an alternative for most indigenous people. As early as the arrival of Western missionaries in the 1830s, Lesotho embraced a Western schooling system that was consistent with Western civilisation, culture, economics and political systems.[22] The existing indigenous cultural outlets, organisations and educational institutions were suppressed. However, they continued existing at the margins, parallel to Western formations.

The Basotho indigenous education system occurs in different settings and uses different procedures.[23] However, the author proposed to enter into the Basotho education system by aligning with UNESCO's strategy of peace education through school system. The first topic to be addressed is whether an indigenous schooling system existed prior to the entrance of Western prototype school. The answer is obviously yes, from the author's perspective as a Basotho cultural insider; there was, and still is, the existence of an indigenous Basotho schooling system in the form of *lebollo*. However, the literature is inconsistent or does not provide a straightforward 'yes' to this problem. The misunderstanding may be exacerbated by the fact that, other than *mophato*, there is no actual institution in indigenous Basotho society that is referred to as a 'school'. *Lebollo* is the term used to describe the activities at *mophato*. According to Machobane,[24] *mophato* is an initiation lodge, and *lebollo* is an initiation procedure. Therefore, *mophato* is a location where candidates, often youngsters, are initiated into the mysteries of Basotho culture and adult life. Machobane's approach is more ritualistic than educational, with an emphasis on initiation ceremonies. Also, Matobo, Makatsa and Obioha[25] depicted *lebollo* as a rite of passage from adolescence to maturity. Others, however, have categorised it as a school because of the fact that *lebollo* is active in educational activities and problems. Ngale,[26] for example, classified it as a traditional initiation school. Because the term 'initiation' is usually associated with rites of passage rather than education,[27] the author suggested referring to *mophato* and *lebollo* as the Basotho indigenous schooling system where circumcision is taught as part of health and sex education rather than performed as a rite. The author's proposal is in agreement with Letseka[28] which refers to *lebollo* as the schooling system with a systematic educational programme.

Two related characteristics are used to categorise *lebollo* as an indigenous schooling system. The first point to consider is how schooling is defined or characterised. Secondly, what is the point of schooling? In different viewpoints, the schooling system is described differently. However, in this study, the author used Goslin's[29] definition, which claims that schooling is an organised process of cultural transmission from one generation to the next. Saldana[30] adds that schooling is the official or formal method through which a society's culture is handed on to its offspring. Goslin[29] defined culture as cognitive systems, skills, beliefs and values, whereas formal or organised refers to a condition in which an activity is no longer individualised or family based, but rather community or societally based. Related to cultural transmission is the view that schooling is the process of socialising groups of children and young people on specific skills and values in a society. This socialising mechanism contributes immensely to social conformity and becomes essential glue that holds society together.[30,31]

Lebollo possesses these features, and it might be said that it symbolises the indigenous Basotho schooling system because it is institutionalised and includes a set of cultural curriculum content, cultural professional teachers and a specific period and location agreed upon. This, however, does not indicate that *lebollo* fits the standards of the Western schooling system, contrary to Matsela,[23] who says that *lebollo* qualifies as formal schooling because of its qualifying traits. Some people argue that African indigenous education should not be classified as formal and should instead be considered informal. Osaat and Asomeji,[32] for example, suggested that African indigenous education is informal in character as learning experiences are conducted orally and knowledge is stored in the heads or minds of elders. It is primarily oral and does not exist in printed form.

The author advocated engaging in formal–informal debate based on critical interculturality precepts. Santos[19] proposed the concept of the interepistemic interculturality that stems from the realisation that historical colonialism did not only include the wilful eradication of other civilisations in the process of indigenous cultural genocide. Instead, there was also a deliberate destruction of indigenous knowledge systems, which Santos[19] referred to as 'epistemicide' or the destruction of colonised populations' knowledge construction and deprivation of their modes of knowledge transmission. According to Granados-Beltrán,[33] epistemic interculturality represents 'an-other' or 'border thinking', which refers to oppositional indigenous thinking that is seeking sociohistorical structural transformation rather than acceptance or inclusion. Similarly, indigenous knowledge systems, according to Granados-Beltrán,[33] do not seek to operate as a separate paradigm outside of modern dominant structures. Rather, they enter those structures to suggest alternative thinking that affects and decolonises those hegemonic paradigms in order to shatter the cultural standardisation that underpins Western universal knowledge structures but which fails to offer comprehensive solutions to problems affecting indigenous people. Walsh[20] pointed out that while interculturality has a different rationale from colonialism, it also works outside the ancestral limits that existed prior to colonisation. Hence, one may say that Basotho indigenous education is neither formal nor informal but rather a context-specific education rooted in ancestral knowledge but applied in a modern context. As a support for education, which is context specific, Matambo[34] asserted that theories of education must reflect the society in which it occurs. There are differing social, economic, cultural and religious circumstances that require different types of education. The concept of indigenous education takes into account the cultural and scientific background of the indigenous people in the present context.

The case for peace-building through indigenous education

As stated in the introduction, several issues support the argument for peace education through the *lebollo* education system. The first step is to target a large number of out-of-school adolescents who are excluded from conventional Western education. According to Makatjane, Hlabana and Letete,[35] 10000 young men attended indigenous Basotho schools every year. While this number may include candidates with basic and tertiary Western education, Integrated Regional Information Networks News (IRIN)[36] found that the bulk of trainees attending *lebollo* schools are primary and secondary school dropouts. As reported by Liphoto,[12] the Ministry of Education and Training recorded that 825 primary school dropouts and 600 secondary school dropouts attended *lebello* schools in 2018. Malefetsane Liau, chairperson of the Council of Traditional Healers and one of the country's most well-known herbalists, noted that *lebollo* provided boys with an awareness and appreciation of their culture that the conventional schooling system could not deliver.[36] Incorporating peace education within the *lebollo* curriculum would be a responsive technique for out-of-school youngsters. The implication is that by including out-of-school youth, peace-building education would not just be an educational activity but an act of building peace by overcoming the divide between Western schooling and the indigenous schooling system. The response would be in line with the critical interculturality proposition, as Santos[19] realised that it consists of developing (whenever appropriate) new forms of cultural understanding and intercommunication that may be useful in favouring interactions and strengthening alliances among oppositional social institutions of different cultural contexts. Overcoming cultural divide through peace-building education would indeed be cherishing interculturality, which is explained by Walsh[17] to be a process of moving from an exclusionary state towards an inclusive pluricultural country that integrates different sectors of society in any social, political and cultural initiatives. Culturally inclusive peace-building education, borrowing from Walsh,[17] serves as a transition from focusing on the dominant elitist group to focusing on all members of society, and it gradually heals the scars of inequality and cultural needs, guaranteeing collective responsibility in the efforts of peace-building.

The most important point is that there are some *lebollo* elements that are compatible with peace-building education. In the first place, UNESCO[37] and Navarro-Castro and Nario-Galace[38] highlighted that building a culture of peace entails the promotion of intercultural understanding, tolerance and solidarity. Although *lebollo* is entirely a cultural institution providing ancestral-oriented education, it is always open to tolerate and work in solidarity with modern demands for the betterment of Basotho society. For example, in recognition that male circumcision reduces human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection by at least 60%, Lesotho took a dialogical initiative to involve *lebollo*, as it already incorporated circumcision into its health and sex education programs.[39] Traditional leaders representing *lebollo* seem to be thankful for the recognition that they have received for their health education and practice; as one leader noted, 'To make a new loin cloth, you use old pieces and add new ones', which suggests a need to build on old knowledge when introducing new strategies.[39] According to Bulled,[40] traditional leaders in Lesotho viewed the government approach as more empowering as it recognises and values the role of *lebollo* health education in reducing HIV infections.

Therefore, *lebollo* values the interculturality of biomedical (objectivity) and indigenous circumcision (subjectivity) health practices in the fight against HIV transmission. The acceptance of coming into an agreement with the government indicates tolerance and solidarity in *lebollo*, despite the fact that, as Bulled[40] highlighted, Western-educated elites are continually disgusted by *lebollo*. Western-educated elites see themselves as part of a rapidly modernising society, and their education status distinguishes them from others who participate in cultural ceremonies and practices. Although the *lebollo* schooling system welcomed the government's invitation, this does not imply a willingness to submit indigenous practices to the regulating institutions of Western culturally oriented elites. During conversations concerning the potential incorporation of biomedical information in *lebollo,* one traditional practitioner cautioned against 'the incursion of governmental influence into a realm where some of society's poorest and most marginalised attempt to keep a limited hold on power' (p. 87).[40] She indicated that *lebollo* graduates are those with few marketable talents and few opportunities to show power or position. As the region becomes more connected to global markets, these people will have limited access to any alternative currency that they can easily convert into coinage of the current liberal capitalist order. Subsequently, 'tradition', which the state risks devaluing further, is perceived as a finite currency to exchange for power.[40] Guilherme's[41] concept of critical interculturality supports traditional leaders' point that the existence of multiple cultures as autonomous entities, albeit heterogeneous in essence, should focus on the spaces in-between, that is, on their dialogical interaction, the elastic nature of cultural identities and the dynamics of intercultural encounters. As a result, reservations and expectations from the two dialoguing groups must be respected in this sensitive and delicate encounter. Interculturality does not necessarily imply fading into hybridisation or transculturality; rather, it denotes the establishment of critical interepistemic and decolonial interactions while acknowledging on-going struggles for social and cognitive justice. It entails reintroducing indigenous knowledge and traditions that have been rendered invisible and unheard. It pertains to capturing and articulating the knowledge, behaviours and beliefs of the population that constitute the majority in terms of numbers despite being the minority in terms of power.[41] Therefore, the viability of *lebollo* for peace-building education does not necessarily entail its annihilation or consent to subjugation but rather a dialogic approach that acknowledges *lebollo*'s ongoing colonial cultural resistance.

Lebollo schooling and peace-building education

It is advocated in this article that peace-building education be introduced using the *lebollo* pedagogy. *Lebollo* pedagogy is an indigenous Basotho pedagogy that, according to Burney's[42] definition of indigenous pedagogy, refers to a broad-based education philosophy, practice and reflection of the Other in society, life and all aspects of representation in socio-economic and political life. It is pedagogy which symbolises a program, a strategy and education that is interdependent and connected with the culture and history of the Other and the indigenous. *Lebollo* pedagogy is founded on Basotho philosophy of education, teaching and learning practice and Basotho cultural life. It reflects the planned educational activities that stem from ancestral knowledge and have the ability to meet the demands of Basotho society in the past, present and future.

Lebollo pedagogy adheres to the epistemic principles of holism and communalism.[43] Holism refers to the different elements that comprise the self, which include intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical components. Holism also refers to a method of teaching and learning that does not separate learning experiences into subject areas, as Western education does.[43] *Lebollo*'s pedagogy allows students to reflect on the four dimensions of knowledge: (1) emotional, (2) spiritual, (3) cognitive and (4) physical learning experiences. According to Maharasoa and Maharaswa[44] and Letseka,[28] instruction and learning activities at *lebollo* are aimed at developing holistic interrelated competencies such as *bohloeki* (purity), *thuto-kelello* (cognition), *makhabane* (virtues), *borapedi* (spirituality [national unity and respect for social structures]). Of course, there are other competencies, but the ones described above are more relevant to peace-building education.

Purity or cleanliness (*bohloeki*) refers to the ability to maintain mental, emotional and spiritual purity, that is, to think carefully, to be pure in heart and spirit. These skills are created via the telling of folktales.[44] Critical thinking development promotes cognitive functionality by allowing students to debate history and poems connected to the socio-economic and political lives of the society. Critical thinking is intended to improve reasoning skills for the *khotla* (a traditional judicial and parliamentary institution) deliberations. The technique is a problem-based education, in which students are required to solve problems that are representative of the community's real life environment.[44] Hard effort, respect for all, humility, perseverance, tolerance, service to one's homeland and patriotism are all emphasised in the *lebollo* curriculum. According to Maharasoa and Maharaswa,[44] there are two instructional strategies for developing healthy moral behaviour. The first is role-modelling, in which instructors are selected based on their strong moral standing in the community, as well as their substantial political, economic and social status. Students are influenced to want to be like them. Emotional intelligence skills such as tenacity, tolerance and selflessness are instilled through the deprivation technique, in which students are sometimes left stranded without basic necessities such as shelter, water and food while being expected to be even more thoughtful and vigilant.

Borapedi (spirituality) is at the heart of *lebollo* education. Students are taught the value of their indigenous belief systems and the necessity of religion in sustaining their identity and connecting them with all created beings. According to Gill,[22] the belief in the relationship between the living and the dead is important to Basotho religion, which postulates the ancestors' continuous engagement in the affairs of the living, whose physical, material and moral well-being is their concern. Students are taught how to maintain good relations with their ancestors in order to gain ancestral support. To acquire ancestral protection and blessings, the living must follow certain moral standards and undertake particular social processes (including *lebollo* itself) that allow them to achieve *botho* (fuller humanity) and *seriti* (spiritual strength). According to Maharasoa and Maharaswa,[44] safeguarding national secrets (*makunutu a sechaba*) referred to keeping *lebollo* activities secret as vital to moulding a people, distinguishing it from others through what is taught in *lebollo.* Keeping *lebollo* secrets is regarded as the highest moral norm, as it preserves Basotho identity. It protects the nation's uniqueness and the importance of what makes Basotho who they are against modern dilution and total mental colonisation.

Communalism is another epistemic assumption that underpins *lebollo* education. African communalist epistemology emphasises that people cannot achieve their human attributes on their own or by themselves. Their accomplishments are not dependent on willpower, memory or intellect, but rather on relationships with other people. Shutte[45] explained that the concept of self is not anything inside a person or one's mental characteristics or strength; it is something outside, derived from one's relationships with others and the world order. The individual can only say, 'I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am' (p. 41),[45] or 'I am related, so I am, not I think, so I am' (p. 54).[46] This expression is found in the Sesotho saying, 'motho ke motho ka batho ba babang', meaning a person is a person only through others. Consequently, *lebollo* uses a variety of instructional strategies to instil communal values in the students. The seclusion approach, according to Magesa,[47] is itself a planned psychological procedure in which students are isolated from their community in order to withstand physical and psychological constraints meant to instil a sense of collective yearning. As a result of their disengagement, the students are trapped. Their sense of belonging is snatched from them. In this approach, they are taught to desire connectedness to family and community while also being aware of the perils of individuality. Communal competencies are also developed through the pedagogy of *lebollo*. According to Maharasoa and Maharaswa,[44] there is continuous integrated learning and assessment meant to identify each person's strengths and weaknesses. The term 'assessment'

refers to the process of describing the areas in which students best display their abilities. The students are assigned names associated with their talents and skills (a form of specialisation), which they must demonstrate in the community after completion of training. Examples are *Lenepa* (the exact one), *Leteba* (the one who goes in depth) and *Letsitsa* (the stable one). *Lebollo* graduates possess a clear sense of social responsibility aligned to their area of specialisation.[44]

In light of this Basotho philosophy of education, it is clear that *lebollo* pedagogical approaches and international peace-building education are inextricably linked. Starting with holistic pedagogy, it is clear that authors in peace-building education such as Mondal and Ghanta,[48] Singh[49] and UNESCO[50] appeared to follow the definition of peace education offered by Schmidt and Friedman[51] that 'peace education is holistic'. It emphasised the physical, emotional, intellectual and social development of children within a system of values based on the traditional human values. Schmidt and Friedman's holistic approach to peace education leaves out the element of spirituality, but Magro[52] argued that for a comprehensive, transformative peace-building education, learning cannot be compartmentalised and viewed solely from a cognitive perspective but must include a spiritual dimension. Learning, from a spiritual standpoint, does not merely concern the intellect, but all aspects of human existence, including the physical, emotional, aesthetic and spiritual. Meyerhof[53] defined spirituality as a dynamic process of consciousness and as a path of evolution which brings humans closer to themselves, the planet, their larger cosmos and the eternal source of all that is. According to Meyerhof,[53] tapping into the spiritual dimension through peace education allows people to feel connected, interconnected and aligned with all humanity, animals, nature, economy and cosmos, leading to ethical, holistic and responsible thinking and acting beyond all personal, national, ethical or religious boundaries.

Lebollo's communalist approach to teaching and learning appears to be replicated in UNESCO's conventional peace-building education. Communalism is synonymous with *botho* in Sesotho and *ubuntu* in Nguni. Swanson[54] asserted that *ubuntu* is an expression of the philosophy that an individual's strength comes from community support and that dignity is achieved as a result of openness, empathy, generosity and commitment, all of which foster a journey towards becoming human. According to Swanson,[54] *ubuntu* epistemology is a mode of knowing that encourages a path towards becoming human in a community of humans. It is an indigenous philosophy of ways of knowing (epistemology) and being (ontology). The African epistemology of *ubuntu* focuses on human relations by addressing people's moral and spiritual conceptions of what it means to be human and to have a relationship with the other. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization[1] affirmed *ubuntu* pedagogy as a learning philosophy that may lead to the development of interconnectedness and interdependence among humans. The *ubuntu* educational approach, according to UNESCO, teaches peace values and virtues such as compassion, friendliness, humaneness, sharing, respect and caring, which lead to more descriptive terms of human action such as empathy, hospitality, dignity, harmony, humility, forgiveness, responsibility, order, understanding, helping and peace creation.

Although *lebollo* and conventional peace education have a meeting point, this does not mean that the two are identical or that one is submitting to another. As Monyela[55] pointed out, in the *lebollo* education system, peace competencies are cultivated through torture, corporal punishment and inflicted sacrifices. For example, trainees undergo physical training to overcome difficulties and pain in order to cultivate courage, endurance, perseverance and obedience. Maharsoa and Maharaswa[44] further added that students at *lebollo* are often deprived of basic needs such as food, water, sleep and affection, while they have to stay focused on the cause and think strategically about what needs to be done. Additionally, Bullied[39] concurred that students at the *lebollo* school are subjected to physical hardships, including nakedness in the winter, beatings, starvation, torture and harassment and suffering the pain and complications associated with circumcision surgery. In contrast, mainstream peace-building education is said to be supported by a peaceful, safe and welcoming learning environment. According to UNESCO,[2] factors that threaten a safe learning environment include those related to physical safety, such as corporal punishment; those related to emotional safety, such as bullying and manipulation; those related to environmental safety, such as properly constructed schools, attacks, conflicts and natural disasters; cognitive safety threats, such as malnutrition and indoctrination; and spirituality safety threats, such as a lack of spaces for silence and reflection. These factors are present in *lebollo*, but UNESCO views them as incompatible with peace-building education.

However, as previously indicated, the meeting point does not always refer to the sameness, but to the sameness in difference. Drawing on interculturality theory, Walsh[20] warned that the goal of indigenous pedagogy is to strengthen and position the features of other epistemological logic, logic that is not always based on equality among education systems. It is not intended to bring indigenous education up to the level of popularity of Westernised schooling or to open up Westernised schooling to include indigenous education systems. Dr Letsie, a Western-educated doctor and proponent of *lebollo*, underlined this argument at a consultation forum on male circumcision and HIV prevention hosted by the Government of Lesotho in 2006. Letsie argued that, while traditionalists welcome the government's acknowledgement of *lebollo*'s contribution to HIV prevention, *lebollo* should not be confused with mainstream HIV medical male circumcision (MMC). Letsie remarked that, while they are willing to adopt the Ministry of Health's proposed safe operation, *lebollo* activities remain secret, and that concealment has been and continues to be an important component of the liberation struggle against colonialism.[39] Indeed, as a school and cultural institution, *lebollo* serves as a base for colonial

resistance. During colonialism, Emile Ronald, a colonial government official in Lesotho, designated *lebollo* as a centre of colonial resistance in a report on the status of administration. According to Rolland:

> [*T*]he rules and character of this institution, as well as its symbolic language understood only by the initiated, render it particularly fit to be the means of a secret and conspiracy, and as long as it exists it will form a dead barrier to all improvements, and form a dangerous engine capable of being set against the government … This institution should be at once put down by proclamation, as a custom tending to immorality and dangerous to good governance … This silly distinction conferred by [*lebollo*] will thereby disappear, and the ground taken away for jeer, for which the black man in his own estimation considers himself to be superior to white.[56] (p. 135)

Identifying *lebollo* as a cultural entry point for mainstream peace-building education necessitates taking into account the reality that the two are distinct, one from hegemonic culture and the other from resistance culture. *Lebollo*'s continued resistance is evidence that internal colonialism has made subservient the Basotho and their indigenous school system within their own country. Therefore, mainstreaming peace education into indigenous school systems requires a very conscious approach. Based on their experience of Australian schools, Biemann and Townsend-Cross[57] warned that indigenous systems of education are often used to achieve mainstream educational goals. They are often subsumed into the canon of established Western parameters, which result in them being dismembered and reassembled to fit into the Western paradigm. In the view of Biermann and Townsend-Cross,[57] this strategy is in fact structural violence, as it introduces indigenous education in a manner that caters to the interests of the Western educational system while maintaining the methodological and conceptual parameters of the Western educational system. In order to teach peace-building through *lebollo*, it is prudent to explore the opportunities offered by critical interculturality. As Walsh[17] argues, critical interculturality demands a dramatic shift in the prevailing order, which is the foundation of Western modernity, as well as the continuation of colonial power. It develops a conceptual understanding of the lived legacies of colonisation, oppression, exclusion and colonial difference, as well as the manifestation of these legacies in social structures and institutions, including education. Accordingly, it strives to reform, reconceptualise and reimagine systems and institutions in ways that bring contradictory, different cultural logics, practices and ways of thinking, acting and living into balance. Interculturality, in this view, is an ongoing and active process of negotiation and interaction that does not eradicate difference. Instead, it aims to foster new understandings, coexistences, solidarities and joint efforts between communities.[17]

While *lebollo* maintains its stance of colonial resistance, it also engages in the decolonisation process of creating new possibilities for new social orders founded on peaceful principles of life, fulfilling for all. As Biermann and Townsend-Cross[57] presupposes, decolonisation implies more than 'making up' or 'getting along' but a serious reconsideration of the totality of relationships to other. Decolonisation involves profound transformations of self, community and social institutions. It means dismantling colonial constructions of differences while reimagining and rebuilding practices and institutions for the betterment of all. Considering the need for *lebollo* to be transformed and become an urgent of transformation, at HIV and AIDS MMC consultation, Dr Letsie (a self-claimed custodian of *lebollo*) noted that *lebollo* was part of the liberation struggle against colonialism and that this struggle could be reoriented for liberation against the HIV scourge. Dr Letsie argued that if *lebollo* were to be incorporated into the mainstream HIV prevention, it would have to be purged of certain elements and be modified to conform to the 21st-century requirements.[39] This means that the transformation of *lebollo* for peace education should come from within rather than being imposed from without in order to conform to Western peace-building education, thus maintaining colonial policy.

Conclusion

This article proposes expanding peace-building education beyond the formal schooling system to encompass indigenous education, primarily *lebollo* education. *Lebollo* is identified as an ideal for expanding peace-building education in Lesotho. Those involved in peace-building education should seek ways to work with the administrative bodies that oversee the nation's *lebollo* education system, such as the traditional leaders (*marena*), the high-ranking members of the National Council of Culture and Heritage (*Lekhotla la Mekhoa le Meetlo*, LMM), traditional healers (*lingaka tsa Sesotho*) and the National Initiation School Committee. The government, as the principal stakeholder, should encourage dialogue in order to establish a peaceful framework for the teaching and learning of peace in the *lebollo* school system. Three issues may hinder the government from leading the charge to introduce *lebollo* into the public space. In the first place, cooperation with *lebollo* instructors and traditional healers could indicate that the Lesotho government supports *lebollo*. For years, the Lesotho government has distanced itself from cultural rituals such as *lebollo* as a means of developing Lesotho into a Christian, democratic and modern nation. Secondly, *lebollo* faces criticism from various social groups, particularly faith-based organisations such as World Vision, which is vociferous in its opposition to *lebollo,* accusing it of increasing school dropouts and child marriage. Thirdly, in 2004, the government attempted a top-down initiative through legislation to regulate and institutionalise *lebollo.* The motion was withdrawn even before it could be presented to Parliament. Members of parliament who attended *lebollo* feared that discussing delicate Basotho culture with people who opposed it would betray it (in other words, to betray the resistance to colonialism). Nonetheless, a nonviolent strategy devoid of colonial violence and based on mutual respect can bring *lebollo* on board for peace-building education, just as it happened in response to the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

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