



# Exploring the Viability of Team Teaching as a Solution to Enhance the Teaching and Learning of Religious Education in Lesotho Secondary Schools

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## ABSTRACT:

There is widespread acceptance of the numerous benefits that team teaching presents. It encourages teachers to blend their own abilities and knowledge, resulting in a synergistic impact that can lead to a more thorough comprehension of a subject. However, nothing is known about the effectiveness of this strategy for improving Religious Education teaching and learning in Lesotho secondary schools. This study employed a qualitative case study supported by Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory to investigate the feasibility of team teaching in Lesotho religious education classrooms. Semi-structured interviews were employed to get meaningful data. Purposive sampling was used to pick six religious education instructors, one from each six selected in the Northern Religious Education Association of Lesotho. The data acquired from interviews was analysed using hermeneutic phenomenological analysis, and the following findings emerged: there is a wide range of collaboration among instructors, with beneficial outcomes such as the sharing of knowledge and greater understanding of religious education issues. However, some educators are still inexperienced with team teaching, inconsistent teamwork, and scheduling restrictions, emphasising the necessity for trainings. The study suggests that specialised professional development programmes, resource allocation, and a collaborative culture make team teaching a feasible option.

Keywords: team teaching, viability, religious education, teaching, learning

## 1. Introduction

While talking about education and waste management in any sections of the society, the role that every science teacher can play in providing waste related education is pivotal compared to other subject teachers (Holbrook, 2009). Education is a tool, that can be used to create societal level awareness on environmental problems through the formal education system (Akinbote, 2007; Dung et al., 2017; Holbrook, 2009). Effective and efficient waste management is an essential part of sustainable development goals, creating awareness on waste issues, can be best done in schools (Morrissy & Browne, 2004). Despite, considerable amount of attention environmental issues receives from the world leaders, it's often been a centre of discussion and debate for decades (Detraz, 2017). Therefore, it is imperative to study science teacher's attitudes towards SWMR in terms of belief, concern, and practice.

Bhutan, a tiny kingdom nestled in the Himalayas is not an exception to this man-made predicament and the environmental problems which are caused by humans (Desa et al., 2011).

The recent study conducted by (National Statistics Bureau [NSB], 2019) of waste besides households, commercial units, health centres, and offices. "In total, institutes generate around 5,400 kgs of wastes a day compared to what industries generate (5,719) kgs daily" (p. XI). The composition of waste generated from institutes is shown in Figure 1. The study further revealed that more than services. In Bhutan, the NSB (2019, p.1) through their National Waste Inventory Survey had shown that "Waste management is one of the prevailing challenges in governance that have multi-fold implications on environmental, economic and social themes."

## 2. Literature Review

Religious education (RE) is critical in shaping learners' moral and ethical underpinnings, resulting in well-rounded students. In Lesotho secondary schools, RE is responsible for not just offering religious knowledge but also fostering a range of skills, values, and attitudes to meet current concerns (Ministry of Education and Training [MoET], 2020). It is essential to note that the pedagogy of current RE education differs from the traditional approaches that were prevalent in the curriculum prior to the implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) of 2009 (MoET, 2009). Learning process and

are adjusted to each learner's specific educational demands (MoET, 2021). Religious education in CAP, 2009 and currently in Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy (LBECP), 2021, emphasise learner-centred approaches which engages learners actively in their learning process and are tailored to meet learners' unique educational needs (Kurata, 2023a; MoET, 2021). This is sensible given that the educational world of the twenty-first century necessitates new techniques to address various requirements of students, such as the development of a wide range of skills that will enable students thrive in this world. This project aims to investigate the feasibility of team teaching as an avenue to enhancing Religious Education teaching and learning in Lesotho secondary schools. Team teaching is the collaborative work of two or more teachers who organise, present, and assess students' learning experiences in order to establish a more participatory learning environment (Goetz, 2000; Shumway et al., 2006).

Team teaching, with its emphasis on collaboration and shared responsibility, has drawn global attention as a technique of enriching the educational experience while simultaneously addressing the issues associated with traditional teaching approaches. In Finland, the benefits of team teaching are recognised, and attitudes towards it as a pedagogical strategy are favourable. Gono and de Moraes (2023) found that team teaching increases motivation and deep engagement in the learning process. In Nigeria, Kamai and Badaki (2012) claim that collaborative teaching is responsible for enhanced achievement among learners. In Lesotho's secondary school system, teaching and learning supports more innovative pedagogical approaches that are inclusive and accommodate to the varied learning styles and demands of students and team teaching is included (Kurata, 2023a). Furthermore, the social sciences performance analysis for the 2024 grade 11 final exams advised joint scheming and testing (JST). This collaborative approach resembles team teaching, which has been touted as a remedy for the disappointing results in social sciences, particularly religious education, where 68% of candidates failed (Examinations Council of Lesotho [ECOL], 2024). It is therefore necessary to investigate whether team teaching, as suggested could possibly enhance the efficacy of religious instruction in secondary schools.

The motivation for investigating team teaching in the context of religious education in Lesotho centres around an understanding of multiple benefits it provides. Team teaching enables teachers to combine their own abilities and knowledge, resulting in an additive effect that can lead to a more complete understanding of religious themes. Furthermore, team teaching has the ability to create an inclusive and participatory learning environment by encouraging active student interaction and collaborative problem solving (Drelick et al., 2023; Simon et al., 2020; Tajino et al., 2016). The 2023 social sciences final examination analysis labelled religious education's performance as poor, with a pass rate of 42% (ECOL, 2024) and suggested team-teaching as one of the student-teacher support strategies to improve the teaching and learning of social sciences, including religion. Therefore, there is a need for examining the viability of team teaching in Lesotho's religious education classrooms.

There is an increasing body of literature on team teaching worldwide (Kamai & Badaki, 2012; Saloviita & Takala, 2010; Gono & de Moraes, 2023). There is an important discrepancy in understanding its relevance and influence in Lesotho's secondary schools, notably in the field of religious education. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the practicality of team teaching and its potential to improve teaching and learning experiences in the context of Religious Education. The study's findings are expected to provide valuable insights into the feasibility and benefits of implementing team teaching strategies in Lesotho's secondary schools, contributing to the country's ongoing efforts to improve education quality.

### **Research question**

1. How does team teaching contribute to enhancing teaching methodologies and improving learning outcomes in Religious Education within Lesotho secondary schools?
2. What are the perceived advantages and challenges in the implementation of team teaching for enhancing the teaching and learning of Religious Education within Lesotho secondary schools?
3. What are the identified professional development needs of teachers engaged in team teaching in Religious Education within Lesotho secondary schools?

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## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 The underpinning theory**

This study utilises Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. The Social Cognitive Theory stresses the role of observational learning, modelling, and social contact in altering people's behaviours and viewpoints. In the context of team teaching in Lesotho secondary religious education, this idea proposes that religious education teachers learn not only via direct experiences, but also by observing and interacting with their peers. Observational learning is a key idea in Social Cognitive Theory, which states that teachers acquire their perspectives on team teaching by observing experienced colleagues or peers (Barni, 2019). Positive modelling and successful implementations act as inspiration, affecting their attitudes about the efficacy of team teaching in religious education. The social aspect of learning, another component of the Social Cognitive Theory, highlights the importance of interactions with other teachers, administrators, and support staff (Algahtani, 2017; Zhou and Brown, 2015). Self-efficacy, which is a belief in one's ability to succeed in a specific situation, is another concept of this theory and is particularly relevant in the context of team teaching. This means that religious education teachers who perceive themselves as capable and confident in implementing team teaching are more likely to hold positive perspectives on its effectiveness (Pizana, 2022).

## 2.2 *The concept of team teaching*

Team teaching is an instructional strategy that involves the collaborative effort of multiple teachers to plan, deliver, and assess students' learning experiences (Goetz, 2000). This instructional practice, known by various terms such as co-teaching, collaborative teaching, and cooperative teaching, enhances the learning environment by leveraging the collective expertise and skills of multiple teachers. Despite its advantages, team teaching presents challenges such as the need for effective planning and seamless teamwork (Grofcikova & Trníková, 2022). While teachers play a central role in team teaching, some argue that students are equally vital, as they learn not only from teachers but also from their peers (Allwright, 2005). This inclusive perspective takes into account all participants in a lesson, rather than solely focusing on teachers (Tajino et al., 2016). Different forms of team teaching exist, including parallel teaching, station teaching, alternative teaching, one teach/one assist, and one teach/one observe (Goetz, 2000). Sharon (1997) identifies alternative models such as One Group, Two Groups with the same content, Two Groups with alternative information, Multiple Groups with varying content, and One Group with two teachers teaching the same content. Cook and Friend (1995) categorize effective co-teaching models as one teach/one assist (or drift), station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and team teaching. These models offer diverse approaches to collaborative instruction, each contributing unique benefits to the learning experience.

### (a) **Team teaching**

The team teaching strategy, often known as "tag team teaching" or having "one brain in two bodies," involves both teachers being present in the classroom at the same time but taking turns teaching the entire class (Jang, 2006). In religious education classes, both teachers offer the same teaching at the same time, without regard for who teaches which portion of the course. They may change roles during the session or at other stages in the curriculum (Kamai & Badaki, 2012). This method has advantages such as giving both teachers an active instructional role, permitting them to contribute their skills and teaching styles to create a dynamic learning environment for students (Gono & Moraes, 2022). However, team teaching has obstacles, including being demanding for teachers in terms of the time and trust required to build a working relationship that values each teacher equally in the classroom (Paradilla, 2023).

### (b) **Parallel teaching**

Team teaching, often known as "tag team teaching" or having "one brain in two bodies," involves both teachers being present in the classroom at the same time but taking turns teaching the entire class (Jang, 2006). In religious education classes, both teachers offer the same teaching at the same time, without consideration for who teaches which portion of the course. They may change roles during the session or at other stages in the curriculum (Kamai & Badaki, 2012). This method has advantages such as giving both teachers an active instructional role, allowing them to contribute their skills and teaching styles to create a dynamic learning environment for students (Gono & Moraes, 2022). However, team teaching has obstacles, including being demanding for teachers in terms of time and trust required to build a working relationship that values each teacher equally in the classroom (Paradilla, 2023).

### (c) **Station teaching**

Station teaching involves organising multiple stations or learning centres, each directed by a teacher, to create a learning environment in the classroom. Students rotate among these stations to obtain a variety of instructional styles and activities (Aparecida et al. 2022). This approach involves splitting the class into multiple groups and delivering diverse learning experiences at each station to ensure a thorough understanding of the content (Shumway et al., 2006). As an illustration, in a religious education class, stations can be used to investigate a religious subject from numerous angles. Co-teachers work together to prepare and teach in-depth concepts that are consistent with the overall class objective (Alacapinar & Uysal, 2020). Learning stations are deliberately placed throughout the classroom to offer a well-balanced and engaging learning environment.

Station teaching has several advantages, including permitting both teachers to play an active instructional role, the flexibility to tailor instruction to the specific needs of each group through flexible grouping, a lower student-teacher ratio, boosted engagement among learners through station rotations, opportunities for independent student engagement with the content, and efficient material coverage (Aparecida et al., 2022). However, it poses some challenges, such as the need for extensive material planning and preparation, the risk of students not progressing at the same pace and missing stations, potential noise and distraction issues, and the need for clear expectations during independent work time to ensure effectiveness (Gordon-Messer, 2022).

### (d) **Alternative teaching**

Alternative teaching comprises a single teacher teaching the primary lesson to the majority of the class while the second teacher teaches an alternate or modified version of the lesson to a lesser percentage of pupils (Paradilla, 2023). This method, often known as "big group/small group" instruction, entails forming small groups based on students' learning needs. Collaborating teachers must analyse student data to identify those who require assistance in filling knowledge gaps, remediation, or faster learning due to prior knowledge or mastery of topic from the large group session. Furthermore, alternative teaching has a reduced student-teacher ratio (De Backer et al., 2023), helps problematic students without singling them out, and allows for re-teaching, review, and pre-teaching (Tajino et al., 2016). However, successful adoption of alternative teaching necessitates robust data collection for appropriate student grouping and may lead to self-consciousness among students in small groups (Mason et al., 1993). Careful planning is essential to ensure that all students receive the necessary instruction without missing out on material covered in the large group setting.

### (e) **One teach, one assist**

The "one teach, one assist" approach of co-teaching involves one instructor delivering a full group lesson while the other teacher walks around to assist individual students. This technique is sometimes known as "one teach, one support," in which the assisting teacher provides additional learning or behaviour management support. Post-lesson debriefing is critical for identifying students who need additional assistance, understanding the nature of that assistance, and pinpointing areas where each student failed (Drelick et al., 2023). This strategy provides ongoing teaching by one teacher while offering real-time support to pupils in need (Drelick et al., 2023) and excellent classroom management using proximity to keep learners on topic. It also provides opportunity for novice teachers to observe experienced colleagues and improves overall classroom management (Abdulkabiroglu et al., 2022).

However, this approach can lead to children assuming that one teacher is completely responsible for behaviour management, implying unbalanced authority between teachers. It can also create unreasonable expectations of immediate one-on-one support (Saclarides, 2023). Effective implementation necessitates careful planning to ensure the supporting teacher's efficient utilisation, and it may present challenges when balancing teaching roles, potentially leaving one teacher feeling more like an assistant. Building a solid relationship with your co-teacher and discussing when to switch responsibilities could assist you negotiate those challenges and ensuring that both teachers have opportunity to teach curriculum and give individual student support (Drelick et al., 2023).

#### **(f) One teaches, one observes**

In a "one teach, one observe" setting, one teacher serves as the primary instructor, while the other is simply observing students' learning and collecting data. The instructing teacher is at the front of the room teaching all the students, while the other teacher is stationed somewhere inconspicuous to make observations (Cook & McDuffie-Landrum, 2020). This model could help see which students need additional help. It could also assist in deciding what co-teaching model may be used next to address any identified needs. However, it can create a dynamic in which students see one teacher as the "real" teacher, potentially impacting the co-teaching partnership (Husna & Desstya, 2022). The limited interaction between co-teachers may make it challenging to establish a robust collaborative relationship. Moreover, relying solely on the "one teach, one observe" model may miss out on instructional opportunities that could arise in a more interactive co-taught classroom environment (Drelick, 2023).

### ***2.3 Benefits and Challenges of Team Teaching***

Team teaching in the field of religious education has various benefits for building a deeper knowledge of religious themes. Brookfield (2015) emphasised teachers' collaborative participation in lesson preparation and evaluation as a clear example of critical conversation in which instructors bring varied viewpoints and expertise to the learning environment. This collaboration has the potential of enhancing pupil comprehension of religious education subjects. According to Gano and Moraes (2023), team teaching exposes students to a diversity of instructional techniques, which accommodates to individual learning preferences while boosting overall engagement. According to their reasoning, 21st-century teaching rejects single-voice benchmarking and instead requires various perspectives (teachers and students). This cooperation between co-teachers might generate an environment conducive to critical discussions, encouraging students to explore religious topics from various angles and nurtures an inclusive learning environment.

Finally, co-teachers continually produce material and social resources that enable new forms of subsequent agency. Co-teachers use physical, social, and meaning-making resources in synchronised and coordinated ways (Roth et al., 2005). These benefits necessitate more research into their application in religious education instruction to improve learning results.

However, there are certain challenges and potential consequences when employing team teaching. Coordination and communication among co-teachers require careful planning to avoid anomalies in content delivery and assessment (Bolton, 2021). Balancing workload and responsibilities among team members can be difficult, and differences in teaching perspectives might occur, affecting the coherence of the instructional method. Furthermore, logistical challenges such as scheduling conflicts resource allocation, can pose hurdles to the seamless execution of team teaching models (New South Wales Department of Education, 2021). Little (1990) asked why collaboration has been mostly overlooked in schools. One of the factors contributing to this is that in many schools, possibilities for teacher collaboration are restricted, and communication is informal and sporadic, despite instructors' belief that working with colleagues could enhance their teaching.

To address these issues and optimise the benefits of collaborative teaching in religious studies, educators must prioritise excellent communication and establish clear roles and responsibilities. Professional development opportunities focusing on collaborative teaching approaches can help teachers negotiate possible issues and enable a smooth deployment of team teaching in religious education settings. Furthermore, continuing support systems and regular evaluations can help to refine the collaborative process, allowing teachers to continuously adapt and optimize their team teaching practices for the benefit of student learning outcomes (Bolton, 2021).

### ***2.4 Teacher Training and Support***

Effective team teaching in religious education requires comprehensive teacher training programmes and activities (Bolton, 2021). These programmes should focus on educating educators with the necessary skills and methods for collaborating effectively in a team teaching environment. Workshops and seminars can provide insights into efficient communication, coordination, and lesson planning in a collaborative setting. Furthermore, training sessions should address the integration of various teaching styles and approaches to ensure that students have a cohesive and rewarding learning experience (Purwanto & Saepudin, 2023; Syamsudin et al., 2023). Highlighting the various intricacies and problems associated with team teaching in religious education is critical because it allows teachers to negotiate the unique characteristics of this subject area while working cooperatively. Teachers involved in team teaching of religious education gain considerable benefits from a robust support system and access to relevant resources.

Establishing mentorship programmes or peer support networks allows teachers to share their experiences, seek advice, and collaborate to improve their team teaching practices (Downer et al., 2011; Knight et al., 2012). Furthermore, having a repository of instructional materials, lesson plans, and evaluation tools designed specifically for team teaching in religious education may assist educators prepare more efficiently. Administrative support for scheduling, classroom arrangements, and logistical concerns is also required to ensure the successful implementation of team teaching initiatives (Jang, 2006). Recognising the value of ongoing professional development, schools and educational institutions should provide ongoing support to teachers involved in team teaching religious education, ensuring they have the tools and encouragement they need to succeed in collaborative teaching endeavours.

### 2.5 Policy implications

Policies have a considerable impact on the educational landscape, instructional styles, and the level of support for collaborative approaches. Lesotho's Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2016-2026 recognises international and regional mandates such as the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 4, alongside regional mandates such as the Southern African Development Community Secretariat's (SADC) Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030 (MoET, 2016). It is critical to note that these organisations prioritise ensuring quality education for all, which Lesotho also supports through (ESP) 2016-2026 (SADC, 2020; UNESCO, 2017).

In addition, Lesotho produced the new Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy (LBCEP), 2021, which emphasises the use of learner-centered pedagogies that engage learners actively to develop 21st-century skills. Undeniably, team teaching, with its emphasis on promoting collaboration between instructors and students for the development of essential skills, has the potential to satisfy the mandate of the LBCEP of 2021. In favour of the new LBCEP 2021, ECoL (2024) stressed that it is critical to provide instructors with a variety of pedagogical strategies and ways to combat low performance in social sciences, including religious education. In this regard, it is critical to analyse Lesotho's current educational policies to see if they support or hinder the adoption of team teaching in religious education. This is because policies that provide flexibility, collaboration, and professional development opportunities are more likely to facilitate the effective incorporation of team teaching methods, whereas rigid and strict curriculum guidelines may pose obstacles to the effective implementation of collaborative teaching in the context of religious studies (New South Wales Department of Education, 2021).

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1. Research Design

The research follows the interpretivism research paradigm, which holds that knowledge cannot be generated from a single reality (Research Methodology, 2016). Mokotso (2017) contends that interpretivists believe in a relativist ontology in which reality is subjective. This paradigm was chosen to study secondary religious education teachers' perspectives on the practicality of team teaching for enhanced teaching and learning, as it allows for a more in-depth knowledge of a phenomenon in its context before generalising to the entire population.

### 3.2. Participants

Purposive sampling was used to choose schools from the Northern region, which is noted for its diversity. This strategy enables strategic selection based on factors relevant to the research objective, resulting in focused data collection (Creswell, 2013). To achieve thorough and rich data collection, schools and teachers were selected based on data saturation and variation principles (Kurata, 2023b; Mokotso, 2017).

Label	Age	Sex	Qualification	District
T1	55	M	Dip. Ed	Leribe
T2	50	M	Dip. Ed	ButhaButhe
T3	37	F	B. Ed	Mokhotlong
T4	45	F	B. Ed	ThabaTseka
T5	30	M	B. Ed	Maseru
T6	25	F	Dip. Ed	Berea

Data analysis comprises hermeneutic phenomenological analysis (HPA), an inductive procedure that takes into account participants' various backgrounds in order to properly interpret the phenomena (Mokotso, 2017). The researcher anticipates many participant perspectives in order to properly comprehend the topic and uncover themes and patterns in the acquired data.

The study focused on ethical considerations. Measures such as maintaining anonymity by disassociating names and roles from responses during coding were implemented. Participants were informed about the research to avoid deception or exploitation (Cohen et al., 2007; Mokotso, 2017).

### 3.3. Instruments

The study's data collection method is semi-structured interviews. According to Kurata (2023b), semi-structured interviews involve asking a few planned questions but also allowing for spontaneous questioning, building a relationship between the researcher and participants in order to examine their

perspectives. This strategy promotes the spontaneous exploration of relevant topics (Mokati & Kurata, 2024; Mokotso, 2017), providing a deeper insight into teachers' perspectives on team teaching in religious education.

### ***Findings and discussions***

This section presents the findings and discussions obtained from the semi-structured interview that were administered over six Lesotho secondary religious education teachers. The findings presented here aligns with the three objectives of the study being: (1) How does team teaching help teachers teach better and make students learn more in Religious Education in Lesotho secondary schools? (2) What are the good things and hard parts of using team teaching to make Religious Education better in Lesotho secondary schools? (3) What do teachers need to learn more about to work well in teams for Religious Education in Lesotho secondary schools? Notably, teachers' responses are categorized based of the questions that address each objective.

Research Question 1: How does team teaching help teachers teach better and make students learn more in Religious Education in Lesotho secondary schools?

#### **(a) Can you talk about your experience working with other teachers in Religious Education?**

The initial question explored teachers' experiences in collaborating with others. Teachers expressed varying levels of collaboration, with some emphasizing the benefits of learning from their colleagues. A significant number of teachers noted that team teaching enables the sharing of expertise among educators. Moreover, the majority of teachers reported an enhanced understanding of certain topics through collaborative teaching. Overall, these results indicate that participants are convinced that religious education has the potential to address challenges encountered in this field. T4 reported,

I have learned a lot because some of the topics I did not know I learned them when they were taught by my colleagues in my class during my presence.

The most unexpected result was that three teachers were uninformed of the benefits of collaborative teaching. Two of them indicate that they rarely collaborate because of intrinsic problems such as inconsistent collaboration and a timetable that does not allow for collaboration. The other teacher claims that it is difficult to collaborate with others because the instructor is the only religious education teacher at the school. T2 replied,

I do not have any experience working with others because I am the only religious studies teacher at my school

T1 commented,

We are three and teach grade 11. It is hectic since I would have to leave my class while I attend this class.

The literature study discusses the various advantages and disadvantages of team teaching (Bolton, 2021; Velichová and Orbánová, 2012). The presentation depicts a similar scenario in Lesotho secondary schools, where some instructors value the benefits of team teaching while others confront barriers to effective teamwork. Teachers that appreciate the benefits of team teaching emphasise the importance of learning from colleagues and sharing expertise, as shown in T2 and T4. These findings are consistent with Jang's (2006) emphasis on the significance of team teaching in promoting ongoing professional development.

Despite these positive experiences, some teachers are unfamiliar with team teaching and its potential benefits, indicating a lack of awareness or training on collaborative teaching practices. Practical problems, such as inconsistent teamwork and scheduling limits, were also noted by some teachers, as revealed by T2. The irregular nature of collaboration could be attributed to a lack of training in team teaching, which is consistent with the assertion of Purwanto and Saepudin (2023) and Syamsudin et al. (2023) that comprehensive teacher training is essential for effective team teaching.

#### **(b) What good things have you seen happen for students because of team teaching?**

The findings show that interviewees believe team teaching has a favourable impact on students. T1, T2, T3, and T4, accounting for 67% of those who responded to this question, said that students are noticeably more motivated, with several teachers reporting enhanced accessibility for student consultation. Specifically, one instructor noted that team teaching gives students the opportunity to approach any teacher, making students feel empowered to seek help and contributing to a healthy educational environment. Furthermore, one teacher emphasised tangible academic advantages, saying that students who participate in team-teaching sessions tend to have a significant improvement in both their academic performance and their overall attitude towards the subject. For instance, a T1 stated,

Learners are very motivated and could consult anyone.

T2 also said,

It enhances examination results. Moreover, students enjoy the classes and are willing to learn more.

Another interviewee alluded that apart from the motivation students have during team-teaching, the workload for teachers is noticeably reduced, specifically in terms of marking. Other responses from T6 to this question included:

While all students have to come to me for marking, now the load is reduced.

The most noteworthy finding was that the majority of respondents, specifically T1, T2, T3, and T4, consistently stated that team teaching increases student motivation. Interestingly, Miao et al. (2023) also found that team teaching increases student involvement. The collaborative setting of this approach

empowers students by instilling a sense of autonomy in them and allowing them to approach any teacher for advice. Furthermore, the improved accessibility to teachers discussed here has the ability to foster an environment in which students feel empowered to seek guidance. This not only creates a favourable learning environment, but it also promotes.

Another significant conclusion is the emphasis on measurable academic gains from collaborative teaching. It could be that these findings are attributable to pupils' ability to interact with a variety of teachers rather than being dependent on just one teacher. This demonstrates a link between collaborative teaching and academic success. T5 went on to argue that learners not only enhance their academic performance but also develop a real passion for the subject. This holistic approach to education implies that team teaching helps to a more comprehensive educational experience for pupils. These findings are consistent with Roth et al. (2005)'s assertion that team teaching has the potential to boost students' learning outcomes.

The most significant conclusion is that collaborative teaching reduces teacher effort, particularly in the area of marking. This unexpectedly favourable result suggests that the This unexpected positive outcome suggests that the collaborative teaching model benefits both students and teachers. These findings corroborate ECoL's (2024) suggestion that team teaching is a feasible choice for reducing the workload of teachers who are concerned about not completing the religious education curriculum. In this scenario, the flexibility to share duties and minimise individual workloads assists to create a more sustainable and efficient teaching environment (Kurata, 2023).

Research Question 2: What are the perceived advantages and challenges in the implementation of team teaching for enhancing the teaching and learning of Religious Education within Lesotho secondary schools?

**(a) What do you think is really good about working with other teachers in Religious Education?**

The teachers' thoughts on benefits of collaborating with other teachers in religious education reflect a variety of beneficial results that result in to a collaborative and rewarding professional environment. Teachers view workload distribution as a big advantage, emphasising the collaborative effort to alleviate the strain of teaching and grading alone. Furthermore, interviewees acknowledged that T2, T3, T4, and T5 emphasise the need of sharing information, particularly experienced teacher involvement in the interchange of ideas, methods, and strategies, as highly beneficial. As T2 articulated it,

Sharing of information especially from experienced teachers can be very advantageous, and we may learn how other teachers tackle some of the difficult questions.

The findings emphasise the benefits of collaborative religious education, such as workload distribution, information sharing, and idea exchange. T1 emphasises the benefits of collaborative teaching by focusing on workload distribution. The idea of minimising the stress of marking alone through mutual support highlights the collaborative character of team teaching. This data implies that teachers understand the practical benefits of shared duties, which contribute to a more balanced and sustainable workload. T2, T3, T4, and T5 emphasise the need of exchanging ideas, methods, strategies, and knowledge, particularly from experienced teachers. This is also consistent with our previous observations, which revealed that active involvement allows both professors to contribute their expertise and teaching styles to promote dynamic learning experiences for students (Gono & Moraes, 2022). This aspect not only enriches instructional techniques, but it also offers teachers with an invaluable learning opportunity. Learning how other teachers approach challenging issues demonstrates an atmosphere of professional development and the possibility of ongoing improvement in teaching approaches. It promotes the idea that collaborative education provides an environment where teachers can draw on each other's knowledge and expertise.

**(b) Have you had any problems with team teaching in Religious Education? If yes, can you tell me about them?**

Teachers' conclusions on potential concerns with team teaching in religious education show that there are challenges that occur in a collaborative teaching situation. T1 and T2 express a struggle with trust and pacing. Another informant supported this sentiment, expressing concern that they do not trust the other colleague's capacity to lead the class independently, noting concerns about their slower speed. As one interviewee stated:

The challenge is when we the colleague is not of the same pace of me. I have to teach alone and she is not helping and learning since I will be doing similar topics every year.

Furthermore, half of the participants, specifically T3, T4, and T5, report no difficulty with team teaching. These comments indicate that, in their opinion, the collaborative teaching style has been seamless and problem-free. T6, on the other hand, notes that working with coworkers who are not friendly is tough. T6 stated,

The challenge is that some colleagues are not sociable and it is hard to team up with them.

Research Question 3: What are the identified professional development needs of teachers engaged in team teaching in Religious Education within Lesotho secondary schools?

**(a) From your experience, what things should teachers be really good at to work together well in Religious Education**

Teachers' conclusions on the attributes required for effective collaboration in religious education emphasise important aspects that lead to a positive and successful team-teaching environment. Interestingly, T1, T2, and T5 emphasise the significance of trust, obedience, selflessness, and communication among teachers as critical factors for successful collaboration. T2 replied,

Teachers need good communication skills. They also should have a sense of humour so that they enjoy working together

T3 suggested that obedience should be demonstrated by teachers' readiness to follow common plans and techniques. This is similar to what T4 and 6 said, who emphasised the necessity of being open to asking assistance from others, exchanging ideas, and participating in collaborative planning, such as team teaching and scheming together. T6 stated,

Teachers should share ideas, do team teaching and scheme together.

These results emphasise critical characteristics for effective teacher collaboration in religious education. Trust, as defined by T1, serves as the fundamental basis for promoting unity. It's fascinating that good communication, as emphasised by T2 and T3, promotes clarity and coordination, yet a sense of humour adds to a positive work environment. These findings are consistent with prior research that found that a strong relationship between teachers is required for teachers to collaborate and exchange roles (Drelick et al., 2023).

T4 emphasises the collaborative character of effective teaching by emphasising the value of idea sharing and cooperative planning. T5 emphasises that proficiency in team teaching is critical for realising the benefits of collaborative efforts. Furthermore, T6 emphasises the need of requesting assistance from others, showing a culture of constant learning and support. These characteristics collectively represent a collaborative teaching environment in which teachers work together, share insights, and prioritise common goals, thereby improving the learning experience in religious education. These findings are consistent with Shumway et al. (2006), who reported that team teaching promotes learning experiences by virtue of its inherent qualities.

#### **(b) How can we help teachers get better at working in teams for Religious Education?**

The findings regarding how to enhance teachers' proficiency in working as a team in religious education highlight a consensus on the significance of training and workshops. T1, T3, T5 and T6 emphasize the need for training sessions to equip teachers with conflict resolution skills and strategies for effective collaboration. T5 specifically said,

Teachers need to be provided with work shops where they will share information with other teachers.

One significant finding is that T2 suggests providing materials for both teachers and students to facilitate team teaching, making the collaborative process more accessible. T2 said,

Provide materials for both teachers and students, so that they find it easy to team teach

The findings indicate that teachers agree on the significance of training and workshops in strengthening their team teaching skills in the context of Religious Education. T1, T3, T5, and T6 all advocate for training sessions aimed at equipping teachers with conflict resolution skills and effective collaborative tactics. These findings are consistent with earlier observational studies, which have shown that workshops are necessary for effective team teaching (Syamsudin et al., 2023). The emphasis on conflict resolution indicates an awareness of potential issues that may develop in a collaborative setting, as well as a need for skills to deal with such situations.

One notable conclusion is a suggestion to provide materials for both teachers and students, with the goal of improving and facilitating the collaborative teaching process accessible. This advice demonstrates a practical approach to supporting teachers by ensuring they have the resources they need to collaborate effectively. These findings confirm that policy and schools must encourage team teaching (New South Wales Department of Education, 2021).

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## **4. Conclusion**

Teachers' experiences varied, with some acknowledging benefits such as learning from colleagues, while others faced obstacles related to team teaching in religious education across Lesotho secondary schools. Teachers reported varying degrees of collaboration, with some emphasising the benefits of learning from peers. The benefits cited include knowledge exchange, increased comprehension of themes, and the perception of religious education as a potential solution to existing problems. Despite these advantageous experiences, a significant proportion of teachers are still unfamiliar with team teaching, indicating potential gaps in awareness or training. Practical challenges such as uneven teamwork, trust, pacing, and interpersonal dynamics, time limits, and the unique situation of being the sole religious education teacher in a school were raised. These characteristics collectively represent a collaborative teaching environment in which educators work together, share insights, and prioritise common goals, thereby improving the learning experience in religious education. According to the findings, religious teachers must demonstrate trust, communication, and a common vision in order to create a collaborative teaching environment. Interestingly, collaboration is fostered by various educational regulations, notably the current Lesotho curriculum until 2021. There is optimism that hiccups would be addressed by the school to facilitate team teaching and thus enhance the quality of teaching and learning in religious education in Lesotho.

The findings show that training and workshops are important for improving teachers' ability to operate as a team in religious education. These findings highlight the value of continued training and material access in improving teachers' skill in team teaching within the context of Religious Education in Lesotho secondary schools. Overall, team teaching may be a viable answer to the intrinsic issues of Lesotho secondary religious education.

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## **Recommendations**

To address teacher-identified issues, it is recommended to:



1. Provide training sessions and seminars on conflict resolution, teamwork, and team teaching approaches.
2. Implementing a systematic method to providing teaching materials associated with the team teaching approach can improve accessibility and effectiveness.
3. School principals should promote collaboration among instructors. This might include establishing formal platforms for teachers to exchange their experiences, strategies, and innovative teaching methods.

#### Ethical Statement

This study does not contain any studies with human or animal subjects performed by any of the authors.

#### Conflicts of Interest

The author declare that they have no conflicts of interest to this work.

#### Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study

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