Promoting learners' right to freedom of religious expression in public schools

by

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Declaration of Originality

I, Maganyane Tumelo Arnols (student number 28544243), hereby declare that the mini-dissertation entitled: "Promoting learners' right to freedom of religious expression in public schools", for the degree "Master's in Education Leadership" at the University of Pretoria, has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that this is my own work in design and execution and that all material from published sources contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

Signed at University of Pretoria on this _____ day of _____ 2020

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Ethics clearance

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This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:
- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

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Ethics Statement

The study adhered to ethical standards listed above. These ethical considerations are further discussed in detail in section 3.5.6 of Chapter 3.

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To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I, Alexa Kirsten Barnby, an English editor accredited by the South African Translators' Institute, have edited the master's dissertation titled "Promoting learners' right to freedom of religious expression in public schools" by Tumelo Arnols Maganyane.

The onus is on the author, however, to make the changes and address the comments made.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my wife, Ms Zilethile Johanna Maganyane, for her outstanding support, care, love and encouragement, as well as to my sons Tumelo and Thabang Maganyane, and to my daughters, Hunadi and Lesego Maganyane, who have given me the joy of being their father and role model. This work is also dedicated to the memory of my late father, Poichane Ezekiel Maganyane, and my late mother, Sthini Lizzie Maganyane. May their departed souls rest in eternal peace.

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Abstract

The dispute over the place, accommodation and tolerance of religion and religious expression in South African public schools, as well as globally, has been vehement. This is, to some extent, because public schools reflect the multicultural and religious societies in which they are found. In addition to their diverse backgrounds, public schools in South Africa and elsewhere are dominated by Christianity, with most people claiming allegiance to it and, sometimes, discriminating against the other minority religions. This has led to governments developing a plethora of legislation, policies and regulations to redress the dominance, unequal treatment and discrimination of the dominant religion. This study was undertaken to answer the question: "How do public schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression?"

This interpretive multisite case study explored the experiences of the SGB chairpersons, principals, Life Orientation educators and learners at three public secondary schools in the Bohlabela District of the Mpumalanga province of South Africa. The research used interviews, document analysis and observations to elicit the participants' views and understandings of how their various schools' religious observance policies promoted the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. The findings revealed that most schools have not changed the way they conduct religious observances since the promulgation of the National Policy on Religion and Education of 2003. Moreover, learners still experience religious intolerance and religious discrimination because schools promote single-faith religious observances.

KEYWORDS: Implementation of policies; religion in education; religious diversity in schools; religious freedom; religious observances; religion policy in schools

List of Acronyms

DoE – Department of Education

EEA – Employment of Educators Act

NPRE – National Policy of Religion and Education

RE – Religious Education

RI – Religious instruction

RSA – Republic of South Africa

SASA – South African Schools Act

SGB – School governing body

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The print and electronic media in South Africa, and elsewhere, are inundated with news and stories indicating that learners are discriminated against on the basis of religion and, at times, their right to freedom of religious expression is violated. For example, Lerato Motshabi was ordered to cut her dreadlocks or face expulsion from her school in the Free State province, South Africa (Tayob, 2015). In the United States, two black students were disciplined for acting contrary to the school's hair policy which prohibited hairstyles with braids that had extensions (Barber-Lester & Edwards, 2018). Van Vollenhoven (2005) argues that not only is learners' right to freedom of religious expression undermined but they are also often verbally abused by teachers for speaking their minds.

The right to freedom of religious expression is one of the many fundamental and protected human rights addressed as a cornerstone of democracy in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1976 (ICCPR, 1976; Van Vollenhoven, Beckmann, & Blignaut, 2006). Freedom of expression, opinion and information is also protected under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UDHR, 1948a). According to Van Vollenhoven et al. (2006), the protection of freedom of expression under these international agreements is a clear indication that this right is internationally recognised as a fundamental right in a democracy. By signing and ratifying these international laws, South Africa agreed to abide by them and protect the fundamental human rights.

In recognising the deep-rooted historical inequalities and differences among the people of South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) government, through the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (hereafter, the Constitution), tried to develop a unity of purpose and spirit that celebrates and cherishes the diversities within communities. For instance, section 15(1) of the Constitution (RSA, 1996a) reads, "Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion" in line with international laws. These freedoms above, may be expressed, either through "speech, written words and publications or symbolic acts" (Bray, 2005, p. 55). Such expressions may include dress, painting, appearance, adornment and displaying

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posters, (Boyle, 1997; Bray, 2005). Therefore, section 15 of the Constitution is directly linked to section 16(1) of the same Constitution, which reads: "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes (a) freedom of the press and other media; (b) freedom to receive or impart information or ideas (c) freedom of artistic creativity; and (d) academic freedom and freedom of scientific research" (RSA, 1996a). Put differently, everyone in public schools has the right to express their religion, thoughts, beliefs and opinion freely as a fundamental human right (Dessel, Bolen, & Shepardson, 2011; Jansen, 2001; Nthontho, 2017a).

The Constitution paved the way for the promulgation of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), hereafter referred to as SASA, which regulates all matters pertaining to public school education in the country. The SASA "upholds the Constitutional right of all citizens to freedom of conscience, religion, belief and opinion" through its section 7 (RSA, 1996b, p. 12). The Act also sets out its aim in the preamble as to "combat racism, sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance" in public schools (RSA, 1996b, p. 1), which echoes the preamble to the Constitution.

The Constitution and the SASA led to the approval of the National Policy on Religion and Education of 2003 (NPRE), as a framework through which public school communities may devise approaches to religion following the lead of the Constitution and the SASA (DoE, 2003). The policy on religion and education and the SASA are aligned directly to the Constitution, which enshrines the values of equality, human rights and freedoms. According to Mestry (2007), the aim of enshrining these values in the Constitution is to ensure that institutional guarantees that are important in the fulfilment of freedom of religion and the equality of religions are realised. Therefore, the Constitution, SASA and the religion policy (DoE, 2003) form the basis for freedom of religious expression in public schools.

Guillaume, Saiz, and Amador (2020) warn that the recent political climate in the United States, and elsewhere, has seen matters of equity challenged, thereby bringing to the need to further engagement in discussions of religion, race, gender and other areas of social justice and equity in educational. These scholars suggest that we prepare educational leaders who are committed to creating public schools that are conducive to enabling equity, respect for dignity and freedom. According to Tayob (2018), it is also worrying that educational leaders are not prepared to address the various inequities in schools, including religion. Educational leadership programs often tend

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to avoid critical dialogue and examination of social justice demands, underrepresentation of minorities and an environment that preserves prejudice and discrimination (Guillaume et al., 2020).

From the above discussion, the provision of freedom of religious expression in public schools is informed by international, regional and national statutes founded on democratic values that include equity, respect, tolerance and openness, among others. It is also clear that freedom of religious expression is provided with the purpose of instilling such values among the learners while they are acknowledging and celebrating their diversity. Therefore, conducting research on the provision, promotion and access to freedom of religious expression is important, because such a study may provide information that could increase our understanding of how to improve leadership in education and whether the policy on religion in schools is delivering on its mandate or if there is a need for modification.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The dispute about the place, accommodation and tolerance of religion and religious expression in South African public schools and globally has been vehement. This is, to some extent, because public schools are found in multicultural societies and, therefore, reflect the ethnic, religious and cultural diversities of the societies within which they are found (Genc, ter Avest, Miedema, & Westerman, 2012; Matemba, 2009; Van Vollenhoven, 2015). In addition to their diverse backgrounds, public schools in South Africa, and elsewhere, are dominated by Christianity with most people claiming allegiance to it, and sometimes discriminate against the other minority religions (Dreyer, 2007; Dupper, Forrest-Bank, & Lowry-Carusillo, 2015; Forrest-Bank & Dupper, 2016; Genc et al., 2012; Mestry, 2007). This has led to governments developing a plethora of legislation, policies and regulations to redress the dominance of and the unequal treatment and discrimination meted out by the dominant religion.

Research evidence suggests that learners from minority religions in public schools often experience a hostile atmosphere, uneasiness and discrimination, sometimes even from the teachers (Dupper et al., 2015; Forrest-Bank & Dupper, 2016). For instance, a study by Forrest-Bank and Dupper (2016) found that one in four learners was bullied because they belonged to a religion or faith that was different from that of the majority of learners. This behaviour is further evidenced

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by the fact that Muslim learners in European countries like France, Turkey, Uzbekistan and others have challenged public school laws that seem discriminative in terms of religious observances such as wearing of a headscarf and/or other religious symbols (Smith, 2007). Similar cases have also been cited in South Africa where two learners, siblings, were sent home for wearing religious headgear (Rousseau, 2010). By so doing, the school violated these learners' right to education as provided for in section 29 of the Constitution (RSA, 1996a). The two siblings were only allowed back to school only after the provincial education department intervened (Rousseau, 2013).

Globally, studies on religion in education have looked at learners' experiences regarding religion in schools, how they cope with religious diversity and how they negotiate their religious identities, for example Dupper et al. (2015), Forrest-Bank and Dupper (2016), (Kuusisto, 2010); Kuusisto (2017) and Shah (2009). However, very few, if any, have been conducted on how public secondary schools promote the right of learners to freedom of religious expression, particularly in South Africa.

According to Nthontho (2013a), education research is relevant and real when it adds value to education. I therefore believe that my study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on religion in education and religion per se, especially the promotion of the right to freedom of religious expression in particular in the sampled public schools. The study findings inform the stakeholders involved in this research, that is, learners, parents and educators, about good governance (Modipa, 2014). Therefore, this study sought to add to the literature on the development, implementation and monitoring of human rights and religion policies in South African public schools and elsewhere.

1.3 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of my study was to explore how the learners' right to freedom of religious expression was promoted in Mpumalanga public secondary schools. To achieve the aim, the following objectives needed to be realised:

1. To investigate participants' understanding of the concept of the right to freedom of religious expression within the school context.
2. To explore how public schools' religion policies provide for the right to freedom of religious expression in these schools.

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3. To determine the challenges public schools experience in the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 Primary research question

The intention of this study was to answer the following question: "How do public secondary schools promote learners' right to freedom of religious expression"?

1.4.2 Secondary research questions

The following sub-questions were formulated for the study:

1. What do participants understand by the right to freedom of expression?
2. How does the religion policy of the school provide for learners' right to freedom of religious expression?
3. What roles do the school leaders play in ensuring that learners exercise their right to freedom of religious expression?
4. What challenges does the school encounter in promoting learners' right to freedom of religious expression?
5. How does the school overcome the above-mentioned challenges?

1.5 RATIONALE

I have observed that South Africa, like other countries around the world, is a diverse nation, and inherent in this diversity are diverse opinions, beliefs, cultures and religions. Adding to this is the fact that the country is one of the preferred destinations for migrants for educational, economic, political and religious reasons, to name a few. Such situations are accompanied by changes in learner profiles and the need for schools to develop policies that respect, protect, promote and instil religious rights (Grobler, Moloi, Loock, Bisschoff, & Mestry, 2006). These are the key roles of every school, ensuring that no one is discriminated against on one or more grounds including that of religion.

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As a teacher in one of the public schools in South Africa, I have witnessed instances where, even since the introduction of the religion-in-education policy, many schools have not promoted their learners' right to freedom of religious expression. Some schools still require scripture reading from the Bible as part of their morning devotions, which is against the principles of diversity, equity and fairness (Sullivan, 2011). There are also schools where "pastor teachers" perform some school functions like counselling. Such "counselling", I believe, is done according to one religion while excluding other religions. My observation suggests that religious inequalities and discrimination still exist in the South African education system and elsewhere (DoE, 2003; Dreyer, 2007; Nthontho, 2017b; Rousseau, 2010; Smith, 2007).

Based on the above discussion, I believe that this study is unique because researchers in most of the studies I have reviewed have focused on the principals' and educators' experiences of implementing religion policy and their implications for public schools in South Africa (Dreyer, 2007; Nthontho, 2013b, 2016; Van der Walt, 2011a). These studies have focused on the policy implications for the school community, how school principals and the SGBs drafted the policies and how the principals implemented the policy. The study by Dreyer went further to investigate how the South African public reacted to the introduction of the policy. While Court and Seymour (2015), Feinberg (2013), Genc et al. (2012) and Jackson (2014) all studied religion policy in schools from an international perspective, this study will look at how schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression from a South African point of view, information on which I believe is minimal. According to Nthontho (2013a), education research is relevant and real when it adds value to education. I believe that my study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on religion in education and the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression, particularly in the sampled public schools.

1.6. PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

This section starts by discussing the terms "Religious Education" (RE), "religious instruction" (RI), "religious observances" (RO) and "religion in education", since they appear to be at the centre of the confusion that exists in schools (Mestry, 2007). I will then motivate my choice of religious observances as the focus for the current study. The multi-faith character of public schools and all that this entails will also be discussed in detail. In addition, this section will look at how learners in South Africa and elsewhere experience religious observance policies of their respective schools,

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as well as how such experiences have shaped their religious identity and conduct with other learners and members of staff. In all these subsections, I will be arguing as to why I believe my study focus is worth investigation. In conclusion, I will state what I found to be the gap that my study will fill with regard to this phenomenon.

1.6.1 Religious Education, Religious Instruction and religious observances

The policy on Religion and Education distinguishes among Religious Education (RE), religious instruction (RI) and religious observances. These terms are used interchangeably when dealing with religion in education because sometimes people confuse them as meaning the same thing. I briefly discuss the difference between them below:

Religious Education is a subject in the curriculum that teaches learners about different religions and aims to provide an understanding so that learners appreciate other religions (DoE, 2003). It is usually accommodated in the school curriculum as a distinct subject. In this way learners have an opportunity to learn what it means to adhere to other faiths or religions (Stern, 2017). In South Africa, and elsewhere, teaching and learning about religion, religions and religious diversity has clear teaching and learning outcomes, including the appreciation of different religions (Mestry, 2007).

Religious instruction (RI) refers to teaching someone in a particular faith or belief and is the responsibility of parents and/or the church (DoE, 2003). It has the aim of instilling adherence to that faith (Mestry, 2007). This means that a specific faith is introduced and taught to a person (Stern, 2017). Stern also argues that religious instruction is no longer given priority in most European countries because they see it as the responsibility of families and communities, and not state-aided schools. In South Africa, RI is prohibited in public schools. Paragraph 55 of the policy on religion and education states that:

> Religious Instruction may not be part of the formal school programme, as constituted by the National Curriculum Statement, although schools are encouraged to allow the use of their facilities for such programmes, in a manner that not interrupt or detract from the core educational purposes of the school (DoE, 2003, p. 20).

It is clear from the above quote that public schools in South Africa may not offer RI to learners as stipulated by the NPRE. However, the same policy recommends to SGBs of public schools to avail

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their facilities for religious observances according to the Constitution, the SASA and rules made by the appropriate authorities. Paragraph 59 of the NPRE describes the various types of religious observances that are entailed by the policy. They include:

- voluntary public occasions, which make use of school facilities, for a religious service on a day of worship or rest;
- Voluntary occasions when the school community (teachers and pupils) gather for a religious observance;
- Observances held in voluntary gatherings of pupils and/or teachers during a school break; and
- An observance, which may be ongoing, and entail other dimension such as dress, prayer times and diets. Which must be respected and accommodated in a manner agreed upon by the school and the relevant faith authorities (DoE, 2003, p. 21).

Among the three concepts discussed above, the provision of religious observances in public schools will be the focus of this study. The NPRE recognises the distinguished contribution that religious observances can make to education and to learners in particular (DoE, 2003). religious observances can contribute to the creation of a cohesive educational community that supports unity in diversity (DoE, 2003). The school community can also benefit from the understanding and inter-religious knowledge that may be instilled through RO. The policy recognises the link between religion and values by acknowledging religions as "key resources for clarifying morals, ethics and building regard to others" (DoE, 2003, p. 13). This means that these values may be inculcated in the learners through religious observances. The policy also suggests that learners can learn, at an early age, the values of justice, love, mercy, care and commitment through religious observances. As a result, the Constitution and the SASA seek to ensure that no particular religious ethos dominates and supresses others during the provision of religious observances(DoE, 2003). Therefore, religious observances should also take place equitably on school premises, including being part of assemblies, although they are not part of the school programme (Mawdsley & Beckmann, 2018; Mestry, 2007).

According to Mestry (2007), there are two perspectives regarding religious observances: those that believe that the religious observances should be free, voluntary and single faith, and therefore the state should not have the right to invalidate such religious observances, while the other perspective believes that single-faith religious observances will discriminate against learners who belong to other religions. The religious observances have the potential to be turned into coercive platforms

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thereby defeating the purpose and spirit of the Constitution, which includes collaboration, equality, non-discrimination, tolerance and respect for human rights (Dreyer, 2007). Schools should use the religious observances to ensure that no learner "feels ashamed or excluded because his or her beliefs are not those of the majority in the school" (DoE, 2003).

In the USA, this coercive potential of religious observances was addressed by separating the church and the state (Franken, 2016; Mawdsley & Beckmann, 2018). US courts ruled that prayer meetings, where learners are in attendance, are unconstitutional because students may be subjected to prayers that are not part of their religion (Connors, 1988; Essex, 2002; Franken, 2016; Mestry, 2007). In South Africa, the Minister of Education declared in the policy that there is no state religion, and the country is not even secular, meaning that there is strict separation between state and religion (DoE, 2003; Mestry, 2007). Debates involving religion in public schools are the most contentious because they deal with minor learners who form a captive audience under the state's compulsory attendance laws (Mawdsley & Beckmann, 2018). Their contentiousness brings challenges for the multi-faith character of the public education system, as discussed in the following subsection.

1.6.2 Multi-faith character of public schools

The multi-faith character of public schools is a result of a variety of factors that include the fact that humanity is diverse. Globalisation and immigration, on the other hand, is ensuring that different nations mingle with each other for one reason or another, for example for political reasons. The economic movement of people, knowledge and customs shapes this period of globalisation in which "religion has become a marker of differences between cultures and societies" (Neilsen, Arber, & Weinmann, 2017, p. 2). Neilsen et al. (2017) argue that religious differences and diversity challenges can be understood from the perspective of historical colonial encounters that mostly spread Christianity. Despite this, other non-Christian religions, including Buddhism, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism, among others, have grown and contribute to the multi-faith character of schools (Mestry, 2007; Neilsen et al., 2017). Therefore, global immigration has become a cultural phenomenon that is manifested in society and in public schools particularly. We have to live with this and must manage it (Basil, 2012; Lee & Sehoole, 2015; Shah, 2009).

Anczyk and Grzymala-Moszczynska (2018) argue that the multi-faith character of public schools poses challenges for the place of religion in schools. For this reason, and many others, the questions of religious tolerance, accommodation and diversity, and whether to remove religion from schools, has been debated at length in South African schools and elsewhere by stakeholders in public education (Nthontho, 2017b). At times, the debate on the removal of religion from public schools is fuelled by the fear of "indoctrination and desire for religious freedom" (Wang, 2013a, p. 152). For example, the "Organisasie vir Godsdienste-Onderrig en Demokrasie" (OGOD), translated into English, Organisation of Religious Education and Democracy, took six schools in the Gauteng Department of Education, South Africa, to court, accusing them of "indoctrinating" their children (de Wet, 2017). The Constitutional Court ruled that public schools could not adopt one religion to the exclusion of others.

Similar issues include the role of religion in public schools within a multicultural society, which has also been fiercely debated and a topic for academic discourses (Niens, Mawhinney, Richardson, & Chiba, 2013). This can further be attested to through the old and contemporary wars that are fought in the name of religion, such as the Maitatsine group in Nigeria, which inflicted severe religious violence in the northern parts of Nigeria, which left 4000 to 6000 people dead between 1979 and 1983 (Sulaiman, 2016). Recent examples include the Boko Haram violence, which claimed many lives and displaced more than 3000 people in Nigeria. Because schools comprise more faith groups than ever before, it is important to understand how learners in these schools experience religious observances, as such understanding can benefit policy development processes.

1.6.3 Learners' experience of religious observances and how such experiences shape their religious identity

In this study, learners' experiences refer to the narrative accounts of events, knowledge and feelings that make up learners' lives, and these may include, but are not limited to, what they saw, felt and understood in the religious observance (Ellingson, 2017). Sometimes, learners experience what Forrest-Bank and Dupper (2016) call micro-aggression, which refers to small, everyday slights or insults that communicate hostile or derogatory messages intended to marginalise religious groups. According to these authors, such aggression is often left unattended to because confronting it often turns into uneasy dynamics, potential conflict in relationships and/or social

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segregation (Forrest-Bank & Dupper, 2016**).** The ghettoising of religions that are anchored on religious indoctrination and dogma at an early age has proven to have disastrous consequences. These include increased discrimination, conflict and/or violence (Forrest-Bank & Dupper, 2016). For example, the "holy wars" in Nigeria and elsewhere that are justified by being fought in the name of God (Al Sadi & Basit, 2013; Ekamen, 2013; Sulaiman, 2016; Van der Walt, 2011a)

Learners may, at an early age, choose and display religious beliefs and practices that they are likely to maintain throughout their lives. It is therefore important that parents, and the teachers who take the place of parents in schools, become involved in shaping learners' identities (Forrest-Bank & Dupper, 2016). In developing a positive identity that will continue into adulthood, the learners should choose goals, roles and beliefs that are consistent with a positive personality through the religious observances. Neilsen et al. (2017) argue that religious identities or labels are often conjured as shorthand or an umbrella term for cultural and ethnic differences. These religious identities gained and rehearsed through the religious observances will provide a navigation mechanism throughout the learners' life development to attain prosocial participation and contribution away from undesirable life paths (Bahr, Maughan, Marcos, & Li, 1998; Forrest-Bank & Dupper, 2016; Neilsen et al., 2017). Therefore, participation in religious observances can serve as a protective influence for many learners, for example "[against the] risk for depressive and anxiety symptomatology and [for] increased self-esteem" (Forrest-Bank & Dupper, 2016, p. 262). These authors also argue that religious observances may result in a higher positive affect and life satisfaction.

When learners are involved in religious observances they are less likely to be involved in substance abuse, rather displaying increased social attitudes because religiosity creates opportunities that favour social support and friendships (Bahr et al., 1998). This is because they spend time in the religious observances instead of engaging in and concentrating on other activities where substance abuse may be found (Bahr et al., 1998). Through their participation and interactions in religious observances learners may also find purpose and a sense of meaning in life that are inconsistent with antisocial behaviour (Bahr et al., 1998). Because the religious observances that the learners may choose at this early age display religious beliefs and practices that they are likely to maintain throughout their lives, it is important that parents are involved in shaping the multi-character of public schools.

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Religious observances can be used as one of the many religious activities available to shape how learners interact with other learners and staff. These can be activities where learners experience and learn social harmony, tolerance and cooperation at an early age (Ekamen, 2013). Religious groups should be accommodative, collaborative and inclusive of each other in order for them to coexist in society and in public school in particular. The importance of religion in life is revealed in a study by Miller (2011). In this study most of the participants agreed that religion is very important. They also said that their entire lifestyle and what they were trying to be were based on their belief in God. They further saw daily prayers, respect for others' views and other religions as important traits that humans should strive for. The participants also added that no single religion exists in isolation or is self-sufficient or independent. Therefore, there is no one faith or one religious school that can alone prepare learners to live differently from others (Feinberg, 2013). Religions are independent of each other, but according to Miller's study, their moral education seem to be overlapping (Miller, 2011).

Religions can inculcate the moral values of respect and discipline in their believers (Nthontho, 2013a). The participants in Nthontho's study attributed ill-discipline in schools today to a lack of religious education in the school curriculum because they felt that religion was the source of these values. Dreyer (2007) also argues that religions and religious leaders have a role to play in democratic societies and schools in particular. Feinberg (2013, p. 2) also acknowledges that "humans are moral beings existing in a web of obligations with other persons of God, and some practises and policies are right or wrong in themselves and not subject to cost-benefit analysis".

We should also take note that public schools are not religiously neutral (Feinberg, 2013); they may favour a secular over a religious understanding of the world. According to the participants in Niens et al. (2013) study, religion enabled them to maintain a sense of being part of their community when they are around the school. They also saw it as being central to and in their lives. To support this, Basil (2012) sees life without a church, a place of public Christian worship or religious service, as being inconceivable because he believes that it teaches Christians a way of life.

The challenges of the multi-faith character faced by public schools discussed above influenced the choice to conduct this study on religious observances. This is because this emerging character of public schools brings with it challenges for school leaders which demand wider knowledge, understanding and the sensitivity to deal with them (Shah, 2009). Religious views constantly enter

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teachers' practices, irrespective of whether they teach about religion or not, which will influence the teachers' facilitation of learners' self-understanding and confidence (Neilsen et al., 2017). Therefore, there is a need to conduct a study on the learners' experiences of religious observances. Not only can the experience of learners be used to explore and understand how the religious observances are conducted, but they may also be a means of coming up with recommendations and/or improvement strategies for the religious observances in public schools (Wong, 2015). Wong argues that institutions, including public schools, can improve their level of engagement if they are to act in response to the concerns and/or experiences that are raised by learners. It is my view that conducting social justice research on the religious observances in public schools is important because social justice has its roots in the efforts to avoid provisions that uphold discrimination, ostracism and exclusionary practices which have prevailed in South Africa and elsewhere for some time (Hlalele, 2012).

While studies have been conducted on religion policy from both local and international points of view, this study will look at religion policy, particularly religious observances, from a South African perspective, as I believe there is a paucity of such studies. From the literature I reviewed, it appears that few looked at religious observances with learners as participants. Therefore, I believe this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on religion in education policy and religious observances.

1.7 RELEVANCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

South Africa transformed from a government which violated the majority's human rights to one of democracy (RSA, 1996a; Van Vollenhoven, 2005). This is encapsulated in the preamble to the Constitution which states that the Constitution was adopted to "lay a foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law" (RSA, 1996a, p. 1). For this reason, and many others, the understanding and the promotion of human rights, especially the right to freedom of religious expression in public schools, may help us understand the strides we have taken so far in our democracy.

Nthontho (2013a, p. 10) argues that "the description of the research problem and proposed solutions should contribute to the theory and practice of education both in present and future", which I believe is intention of this study. This is supported by the fact the implementation of

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educational policies, for example the policy on religion and education, in South Africa has not been without obstacles, as seen in the literature I reviewed (Rousseau, 2010; Tayob, 2015; van der Walt, 2011b). This is seen through the reported cases of discrimination and intolerance in the media. These cases may be attributed to the fact that religion in public schools, and elsewhere, is one of the controversial debates affecting schools and society in general. Therefore, conducting research on how schools promote the right to freedom of religious expression may contribute to the body of existing information and knowledge on religion in public schools.

I believe that this study is unique and relevant because in the studies I reviewed, the researchers focused on the principals' and educators' experiences of implementing religion policy and its implications in public schools in South Africa (Dreyer, 2007; Nthontho, 2013a, 2016). These studies focus on the implications of policy for the school community, how school principals and the SGBs drafted the policy, and how the principals implemented the policy. A study by Dreyer went further to investigate how the South African public reacted to the introduction of the policy. While Court and Seymour (2015), Feinberg (2013), Genc et al. (2012) and Jackson (2014) studied religion policy in schools from an international perspective, this study will look at the right to freedom of religious expression from a South African standpoint, which I believe is minimal.

According to Nthontho (2013a), education research is relevant and real when it adds value to education. I, therefore, believe that my study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on religion in education and, especially, the promotion of the right to freedom of religious expression, particularly in the sampled public schools. The study findings may inform the stakeholders involved in this research, including learners, parents and educators, about good governance (Modipa, 2014). Therefore, the intention of this study is to add to the literature on the development, implementation and monitoring of human rights and religion policies in South African public schools and elsewhere. To inform the relevance of this study, I shall now look at the conceptual framework that I used to guide my study.

1.8 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study used concepts derived from social justice theory which is associated with John Rawl's 1971 work (Bankston, 2010; Valadez & Mirci, 2015), which was further developed by Nancy Frazer in 1997, 2000 and 2008 to describe how people can overcome inequalities and

discrimination, and how social arrangements enable equal participation of people in social life (Bozalek, 2011; Hlalele, 2012; Valadez & Mirci, 2015). Social justice is concerned with issues of power and justice and the ways in which matters of religion, race, ethnicity, education and ideologies, among others, interact to construct a just social system to which they belong (Hlalele, 2012). Although social justice has diverse and complex definitions, making it difficult to arrive at a general definition, there are threats in every definition that hold the theory together, such as just, fairness and equity, among others.

Nancy Fraser's version of social justice is "participatory parity"; according to her, "overcoming injustices means dismantling institutionalised obstacles that prevent some people from participating on par with others as full partners in social interaction" (Fraser, 1998, p. 16). Her definition is in line with the intentions of the South African Constitution, and others in the world, which try to address equality. In order to advance social justice, we must take steps to minimise and eliminate discrimination against and oppression of one religion by another, however distant we may feel from personal responsibility for their enactment (Calderwood, 2003).

Recognition in my study refers to the manner in which public schools consider the learners according to their religious differences, which Nancy Fraser calls social markers, for example religion, race, denomination and ethnicity. Bozalek (2011) argues that this would have effects on whether they are full members and interact on the same conditions as others in schools. She also argues that the lack of respect of the other learners' social markers would constitute misrecognition (Bozalek, 2011). Misrecognition refers to lack of respect for fellow learners' social markers, which makes them unable to interact as full partners and equals in schools.

Representativity refers to "who is included or excluded and whose voice will be heard as legitimate" (Bozalek, 2011, p. 58). The promotion of learners' right to freedom of religious expression ensures that every learner's voice is heard. Representativity also refers to how the learners interact with each other as equals or peers in the public school environment (Bozalek, 2011). Therefore, the extent to which learners interact as peers in the school and its participatory spaces is determined by the recognition of their differences and the representativity of their voice which resonates with the values of the South African Constitution, other countries' constitutions and international conventions and laws. According to Bozalek (2011) and Keddie (2012), social

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justice aims at redressing maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentivity by, for example, policy change.

Several researchers have used social justice theory in educational research, for example Valadez and Mirci (2015) used it in the context of Catholic education, while Hlalele (2012) used it to study education in a South African context, looking at the inequalities and injustices between rural and urban education. The study by Bozalek (2011) is particularly relevant to my study because it focuses on how learners are able to participate equitably and equally as partners in their interactions. Participatory parity or equity therefore suggests that learners should be afforded equal opportunities in whatever they are doing in the public school. The promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression should also be accommodative, tolerant, collaborative and respectful of others; in other words, with no discrimination or inequality.

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework by John Rawls (1971)

Redistribution	• To what extent are resources (facilities, time, space) redistributed to the diverse religions in the public school?
Recognition	• How is the background or social markers (religion, race, ethnicity, denominations) of learners recognised? • to what extent are the learners given a choice of the religion they want to belong to?
Representation	• How are the different voices represented in the religious observances? • What measures are put in place to address discrimination and inequalities in the RO?

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The purpose of this methodology section is to describe my research strategy. This focused on why, what, from where and how I collected and analysed the data. In answering these questions, I discuss the research paradigm which formed the basis of my research and which, in turn, informed the choice of my research approach and design. I, therefore, further give an outline of my data gathering, sampling and analysis procedures.

The purpose of my study was to answer the following question: "How do public secondary schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression"? The participants in the study used

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words to describe their experiences regarding the promotion of their right to such expression, therefore suggesting a qualitative enquiry.

1.9.1 Research paradigm

This study was based on the ontological assumption of the interpretive research paradigm which is relativism (Scotland, 2012). For the interpretivists, reality is constructed individually and therefore every participant brought their own understanding of how learners' right to freedom of religious expression is promoted, as the reality they experienced. It is against this background that the participants described their individual interpretations and understanding of the right to freedom of religious expression. They described their own socially constructed ideas on what they experienced and the meanings of the ideas they built through their social interactions (Scotland, 2012). Accordingly, they described their jointly constructed ideas on how they understood the promotion of learners' right to freedom of religious expression (Creswell et al., 2010).

In the interpretive paradigm, evaluating trustworthiness, authenticity and ethical challenges are complicated because the understanding of the data is based on a combination of personal and cultural prejudices (Willis, 2012). I overcame this challenge by providing thick descriptions of participants, research sites and used "member checking", which means I submitted the transcribed interviews and draft report to the participants to verify that my transcripts, interpretations and understanding of their responses were correct (Maree, 2016).

1.9.2 Research approach

The research approach to this study was qualitative. I used a qualitative approach to answer the research questions by systematically using a predefined set of procedures. The data were collected by means of interviews, observations and document analysis and the findings were not predetermined (McMillan & Schumamacher, 2010).

I used an exploratory qualitative research approach because I had limited knowledge about how learners' right to freedom of religious expression is promoted in public secondary schools. My aim was to identify key issues and gain more and a new understanding of, in this case, the promotion of this learners' right (Maree, 2016). I chose a qualitative approach because the participants used words to describe their experiences, rather than quantitative approach which uses numbers to

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collect data (du Plooy-Celliers, Davis, & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This research approach helped me to understand the contextual descriptions of the participants' lived experiences of the promotion of this learners' right and how these experiences influenced decisions in their daily lives. This approach further provided me with information regarding the participants' beliefs, behaviours, opinions, relationships and emotions during our interactions, while the subjectivity of this information gave rich meaning to the findings (Groenewald, 2004).

The shortcoming of this qualitative approach was that the knowledge it produced had limited transferability because it was usually fragmented instead of being a unified, coherent body (Scotland, 2012). Moreover, the highly contextualised data, subjective understanding and interpretations made transferability of the findings impossible. This I overcame by providing thick descriptions of the context of the interview and the participants. This may allow the reader to make their own judgements regarding the transferability of the findings.

1.9.3 Research design

The research design refers to the action plan that guided my study in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data with the aim of finding answers to the research question (McMillan & Schumamacher, 2010; Mertens, 2008). This study used a case study design. According to Yin (1993, p. 13) and Maree (2016, p. 81), a case study is a form of empirical research which aims to explore current events within their real-life setting, particularly "when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". In this study, the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression, as a phenomenon, occurs in public secondary schools, as a bounded context, which occur in concert with each other. Yin (1993) asserts that a case study is one of several social science research designs that may be used to study policy implementation. I therefore used a case study design to study the religion policies of public secondary schools.

1.9.4 Sampling of participants and research site

Sampling in this qualitative research study refers to the process of choosing relevant people who were most likely to provide insight and understanding regarding my research question, which is: "How do public secondary schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression" (Marshall, 1996). In this study, purposeful and convenient sampling methods, that is, non-probability sampling methods, were used to actively select the most productive and accessible

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participants who had characteristics relevant to my study (Maree, 2016; Marshall, 1996). These participants had knowledge about activities and/or operations and/or experiences in public secondary schools regarding the promotion of learners' right to freedom of religious expression (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2002). In this study, therefore, the SGB, principals, Life Orientation (LO) educators and learners were the ones that had experiences of the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression in public secondary schools. They were thus able to answer my research question: "How do public secondary schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression?"

The SGB chairperson of the sampled schools were included as participants because they form part of school governance. They were therefore in a good position to answer questions relating to school policy, specifically school religion policy.

Secondly, the principals were the most important participants because they are entrusted with the management of the school, including the implementation of policies such as that of religion, as stipulated in section 16A(2) of the SASA.

Thirdly, the experiences of the LO educators in teaching knowledge about the major religions in South Africa are important. LO as a subject introduces learners to and acquaints them with their Constitutional rights and responsibilities (Tayob, 2015). Chidester (2008) acknowledges the introduction of the subject as the government's commitment to "Unity in Diversity" as stipulated in the Constitution.

I chose three learners from each sampled school. I chose three because according to 2016 South Africa Census and 2019 Statistic South Africa, the most dominating religions in the country were Christianity, African Traditional Religions and Islam (RSA, 2019). I, therefore, asked the school principals, as gate keepers to identify three learners that could fit into these three major religions. Furthermore, this is qualitative study, like any qualitative study, was interested in collecting rich, thick data and not necessarily in the number of participants (Marshall, 1996; Mertens, 2008; Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2014).

Although most public schools in South Africa qualified to participate in my study, it was impossible to include all of them (Maree, 2016). I therefore purposefully selected three public secondary schools in the Bohlabela District of Mpumalanga province. This district and its public

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schools are a homogenous sample that share the same characteristics of other districts and public secondary school in South Africa and elsewhere (Marshall, 1996). Secondly, in this qualitative research I was not interested in the number of schools or the area in which they are found, but rather the depth and saturation of the data (Roulson & Choi, 2018).

1.9.5 Data collection

The data were collected using semi-structured interviews. This type of interview allowed me to corroborate the data by asking open-ended questions, followed by further probing where I needed clarity (Maree, 2016). Semi-structured interviews enabled me to gain a detailed picture of the participants' perceptions of how the learners' right to freedom of religious expression is promoted.

The interviews were audio recorded. To do this, I obtained permission from the participants before recording them. I supplemented the interviews by taking notes, which enabled me to review answers and/or obtain additional information during data analysis (Lichtman, 2017b). After the interviews, I listened to the recording, and reviewed and reflected on it. I made transcripts of the digital recordings soon after the interview and used these to analyse the data.

The religion policies of the schools were analysed as primary data sources in this study. Primary data refers to documents that afford actual or real versions of events or occurrences that are not analysed or interpreted (Gross, 2018). Going through this process is referred to as document analysis. In this study, document analysis as a qualitative research method was used to review, examine, understand and interpret the data from the religious observance policies of the public schools in this study (Altheide & Schneider, 2013; Gross, 2018). The objective of this exercise was to elicit meaning and gain an understanding of how freedom of religious expression was being promoted in the schools through the religious observance policies (Bowen, 2009; Gross, 2018; Hesse-Biber, 2010)

Owing to the credibility dilemma created because I decided the direction of the research, the final interpretation of the data and the information, and the findings to make public, and also controlled the interpretation of the interviews and the report writing (Lichtman, 2017b), I used member checks to verify the findings with the participants before publication.

1.9.6 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis refers to how I interpreted and understood the matters arising from the interview transcripts and field notes (Roulson, 2018). I treated my qualitative data analysis as an ongoing process rather than a step in the research process (Mertens, 2008). I linked data analysis to collection, processing and reporting because I went back and forth to the original field to verify, collect additional data and solicit feedback from the participants (Creswell et al., 2010; Roulson, 2018).

Data analysis in this study involved assigning "codes" to bits and pieces of the data transcribed from the audio recorded data and clustering it into topics or themes based on my reflections. This enabled me to summarise what I had heard or seen in the form of common words, phrases or patterns that helped me to understand and interpret that which emerged (Archer, Janse van Vuuren, & Van Der Walt, 2017; Maree, 2016)

1.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Maree (2016) suggests several ways that I could use to ensure the trustworthiness of my study. These include credibility and transferability, among others. Credibility refers to how believable and congruent my study is. Transferability, which was not the intention of this qualitative study, involves the possibility of determining whether the findings can be transferred or applied to different settings and/or environments (Frey, 2018; Maree, 2016). I ensured the credibility of this study by means of member checks. The member checks entailed submitting the transcribed data to participants for checking and correcting mistakes and errors, if any, and verifying that my understanding and interpretations of what they had said were correct (Maree, 2016).

I also employed triangulation in this study. This refers to the process I used to collect data from multiple sources, for example from the participants through semi-structured interviews, as well as from documents such as the religion polices of the public schools (Cohen et al., 2002; Lichtman, 2017b).

I also worked closely with two supervisors assigned by the University of Pretoria to further validate my study. They advised and commented on issues concerning research ethics, research language, content and relevant choice of methodology.

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1.11 ETHICAL MEASURES CONSIDERED

All guidelines for ethical considerations were followed. For example, I obtained ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria before undertaking the research. I also applied for permission to conduct the research in schools from the Bohlabela District Department of Education, the school governing bodies (SGBs) and principals. The application letter contained the title of the study and clearly explained the purpose of study to the District Head, the SGBs, principal, parents and learners. I asked permission from the principal and parents before approaching the learners to be participants in this study.

1.11.1 Institutional level

This study employed ethical principles, including, but not limited to, respecting participants' autonomy, minimising harm, protecting privacy and treating the participants equitably (Hammersly, 2012).

Participants' autonomy was respected by allowing them to make their own decision regarding whether to participate. This included the right to withdraw from the study at any given time if they decided to do so, without giving any reasons.

1.11.2 Safety of participants

I ensured that the study did not cause any harm whatsoever, including reputational and financial harm to the participants.

1.11.3 Confidentiality

All guidelines for ethical rules were followed to assure participants that the data would be kept confidential. Participants' names, schools, geographical regions and other identifiers were removed from the research data to ensure confidentiality (Hammersly, 2012; Mertens, 2008).

CHAPTER 2

PROMOTING THE LEARNERS' RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore and understand how public schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression as provided by international, regional and national laws, as well as the NPRE (DoE, 2003). Divisions, conflict, discrimination and court cases, amongst other things, fuelled or perpetrated as a result of religion policy development and implementation in the public schools in South Africa and elsewhere, have been reported in the media (Evans, 2017; SAFLLI, 2017). This study, therefore, intends to explore and understand the causes of religious conflict and exclusion, and how public schools try to manage and promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. In this chapter, I will therefore attempt to review relevant and related literature.

In this chapter I firstly discuss the concept of "the right to freedom of religious expression". Secondly, I discuss the right to freedom of expression as a fundamental human right by reviewing international, regional and national laws, protocols and conventions to which South Africa is signatory. I shall also explore the provision and protection of this right by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996a), the South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996b) and the National Policy on Religion and Education (DoE, 2003). Thirdly, and with thorough engagement with the literature, I shall deliberate on religion in public schools followed by looking at its importance in education. Fifthly, I shall present learners' experiences of the right to freedom of religious expression, paying particular attention to the challenges and prospects in this regard. Lastly, I will conclude by presenting what would seem to be the contributions that I intend to make by conducting this study.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF "FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS OF EXPRESSION"

The two concepts: "freedom of expression" and "freedom of religion" differ from each other, but are both fundamental rights afforded to everyone by international, regional and national law, for example the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UDHR, 1948b), the African Charter

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on Human and People's Rights of 1981 (OAU, 1981), and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996a).

In this study I brought the two concepts of "freedom of religion" and "freedom of expression" together to form what I term "freedom of religious expression". This study will therefore explore the learners' freedom of expression in public secondary schools with specific reference to their religious freedom. I therefore discuss these two concepts below.

2.2.1 Freedom of expression

Several scholars agree that the definition of the term "expression" is broader than speech and may include activities such as displaying posters, dancing, sculpting and the publication of photographs, among others (Bray, 2005; DoE, 1998; Malherbe, 2003; Van Vollenhoven, 2005; Van Vollenhoven et al., 2006). The definition may also include every act that learners may use in an attempt to express their emotions, grievances and opinions and therefore include freedom of belief, opinion and association (Van Vollenhoven et al., 2006).

2.2.2 Freedom of religion

Freedom of religion in public schools means the right of everyone, including learners, to express their own religious belief freely, publicly and privately, either in the form of practice, teaching, worship or observance (Mestry, 2007; RSA, 1996a, 1996b). Religion and religious freedom played and still play an important role is shaping events in South Africa and elsewhere, as a result getting freedom of religion right in public schools is essential. Freedom of religion is afforded to very person in South Africa, including learners, by section 15(1) of the Constitution.

In this study, I integrate the two concepts of "expression" and "religion" to explore and understand the way in which public secondary schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. Put differently, I investigated the way learners' expressions based on religion are nurtured and promoted. Haynes (2012) posits that today there are more studies about religious expression and religion in public schools than at any time in the last century. He also argues that, in some public schools, officials continue to promote or censor learners' religious expressions, which is sponsored by the schools, which is unconstitutional. I believe that understanding the place of religion and its accompanying expression in public schools is crucial for preventing conflict and

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building tolerance and accommodation among the diverse religions found in public schools. In the following section, I discuss freedom of expression as a fundamental human right.

2.3 THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT

Human rights, including the right to freedom of expression, are instruments that have been intentionally put in place to restrict the governments' power from interfering with people. Everyone possesses human rights just for the fact that they are born and for being human beings. Therefore, every human being has the same and equal human rights irrespective of their economic, political, social religious and cultural orientations (Bray, 2005; ICCPR, 1976; RSA, 1996a; Van Vollenhoven & Blignaut, 2007). Human rights are commonly recognised principles of impartiality and justice (Van Vollenhoven et al., 2006). Therefore, protection of human rights is a requirement in the public schools in democratic countries. In such democratic countries the right to freedom of expression is seen as one of the fundamental rights that are applied in resolving social challenges (Van Vollenhoven et al., 2006). It for these reasons that the authors cited here see the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1990 (CRC) as strengthening the protection of children's human rights, particularly in public schools, by minimising the uncurbed abuse of children's fundamental rights.

Freedom of expression, opinion and information is acknowledged as a fundamental human right in South Africa, and elsewhere, in line with international statutes, for example Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the International Covenant on Civil Political Rights of 1976 and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of 1986 (DoE, 1998; ICCPR, 1976; OAU, 1981; UDHR, 1948a; Van Vollenhoven et al., 2006). The right to freedom of expression is also perceived as a cornerstone of democracy (Van Vollenhoven et al., 2006). Freedom of expression serves as a prerequisite for strong democracies in the context of real democracies that respect human rights (Mastracci, 2018). Therefore, affording everyone freedom of expression is seen as a move away from an authoritarian and repressive culture of governance to one of openness and transparency, particularly in public schools (Van Vollenhoven, 2015). This right also plays a fundamental role in the protection of the other rights established by the Constitution and other international conventions and protocols, such as the freedom of association and assembly and the freedom of thought, belief, conscience and religion. A democratic society is

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impossible without the basic right to freedom of expression because such societies' development depend on its ability to receive and impart information and ideas (Mastracci, 2018).

The American Convention on Human Rights of 1978 affords everyone rights and freedoms, including freedom of religious expression to be protected and respected (ACHR, 1978). This is in line with other international advancements of human rights, such as The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1953, which reaffirms the core freedoms that underpins peace and justice (ECHR, 1953).

South Africa has signed and ratified the above international laws, conventions and protocols and is thereby protecting human rights, which I shall discuss below.

2.3.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, affords everyone human rights, including religious freedom, religious diversity and, therefore, freedom of religious expression (Ntho-Ntho & Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Human rights in South Africa reflect the Constitutional values of:

> (a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms.
>
> (b) Non-racialism and non-sexism.
>
> (c) Supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law.
>
> (d) Universal adult suffrage, a national common voters' roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness (RSA, 1996a, p. 15).

These Constitutional values are also aligned with the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom as stipulated in section 7 of the same Constitution (Malherbe, 2003; RSA, 1996a; Van Vollenhoven, 2015; Van Vollenhoven et al., 2006; Van Vollenhoven & Blignaut, 2007). Section 9 of the Constitution affords everyone equality before the law which includes equal protection and benefit of the law. Subsection 3 of this section lists the grounds upon which the state may not discriminate anyone, which include conscience, belief, culture and religion, amongst others (RSA, 1996a). Learners are, therefore protected from any form of discriminatory practices that are based on the grounds listed under section 9, including religion, and should be free from any form of coercion or constraint because, according to Mestry (2007), the presence of freedom is characterised by the absence of coercion and restraint.

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The Constitution also affords everyone the right to freedom of speech and expression, including learners, through its section 16. This section affords everyone the right to articulate their opinions and/or ideas without fear of retaliation, censorship, or legal sanction, among others. The section states that:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes:
>
> (a) Freedom of the press and other media;
>
> (b) Freedom to receive or impart information or ideas;
>
> (c) Freedom of artistic creativity; and
>
> (d) Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research (RSA, 1996a, p. 21)

It is clear from this section of the Constitution that freedom of expression can be used by learners to understand current problems, and investigate and synthesise their own opinions on contemporary issues (Nthontho, 2017a; RSA, 1996a). This right enables learners to express new ideas and findings which favour scientific, artistic or cultural development. It is universally accepted that freedom of expression can create a marketplace for ideas and, therefore, guarantees individual advancement and self-accomplishment resulting from participating in democratic processes (Nthontho, 2017a; Van Vollenhoven, 2015).

The Constitution paved the way for the promulgation of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) (hereafter referred to as SASA), which regulates all matters that pertain to public school education in the country. The SASA endorsed the religious freedoms as guaranteed by the Constitution. It is through this Act that school governing bodies (SGBs) are democratically elected with a mandate of drafting codes of conduct for learners, vision and mission of the school, policies that regulate language and religion in education (Ntho-Ntho & Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

2.3.2 The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996)

The SASA upholds the Constitutional rights of all citizens to freedom of conscience, religion, belief and opinion" amongst others (RSA, 1996b, p. 7). The Act also sets out its aim in the preamble as to "combat racism, sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance" in the public schools (RSA, 1996b, p. 1). It further provides for religion and religious observances to be conducted at public schools, through section 7 in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic. This section stipulates that:

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> … subject to the Constitution and any applicable law, religious observances may be conducted at a public school under rules issued by the governing body, and if such observances are attended, it should be on an equitable basis and attendance at them by learners and members of staff should be free and voluntary (RSA, 1996b, p. 12).

Section 8 of the SASA mandates the SGBs of public schools to "adopt a code of conduct for the learners after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school" with the aim of creating a disciplined school that maintains a qualitative learning process. Such a code of conduct should follow the Guidelines for the Consideration of School Governing Bodies that were determined by the Minister of Education in 1998, as contemplated in subsection 3 of this section (RSA, 1996b). According to the guidelines, freedom of expression goes beyond freedom of speech because freedom of expression includes external expression that may be expressed in the choice of clothing and hairstyles. The guideline states that "freedom of expression includes the right to seek, hear, read and wear" (DoE, 1998). Freedom of expression in communities, and therefore public schools, is built on the impression that learners would live their lives freely and be able to express their genuine beliefs about the value of life and its meaning (Warnick, 2012).

The SASA led to the proclamation of the Policy on Religion and Education to influence and shape the relationship between religion and education in the public secondary school, which I shall discuss below (DoE, 2003).

2.3.4 The National Policy on Religion and Education

The National Policy on Religion and Education (DoE, 2003) was approved as a framework through which the school community may devise approaches to religion in South African public schools following the lead of the Constitution and the SASA (DoE, 2003, p. 2). The religion policy is aligned directly to the Constitution, which enshrined the values of equality, human rights, thought, religion and belief amongst others. According to Mestry (2007), the aim of enshrining these values in the Constitution is to ensure that institutional guarantees which are important in the fulfilment of freedoms and equality of religions are realised. Therefore, the Constitution, SASA and the religion policy (DoE, 2003) form the basis for promoting freedom of religious expression in public schools. The public schools must ensure and protect the right of learners to be at school just as they recognise, respect and appreciate the learners' religious views (DoE, 2003). This policy instructs the SGBs to make their facilities available for religious observances provided it is done

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on an equitable basis. This is in accordance with the equality clause as prescribed by the Constitution and the Act.

From the above discussion, it is clear the Constitution, international, regional and national values also acknowledge that freedom of expression, and its accompanying freedom of religious expression, comprises mediums such as oral, attire, bodily expression, written and print, including the internet or through art forms. This means that the protection of freedom of expression as a right includes not only the content but also the means of expression that favour human development (Malcolm, 2018a; Van Vollenhoven, 2015). This right, as with other rights, is afforded with some responsibilities to their bearers. Therefore, the following section looks at the limitation of the right to freedom of expression.

2.3.5 Limitation of the right to freedom of expression

The Constitution, in line with international statutes, does not afford freedom of expression as an absolute right. There are common limitations or restrictions to this right, which include amongst others, slander, libel, incitement, perjury, non-disclosure agreement and the right to privacy. The multicultural nature of many countries, including South Africa, warrants the limitation of this right (Van Vollenhoven, 2015). Section 16(2)(a) to (d) provide the following as limitations the right:

> The right in subsection (1) does not extend to –
> (a) Propaganda for war;
> (b) Incitement of imminent violence; or
> (c) advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm (RSA, 1996a, p. 21).

The above limitation of this right is in line with Article 19(3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which limits the exercise of the right to freedom of expression by prescribing special duties and responsibilities. According to ICCPR the right "may therefore be subject to certain restrictions", but these shall only be such if those restrictions are provided by law and are necessary (ICCPR, 1976, p. 11). Paragraph 4(4.5.2) of the Guidelines for the Consideration of Governing Bodies in Adopting a Code of Conduct for Learners says the following regarding the limitation of the learners' right to freedom of expression in line with international law, and the Constitution:

> … the learners' rights to enjoy freedom of expression are not absolute. Vulgar words, insubordination and insults are not protected speech. When the expression leads to a material and

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substantial disruption in school operations, activities or the rights of others, this right can be limited as the disruption of schools is unacceptable (DoE, 1998, p. 3).

The Guidelines further reminds learners of their right to the agreed procedures that are to be followed when initiating and settling school-related disputes. These procedures include due processes, appeal methods and peacefully assembling on school premises, at a time and place as designated by the school principal (DoE, 1998). The same is true in the USA, where some universities have drafted and imposed speech codes, with serious penalties for transgression, that include ostracism and suspension for students, while the staff is sometimes pressured to resign (Malcolm, 2018a). All these are efforts aimed at protecting and promoting the learners' right to freedom of expression and its accompanying religious freedom of expression which this study aims to investigate.

2.4 RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In trying to introduce learners to religion in South African public schools, and elsewhere, and to promote freedom of religious expression, as well as accommodation and tolerance among the diverse religions, at an early age among the learners, the Department of Basic Education introduced "Life Skills" as a subject in the curriculum of the Foundation (Grades R–3) and Intermediate phases (Grades 4–6). Knowledge of major religions in South Africa, including Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, the Baha'i faith and African Religion, is introduced. Accordingly, learners in Grades 4 to 6 are exposed to the various religious customs and festivals and discussions about a person's dignity in the various religions (Driesen & Tayob, 2016; Nogueira-Godsey, 2016).

The subject, Life Orientation (LO), is offered from Grades 7 to 9 and Grades 10 to 12, which are the Senior and the Further Education and Training phases, respectively. In these two phases, the learners are taught about their Constitutional rights and responsibilities (Driesen & Tayob, 2016; Nogueira-Godsey, 2016). Chidester (2008) acknowledges the introduction of the subject as the government's commitment to "Unity in Diversity" as stipulated in the Constitution. It is worrying, however, that according to a study conducted by Nogueira-Godsey (2016), educators encounter several obstacles to implementing the LO curriculum effectively and therefore face challenges in promoting freedom of expression. The obstacles include, in general, that educators do not have a comprehensive understanding of the NPRE. Secondly, the government does not provide engaged

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textbooks on religion education knowledge or specific training intended to approach religion from a multi-religious perspective. Therefore, it becomes unreasonable to expect the educators to commit to the promotion of diversity and pluralism in public schools (Nogueira-Godsey, 2016).

We should also take note that public schools are not religiously neutral (Feinberg, 2013); they may favour a secular over a religious understanding of the world. According to the participants in Niens et al. (2013) study, religion enabled them to maintain a sense of being part of their community when they are around the school. They also saw it as being central to and in their lives. To support this, (Basil, 2012) sees life without to be church, a place of public Christian worship or religious service, as being inconceivable because he believes that it teaches Christians a way of life. Religions can inculcate moral values of respect and discipline in their believers (Nthontho, 2013b). The participants in Nthontho's study attributed ill-discipline in schools today to a lack of religious education in the school curriculum because they felt that religion was the source of these values (Nthontho, 2013b). (Dreyer, 2007) also argues that religions and religious leaders have a role to play in democratic societies and schools in particular. Feinberg (2013, p. 2) also acknowledges that "humans are moral beings existing in a web of obligations with other persons of God, and some practices and policies are right or wrong in themselves and not subject to cost-benefit analysis". The diverse religious groups, particularly in public schools, should be accommodative, collaborative and inclusive of each other in order for them to coexist in society.

Religions in public schools have a potential to be turned into coercive platforms, thereby defeating the purpose and spirit of the Constitution, which include among others, collaboration, equality, non-discriminative, tolerance and respect for human rights (Dreyer, 2007). The schools should use religion to ensure that no learner "feel[s] ashamed or excluded because his or her beliefs are not those of the majority in the school" (DoE, 2003). In the USA, this coercive potential of religion was addressed by separating the church and state (Franken, 2016; Mawdsley & Beckmann, 2018). US courts ruled that prayer meetings, where learners are in attendance, are unconstitutional because students may be subjected to prayers that are not part of their religion (Connors, 1988; Essex, 2002; Franken, 2016; Mestry, 2007). In South Africa, the Minister of Education declared in the policy that there is no state religion, but the country was not even secular, because there is no strict separation of state and religion (DoE, 2003; Mestry, 2007).

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2.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The importance of religion in life is revealed in the study by Miller (2011). In this study, most of the participants agreed that religion is very important. They also said that their entire lifestyle and what they were trying to be were based on their belief in God. They further regarded daily prayers and respect for others' views and other religions as important traits that humans should strive for. The participants also added that no single religion exists in isolation or is self-sufficient or independent. Therefore, there is no one faith or one religious school that can prepare the learners alone to live differently from others (Feinberg, 2013). Religions are independent of each other, but according to Miller's study, their moral education seems to overlap (Miller, 2011).

Besides the advantages that religions have, several researchers agree that there are contentious debates about religion in public schools (Mestry, 2007; Ntho-Ntho & Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Shah, 2009; Van der Walt, 2011). These debates are the most contentious because they deal with minor learners who are captive audience under the state's compulsory attendance laws (Mawdsley & Beckmann, 2018). Their contentiousness creates challenges within the multi-faith character of the public education system. Anczyk and Grzymala-Moszczynska (2018) argue that the multi-faith character of public schools poses challenges about the place of religion in schools. For this reason, and many others, questions of religious tolerance, accommodation and diversity, and whether to remove religion from schools have been debated at length in South African schools and elsewhere by stakeholders in public education (Nthontho, 2017a; Wang, 2013b). At times, the debate on the removal of religion in public schools is fuelled by the fear of "indoctrination and desire for religious freedom" (Wang, 2013b, p. 152). For example, the Organisation of Religious Education and Democracy (OGOD) took six schools in the Gauteng Department of Education, South Africa, to court, accusing them of "indoctrinating" their children (de Freitas & du Plessis, 2018; de Wet, 2017). The Constitutional Court ruled that public schools could not adopt one religion to the exclusion of others. According to De Freitas and Du Plessis (2018), this ruling confirms the significance of accommodating diverse religions in public schools.

Similar issues include the role of religion in public schools within a multicultural society, which has also been a fiercely debated topic for academic discourses (Haynes, 2012; Niens et al., 2013). This can be further attested to by both the old and the contemporary wars fought in the name of religion, such as the Maitatsine group in Nigeria, which inflicted severe violence in the name of

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religion in Nigeria's northern parts which left 4000 to 6000 people dead between 1979 and 1983 (Sulaiman, 2016). Recent examples include the Boko Haram violence, which claimed many lives and displaced more than 3000 people in Nigeria. Because public schools are now more multiple faith than ever before, it is important to understand how freedom of expression is promoted because such an understanding may benefit policy development processes.

2.6 LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Research has shown that since the implementation of the NPRE in 2003, there have been several cases reported in the South African media which demonstrate that there is still intolerance and discrimination based on religion in public schools (de Freitas & du Plessis, 2018; Nogueira-Godsey, 2016; Rousseau, 2010; Van Vollenhoven, 2005; Vopat, 2010). These reports draw attention to the fact that while the Constitution, Acts and policy afford learners freedom of religious expression, the public education system has not yet caught up with the requirements of South Africa's multi-religious society, including freedom of religious expression in public schools (Haynes, 2012; Nogueira-Godsey, 2016; Van Vollenhoven, 2015; Warnick, 2012). The Policy on Religion and Education also acknowledges that there have been instances where public schools have discriminated against learners on the grounds of religion, for example where learners have been forced to attend religious observances without being given a choice of whether or not to attend (DoE, 2003).

There are several reasons why educators make religious choices on behalf of the learners in public school. According to Van Vollenhoven and Blignaut (2007), in a country with diverse religious and cultural groups, the rights of everybody are not always equally protected. The reasons include the fact that educators thought that learners are still young and have limited understanding and information on the world and therefore their religious background cannot be said to reflect the learners' choices. This, according to Malcolm (2018) and Warnick (2012), led to some educators choosing the religions that they thought were best for the learners. Hill (2014), attributed the learners' lack of freedom religious choice and the discrimination and intolerance suffered by them to "religious dominance" toward minority groups or religions, although it should be noted that the "dominance" and "minority" in Hill's study referred to numerical prevalence. This is also confirmed by the Policy which states that although South Africa is home to diverse religions, that

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encompasses diverse practices and understandings, 60% of South Africans claim allegiance to Christianity (DoE, 2003). Put differently, an educator in a public school who belongs to a dominant religion may subject a learner to a religious activity chosen by the teacher, for example religious observances or morning assemblies for prayers. Such religious observances and morning prayers may be conducted differently from the learner's own religion if it differs from the educator's religion. This is exacerbated by educators "having little knowledge about other religions than their own", and even if they have such knowledge, it is often tiny (Haynes, 2012, p. 9). According to Van Vollenhoven (2007), it is often difficult to balance freedom of religion and its accompanying right to freedom of expression in public schools with the right to equality. This is because, although everyone is entitled to equal freedom of religious expression, the religions are not necessarily equal. This means some are in the majority while others are in the minority.

Sulaiman (2016), Barber-Lester and Edwards (2018), Malcolm (2018) and Tayob (2015) note that cases of religious intolerance and discrimination, more often than not, disrupt the normal flow of schooling. This is because schools will be in and out of courts of law instead of concentrating on the primary aim of schooling, which is effective teaching and learning. In most such cases, learners were suspended or dismissed as a result of the wearing of religious attire or the physical exhibition of religious symbols. Such learners, in some cases, were only allowed back to school after the courts of law or various government bodies had intervened (Tayob, 2015). For example, in 2013 and 2014, two schools in Cape Town were forced by the courts to revise their uniform policy and accommodate Muslim head coverings. In 2005, a Grade 11 learner at Durban Girls High School, Sunali Pillay, was threatened with suspension for wearing a religiously inspired nose ring. Lerato Motshabi, a learner at Navalsig High School in the Free State province, and Odwa Sitayaya, a learner at Joe Slovo Engineering High School in the Western Cape province, were ordered to cut their dreadlocks or face expulsion. In another case, Lerato Radebe was forced to spend the whole day in the staffroom, and not allowed to go into the classroom, unless she cut her dreadlocks. Some of these cases were taken up to Constitutional Court of South Africa either by parents or by members of the Department of Education. In each of the cases, the courts ruled in favour of the learners, in that the schools had to modify their school dress code to accommodate the learners (Nogueira-Godsey, 2016; Tayob, 2015).

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Tayob (2015) argues that in all the cases that have been reported in the media in South Africa, schools and governing bodies have made it very difficult for learners to express religious and cultural differences that are not part of the dominant expectations of the schools. Nevertheless, under pressure, the public schools have had to amend or change their uniform and discipline policies and codes so that they are aligned with the new public school demographics. This author also suggests that some South African public schools have been proactive in addressing diversity, while some were almost oblivious of the demands of the Constitution.

Similar cases are also reported internationally. A study by Barber-Lester and Edwards investigated "what constitutes protected students' speech, and what kinds of expression lose protection because they are deemed disruptive or unsafe?" in the United States (2018, p. 1). The study investigated the violence that erupted after anti-racist protesters demolished the Confederate memorial at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2018. The protest followed years of conflict with administrators and legislators over the right to the existence of the memorial. The article also describes similar acts in Middlebury College in 2017 where protesters demonstrated against a talk and interview by Dr Charles Murray who was later physically attacked by the students. These incidents led to some scholars stopping their speaking tours. In these examples, protestors' rights to freedom of speech and expression are pitted against the rights to freedom of expression and speech of speakers, leading some states to propose legislation to suspend or expel students who repeatedly disrupt campus speakers (Hawkins, 2017).

In another case, in May 2017, two black students at Malden Charter School in Massachusetts, USA, were disciplined by their school administrators for acting contrary to the school's hair policy "by having their hair styled in braids with extensions" (Barber-Lester & Edwards, 2018, p. 2). The students' parent believed that the students' hairstyles were a significant expression of culture and therefore viewed the school policy as racist and unreasonably affecting black children, and against the students' constitutionally guaranteed right of equal protection and due process (Barber-Lester & Edwards, 2018). According to these authors, "these instances illustrate the dual, often strained, obligations of schools to protect students' freedom of expression together with the need to create a school atmosphere that is safe and caring for all students" (2018, p. 3). As Malcolm (2018) puts it, restricting freedom of speech and expression strikes twice at intellectual freedom, "for whoever

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deprives another of the right to state unpopular views necessarily also deprives others of the right to listen to those views" (p. 10).

In other countries, for example in France, the law that governs public school codes is different. The wearing of religious symbols or clothing by learners that publicly manifests a religious association is prohibited. French law does not identify with a particular faith, but it prohibits equally all the wearing of noticeable religious symbols, including Christian crosses and Jewish yarmulkes. However, the laws are widely seen as being aimed at the wearing of the hijab by Muslim girls and young women because the French authorities have been dealing with the "conflict over the hijab for several years" (Gey, 2005, p. 7).

Several scholars argue for and against the complete removal of religion from public school education (Feinberg, 2013; Franken, 2016). According to De Freitas and Du Plessis (2018), the removal or "exclusion of God" from public schools has another dimension. According to these authors, the "exclusion of God" does not necessarily result in neutrality on the part of the public school toward religions; instead, what enters is the marginalisation of any expression that is at all religious. Such a neutrality is seen as "exclusive neutrality" that contends that an unbiased agenda can be realised only if the state totally neglects religious and cultural differences. This would heavily marginalise religions in public schools, whilst introducing an encompassing and subjective non-religious context or background that cannot be exactly neutral because of "its exclusivist effect" (de Freitas & du Plessis, 2018; Vallejo, 2018). In other words, excluding religion from education would be seen as favouring secularism, and thereby discriminating against religion. I shall discus below how, according to some scholars, schools may promote freedom of religious expression.

2.7 PROMOTING LEARNERS' RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

The protection of individuals from abuse of state power, and therefore the learners from school authorities is fulfilled by the vertical application of the Bill of Rights. This means that the state must make every effort to respect, protect and fulfil the rights contained in the Bill of Rights (Mestry, 2007). Section 9(4) of the Constitution mandates the state to enact legislation that prevents and prohibits unfair discrimination (RSA, 1996a). This is done through the promulgation of Acts, policies and regulations, for example the SASA of 1996 and the Policy on Religion and

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Education of 2003, that prescribe, regulate and govern the relationships in education and other departments.

Many scholars report the challenges facing learners regarding religious expression in public schools, for example (Haynes, 2012; Van Vollenhoven & Blignaut, 2007). The challenges regarding religion in education and the promotion of the learners' religious right need adult supervision, in this case the educators, who are in loco parentis, meaning that they stand in the place of the parent in public schools. Educators should guard against taking unfair advantage of the learners' immaturity by indoctrinating them with their own thoughts and beliefs (Nthontho, 2018; Wang, 2013b). It is worth noting that, at their age, learners have not yet had an opportunity to fairly scrutinise other opinions about other religions, and therefore have insufficient knowledge and maturity of judgement to be eligible to form any definitive opinion of their own (Malcolm, 2018; Van Vollenhoven, 2015; Warnick, 2012). The educators must, therefore, ensure that religious orientations are not imposed on learners because it would be unfair to force learners to endorse a set of religious views that they are not part of. Letting learners grow and develop maturity of judgement and opinion ensures the advancement of and complete association with a democratic society (Warnick, 2012).

The principal obligation of the public school is to protect the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. It is, therefore, the duty of public-school governors and managers, including teachers, to take practical steps to protect this right (Malcolm, 2018). It should also be noted that religious expressions that are introduced and enforced by school authorities are prohibited, while the learners' initiated religious expressions are protected, provided they do not disrupt any school activities (DoE, 1998; RSA, 1996a; Warnick, 2012). The Guidelines for the Consideration of Governing Bodies in Adopting a Code of Conduct for Learners (DoE, 1998) stresses that the public school should protect learners from abuse or exploitation by adults and/or other learners in the promotion of the right to freedom of religious expression. It also mandates the educators to restrain learners whose actions may be capable of inflicting harm on others in the school and/or violating the rights of other learners and educators in promoting this right (DoE, 1998).

The study by Malcolm (2018) recommends several standards that may be applied in promoting freedom of expression. These include, amongst others, the creation of campus codes of conduct that respect free speech and expression together with deliberations that emphasise these values, as

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well as the public school being clear on what is expected of the school community and clarifying any associated sanctions. It is clear from the above discussion that affording the learners the right to freedom of religious expression has its own challenges. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology I used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGNS AND METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature relevant and related to the subject of promoting learners' right to freedom of religious expression by discussing the provisions and protection of this learner right by international, regional and national laws. I also deliberated on religion in public schools and its importance, freedom of expression as a fundamental human right and how learners experienced this right in public schools. I concluded by looking at the suggestions that some scholars make for the promotion of learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

In this chapter, I describe the research design and methods chosen for this study. The research design and methods are the collection of systematic rules, procedures, principles and tools by which this research will be conducted (Cohen et al., 2002). To describe these, I discuss the ontological assumptions, research approach, research design and methods that I used in this study. I also provide my sampling methods and samples, as well as data gathering and data analysis procedures, and conclude by looking at how I ensured trustworthiness in this study. I shall conclude by looking at the ethical considerations that I applied to ensure informed consent, voluntary participation and the protection of participants in this study.

3.2 ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Ontology refers to the way people view the nature of reality being studied, which in this case was the exploration of participants' lived experiences, events and activities of how public secondary schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression (Hammersley, 2012; Scotland, 2012). The ontological assumption of the interpretive research paradigm, on which this study was based, is relativism (Creswell, 2014; Scotland, 2012). For the interpretivists, and therefore an interpretive research paradigm, reality is constructed individually and, as a result, every individual participant brought their own understanding and experiences of how the learners' right to freedom of religious expression is promoted at their schools (Cohen et al., 2002; Creswell, 2014). Put differently, my task as the researcher was to understand how the participants saw, thought and felt about the promotion of learners' right with the purpose of grasping their

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perspectives in their own terms (Hammersley, 2012). The participants described their own social construction of ideas of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression which they built through their social interactions (Scotland, 2012). These descriptions were the participants' jointly constructed ideas of how they experienced and understood this right, which were created through their interactions and relationships (Maree, 2016). Relativism, as I discussed above, informed the choice of a qualitative research approach, data collection and analysis method, which I discuss below.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

In this study, research approach refers to the general framework that guided how I conducted aspects of this research and its theoretical orientation (Creswell, 2014; Lichtman, 2017a). Accordingly, this study was guided by a qualitative research approach. According to Lichtman (2017b, p. 13), a qualitative research approach seeks to "describe, understand, and interpret human *phenomena*, human *interaction*, or human *discourse"*. Lichtman also explains that human *phenomena*, refers to the lived experiences of the participants, while human *interaction*, as the word denotes, refers to how participants interact with each other, especially looking at their culture. She further adds that human *discourse* is about communication among humans themselves or when they communicate ideas. In my study, the two concepts, namely "human phenomena" and "human interaction" described above were intertwined (Lichtman, 2017a, 2017b). Put differently, the participants described their experiences, which they gained through their interactions and communication in the public secondary schools. The goal was to explore and understand the meaning these participants constructed in their personal interactions with regulations that govern the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression in the public secondary schools (Creswell, 2014; Lichtman, 2017a)

This study used a qualitative research approach to explore and understand the meanings the participants attached to human and social challenges (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1988). As Cohen et al. (2002) put it, a qualitative research approach is based on words and, therefore, this enabled me to gather rich and personal data. In this study, the rich, personal data were the participants' experiences of the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression in public secondary schools. Through a qualitative research approach, I entered research sites with

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an intention of understanding, describing, or explaining social phenomena from within to analyse the experiences of participants (Flick, 2018).

A qualitative research approach allowed me to collect data in the participants' natural setting. Thereafter, I interpreted the meaning of the collected data (Lichtman, 2017a). The use of a qualitative approach also enabled me to establish the meaning of phenomena from the views of the participants (Cohen et al., 2002; Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, this approach afforded me the opportunity to gain detailed descriptions and understandings of the participants' experiences regarding the promotion of learners' right to freedom of religious expression (Cohen et al., 2002).

The limitations that I encountered in using a qualitative research approach included that it was time-consuming and I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Flick, 2018). To deal with this issue, I used a smaller sample size since qualitative research is interested in rich saturated data rather than the number of participants (Timmons & Cairns, 2012). I also provided a thick description of the research site, the participants and the interviews to validate the data. However, this approach also comprised bias because my subjectivity came into play during data collection, analysis and interpretation (Cohen et al., 2002). To ensure credibility in the study, I used a reflective journal and memos during the fieldwork and data analysis to record and reflect on the information obtained (Mills et al., 2014). The goal was to explore and understand the meaning the participants construct in their personal interactions with the policies and regulations that prescribe the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression in public schools. The research design that informed this study is discussed below.

3.4 CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

In the preceding subsection, I discussed the qualitative research approach which I employed in my study and why I felt it was appropriate for understanding the subjective meanings the participants attached to their experiences on the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression in public secondary schools. In this subsection I discuss the action plan, or design, that guided my study in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data with the aim of finding answers to the research question (Creswell, 2014; Lichtman, 2017a). Yin (1993) defines research design as an "action plan of getting from the initial set of questions to be answered to the answers about the questions" (p. 19). He also defines a research design as the logical arrangement of

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activities that eventually connect the data that I collected to my conclusions on the primary research questions for this study. In this study, I collected data with the aim of finding answers to the question: "How do the public schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression?"

This study used a case study research design. This type of research design emerged as a means for conducting educational research in the 1970s and 1980s in reaction to the quantitative bias and primacy of measurement as a means of capturing data (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2014b). According to Yin (1993, p. 13) and Maree (2016, p. 81), a case study comprises empirical research which aims to explore current events within their real-life setting, particularly "when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". In this study, the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression, as a phenomenon, occurs in public secondary schools, as a bounded context, and occur in conjunction with each other. As Yin (1993) puts it, a case study research design enabled me to study the implementation of religion policies public secondary schools.

I chose case study design because I wanted to answer "how" the learners' right to freedom of religious expression is promoted in the public secondary school, which is a contemporary event in which I could not manipulate the behaviour of the participants (Zucker, 2009). In other words, the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression occurs in public secondary schools without my interference or involvement. I also chose a case study research design because the promotion of this right occurs in a real-life context, that is, in public schools, and I have no control over how the learners' right to freedom of expression is promoted (Yin, 1993). Case study further allowed me to obtain a rich and all-inclusive account of events by offering insights and revealing meanings that would increase the readers' experience (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2014b).

Multisite case study is a term often used interchangeably with multiple case studies, comparative case study and collective case studies, referring to case studies that are used to investigate a common and recent phenomenon in two or more realistic settings, for example two or three public schools (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2014b). Such case studies are used to explore and understand events from various angles (du Plooy-Celliers et al., 2014). Multisite case study was used in this study to assist me to understand religion policy implementation in public secondary

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schools through multiple representations from the three sampled secondary schools (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). These multisite case studies also helped me to illuminate the participants' experiences in more than one setting, thereby giving a broader understanding of how the learners' right to freedom of religious expression is promoted. It further enabled me to elicit common findings from across the different settings, as a result allowing me to gain a richer and deeper understanding of how the learners' right to freedom of religious expression was promoted (Mills et al., 2010). Although a multisite case study was employed in this study, the research design was the same at all sites. In other words, data collection and analysis were done by considering the same research question.

I avoided a disadvantage of such case study, that is, of being sloppy and allowing "equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions", by reporting all data fairly (Yin, 1993, p. 9). Reporting data fairly means I reported equally about all data that were for and against the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. Mills et al. (2010) warn that analysing data could be challenging in multisite research owing to the sheer volume of data. To overcome this challenge, I used a smaller sample size, but with the intention of obtaining rich, thick data. Another concern was that case study findings provide insufficient foundations for scientific generalisation (Yin, 1993). In this case, it is worth noting that this qualitative study was not interested in numerical or statistical generalisation. Although case studies have their disadvantages, they have been proven to be predominantly valuable for studying educational innovations, evaluating programmes and advising on policy (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2014b). I, therefore, found it suitable and appropriate to use a case study in this study on religion policy implementation in public secondary schools. The research design also prescribed my data collection strategies, which I shall present in the following section.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, research methods refer to the techniques and procedures I used to collect and analyse data (Creswell, 2014). These methods were informed by the purpose of my study which was to "explore how public secondary schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expressions". This purpose guided me on how I chose my research population, my sample, data collection strategy and analysis, as I shall discuss below (Creswell, 2014; du Plooy-Celliers et al., 2014; Maree, 2016).

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3.5.1. Sampling

Sampling in this qualitative research refers to the process of choosing the relevant people who were most likely to provide insight and understanding regarding my research question that I wanted to answer, which is "How do public secondary schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression?" (Marshall, 1996). In this study I used a purposive sampling technique. This is a non-probability sampling technique which I used to actively select the most productive research sites, participants and documents that have characteristics relevant to my study (Maree, 2016; Marshall, 1996). Put differently, purposive sampling enabled me to hand-pick any public secondary school and its stakeholders because they had knowledge and experience about the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression (Cohen et al., 2002). I therefore used purposive sampling to select public secondary schools and participants with the specific purpose of answering the research question for this study: "How do public schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression?"

However, the limitation of purposive sampling is that the sample selected using this procedure is not representative of the larger population of public secondary schools and the participants (Cohen et al., 2002). Put differently, the sampled participants spoke for themselves rather than any group and, therefore, the findings may not be generalisable. It is worth noting that generalisability was not the concern of this study, but rather the acquisition of in-depth data from the sample (Cohen et al., 2002).

3.5.1.1 Research sites

Although most public schools in South Africa qualified to participate in my study, it was impossible to include all of them (Maree, 2016). I therefore purposively selected three public secondary schools in the Bohlabela District of Mpumalanga province. This means I deliberately selected any three public secondary school in the district because any of these schools could answer the questions relating to how they promoted the learners' right to freedom of religious expression (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Marshall, 1996). Secondly, these schools were willing to provide rich information about what they knew or experienced of the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression (Etikan et al., 2016). Thirdly, in this qualitative research I was not interested in the number of schools or area in which they are found, but rather the depth

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and saturation of the data (Roulson & Choi, 2018). Therefore, any public secondary school in any district qualified for inclusion.

3.5.1.2 The participants

This study needed participants who had knowledge about the activities and/or operations and/or experiences in public secondary schools regarding the promotion of the right of learners to freedom of religious expression (Cohen et al., 2002). Therefore, the SGBs, principals, LO educators and learners are the ones who had experiences regarding the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression in public secondary schools. Accordingly, they were able to answer my research question: "how do public secondary schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression?"

In terms of section 8 of the SASA, SGBs, together with the principal as ex-officio, have been entrusted with the duty of adopting the policies of the school, including the religion policy (RSA, 1996b). The SGB chairpersons of the sampled schools were included among the participants because they form part of the governance of the school. They were therefore in a good position to share their experiences relating to school policy, specifically the school religion policy.

Secondly, the principals were the most important participants because they are entrusted with the management of the school, including the implementation of policies such as that of religion as stipulated in section 16A(2) of the SASA. This section states that "the principal must undertake the professional management of a public school and the implementation of policy and legislation" (RSA, 1996b, p. 24). It is for this reason that their experience regarding the promotion of the freedom of religious expression was essential for the study.

Thirdly, the experiences of the LO educators in teaching knowledge about the major religions in South Africa were important. LO as a subject introduces learners to their Constitutional rights and responsibilities (Tayob, 2015). Chidester (2008) acknowledges the introduction of LO as the government's commitment to "Unity in Diversity" as stipulated in the Constitution. One of the responsibilities of LO educators is to ensure and protect the right to freedom of religious expression and to instil recognition, respect and appreciation for learners' diverse religious views (DoE, 2003). Nogueira-Godsey (2016) acknowledges that educators may experience several obstacles in promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. Such educator experiences were

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crucial in this study. Therefore, I sampled one Life Orientation educator per sampled school to describe their experiences of the promotion of learners' right to freedom of religious expression through the eyes of educators. I selected Life Orientation educators because, as a subject, LO introduces learners to the various religions of the world (Nogueira-Godsey, 2016).

Lastly, I asked learners to participate with the aim of understanding their experiences of their right to freedom of religious expression. I requested the principals of the sampled public school, as gate keepers, to identify one learner from each of the major religions found in each of the three sampled schools. I chose only one learner per religion because I believe I could collect rich, thick data from each participant (Marshall, 1996; Mertens, 2008; Mills et al., 2014). The participants spoke for themselves and not for someone else, hence I had no intentions of generalising the findings (Cohen et al., 2002). I suggested to the principals to came up with one learner per the dominant religions in South Africa, which are Christianity, Islam and African Traditional religion(s) (Driesen & Tayob, 2013). This meant three learners per school multiplied by the three sampled schools, which meant nine learners participated in this study. Although I anticipated that the three dominant religions, that is, Christianity, African Traditional religion and Islam will each have a representative, it was difficult for the principals to come up with a fair representation. At School one, there were two Christians and one Muslim, at School two there were two Christians and one African Traditional religion and three Christians at School three. These learners were required to have been at the school for at least two years because they had to have experience and understanding of how things are done at the school. Ultimately, all the learner participants were in Grade 10.

Learners who were recently registered or enrolled, for example had spent one year at the school, were excluded because they did not have enough knowledge or understanding of the culture of the school. Grade 12 learners were also excluded because by the time of member checks, they might have left the school and therefore might have been difficult to trace. From knowing where and from whom the data would be collected, in the following sub-section I describe how the data were collected.

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3.5.2. Data collection

In this qualitative study, data collection meant the selection and production of verbal and/or non-verbal material with the intention of analysing and understanding phenomena through the participants' subjective experiences (Flick, 2018). In other words, I asked the participants questions regarding their experiences of how they promoted the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. I used directive means to find out what the participants thought, felt and had done in the promotion of this learner right. The participants used words to express their experiences (Firmin, 2012). The data were collected using semi-structured interviews and document analysis, as I present them below.

3.5.2.1. Semi-structured interviews

I used semi-structured interviews to collect data. These involve a question–answer session with open ended questions which I used to elicit information about my topic (Roulson & Choi, 2018). This type of interview is flexible as it allowed me and the participants to engage in a discussion or conversation. Additionally, semi-structured interviews enabled me to further probe the original questions depending on the participants' answers (Lichtman, 2017b; Olsen, 2014). Semi-structured interviews also allowed me to corroborate the data by asking open-ended questions, followed by further probing where I needed clarity (Frey, 2018; Lichtman, 2017a; McMillan & Schumamacher, 2010). According to Lichtman (2017b), semi-structured interviews are dynamic because they do not follow a predetermined script; rather the participants narrated their experiences of activities in which they promoted the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. Lastly, semi-structured interviews enabled me to enter the social world of the participants, as a result participants were able to shed light on their social interactions, indicating how they promoted the learners' right to freedom of religious expression (Smith & Osborn, 2004).

The interviews were conducted individually over two days after school hours in each of the sampled public secondary schools. The first day was set aside for the interviews with the chairperson of the SGB, the principal and the LO educator, while the second day was set aside for the learners. Conducting the interviews individually with each participant gave the participants the freedom to express their experiences without being intimidated by participants from other religions, especially the learners and/or marginalised participants (Cohen et al., 2002). Individual

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interviews also helped me to study sensitive matters relating to the promotion of learners' right to freedom of religious expression in public secondary schools.

It was important that I firstly drew up an interview schedule in advance. This comprised a set of questions to guide the interviews rather than dictating them. I started the interviews by establishing rapport with the participants. This refers to developing trusting relationships with the participants by establishing a comfortable atmosphere that put the participants at ease when answering the questions (Roulson & Choi, 2018). For example, I asked the participants about the weather and life at home to put them at ease before asking the interview questions. I listened attentively, interestedly and empathetically while I assured them of anonymity and confidentiality to maintain trust and rapport with the participants. Otherwise, if they felt the interviews were not confidential and anonymous, the participants might have been reluctant to share information (Cohen et al., 2002). I therefore believe that I obtained sincere, accurate, rich and saturated data which I achieved by being polite and friendly, concentrating on the main question and leaving sensitive questions, if any, until later (Smith & Osborn, 2004).

The challenges that I encountered while using semi-structured interviews is that I expected the participants to come up with answers without reflecting long enough on them (Roulson & Choi, 2018). I overcame this challenge by probing during the interviews as well as during member checks after I had transcribed the data to verify if my interpretations were consistent with those of the participants (Maree, 2016; Roulson & Choi, 2018)

3.5.2.2. Audio recording

I audio recorded the interviews because it is the best known and most effective method for capturing words and experiences in a qualitative setting. Audio recording allowed me to think freely and creatively during the interview. It also enabled me to conduct an in-depth analysis of what the participants said while ensuring the integrity of the data through the recording (Firmin, 2012).

Before recording the interviews, I obtained permission from the participants to do so; that is, the SGB chairpersons, the principals, the LO educators, the parents on behalf of the learners, and the learners thereafter. Permission to do so was essential for ethical and legal reasons (Smith & Osborn, 2004). After the interviews, I listened to the recordings and transcribed them shortly

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thereafter. I used the transcripts of the digital recording in my data analysis (Roulson & Choi, 2018)

3.5.2.3. Document analysis

After I had conducted the interviews, I requested a copy of the religion policy of the school to analyse as a primary data source in this study. Primary data sources are documents that afforded me with actual or real versions of events or occurrences that are not analysed or interpreted (Gross, 2018). Going through this process is referred to as document analysis, which is a systematic procedure that is used to analyse documentary evidence. This is a qualitative research method that required that I repeatedly reviewed, examined, understood and interpreted the data contained in the schools' religion policies (Altheide & Schneider, 2013; Gross, 2018). The objective of this exercise was to elicit meaning and gain an understanding of how freedom of religious expression was promoted in the schools through the religious observance policies (Bowen, 2009; Gross, 2018; Hesse-Biber, 2010). Document analysis as a qualitative research method enhanced the way I produced rich descriptions of how freedom of religious expression was promoted in the public schools (Gross, 2018). It was from these school religious observance policies that I expected to obtain guidelines on why and how the school promoted learners' right to freedom of religious expression

I used a sequential approach to data analysis in this study. Analysing data sequentially meant analysing data that had already been collected to shape the ongoing data collection process (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000). This continuous process was almost inevitable in this qualitative data collection because I thought about what was said and what I saw in the field rather than reserving my thoughts for a later stage (Sung & Kelley, 2019). Sequential analysis also enabled me to search for divergent or negative cases, for example discussions that run against the emerging suggestion of how the schools promoted the learners' right to freedom of religious observances (Pope et al., 2000).

I also constructed a document analysis protocol in which I specified the purpose of the study. In this protocol, I listed the questions that guided my data collection from the documents, in this case the school religious observance policy. The questions included the purpose of the religion policy of the school; how the stakeholders were consulted when the policy was drafted; how it provides

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for learners' right to freedom of religious expression; how it accommodates the diverse religious orientations in the school; what strategies, if any, the religion policy provides for dealing with contesting views in the school; the number of years the policy has been in existence and when it is due for review.

I used document analysis to triangulate the findings I gathered from the interviews because this qualitative study was expected to draw evidence from several sources (Altheide & Schneider, 2013; Bowen, 2009; Gross, 2018). Document analysis corroborated, elucidated and expanded my findings, and in the process, also helping me to guard against bias. I discuss below my position in relation to the research sites and the participants.

3.5.3 Personal declaration

There is a consensus among social scientists that researchers should clarify their roles, particularly those that use qualitative methodology to validate their research (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kelly, 2014; Kerstetter, 2012; Unluer, 2012). As Milligan (2016) puts it, researchers may approach research or be characterised as an outsider or an insider at research sites. Outsiders are researchers who are not from the communities they study, hence they are neutral and detached and are observers, while insider are researchers who are part of the community being researched and therefore share some experiences, knowledge and understandings with participants (Kerstetter, 2012).

I approached the public secondary schools as an outsider researcher because I was a stranger to what they experienced and my relationship with the participants was as though from a bird's-eye view. Approaching this study as an outsider may have helped in ensuring validity and credibility because I had emotional distance and therefore I was objective in regard to the way public schools promoted the learners' right to freedom of religious expression (Kerstetter, 2012). The advantage of being an outsider researcher is that the members of the public school community and the readers may value this research because it provides an external, more objective view of the sensitive topic of religion in education, particularly in public schools (Kerstetter, 2012; Unluer, 2012). It is worth noting that I was personally not attached to and did not know the public secondary schools or the participants who were involved in this study.

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The challenge faced when approaching this study from an outsider perspective was that I found it difficult to gain access to research sites and participants (Kerstetter, 2012). I solved this by producing the ethics committee and provincial letters of approval to conduct research in the schools. Secondly, several observations and experiences of the participants may have remained hidden until a certain level of trust could be established which I overcame by firstly asking informal questions, sometimes referred to as "icebreakers" (Flick, 2018). Thirdly, my interactions with members of a less powerful community, for example the minority or discriminated against religions, seemed to make them uncomfortable about speaking freely and critically (Kelly, 2014; Kerstetter, 2012). I overcame this challenge by assuring anonymity and confidentiality.

3.5.4 Data analysis

Data analysis in this study meant dismantling and scrutinising paragraphs, sentences and words in order to make sense of them, and to interpret and theorise those data by organising, reducing and describing them (Smit, 2002). Put differently, it was a means of explaining and making sense of my research by extracting meaning from the data in an organised, far-reaching and rigorous way (Smit, 2002). Miles and Huberman (1994) posit that qualitative data analysis fundamentally involves classifying things, persons and events according to the properties which describe them.

Data analysis in this study was an ongoing process in which I transcribed the data from the interviews and the observational minutes into a word processing document (Smit, 2002). This involved assigning "codes" to bits and pieces of the transcribed data from the audio recordings and clustering them into topics or themes based on my reflections (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This enabled me to summarise what I had heard or seen in common words, phrases or patterns that helped me to understand and interpret that which emerged.

3.5.5 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this qualitative study referred to the identification and discussion of one or more strategies that I employed to ensure and confirm the accuracy of my interviews and findings (Creswell, 2014). These strategies included, but were not limited to, using thick and rich descriptions, triangulation, member-checking, self-reflection, presenting negative information or perspectives that are contrary to my views and using external auditors to review my study, which I shall discuss below (Creswell, 2014).

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3.5.5.1 Field notes and memos

The interview recordings were supplemented by note taking which enabled me to review the answers and obtain additional information at a later stage. The field notes contained thick, rich descriptions of the physical setting, behaviour of participants and any activities that I observed (Flick, 2018). These rich, thick, detailed descriptions will enable anyone interested in the transferability of this study to have a solid background for comparison (Merriam, 1998). I also provided a detailed explanation of the study focus, my role as the researcher, the participants' position, why I selected them, and the setting or research sites from which data were collected during data collection (Marshall, 1996; McMillan & Schumamacher, 2010). Note taking enabled me not to forget or overlook data for whatever reason (Cohen et al., 2002).

3.5.5.2 Member checks

After I had transcribed the data, I returned to the participants to check whether my interpretation and understanding of the data was consistent with what they had said, as well as for feedback, which is referred to as member-checking (Cohen et al., 2002; Creswell, 2014; Lichtman, 2017b). The purpose of the member checks was also to enable me to illuminate the findings or give me one or two reasons to analyse the findings from multiple perspectives (Firmin, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2004).

To confirm the accuracy of the interviews and the findings, I now and again reiterated points in the interview. Reiterating points enabled me to understand, and to have an accurate synopsis of, what the participants had really said (Lichtman, 2017b). I also did this by providing the participants with the transcripts of their interviews to give them the opportunity to confirm or deny my interpretations, thereby ensuring that I had dealt with inaccuracies and misinterpretations (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2014a; Maree, 2016).

3.5.5.3 Triangulation

Triangulation in this study means the collection and analysis of data through multiple sources and will include interviews, observations and the schools' religion policies (Creswell, 2014). I therefore observed the school to see whether there were pictures and other art forms to substantiate the claims made by the participants (Maree, 2016). I checked publicity brochures, websites,

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advertisements, meeting minutes, disciplinary records, bulletins and other sources that could shed light on the degree to which the interviews appropriately reflected the reality of how the learners' right to freedom of religious expression was promoted in the participants' daily lives (McMillan & Schumamacher, 2010). Merriam (1998) asserts that the use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis will strengthen the trustworthiness of a study, in this case mine.

Firmin (2012) mentions that participants often say something to deliberately or unintentionally mislead a researcher. However, in this case I think the interview data were consistent with what I observed from other sources associated with the participants.

3.5.6 Ethical considerations

Several authors who discuss qualitative research design also address the significance of ethical considerations, for example Cohen et al. (2002), Creswell (2014), du Plooy-Celliers et al. (2014), Hammersly (2012), Maree (2016) and McMillan and Schumamacher (2010). I was therefore obligated to respect the rights, values and needs of participants, to obtain their informed consent, and to ensure their safety during this study. It was in this spirit that all guidelines for ethical rules were followed. My obligations included obtaining ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria before undertaking the research and assuring participants of the confidentiality of the data. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to the District Head, principals, parents and, more importantly, the learners as vulnerable participants.

The following safeguards were employed to protect the participants' rights: the research objectives, including how data were collected, were expressed verbally and in writing so that they were clearly understood by the participants; written informed consent and assent to proceed with the study were obtained from the participants before the commencement of data collection; the participants were informed about all the data collection devices and activities; the process of member-checking was discussed with the participants; the participants' rights, interests and wishes were considered first when choices were made regarding reporting the data; and lastly, the final decision regarding participants' anonymity and confidentiality lay with each of them (Cohen et al., 2002; Creswell, 2014; Hammersly, 2012).

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CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3 of this study, I discussed the research design and the methodology that I used to collect data. As indicated in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, the purpose of this study was to explore and understand how public secondary schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. In this chapter, I present the experiences of the SGBs, principals and LO educators of the different schools in promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. My role as a researcher was to record, analyse and interpret the participants' experiences with the aim not only of uncovering the underlying descriptions which they themselves might not have been able to give voice to, but also of using these as a basis for the conclusions I drew about their academic lives. The data and interpretations I present in my study are not allusions to my own experiences, beliefs, views and observations, but to those of the participants. Because I was aware of the influence I could have on the interviews to a certain extent, in so doing making all interpretations subjective, I kept on probing for a deeper understanding and interpretation by engaging the participants in discussions in which they were free to modify, admit or to reject my understanding of the interviews

I present my data analysis in the following manner. First, I narrate how the participants understood the concept of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression; second, how the public-school religion policies provide for this right to freedom of religious expression; third, the challenges the public schools experienced in the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression, and fourth I draw conclusions about the strategies schools have in place to promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. Finally, based on the insights I gained from listening to and analysing the participants' responses to questions, as well as my interpretation of their stories, I present my conclusions about the effect that their experiences might have had on the way they promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression in their schools. In presenting the findings, I will be quoting the participants verbatim to support my interpretations. Acronyms such as school governing body one (SGB1), principal one (P1), school 1 (S1), Life

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Orientation educator one (LO1) and learner one (L1) will be used to identify the various participants as well as their school.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES

The chairperson of the SGB, the principal, LO educator and three learners from each of the three sampled schools participated in this study. The participants' profiles are important in this study because I wanted to explore whether their differences regarding religion, gender, period of service and leadership portfolios influenced their thinking or decision-making in the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. Table 4.1 gives a summary of the participants in this study.

School one (S1)

School one (S1) is a former Model C school which previously accommodated mostly white learners, although it now admits learners from different demographics. This school is a former Model C school which is classified as Quintile 4 under the National Norms and Standards of School Funding (NNSSFF) policy in terms of the SASA of 1996. The school is affluent and charges school fees as agreed with the majority of the mostly wealthier parents, therefore, poor learners are "excluded". This school, the only secondary school in town, is located in a small rural town among rolling hills in Mpumalanga province, with economic activities dominated by forestry, logging, carpentry and tourism. The school has a total of 683 learners with 56 teachers. The principal described the school as comprising almost entirely learners belonging to the Christian faith, with one known Muslim learner. The other participants in S1 also confirmed that the school has only one learner belonging to the Islamic faith, while other religious orientations were not present in the school.

The SGB of S1 is made up of parents, educators and learners as stakeholders and each stakeholder has representatives on the SGB. It is worth mentioning that this SGB is composed of prominent, educated people in the community. The representation on the SGB enables the different constituencies to have a say in school governance. The stakeholders therefore have a voice in the way the school promotes the learners' right to freedom of religious expression

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School Governing Body one (SBG1)

The representative of the SGB who participated in this study was the chairperson who is a black female, referred to as SGB1 in this study. She has been a parent at this school for the past eight years but was only elected to serve on the SGB and as a chairperson for the past three years.

Principal one (P1)

The principal of S1 is a white male who confidently expressed himself as a God-fearing Christian who was brought up with Christian values of respect, integrity and honesty, among others. He acknowledged these "high morals and values" as being very important in the school and in education in general. He has been the principal of S1 for two years and this is his first appointment as principal. He has also served on the school management team (SMT) of the same school for three years.

Life Orientation educator one (LO1)

LO1 is a black female. She has been an educator for 27 years. She started teaching LO when it was introduced in 2005 in various grades and at several secondary schools, including private secondary schools, from Grades 8 to 12. This means that she has been an LO educator for the past fifteen years and spent six years of the fifteen at S1. She has a Christian religious orientation.

Learner one (L1)

This was a black female learner who showed confidence and was outspoken during our conversation. She was in Grade 10 and therefore this was her third year at the school. She is a Christian and has never had a leadership role as a learner.

Learner two (L2)

A male Indian Muslim learner, the only Muslim in the entire school. He showed reservations about answering some of my questions. This was his third year at the school. He was in Grade 10 and was not serving in any leadership position.

Learner three (L3)

A black female learner who was also in Grade 10. She had been at the school for three years and had never held a leadership position in the school or anywhere else. She also had a Christian religious orientation.

School two (S2)

School two (S2) accommodates predominantly black learners although it also admits learners who speak English and Afrikaans as their mother tongue from neighbouring coloured communities. The school is a no-fee paying school situated in the urban-rural fringe – on the outskirts of town – of a larger town than that of S1 in Mpumalanga province. This school is one of three public secondary schools in the circuit and has a total of 1160 learners with 45 teachers. It has two deputy principals and eight SMT members. Christianity is the only religious orientation in the school although the participants from this school confirmed that the school had previously had learners from other religious orientations but they had since left the school.

The SGB of S2 is also made up of parents, educators and learners. This representation therefore enables the different components to have a say in the governance of the school. Accordingly, the stakeholders appeared to have a voice in the way the school promoted the learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

School Governing Body two (SGB2)

The SGB representative of school two (SGB2) is a black Christian male. He has been a parent at the school and chairperson of the SGB for three years. He also served as chairperson of the Association of Governing Bodies in his first two years as chairperson. The Association has a duty to coordinate the various SGBs in the circuit.

Principal two (P2)

P2 is a black Christian male who believes that Christianity can teach the learners good morals. He has been a principal for the past twelve years at the same school and previously also served as an SMT member and later deputy principal at his previous school.

Life Orientation Educator two (LO2)

LO2 is a black female who also believes in God. She has been a teacher for the past 26 years and an LO educator for the past 15 years. She teaches Grades 10 to 12 at the current school. She also taught LO at three other schools before she joined S2. She has been allocated the responsibility of organising and supervising the assemblies at this school. She also organises gatherings for Christian learners and educators at the school during break and sometimes after school hours. These gatherings were characterised by scripture readings, singing Christian songs and prayers.

Learner four (L4)

This is a black female learner. She claimed not to know or have heard anything regarding religion in her life and therefore did not belong to any religion. She has been at the school for three years and is in Grade 10 and had never held any leadership position.

Learner five (L5)

Also a black female learner who has been at the school for the past three years and is in Grade 10. She is a Christian and did not hold any leadership position.

Learner six (L6)

L6 is a black male who said he was unwilling to share some of his experiences with me regarding freedom of religious expression in the school, nor was he willing to disclose his religion to me. He had never held any leadership position.

School three (S3)

School three (S3) is also a no-fee paying school and has black learners only. The school is located in the same town as S1, but in a black urban township. The two schools, S1 and S3, are the only public secondary schools in this circuit. S3 has an enrolment of 480 learners with 27 teachers of which, six are SMT members.

Like both the SGBs of S1 and S2, the SGB at S3 has parents, educators and learners as stakeholders and each stakeholder has representatives on the SGB.

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School Governing Body three (SGB3)

S3 was represented by a black female SGB member. She has been a parent at the school for seven years and chairperson of the SGB for three years. SGB 3 is an educator at one of the primary schools in the same circuit.

Principal three (P3)

P 3 is a black male who is also a Christian and has been principal of this school for the past seven years. He has never been a principal elsewhere.

Life Orientation Educator three (LO3)

LO3 is a comparatively young black man and the only male LO educator among the three LO educators in this study. He has been an educator at the same school for the past five years and an LO educator at this school for the past three years in Grades 9 and 10. He is a Christian.

Learner seven (L7)

L7 is a black female Christian learner who has been at S3 for the past three years. She was in Grade ten and had never held any leadership position.

Learner eight (L8)

L8 is a black male learner and had also been at the school for three years and had never held any leadership position anywhere. He is a Christian and believes that God is speaking to him.

Learner nine (L9)

This is a black Christian female learner in Grade 10. She had been at the school for three years and had also never held any leadership position.

Below is table 4.1 which summarises the profiles of the participants whom I interviewed at the various research sites.

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Table 4.1: Summary of participants' profiles

	Participants	Gender	Religion	Leadership	Years in school	Experience in portfolio
School one (S1)	Learner one	Female	Christian	None	3	
	Learner two	Male	Muslim	None	3	
	Learner three	Female	Christian	None	3	
	LO educator one	Female	Christian	None	6	27
	Principal one	Male	Christian	None	2	None
	SBG one	Female	Christian	None	3	8
School two (S2)	Learner four	Female	Christian	None	3	
	Learner five	Female	Christian	None	3	
	Learner six	Male	Undisclosed	None	3	
	LO educator two	Female	Christian	None	26	15
	Principal two	Male	Christian	None	12	None
	SBG two	Male	Christian	None	3	2
School three (S3)	Learner seven	Female	Christian	None	3	
	Learner eight	Male	Christian	None	3	
	Learner nine	Female	Christian	None	3	
	LO educator three	Male	Christian	None	3	5
	Principal three	Male	Christian	None	7	None
	SBG three	Female	Christian	None	7	3

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Although gender and race were not part of the selection criteria I used to select the participants in this study, it is worth mentioning that all three principals were males; principal one was white while the rest were black. LO educators from S1 and S2 were females while the LO educator from S3 was male. The learners who participated in this study were of mixed gender and religion and were all in Grade 10. These learners are a mixed gender and religion because public schools participated in this study and, like most public schools elsewhere, are heterogeneous regarding religion and gender. I chose Grade 10 because, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this study, these learners have been at their schools for two or more years and have therefore acquired experience and understanding of how things are done in the school. I also chose Grade 10 because they would be available for member checks.

Having presented the profiles of the research sites and participants in this study, their understandings, accounts, and experiences of how the learners' right to freedom of religious expression was promoted follows. I have grouped the themes which I probed during the interviews according to the sub-research questions in this study, as outlined in Chapter 1. The primary research question, "How do public secondary schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression?" served as my overarching theme and was probed by asking the sub-questions below. I then classified the participants' responses according to the participant categories namely, learners, LO educators, principals and SGBs under each sub-research question. I therefore present the experiences of the participants in the three schools as underpinned by these questions:

4.2.1.   What do participants understand by the right to freedom of religious expression?

4.2.2.   How does the religion policy of the school provide for the learners' right to freedom of religious expression?

4.2.3.   What roles do the participants play in ensuring that learners exercise their right to freedom of religious expression?

4.2.4.   What challenges does the school encounter in promoting learners' right to freedom of religious expression?

4.2.5.   How does the school overcome the abovementioned challenges?

4.3 PARTICIPANTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE LEARNERS' RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

As indicated in Chapter 3, I commenced all my interviews with each participant by investigating their understanding of the right to freedom of religious expression. Interpretation and understanding of this concept, mainly the associated legislation and educational policies, is very important because such policies influence decision-making and the actions that are taken, as well as the strategies formulated to solve the problems experienced. It was therefore necessary to explore this concept from the participants' perspective since I wanted to understand what influenced the way they dealt with religion in education matters in their schools. I classified my interviews according to the stakeholder groupings in the study, that is, learners, LO educators, principals and SGBs for all the sub-questions. I then present the conclusions I make as I interpret their understanding.

Firstly, when describing her understanding of the right to freedom of religious expression, L1 from S1 said, *"We should be free to practise our religions, we shouldn't be afraid to say, 'I am a Muslim or a Christian'. We should be able to express our religion in the school, and not hide it. Let's say I am a Muslim, I could show that I am Muslim, and not be judged according to my religion".* L2 said, *"The right to freedom of religious expression is needed and it is important in this country as a free religious country".* L3 responded *"every learner in the school has the right to do what his/her religion instructs him/her. For instance, Christians are people who pray. That is, we should be given time to pray even here at school".*

At school two (S2), L4 responded "*I did not really understand the right to freedom of religious expression because I do not go to church*". She recollected, "*Maybe it means when people talk about their religion and spirituality*". She added, "*People are free to believe what they want*". L5 believed that the right to freedom of religious expression was when people "*believe what they want*" and when "*they attend any church they want*". L6's understanding of the right to freedom of religious expression was "*whereby I am allowed to believe in whatever way I want to with no one disputing*".

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The learners at school three (S3) also had their understanding of the right to freedom of religious expression. L7 mentioned that this was *"everyone having the right to express themselves religiously in the school"*. L8 felt people *"should accept one's religious expressions in the schools regardless of whether they are Muslims, Christians or any other religion",* while L9 stated that the right to freedom of religious expression entailed everyone's freedom of religion, and *"it did not matter the language one speaks or activities one does. People should practise the religion of their choice".*

The above learners' narratives reveal five categories to which learners in this study assigned their understandings and interpretations of the right to freedom of religious expression. Category 1 defines the right to religious expression according to what schools should enable learners to do. For instance, schools must create space and allocate time for the learners to observe their religion – in the case of Christians this would take the form of a prayer. In this way, these learners see schools as *"enablers"* instead of *"gatekeepers".* In category 2, is the learners' view of the right to freedom of religious expression in terms of "*religion as a spiritual need"*. According to them, there are moments in life when one needs to satisfy one's spiritual needs by observing the religion in terms of prayer or attire or by means of a song. Such a need, they feel, should be fulfilled. The third category into which learners' views fall is the right to freedom of religious expression in terms of affording the learners *"the right to freedom of religious choice*". These learners understand that they have a right to choose whatever religion they want to follow without pressure from parents or indoctrination by the school through educators.

Category 4 refers to the view of learners of the right to freedom of religious expression as a *"unifying rather than [a] dividing factor"* in that the right condemns any form of religious discrimination against or persecution of members of "other" religions. According to them, learners should observe their religions without fear of being victimised by members of other religions. In the same way, learners cannot be denied admission to schools on any grounds including religion. The last category of learners' views refers to understanding the right to freedom of religious expression as an expression of one's religion in whatever language one speaks. In these terms, *"religious expression knows no language boundaries"*. Therefore, according to this category, learners may form, join, observe and enjoy their religion regardless of the linguistic community to which they belong.

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As they responded to the same question, LO educator one (LO1) from S1 said: "*Learners have the right to state their opinion with a responsibility neither to hurt nor offend other learners. In other words, it means freedom of speech*". LO2, from S2, described the learners' right to freedom of religious expression as the "*provision of freedom of speech to everyone at the school but with respect to the right of others*". LO3, from S3, understood this right to be "*giving the learners the opportunity to act, behave and practise their beliefs, but within legal parameters. The learners are free to participate in different activities, including cultural, traditional and religious in a language of their choice*".

The understanding of the right to freedom of religious expression by LO educators in this study is threefold. First, they understood freedom of religious expression as *"freedom of religious opinion"*. For example, learners are free to attend religious gatherings at assemblies or any designated place in the schools. During such occasions, they are free to *"convey or receive religious ideas and information"* through "*sermons, scripture reading and/ or poems"*. Secondly, a similar idea to that of learners was discovered from the LO educators, as they also defined freedom of religious expression in terms of *"language of choice"*. In this way, participants in this study attest to language being a very important element which enables one to connect with high powers. Lastly, these educators were adamant that learners must *"practise their religious freedom with responsibility"*. That is, they must be sensitive to others and by all means *"avoid religious observances that advocate hatred"*. In the next paragraph I present the principal's understanding of this right.

While narrating their understanding of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression principal one (P1) from S1 said *"Everyone has the right to freedom of religion in this country. So, everyone has the right to equal treatment regarding religion in the school"*. P2 from S2 pointed out: *"Schools should permit learners to observe their religious practices. That is, time for religious practices must be allocated, where it is practically possible, to allow learners to observe their religious beliefs. Learners should not be compelled to subscribe to the religion that is dominant in the school. Thus, learners have a freedom of choosing their religion and practise it"*. P3 from S3 said the right to freedom of religious expression affords *"every learner the right to observe their religious observances. No learner should be forced to follow a certain religion"*.

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From the principals' narratives, it became clear that they understand the right to freedom of religious expression similarly to mean *"freedom of religious choice"*, just as the learners and the LO educators in this study did. They therefore also appeal to schools not to run the risk of indoctrinating learners in the religion of majority, but instead to *"equally treat all religions"* in the school. For example, when allocating time for religious observances schools must ensure that all represented faiths receive an equal share of the allocated time. This then also speaks to LO educators who must allocate equal time for the teaching of the various religions in their classes.

On sharing their understanding of the right to freedom of religious expression, the representative of the SGB of S1, SGB1 stated: *"The right affords everyone freedom of religious speech, whether in writing, speaking, clothing, including the right to communication without being intimidated."* SGB2 from S2 articulated: *"The right includes the given opportunity to express yourself, the way you feel good about yourself. For example, the way you dress, move and speak."* SGB3 from S3 stated that the right to freedom of religious expression is *"the right to express one's feelings without being judged or prejudiced"*.

Similar to the statements of the other stakeholder groupings above, the SGBs of the schools in this study viewed free expression of one's religion in forms that include signs and symbols, clothing, songs and diet, without intimidation, being judged or prejudiced while in public space to be of paramount importance. In so doing, schools ensure religious unity without uniformity and diversity without the division of the various religions found in the schools, as contemplated by the NPRE.

My findings regarding this first question are that the participants' understandings and interpretations of the right to freedom of religious expression may be categorised into five main themes. Firstly, they view the schools as *"enablers instead of gatekeepers"* of religious practices through the allocation of time and space. Secondly, they felt that *"religion is a spiritual need"* that has to be satisfied. The third category of participants' understandings entail freedom of religious expression as meaning *"freedom of religious choice"*, which must be afforded without discrimination, coercion or intimidation. The last category understands freedom of religious expression as meaning *"freedom of religious opinion"* that may be expressed through, for example, dress, song and diet. In the next section I present the narratives of the participants regarding the second sub-research question.

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4.4 HOW DOES THE RELIGION POLICY OF YOUR SCHOOLS PROVIDE FOR THE LEARNERS' RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION?

In my second sub-research question I asked the participants "how their school religion policies provided for the learners' right to freedom of religious expression". I had to explore the different stakeholder groupings' understanding and knowledge of the provisions by their school policies on religion because the NPRE requires public schools to provide for and regulate the nature and content of the right to freedom of religious expression. The aim is to ensure consistency and alignment with this policy and relevant legislation, for instance the Constitution and the SASA. Participants' understanding of the provisions of their various school religion policies is important in the implementation and promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression as discussed in Chapter 2. I also classified the participants' responses according to the stakeholder groupings, namely, learners, LO educators, principals and SGBs.

Responding to this question, L1 from S1 said: "*My school does not have a policy on religion that I know of*". She also felt that her school "*practised Christianity more than any religion.*" She further added "*Usually on Mondays and, or Fridays we go to the courtyard where we pray and read the Bible*". L2 from S2 expressed "*I am the only Muslim in this Christian school but, with request from my parents, the school permits me to observe my religious observances*". He was also of the opinion that "*there are no procedures that regulate the different religions in the school that I know of*". He further stated: "*During special occasions in the Muslim calendar, I need a written letter from my parents asking permission that I attend. If the permission is granted, the school would let me write whichever test I missed on another day*". L3 from S3 responded "*I went through the school's Code of Conduct for learners, but it did not have any provision for religious observances*".

L4 from S2 replied, "*there are prayer sessions organised in one of the classes during break-time and sometimes, after school hours. If one is interested in these prayer sessions, they are free to attend. In these sessions, we discuss the Bible, Jesus, and other Christian issues*". This was confirmed by L5 from the same school, S2, when she said, "*The school has two breaks. During the first break, learners gather in a classroom and pray*". She also disclosed "*The school also holds Christian prayer gatherings on Mondays and Fridays*". L6 from S2 further confirmed "*The school holds morning Christian devotions every Mondays and Fridays where we pray*", although

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he revealed "*I do not express my religion at school*". Therefore, according to him, he "would not know how the religion policy of the school provides for the learners' right to freedom *of religious expression*".

When answering the same question, L7 from S3 responded: *"My school religion policy provides for the learners right to freedom of religious expression by organising morning devotions on daily basis and sometimes during break-time, where we pray. Our teachers also invite learners to pray and read scriptures from the Bible during these assemblies"*. L8 from S3 replied "*I don't think the school has a religion policy. But the teachers say that we are a Christian school".* He also highlighted: "*If a learner does not want to be part of the prayer sessions, they are excused.*" L9 from S3 said: "*The school religion policy allows everyone to practise their religion freely.*"

The above accounts by learners of their experiences revealed *"three phased schools in terms of the religious observances policy"*. Phase one of those schools includes those *"without religious observance policies"*. Learners in these schools had never seen or heard about such policies. For this reason, they could not say whether or not religious observances in their schools were policy based. Phase 2 involves, *"schools with policies that promote one faith",* that is, that of the majority. According to learners in this study, although their schools have religious observance policies, such policies turn out to be single-faith based policies that promote one faith, Christianity in particular. In this way *"religious intolerance"* is observed in these schools. As a result, some learners are still subjected to *"religious exclusion and intimidation"* after more than 25 years of democracy in South Africa. Phase 3 involves *"schools with policies that accommodate religion representation"* and enable learners from different religions to enjoy their religious freedom. For instance, the schools allowed Muslims to observe Laylat al Qadr, a Muslim holiday. Based on the findings from the interviews, these schools tolerate other religions and include them in their religious observance policies. In so doing, learners enjoy their right to freedom of religious expression not only in policy (theory) but also in practice.

In response to how their schools provided for the learners' right to freedom of religious expression, LO1 from S1 said: *"I never saw or came across any religion policy at the school. I don't think the school has one. So, I would not know its provision."* LO2 from S2 indicated that their school religion policy provides for the learners' right to freedom of religious expression by *"allowing non-Christians to observe their religion in another class. They are also allowed to observe their*

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religious festival days at home". She also recalled: *"On Mondays and Fridays, we observe Christian devotions, where we read the Bible, sing hymns, pray and invite learners to present religious items. The school religion policy allows us to organise such gatherings."* She further said: *"The policy says, everyone has the right to belong to any religion of their choice. We also excuse those who do not feel comfortable with Christian gatherings, although most of our learners belong to Christianity."* LO3 explained that the religion policy of his school provides for the right to freedom of religious expression as *"the admission policy does not discriminate against anyone on grounds of religion"*. He also said, *"The majority of learners are Christians, although one or two may belong to other religions. For instance, our assemblies are conducted in the Christian way and most of the learners, if not all, agree and conform. So, that makes it difficult to identify learners that are not Christians"*.

The narratives of the LO educators revealed that, like the learners, the schools' religious observance policies take three forms. There are those schools without a religion policy, those with a policy that accommodates other religions but in practice such religions are side-lined. That is, the policy would stipulate that everyone has the right to practise their own religion. However, when it comes to religious orientations in schools, only one religion, Christianity for instance, is given preference. It is therefore not surprising that the LO educators could not recognise the presence of learners from religious minorities. Religious intolerance still prevails in some South African schools. The third form involves schools that accommodate learners from other religions by allocating them classrooms to observe their religious observances and excusing them from school when observing certain religious rituals at home.

Responding to the same question, P1 from S1 said that their school religion policy provided for the learners' right to freedom of religious expression *"by allowing learners to choose either to participate or not in the Christian religious assemblies"*. He also thought that *"The learners who participate were comfortable with the teachings of the Bible because it is not compulsory"*. P2 from S2 explained *"Our school is Christian and, therefore, Christian learners have Christian gatherings, but other learners of other beliefs, are not forced to participate in these Christian activities. They are allowed time and space to observe their own religious activities"*. P3 from S3 clarified: *"My school's religion policy is in line with the provincial education department religion policy, because it was adapted from it as supplied to schools by the department. All what the school*

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does is on the draft to fill in what is applicable to them. Our policy makes it clear no learner or person in the school is forced to adhere to any religion they are uncomfortable with." P3 also acknowledged *"although the majority of learners and educators at the school are Christians, there are some who do not want to disclose their religion and would then practise Christianity with the majority".*

According to the principals in this study, religious observance policies are accommodative since they provide that everyone is free to practise his/her religion and no one should be forced to practise religions other than their own. It is, however, surprising to hear them mentioning that learners more often than not observe Christian orientations as the majority religion. The principals add to this by saying that learners in religious minorities shy away from disclosing their religions and, as a result, they join Christian orientations. According to them, learners are comfortable with such teachings. The question would be, why they wouldn't find be comfortable when they have no choice.

The chairperson of the SGB (SGB1) from S1 responded: "*Every learner has the right to practise his/her religion in the school, regardless of their language or culture. The school, however, does not allow learners to wear their religious attire around the school yard, but only the school uniform*". SGB2 from S2 said their school's religion policy "*allows the learners to choose whether to attend the Christian religious gatherings of the school or not*". SGB3 from S3 stated: "*Every learner can express their own religion, although Christianity is dominant. It's just that the learners do not say if they are affiliated to a different religion, for example Muslim.*"

Like the interviews with learners and principals in this study, the first category of schools identifies is schools that allow freedom of religious choice. For instance, in these schools, the language and/or culture of learners does not play a role in determining who should practise or enjoy their religious freedom. The second category, which is similar to the responses of the learners, educators and principals, encourages single-faith, especially Christianity. This category of schools allows learners to practise their faith but seems not to have put measures in place to ensure that this is according to what the schools purport. The last category refers to schools that promote religious freedom through their religious observance policies. These policies accommodate all learners and every religion found in the school.

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4.5 THE ROLES PARTICIPANTS PLAY IN PROMOTING THE LEARNERS' RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

This question was meant only for the LO educators, principals and SGBs because they are in a position to promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression in the schools. This right is meant to be promoted by those in authority at the schools as they implement the school religion policy. Accordingly, I probed their knowledge of and commitment to their roles in promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. The achievement of the promotion of the right to freedom of religious expression requires participants who are adequately knowledgeable of and determined in their roles.

Responding to what role she plays in promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression, LO1 from S1 said: *"During Life Orientation lessons, we sometimes discuss topics about religion education, world views and moral education."* LO2 from S2 responded: *"As an educator, especially during morning devotions, I ask learners to present religious items that accommodate everyone". Although some of them are reluctant, the ones that forward themselves are usually Christian orientated."* LO3 from S3 stated that *"As an LO teacher, I offer an extra platform during our activities for learners to express themselves. I tell them 'we are all different, I don't look like you, you don't look like me, but we are the same'".* He thought *"as LO educators, we have no choice but to embrace the religious diversity of learners".* He further added *"I think it is amazing to have learners from diverse religious background in the classroom. All I do is to offer them equal opportunities in terms of practice".*

The LO educators' responses revealed that they promote learners' right to freedom of religious expression by creating a conducive platform, as educational leaders, for learners to *"discuss about diverse religions, world views and moral education".* According to these educators, their leadership role is to create a conducive environment for meaningful discussion during "*religion education"* lessons in LO as a subject. Some LO educators viewed their leadership role as to *"organise religious gatherings"* in their school. It is at these gatherings that learners are given a platform to render hymns, spirituals and poems from diverse religious beliefs in an attempt to accommodate every religion in the school. Other educators viewed themselves as *"enablers of religious diversity"* in the school. These educators viewed their leadership role as that of embracing learners from dissimilar religious backgrounds in the school.

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While asked about their roles in promoting learners' right to religious expression, P1 from S1 said: *"My role is to respect and allow learners to attend their religious observances if requested by their parents."* P2 from S2 replied *"I ensure that our admission policy does not discriminate on various grounds including religion"*. P3 from S3 responded: *"Our religion policy, and religion committee has been established to ensure that no learner is prohibited from observing their religion. Everybody practises their religion. If one says, 'I am a Rastafarian', and 'according to Rastafarian I am supposed to attend this ritual by this time', and one requires permission, then we can grant it."*

The principals in this study described their leadership role as to "*grant permission*" for religious observances when required. For example, learners or parents may request permission to attend religious observances at home or anywhere else. Some of them viewed their role as "*ensuring religion policies and regulations are not discriminative*'. According to these principals, they ensure freedom of religious choice and religious association in the schools. Others guarantee "*equitable allocation of time and space*" to the diverse religions in the school. They guarantee this equity of the religions through free and voluntary attendance of religious gatherings.

Narrating the leadership role she played in promoting the right to freedom of religious expression, SGB1 from S1 replied: "*My role is to remind the school, especially the principal, about every learner's right to freedom of religion around the school.*" She also pointed out: "*Through school visits, we inculcate respect among the learners towards each other's rights, beliefs, religion, cultures, and language*". She further advised "*The school should not force anyone to pray to God*". At S2, SGB2 responded" "*My role is to meet with the parent and the teacher component to discuss issues related to religion in the school and to attend to grievances from the learners and parents regarding religion in the school.*" Lastly at S3, SGB3 said: "*If learners say they follow a certain religion, my duty is to support them in whatever religion they believe.*"

In summarising the responses of the SGB chairpersons above, it became clear that there are those who thought their leadership role was to *"offer and maintain religious rapport"* between stakeholders in the school by reminding the principal about learners' religious rights. According to them, freedom of religion must be respected and promoted by practising free and voluntary attendance of religious gatherings. There were also those who saw their role as being *"liaison"* and *"grievance resolver"* regarding religion in the school. For example, they resolved disputes

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regarding the use of facilities for religion in their schools. And lastly, there were those who felt their role was to *"offer support"* in whatever endeavours to promote diversity of religion and freedom of religious expression in the schools.

Participants in this study played varying leadership roles in promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. There were also those who felt their roles included, among others, *"organising assemblies"* that accommodated everyone in the schools, ensuring *"equality of religions"* and *"crafting policies"* that were not discriminative. Others viewed their responsibility to be *"constituting committees"* that were responsible for religion in the schools. Certain SGB chairpersons felt that their responsibility was *"to act on behalf of parents"* in the school to ensure the religious interests of the parents are acknowledged. It is important that schools operate in a conducive atmosphere with minimal religious conflict, thus some participants viewed themselves as *"counsellors and mediators"* that ensure religious disputes and grievances are resolved as quickly as possible. *"Religious support"* is also needed to satisfy the spiritual need of the school population, therefore some participants felt it was their role to offer such support. Subsequently, I wanted to establish whether there were any challenges that the schools encountered in the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

4.6 CHALLENGES SCHOOLS ENCOUNTER IN PROMOTING THE LEARNERS' RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

After probing the provisions of the various school religion policies in the previous research question, I asked the participants in the study: "What challenges does your school encounter in promoting learners' right to freedom of religious expression?" I had to probe this question to establish the challenges the public secondary schools face in their endeavours to promote the core values of a democratic society through their religion policies. These core values include equity, diversity, tolerance and openness, among others.

In responding to this question, LO1 from S1 said *"No, there are no challenges".* LO2 from S2 replied: *"We do not have challenges or problems at the moment"*, while LO3 from S3 revealed: "*Unfortunately, there has been some instances where you find that certain educators are not as accommodating as they should, perhaps we can attribute this to the fact that they are used to*

dealing with mostly Christians. Some educators are not welcoming of their difference with learners."

While some LO educators had not experienced challenges in the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression in their schools, others felt that certain learners had been discriminated against by their colleagues. According to LO3, some of his colleagues were not willing to put up with learners who were of a religion that was different from theirs. This offends the learners and, as a result, they have negative attitude toward such educators.

In answering what challenges they encounter in promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression, P1 from S1 said: *"We have no challenges regarding religion in the school, up to now. I can say we were blessed. Everything is working fine for us so far. If we did something wrong, we would have picked it up."* P2 from S2 responded *"We have none, zero-zero challenge"*. P3 from S3 said: *"We do not have problems. Although at times some learners will wear some clothing that were not part of the school uniform"*. He further explained: *"The school does not encourage learners to wear dreadlocks, but there were learners who might be taking chances and say they are Rastafarians and need to wear dreadlocks. That is the challenge that we usually experience. But in most cases when we interrogated them further, we discovered that they are just interested in the hairstyle. They were not really Rastafarians."*

Our deliberations with the principals regarding the challenges their schools experience in promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression indicated that these are similar to those suggested by the LO educators, that is, that there were minimal challenges. Although one principal mentioned that sometimes there were learners who would want to violate the code of conduct of the school in terms of their hairstyle.

In responding to the same question, the SGB chairperson (SGB1) of S1 said: "*We have learners that may be obsessed with traditional spirits at the school. In that case we call the parent to come and fetch their child.*" SGB2 from S2 "*Up to this far we do not have any challenge. We are doing everything well, so, we don't have any challenges*". SGB3 from S3 responded "*Some religions may require the learners to put on certain religious clothing. Sometimes these religions may require the learners to perform some rituals. And that's when you find that it is contrary to the school rules regarding school uniform and what the other learners are used to*".

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The narratives of the SGBs regarding the challenges encountered by their schools suggest that, in general, the various schools did not experience challenges, as was revealed by the LO educators and the principals. One SGB chairperson mentioned a case where one learner was, according to her, obsessed with traditional spirits, in which case the parents were called in to collect the child. In another case, one of the SGB chairpersons was worried that a certain religion might require learners that belong to it to wear religious clothing. She was worried that that might be against the school uniform policy and what other learners were used to.

I gathered from the interviews with the participants in managerial and leadership positions that their schools *"did not encounter challenges"* in the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. According to the participants, the majority of parents, if not all, and therefore, the learners, were Christian and this contributed to the schools having "*no challenges*". The fact that all the principals and their schools were Christian orientated made it difficult for those who were not Christians to confess their religion, as P3 put it. For example, only one Muslim in one school participated in the assemblies and felt comfortable. According to the participants, this meant that the Bible is not forced on them. Subsequent to this sub-research question, I wanted to find out how the various schools dealt with the challenges.

4.7 HOW THE SCHOOL OVERCOME THE ABOVE-MENTIONED CHALLENGES

Finally, as my last sub-research question, I asked the participants in managerial and leadership positions in the schools how their schools overcome the above-mentioned challenges experienced during the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

The participants believed that they do not have challenges regarding the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. This is evident in that they *"did not put measures in place"* in anticipation of any matter that might arise from the implementation of the schools' religion policies. For example, P2 from S2 said they were *"not receiving any learners requesting for time to observe religious practices of religions other than Christianity"*. P1 from S1 replied: *"We never have any challenge regarding the promotion of this learners' right, because we involve the parents."*

According to the SASA the principal must undertake the professional management of a public school, while the SGBs must provide governance under the authority of the Head of Department

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of Education (RSA, 1996b). The Employment of Educators Act also explains that professional management of the public school include planning, organising, providing leadership and giving feedback, including the of the religious observances in the public school (RSA, 1998). These may offer the school a platform for re-planning and reorganising if the religious observances are not achieving or are not going according to the plan. The minister's foreword in the NPRE advises that as educational leaders lead diverse learners of different religions, cultures, and languages, educators are duty bound to use the learners' diversity to develop a unity of purpose and spirit that recognises and celebrates the diversity of humanity. As leaders, educators should put measures in place to ensure that no particular religious philosophy dominate over or suppress others (DoE, 2003). It is, therefore, to a certain extent, dereliction of duty on the part of those in management and governance of the public school in the study not to put measures in place for unforeseen circumstances that may arise during the religious observance, they have not yet encountered challenges.

4.8 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The purpose of document analysis in this study was to corroborate the responses of the participants about the implementation of the NPRE. Accordingly, I requested copies of the participating schools' religion policies, which were made available. The use of different data collection methods in the same study is referred to as methodical triangulation; this increases the trustworthiness of data. The following questions were included in the document analysis schedule:

- Which other legal documents were consulted during the crafting of the religion policy of the school?
- For how many years has the religion policy of the school been in existence?
- Who crafted the policy?
- What was the purpose of the policy?
- How does the policy provide for the learners' right to freedom of religious expression?
- Does the policy specify the religious character of the school? If yes, how does it provide for learners of other religious orientations?
- What proactive and reactive strategies does the policy provide for dealing with contesting views among the parties involved?

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- What are the indicators that the policy is fulfilling what it is meant to do?
- After how many years does the policy qualify for review and by whom?

The aim of analysing the schools' religious observance policies was to find out if there was evidence of how the schools dealt with issues relating to religious activities. Evidence from the policies showed that they were crafted in line with the Constitution, the SASA and the NPRE. The policies were drafted by filling in information which was applicable to the schools on the education department's draft document. This document was supplied to schools in the Bohlabela District.

The preamble to the schools' religion policies state that "the Constitution guarantees that everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, belief and opinion. The policy draws on the core values of a democratic society, and the practice in our school is tested against the following national priorities, tolerance, diversity openness, accountability and social honour".

This confirms that the schools' religion policies promote the core values of the Constitution by clearly articulating them in the preamble. The policies also contained their purpose.

The policies provided pertaining to the learners' right to freedom of religious expression, the different religions that may be present in the school, including "Christianity, Muslim and African traditional religions".

However, some educators and learners did do know if such religious observance policies existed in their schools or not. There were also no measures put in place to deal with any religious conflict that might arise.

4.9 CONCLUSION

It became clear from the fieldwork that the participants in the study understood what is entailed in the right to freedom of religious expression within the scope of the multi-religiosity of our schools in a democratic society. However, in most cases, their understanding did not seem to manifest in their practices. Although the words they preached stated that everyone has the right to religious choice, learners in religious minorities were often subjected to religious observances other than their own. The subthemes that emerged from the participants' understanding of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression are thus "educators as enablers instead of gatekeepers",

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"religion as a spiritual need", "the right to religious choice", "freedom of religious opinion" and "equal treatment of all religions" in the school.

The interviews depicted that the demographics of the participants, that is, their gender, religion, service period and leadership positions, did not influence the way the participants understood the promotion of the right to freedom of religious expression. The interviews also revealed that the learners in this study, although they have been at their respective schools for more than two years, did not know whether their schools had religious observance policies or not. This is also true for LO1, who, despite having been at the school for four years, did know not if the school had a policy or not. Therefore, the categories that emerged from the provision of the school religious observance policies are that there were "schools without religious observances policies", "schools with policies that promote one faith" and "schools with policies that accommodate all religious representation".

With regard to the roles the various participants in the study played in promoting the right to freedom of religious expression as a theme, the sub-themes that emerged are "organisation of morning devotions", "crafting of non-discriminatory polices", "maintaining harmonious relations among the religions in the school", being "liaison persons" between school and parent community, being "counsellors and mediators" and "offering support" in the schools.

It was also apparent that the schools had no measures in place to deal with the challenges that might arise regarding religion in their schools because, according to them, most learners in their respective school were Christians; hence, there was no likelihood of encountering conflicting ideas regarding religion. However, the findings revealed that not all learners in the schools were Christians. Accordingly, the sub-themes that emerged included that some learners experienced "religious discrimination", "religious intolerance" and "religious exclusion and intimidation" by educators.

In the next chapter, Chapter 5, I discuss my findings which are informed by the themes and the categories developed during my analysis of data, as mentioned in the concluding paragraph above. This is done to answer the research question presented in Chapter 1, through which I sought to explore the way in which public schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

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CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, Chapter 4, I presented the research findings of this study as informed by the narratives and responses of the participants. In this chapter, I discuss the themes and categories or subthemes that support these themes in detail with reference to the literature. The discussion in this chapter infuses aspects of the research question as outlined in Chapter 1: "How do public schools promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression?" In this way I describe the lived experiences of the participants in promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression as they develop and implement the religious observance policies in their schools. Finally, I present recommendations for further research and improvement of practice on this research topic.

This study moved from the premise that schools can overcome inequalities and discrimination that are based on religion by putting in place social arrangements that enable equal participation, as discussed in the conceptual framework in Chapter 1. To achieve social justice, schools should redistribute resources, for example buildings, and make an equitable amount of time available for religious observances in an effort to allow learners to express their religion. There should also be evidence in the schools of religious activities and a religious observance policy; in addition, the school should provide all religions with a platform that will allow them to coexist and enjoy equal privileges and freedoms. In such cases, there will be no direct or indirect coercion, and no preference for one religion over another. Therefore, through their religious observance policies schools should put measures in place to curb intolerance and discrimination, among other things, as well as to enhance freedom of religion, belief and opinion.

In the paragraphs below, I discuss the categories that were developed in Chapter 4 during the analysis of the data. I do so in the form of headings as I summarise the experiences of the participants. I will be discussing my findings by rigorously comparing them to the literature I reviewed in Chapter 2 and beyond.

The main findings that emerged from the responses are as follows:

- The participants had different understandings of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression.
- Although all the participating schools claimed to have religious observance policies, the educators and learners were unable to outline the provisions afforded by such policies.
- The SGBs, principals and educators played different roles in the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression
- The participating schools had no measures in place to address any challenges that might arise as a result of the diverse religious character of the schools which are also situated in diverse communities.

5.2 DISCUSSIONS

The main purpose of this research study was to explore how schools in the Bohlabela District of Mpumalanga province in South Africa promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. In the discussion below, I compare the responses and opinions of the participants with the research findings noted in existing literature on the research topic. I also present some recommendations based on the participants' experiences and the literature reviewed.

5.2.1 Understanding of the right to freedom of religious expression

The participants in this study had different understandings and interpretations of the right to freedom of religious expression. These included viewing the schools as "enablers instead of gate keepers" of religious practices, religion as "spiritual need", freedom of religious expression as "freedom of religious choice" and freedom of religious expression as "freedom of religious opinion".

5.2.1.1 The school as "enablers" instead of "gatekeepers"

The data revealed that some participants viewed schools as institutions that should make freedom of religious expression accessible and conceivable to every learner rather than controlling who may access it. These participants felt that schools should enable this right by creating space and allocating time for the various religion representations to observe their faiths. This view is supported by paragraph 1 of the NPRE, which recognises the relationship between religion and

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education and the responsibility of public schools for teaching and learning about religion and promoting freedom of religious expression. This is also confirmed by a study by Ashraf (2018), who found that schools play an important role in the development of the learners' characters by enabling personality development through religious observances. By so doing, schools are able to build balanced societies for people of diverse beliefs.

5.2.1.2 Religion as a spiritual need

All the participating schools in this study began the school day with obligatory Christian devotions, and sometimes, accompanied by prayer, hymn singing and scripture reading during breaks or after school hours. The literature that I reviewed in Chapter 2 points to the fact that humans are spiritual beings and religion can be used to guide their morals and values; values that include equity, respect, diversity and tolerance, among others (Nthontho, 2013b). The study by Serfontein (2014) found that many believers see their relationship with God as being central to all their activities. Nthontho also advises that religious beliefs have the ability to inspire perceptions of self-esteem and human dignity, which are the foundation of human rights. The participants in study further said that there were moments in life when one needs to satisfy one's spiritual needs. These spiritual needs should be fulfilled by the school through religious observances.

5.2.1.3. The right to freedom of religious choice

Freedom of religion is guaranteed under section 15 of the Constitution by allowing equitable free and voluntary religious observances to be conducted in public schools. Schools cannot deny learners admission on grounds of religion. Theoretically, the principals, SGBs and educators claimed that learners were free to choose and practise their religion in the schools. However, it was evident that, in practice, they were subjected to one religion, specifically Christianity. The learners from minority religions experienced religious discrimination by educators who were unwilling to accommodate learners who were of a religion different from their own. The educators also said they subjected the learners to the majority religion because they did not disclose their religion to the school. Therefore, the school felt that the learners were comfortable in practising the majority religion because of their non-disclosure. As a result, the only option was Christianity although the educators felt this was not forced on them. The study also found that in some schools, learners were not allowed to observe their religions by, for instance, the wearing of their religious

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attire. Only school uniform was permissible, although minority religions like Muslims were sometimes released to attend religious observances at home. The NPRE confirms that there are cases where schools discriminate against learners on grounds of religion. The study by Vopat (2010) indicates that policies that force choices of religion and attire on learners may constitute an unfair infringement on the learners' and their parents' freedom of religious choice since the learners' choice is usually informed by and aligned with their parents. This may therefore result in conflict between the parents and the schools.

5.2.1.4 Freedom of religious opinion

Freedom of religious opinion is also guaranteed by section 15 of the Constitution. Section 16(1)(a) further affords everyone the right "to receive or impart information or ideas". In the participating schools, learners attended religious gatherings where they were free to convey or receive religious ideas through sermons, scripture readings and poems. During these occasions, the schools offered everyone the right to express their feelings without being judged or prejudiced. It was evident that the learners' religious opinions and everyone else's did not amount to advocating hatred but were sensitive to and respectful of other religions. Indications are that in some schools, religious leaders, educators and learners were invited to give religious sermons. However, the "outside leaders" who were invited to give sermons were from one faith only – Christianity. This revealed that only the religion of the majority is supported and therefore dominates. Taskin (2014) acknowledges that it is imperative that learners be allowed to express themselves religiously for their own development. The participants in Taskin's study also revealed that learners' freedom of religious expression included the right to say something freely as well as express their thoughts, including the right to participate without any intimidation.

5.2.1.5 Equity of all religions

Section 15 of the Constitution prescribes that schools should allow religious observances on their premises on an equitable basis while further recommending free and voluntary attendance. Section 9 also affords very religion in the schools "full and equal enjoyment of all right and freedoms". It instructs schools to "promote the achievement of equality" by putting "legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination". The study found that the schools allocated equal time and space for the various

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religions represented and those learners who were not willing to join the majority religion were allocated classrooms to observe their own religion. However, in practice, the study found out that these learners were not allocated educators to manage these gatherings because the educators were Christians. Practically, this meant that the learners were marginalised and excluded from the Christian religious gatherings and left to fend for themselves. It would therefore appear that the schools did not know what was happening at these minority religious gatherings. This is a common occurrence in schools according to the literature I reviewed. For example, the research by Schlanger, Shaffer, and Maec (2017) found that learners of from minority faiths experienced bullying and harassment by educators and fellow learners based on their religion. The study also found that the actions or inactions of educators, by not addressing bullying and harassment and by not confronting stereotypes, could unintentionally create a school situation where discrimination against learners of a certain religious background is seen as acceptable.

5.2.2 Provisions by the school religious observance policies

Section 15 of the Constitution states that public schools must draw up rules for conducting religious observances on an equitable basis with free and voluntary attendance. This section also prescribes to public schools, through SGBs as "appropriate authorities", that these rules, which will regulate religious observances, must be contained in the schools' religious observance policies. Based on an analysis of the participants' interview responses, I came up with three categories of schools: those that did not have religious observance policies in place, those that had religious observance policies that promoted one religion and those that had policies that accommodated all religions represented in the school.

5.2.2.1 Schools without religion policies

The study found that some schools did not have religious observance policies. Although the principal at S1 claimed that the school had such a policy, the LO educator and the learners had never heard of seen it. This means that even if the school had a religion policy, the principal did not discuss or share it with the school population and, therefore, they had not made such policy their own. If the school community had not seen or heard about it, this also raises the question of who drafted the policy. My observations revealed that the school held morning devotions on Mondays and Fridays to start and end each school week. The study also found that such morning

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devotions were compulsory for the educators and learners regardless of their religious affiliation. Implementing studies have shown that principals as implementers of the NPRE may become resisters and saboteurs working to circumvent the policy suggestions that do not advance their self-centeredness, and either ignore or modify the policy to suit their agenda (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002).

5.2.2.2 Schools with religion policies that promote one faith

There are also schools that have religious observance policies, although such policies are single-faith based and promote one faith – Christianity. Learners in these schools experienced religious intolerance and discrimination. As a result, some learners are still subjected to religious exclusion and intimidation after more than 25 years of democracy in South Africa. There are schools that give Christianity preference over the minority religions by leaving learners of minority religions unattended in classes. This may be because the educators lack knowledge about the beliefs and customs of the minority religions, or perhaps lack knowledge about religion education. Policy implementation researchers like Spillane et al. (2002) also confirm that implementation managers, such as principals, "fail to notice, intentionally ignore, or selectively attend to policies that are inconsistent with their own interests and agendas". Such principals tend to implement policies that fit their agenda of "one faith in one school". According to these scholars, such principals ignore the policy because of their unreliable human relations or lack the knowledge, skills, educators and other resources that are required to work in ways that are according to the NPRE, 2003, which promotes religious diversity.

5.2.2.3 Schools with religious observance policies that accommodate all religions represented

Some schools have policies that accommodate all religions in the school and empower learners from different religions to enjoy religious freedom. This study found that these schools do not endorse a particular religion. For instance, these schools acceded to Muslims learners' requests to observe their Muslim holiday. The principals tolerate other religions and include them in their religious observance policies through clauses that allow them to attend their religious activities and festivals at home or at mosques, if requested. In so doing, learners enjoy their right to freedom of religious expression not only in theory (policy) but also in practice. These schools acknowledge that religion is part and parcel of a learner's life contributing enormously to his/her character.

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Learners should be allowed to ask existential questions in the classroom, and teachers should be able to respond to them independently from the formal confessional or neutral identity of the school (Bakker & Avest, 2014). Barb (2017) acknowledges that schools must educate global students who are cognisant of the rising public consciousness of the social, cultural and political importance of religion on an international level. In other countries, like Germany and Austria, parents have the right to elect the type of religious education to be offered to their children (Berglund, 2015).

5.2.3 The participants' roles in promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression

According to Joubert and Prinsloo (2008), parents and legal guardian place schools and educators in loco parentis, meaning that they take the place of the parent when learners are at school. So, educators have a legal duty to protect learners against harm, both physical and psychological. Such harm may arise from the fact that we face a gravest challenge in terms of free exchange of thoughts for freedom of religious education (Malcolm, 2018b). The religious activities in the schools require the stakeholders – the SGBs, principals and LO educators – to play their various roles in ensuring that the diverse religions in the schools get along as smoothly as possible, thus promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. From the analysis of the data, such roles include organising morning devotions, crafting non-discriminatory policies, maintenance harmonious relationships, and acting as liaison persons, counsellors and mediators. I also conclude this sub-section by discussing the leadership practices that emanated from the data.

5.2.3.1 Organising morning devotions

Some participants felt their role was to organise religious gatherings to give the learners a platform to render hymns, spirituals and poems from their religious backgrounds to accommodate the diverse religions represented in the school. These participants felt that their role was to embrace the diverse religious beliefs brought about by the diverse school population. This is in line with paragraph 61 of the NPRE which requires SGBs to determine where and when the religious observances are organised in the schools. According to the policy, if religious observances are organised, they should accommodate and mirror the multi-religiosity of South Africa. This may

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include separating learners according to religion, rotating the opportunities for religious observances, reading selected texts from the various religions and using universal prayers.

5.2.3.2 Crafting non-discriminatory policies

The Constitution, the SASA and the NPRE prescribe that public schools must craft and implement policies that do not discriminate. It is in this spirit that the participants felt it is their role to craft such non-discriminatory policies. Such policies are used to resolve some of the conflict that may arise due to the allocation of time and space for religious observances.

5.2.3.3 Maintaining harmonious relationships

The study found that the participants viewed harmonious relationships as crucial in promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. They felt it is important that they maintain and nurture these relationships. This is in line with section 17 of the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998. The participants understand that they play an important role in enabling, protecting and promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. The NPRE suggest a cooperative model for creating sound interaction between religions in schools while protecting learners against religious discrimination and coercion through ongoing dialogue between the diverse religions represented.

5.2.3.4 Liaison persons

The participants, especially the SGB chairperson, were aware that they had been elected to serve on the SGB to represent the parents in all matters, including religion. They also acknowledged and understood that they were "eyes and ears" of the parents and, therefore, served as an important link between the school and the community. Their responses correlated with section 18 of the SASA which requires members of the SGB to report on their activities, particularly their religious activities, to parents, educators, learners and other staff members.

5.2.3.5 Counsellors and mediators

The educators in this study understand that they stand in loco parentis. It is their duty to serve as guides, referees and mediators when religious conflict, misunderstandings and grievances arise in the schools. The potential conflict may arise from the allocation of time and space for religious

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observances and other religious differences regarding values, perceptions and expectations (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2008; van der Merwe, Prinsloo, & Stuinmann, 2003).

5.2.3.5 Leadership practices

According to Chunoo, Beatty, and Gruver (2019), leadership education and development programs around the world increasingly are driven by values and practices of social responsibility and social change. This move is a response to social and institutional demands to produce leaders who are ready, willing, and able to engage complex societal issues such as religion in public schools. These authors believe that public schools need what they term "social justice educators" who are committed to understanding oppression as widespread, restrictive, classified, internalized, and manifested in the public-school education system (Chunoo et al., 2019; Guillaume et al., 2020). Educators as leaders should, therefore, embrace social change model of leadership development which has the values of equity, social justice, self-awareness, personal empowerment, cooperation, citizenship, and service of the entire school population in the realisation of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression (Dinham & Francis, 2015).

5.2.4 Challenges encountered in promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression

The participants said that their schools do not encounter any challenges in the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. To an extent, I attributed this to the fact that religious freedom is suppressed because some participants said the learners did not disclose their religion and, therefore, they assumed most learners to be Christians. The study also found that learners experienced religious discrimination by allocating them classrooms to observe their religion without arranging supervision. The morning devotions were conducted the Christian way without considering the minority religions that might be present in the school. This amounts to religious intolerance and religious exclusion.

5.2.5 How the schools overcome the challenges

The fact that principals, educators and SGBs felt that their schools did not have challenges meant that they had not put measures in place in anticipation of any eventuality. Tensions and dilemmas are unavoidable in organisations that contain people. So, putting measures in place to resolve

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conflict shows that the school has a clear purpose to afford the represented religions a platform to raise any grievance so that they may coexist and enjoy equal religious rights and freedoms. These measures may include, among others, no direct or indirect coercion, no preferential treatment of religions and involvement in decisions that affect the various religions, through religious observance policies and their contents. This must be done in line with applicable legislation, the Constitution, the SASA and the NPRE with the intention of promoting the learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

5.2.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented a discussion based on the participants' responses on how they promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression as a basic human right. The findings show that the participants had a clear understanding of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. However, it is also clear that in some schools, learners and educators did not know whether their schools had religious observance policies or not. This means that the schools had not discussed the policy with the school community, or that the principals kept the policy to themselves. Such schools, therefore, had not put measures in place to deal with the challenges that might arise as a result of inherent differences.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that derive from the finding of this study are divided into recommendations for improvement of practice and recommendations for further research.

5.4.1 Recommendations for improvement of practice

I came up with the following recommendations as a reflection of the journey I undertook and the knowledge that I gained through the interviews and the data analysis:

- It is clear from the research findings that most schools conducted their religious observances in a Christian way, thereby disregarding the minority religions in the school. Thus, the minority religions were excluded and discriminated against. Schools should take measures to rectify this.
- The Department of Basic Education should ensure that schools' religious observance policies are crafted according to the NPRE.

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- Learners from various religions were left alone without supervision. Schools should therefore establish committees to supervise the various allocated spaces for religious observances.

5.4.2 Recommendations for further research

Some scholars believe that religion is important for the moral and spiritual growth of learners. They emphasise the practising of religious values in educating learners about discipline and the maintenance of order in the school and, therefore, in the community at large. Thus, they are inclined to associate learner ill-discipline with the non-existence of a home-based religious ethos. Therefore

- Research should ascertain the extent to which religious values enhance learner discipline
- Research should be undertaken to establish why some schools have not changed the way they conducted their religious observances
- Research must also be conducted to find out why schools have not developed and implemented inclusive, accommodative and non-discriminatory religious observances policies more than 25 year into our democracy.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This study never intended to come up with a representative sample of participants or schools but to select them on the basis of the criteria set for inclusion in the research. The criteria which resulted in the limitations of this study included, firstly, that this qualitative study purposefully sampled participants and schools that had lived experience regarding the promotion of the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. Secondly, the learners had to be in Grade 10 and above so that they should have gained sufficient knowledge and experience of how the learners' right to freedom of religious expression was promoted. Thirdly, I selected LO educators because, LO as a subject or learning area must educate learners regarding diverse religions and worldviews. These educators were therefore selected with the purpose of informing how they promoted religious diversity in their classes. Fourthly, I sampled only schools that were situated in the Bohlabela District of the Mpumalanga province of South Africa because of its proximity, because they are schools like any school in the country, and elsewhere. And lastly, my lack of experience as a researcher may have influenced the data I collected during the interviews, as I may not have probed the participants enough to solicit sufficient and valid data.

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5.6 CONCLUSION

The journey I undertook through this study was intended to obtain better understanding and insight into the way in which schools promote learners' right to freedom of religious expression by accommodating, tolerating and respecting the diverse religions. During the interviews I discovered that, at times, participants struggled to respond to questions about religion in their schools because they thought of it as an unimportant topic, although studies and the literature I reviewed have shown that this topic is highly contested, which has led to many conflicts, some unresolved even today. The interviews revealed several roles that the participants played in trying to promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression. It was surprising that the participants did not see the importance of crafting religious observance policies that outline the measures to be taken to resolve the conflicting ideas on religion in their schools. That is why I am of the opinion that schools still subject learners to religious intolerance, discrimination and other social injustices because the principals may ignore the development and implementation of the NPRE. It is the role of the Department of Basic Education to ensure that this is remedied.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: Ethics Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER: **EM 19/03/06**
DEGREE AND PROJECT	MEd
	Promoting learners' right to freedom of religious expression in public schools
INVESTIGATOR	Mr Tumelo Arnols Manganyane
DEPARTMENT	Education Management and Policy Studies
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	22 July 2019
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	27 October 2020

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Funke Omidire

CC

Ms Bronwynne Swarts

Dr Maitumeleng Nthontho

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:
- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

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ANNEXURE B: Application letter to Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Education

Faculty of Education

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

P.O. Box 498
MASHISHING
1123
19 July 2019

The Director
Mpumalanga Department of Education
Private Bag x11341
Nelspruit
1200

**APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN BOHLABELA
DISTRICT SCHOOLS**

I am currently enrolled as a master's student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study is: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools**. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how the school promotes learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

I hereby will like to request permission to collect data from three secondary schools in the Bohlabela district. At each school I would like to interview the Chairperson of the SGB, principal of the school, Grade 10 and/or 11 Life Orientation educator and three learners who each represent one of the main religions that they practice (i.e. Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion). I will request a list of the learners and their religious denomination to contact from the principal at each school. The study will also include an analysis of the religion policy of the school. The data collected will be used for research purposes only and will take approximately two months to collect. Only participants who have agreed to and signed the consent form will be permitted to take part in this study. Although there will be no direct benefit to participating in the study, I hope that the participants will find sharing their experience of religious expression at the school of value.

Participants will be required to take part individually in a semi-structured interview for about an hour. Each group of participants will be asked similar questions and given an opportunity to share their experiences at the school. I will meet again with the participants individually after the interviews have been transcribed and a preliminary report written. The second interview will take approximately thirty minutes to provide participants with an opportunity to check that I have understood and interpreted their data correctly.

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The data collection process:

- I will meet with participants at a time that is convenient for example during free periods or after school so as not to disturb teaching time.
- Participants who take part in the study will not receive any incentives for participating in the research.
- To ensure anonymity and confidentiality I will keep the names of the participants and the school anonymous except.
- Participants are free to withdraw at any time should they wish to do so. In the event of participants withdrawing from the study, their data will be destroyed or discarded.

It is unlikely that participants will be harmed in the study. However, should something upsetting come up during the interview I will refer them to the school counsellor or psychologist in the district who will meet with them for free. If the problem is serious and I am concerned about their safety I will inform the school counsellor/psychologist and the University of Pretoria. I will also provide the participants with the details of the district school counsellor and psychologist should the participants want to contact them directly in the permission letter as listed below:

- **Mr Aron Mokwena (Counsellor)** – Provincial Department of Education
  Tel: 013 766 5952
  Cell: 079 925 1232
- **Dr Sebakane William Mashaba (Psychologist)** – The Bohlabela Education District
  Tel: 103 766 7420
  Cell: 082 396 7091

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me.

Yours sincerely

Mr Tumelo Maganyane (Researcher)
Telephone: 083 937 5562
E-mail: tumelo.mag1@gmail.com

Dr Maitumeleng Nthontho (Supervisor)
Telephone: 012 420 2499
E-mail: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

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ANNEXURE C: Approval letter from Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Education

education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ikhamanga Building, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11341, Mbombela, 1200.
Tel: 013 766 5552/5115, Toll Free Line: 0800 203 116

Litiko le Temfundvo, Ummyango we Fundo   Departement van Onderwys   Ndzawulo ya Dyondzo

Mr. Tumelo Arnols Maganyane
PO BOX 498
MASHISHING
1123
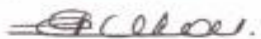
RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: TUMELO MAGANYANE

Your application to conduct research study was received and is therefore acknowledged. The title of your study reads thus: **"Promoting learners right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools."** The aims and the objectives of the study may benefit the department in particular the learners in our schools. Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the departmental website and available on request. You are also requested to adhere to your University's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics document.

In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can only be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department as soon as you complete your research project. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the department's annual research dialogue.

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5476 or a.baloyi@education.mpu.gov.za.

The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

MR. J.R. NKOSI
ACTING HEAD: EDUCATION

20 | 08 | 2019
DATE

MPUMALANGA
THE PLACE OF THE RISING SUN

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ANNEXURE D: Letter requesting permission from schools

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

P.O. Box 498
MASHISHING
1123
19 July 2019

Dear Chairperson of the SGB

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

In this letter I am inviting the school and you to participate in my study. The letter outlines my study and what participation entails.

I am currently enrolled as a master's student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study is: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools**. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how the school promotes learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

Permission for this study has been secured from the Mpumalanga Department of Education and the University of Pretoria. The data will be collected from three schools in the Mpumalanga province and at each school I would like to interview the Chairperson of the SGB, principal of the school, Grade 10 and/or 11 Life Orientation educator and learners who can represent the religion that they practice (i.e. Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion). The study will also include an analysis of the religion policy of the school. The data collected will be used for research purposes only and will take approximately two months to collect. Only participants who have agreed to and signed the consent form will be permitted to take part in this study. Although there will be no direct benefit to participating in the study, I hope that the participants will find sharing their experience of religious expression at the school of value.

Participants will be required to take part individually in a semi-structured interview for about an hour. Each group of participants will be asked similar questions and given an opportunity to share their experiences at the school. I will meet again with the participants individually after the interviews have been transcribed and a preliminary report written. The second interview will take approximately thirty minutes to provide participants with an opportunity to check that I have understood and interpreted their data correctly.
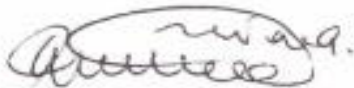
105

The data collection process:

- I will meet with participants at a time that is convenient for example during free periods or after school so as not to disturb teaching time.
- Participants who take part in the study will not receive any incentives for participating in the research.
- To ensure anonymity and confidentiality I will keep the names of the participants and the school anonymous except.
- Participants are free to withdraw at any time should they wish to do so. In the event of participants withdrawing from the study, their data will be destroyed or discarded.

It is unlikely that participants will be harmed in the study. However, should something upsetting come up during the interview I will refer them to the school counsellor or psychologist in the district who will meet with them for free. If the problem is serious and I am concerned about their safety I will inform the school counsellor/psychologist and the University of Pretoria. I will also provide the participants with the details of the district school counsellor and psychologist should the participants want to contact them directly in the permission letter as listed below:

- **Mr Aron Mokwena (Counsellor)** – Provincial Department of Education
  Tel: 013 766 5952
  Cell: 079 925 1232
- **Dr Sebakane William Mashaba (Psychologist)** – The Bohlabela Education District
  Tel: 103 766 7420
  Cell: 082 396 7091

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me.

Yours sincerely

Mr Tumelo Maganyane (Researcher)
Telephone: 083 937 5562
E-mail: tumelo.mag1@gmail.com

Dr Maitumeleng Nthontho (Supervisor)
Telephone: 012 420 2499
E-mail: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

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ANNEXURE E: Permissions from schools

**Hoërskool
Sybrand Van Niekerk
High School**

☎ (013) 764 2148
📠 (013) 764 3494
Verw./Ref.Nr ....

Hoofstraat / Main Street
Privaatsak x500 P/Bag
Sabie
1260

24 SEPTEMBER 2019

Dear Mr. TA Maganyane

I hereby acknowledge receipt of your request and invitation of myself, and the school to participate in your research.

I therefore accept your request and acknowledge that I agree to your request and will be available on the agreed date.

Thank you & kind regards

Mr. EM Smit
Principal

HOËRSKOOL / HIGH SCHOOL
SYBRAND VAN NIEKERK

2 4 -09- 2019

P/SAK / P/BAG X500 SABIE 1260
TEL: (013) 764 2148 FAX: 764 3494

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SKHILA SECONDARY SCHOOL

Cnr. Polokwane & Ohrigstad Road
39 Showground Street
Lydenburg
1120
Tel No   : 013 -235 2540
Fax No   : 013-235 2813
Email   : skhilasec@yahoo.com
Cell   : 0839731291
Principal : Mokoena T.G.
EMIS   : 800001164

P.O. Box 611
Lydenburg
1120

02 September 2019

Dear Mr Maganyane T.A.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

The undersigned, herewith acknowledges receipt of your letter dated the **19 July 2019** in which you invite the school and I to participate in your research programme.

Consequently, **permission is hereby granted and request acceded to, for you to conduct your research at this institution.**

Wishing you success in your studies.

Kind regards

Mokwena T.G.
Principal

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SKHILA SEC SCHOOL
2019 -09- 02
TEL 013 235 2540 • FAX 013 235 2813
P.O. BOX 611 LYDENBURG 1120
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

523 Makwili
Street
Simile Location
Sabie
1260

Private Bag X510
Sabie, 1260
Tel: 072 237 1230
Fax: 086 565 1366

MEMEZILE HIGH SCHOOL

19 September 2019

Dear Mr Maganyane

I hereby acknowledge receipt of your request and invitation of myself, and the school to participate in your research.

I therefore accept your request and acknowledge that I agree to your request and will be available on the agreed date.

Thank you

Muthambi MG

Principal

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
MEMEZILE SEC. SCHOOL

2019 -09- 1 9

CELL: 072 23: 1230 FAX: 086 500 1166

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

109
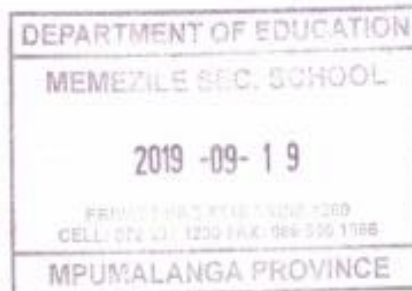
ANNEXURE F: Invitation letters to participants

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

P.O. Box 498
MASHISHING
1123
19 July 2019

Dear Chairperson of the SGB

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

In this letter I am inviting the school and you to participate in my study. The letter outlines my study and what participation entails.

I am currently enrolled as a master's student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study is: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools**. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how the school promotes learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

Permission for this study has been secured from the Mpumalanga Department of Education and the University of Pretoria. The data will be collected from three schools in the Mpumalanga province and at each school I would like to interview the Chairperson of the SGB, principal of the school, Grade 10 and/or 11 Life Orientation educator and learners who can represent the religion that they practice (i.e. Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion). The study will also include an analysis of the religion policy of the school. The data collected will be used for research purposes only and will take approximately two months to collect. Only participants who have agreed to and signed the consent form will be permitted to take part in this study. Although there will be no direct benefit to participating in the study, I hope that the participants will find sharing their experience of religious expression at the school of value.

Participants will be required to take part individually in a semi-structured interview for about an hour. Each group of participants will be asked similar questions and given an opportunity to share their experiences at the school. I will meet again with the participants individually after the interviews have been transcribed and a preliminary report written. The second interview will take approximately thirty minutes to provide participants with an opportunity to check that I have understood and interpreted their data correctly.

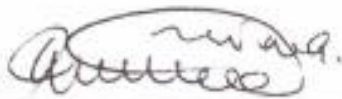110

The data collection process:

- I will meet with participants at a time that is convenient for example during free periods or after school so as not to disturb teaching time.
- Participants who take part in the study will not receive any incentives for participating in the research.
- To ensure anonymity and confidentiality I will keep the names of the participants and the school anonymous except.
- Participants are free to withdraw at any time should they wish to do so. In the event of participants withdrawing from the study, their data will be destroyed or discarded.

It is unlikely that participants will be harmed in the study. However, should something upsetting come up during the interview I will refer them to the school counsellor or psychologist in the district who will meet with them for free. If the problem is serious and I am concerned about their safety I will inform the school counsellor/psychologist and the University of Pretoria. I will also provide the participants with the details of the district school counsellor and psychologist should the participants want to contact them directly in the permission letter as listed below:

- **Mr Aron Mokwena (Counsellor)** – Provincial Department of Education
  Tel: 013 766 5952
  Cell: 079 925 1232
- **Dr Sebakane William Mashaba (Psychologist)** – The Bohlabela Education District
  Tel: 103 766 7420
  Cell: 082 396 7091

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me.
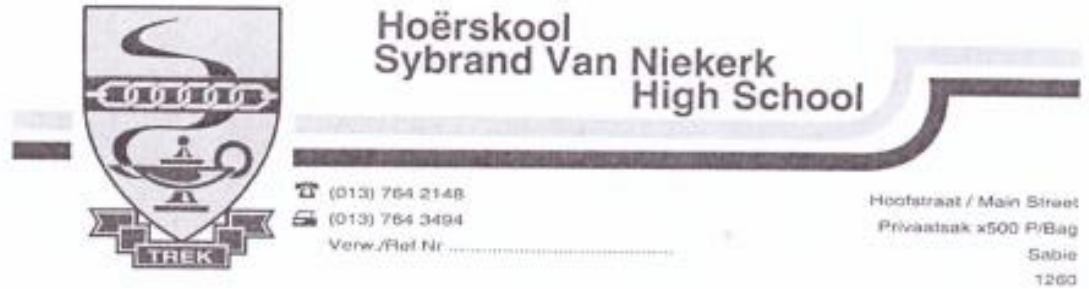
Yours sincerely

Mr Tumelo Maganyane (Researcher)
Telephone: 083 937 5562
E-mail: tumelo.mag1@gmail.com

Dr Maitumeleng Nthontho (Supervisor)
Telephone: 012 420 2499
E-mail: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

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Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

P.O. Box 498
MASHISHING
1123
17 July 2019

Dear Principal

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

In this letter I am inviting the school and you to participate in my study. The letter outlines my study and what participation entails.

I am currently enrolled as a masters student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study is: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools**. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how the school promotes learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

Permission for this study has been secured from the Mpumalanga Department of Education and the University of Pretoria. The data will be collected from three schools in the Mpumalanga province and at each school I would like to interview the Chairperson of the SGB, principal of the school, Grade 10 and/or 11 Life Orientation educator and learners who represent the religion that they practice (i.e. Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion). The study will also include an analysis of the religion policy of the school. The data collected will be used for research purposes only and will take approximately two months to collect. Only participants who have agreed to and signed the consent form will be permitted to take part in this study. Although there will be no direct benefit to participating in the study, I hope that the participants will find sharing their experience of religious expression at the school of value.

Each group of participants will be asked similar questions and given an opportunity to share their experiences at the school. Participants will be required to take part individually in a semi-structured interview for about an hour. I will meet again with the participants individually after the interviews have been transcribed and a preliminary report written. The second interview will take approximately thirty minutes to provide participants with an opportunity to check that I have understood and interpreted their data correctly.
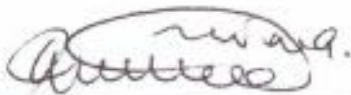
The data collection process:

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- I will meet with participants at a time that is convenient for example during free periods or after school so as not to disturb teaching time.
- Participants who take part in the study will not receive any incentives for participating in the study.
- To ensure anonymity and confidentiality I will keep the names of the participants and the school anonymous.
- Participants are free to withdraw at any time should they wish to do so. In the event of participants withdrawing from the study, their data will be destroyed or discarded.

It is unlikely that participants will be harmed in the study. However, should something upsetting come up during the interview I will refer them to the school counsellor or school psychologist in the district who will meet with them for free. If the problem is serious and I am concerned about their safety I am required to inform the school counsellor or psychologist and the University of Pretoria. Below are the details of the district school counsellor and psychologist should participants want to contact them directly:

- **Mr Aron Mokwena (Counsellor)** – Provincial Department of Education
  Tel: 013 766 5952
  Cell: 079 925 1232
- **Dr Sebakane William Mashaba (Psychologist)** – The Bohlabela Education District
  Tel: 103 766 7420
  Cell: 082 396 7091

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me.

Yours sincerely

Mr Tumelo Maganyane (Researcher)
Telephone: 083 937 5562
E-mail: tumelo.mag1@gmail.com

Dr Maitumeleng Nthontho (Supervisor)
Telephone: 012 420 2499
E-mail: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

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Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

P.O. Box 498
MASHISHING
1123
17 July 2019

Dear Educator

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

In this letter I am inviting you to participate in my study. The letter outlines my study and what participation entails.

I am currently enrolled as a masters student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study is: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools**. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how the school promotes learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

Permission for this study has been secured from the Mpumalanga Department of Education and University of Pretoria. The data will be collected from three schools in the Mpumalanga province and at each school I would like to interview the Chairperson of the SGB, principal of the school, Grade 10 and/or 11 Life Orientation educator and learners who can represent the religion that they practice (i.e. Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion). The study will also include an analysis of the religion policy of the school. The data collected will be used for research purposes only and will take approximately two months to collect. Only participants who have agreed to and signed the consent form will be permitted to take part in this study. Although there will be no direct benefit to participating in the study, I hope that the participants will find sharing their experiences of religious expression at the school of value.

Participants will be required to take part in a semi-structured interview individually for about an hour. Each group of participants will be asked similar questions and given an opportunity to share their experiences at the school. I will meet again with the participants individually after the interviews have been transcribed and a preliminary report written. The second interview will take approximately thirty minutes to provide participants with an opportunity to check that I have understood and interpreted their data correctly.
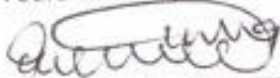The data collection process:

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- I will meet with participants at a time that is convenient for example during free periods or after school so as not to disturb teaching time.
- Participants who take part in the study will not receive any incentives for participating in the study.
- To ensure anonymity and confidentiality I will keep the names of the participants and the school anonymous.
- Participants are free to withdraw at any time should they wish to do so. In the event of participants withdrawing from the study, their data will be destroyed or discarded.

It is unlikely that participants will be harmed in the study. However, should something upsetting come up during the interview I will refer them to the school counsellor or school psychologist in the district who will meet with them for free. If the problem is serious and I am concerned about their safety I am required to inform the school counsellor or psychologist and the University of Pretoria. Below are the details of the district school counsellor and psychologist should participants want to contact them directly:

- **Mr Aron Mokwena (Counsellor)** – Provincial Department of Education
  Tel: 013 766 5952
  Cell: 079 925 1232
- **Dr Sebakane William Mashaba (Psychologist)** – The Bohlabela Education District
  Tel: 103 766 7420
  Cell: 082 396 7091

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me.

Yours sincerely

Mr Tumelo Maganyane (Researcher)
Telephone: 083 937 5562
E-mail: tumelo.mag1@gmail.com

Dr Maitumeleng Nthontho (Supervisor)
Telephone: 012 420 2499
E-mail: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

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Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

P.O. Box 498
MASHISHING
1123
19 July 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO HAVE YOUR CHILD PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

In this letter I am asking permission for your child to participate in my study. The letter outlines my study and what participation entails.

I am currently enrolled as a masters student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study is: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools**. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how the school promotes learners' right to freedom of religious expression.

I have received permission from the Mpumalanga Department of Education and the school to do this study. The principal of the school gave me the names of learners who I can interview for my study but before I can interview them I also need your permission and permission from your child. Learners will not receive any benefit for taking part in the study except that it will provide them with an opportunity to share their experiences at the school.
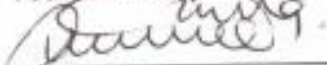
Learners who take part in the study will be interviewed on their own during a free period or after school so that their lessons will not be disturbed. The interview will take about an hour. After I have collected all the data, I will meet your child again to check if I have understood what they told me in the interview. This meeting will take about 30 minutes and will also be done during a free period or after school.

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During the interview I will be asking learners some questions and allow them time to describe their experience at the school on freedom of religious expression. It is unlikely that learners will be harmed in the study. However, if something makes them distressed or they tell me about discriminative practices I will consult on the issue, and/or refer them to someone who is best able to help. Learners can also contact the counsellor and psychologist below for help which will be free of charge:

- **Mr Aron Mokwena (Counsellor)** – Provincial Department of Education
  Tel: 013 766 5952
  Cell: 079 925 1232
- **Dr Sebakane William Mashaba (Psychologist)** – The Bohlabela Education District
  Tel: 103 766 7420
  Cell: 082 396 7091

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me on the contact details provided below.

Yours sincerely

Mr Tumelo Maganyane (Researcher)
Telephone: 083 937 5562
E-mail: tumelo.mag1@gmail.com

Dr Maitumeleng Nthontho (Supervisor)
Telephone: 012 420 2499
E-mail: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

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Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

P.O. Box 498
MASHISHING
1123
19 July 2019

Dear participant (learners)

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

In this letter I am inviting you to participate in my study. The letter outlines my study and what participation entails.

I am currently enrolled as a master's student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study is: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools**. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how the school promotes learners' right to freedom of religious expression. In the study I will be interviewing different people in the school and learners from different religious backgrounds.

To do this research at your school I have received permission from the Mpumalanga Department of Education and University of Pretoria. I also have permission from the SBG, principal and your parent/carer. Although there will be no direct benefit for you to participate in the study, I hope that you will find value in sharing with me your experiences of religious expression at the school. You will not receive any incentives for participating and whatever you say in the interviews will remain anonymous and confidential. Your participation in the study is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate or withdraw during this study this will not be held against you. Any data that I have already collected from you will be destroyed and not form part of the study.

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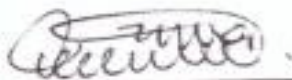
To take part in the research I will need to interview you about your experiences of religious expression at the school. The interview will take about an hour and will be done during a free period or after school. After I have collected all the data I will meet with you again to check with you if I have understood what you said. This interview will take about 30 minutes and will also be done during a free period or after school. I will conduct the interviews with you on your own.

During the interview I will be asking you some questions and allow you time to describe your experience at the school on freedom of religious expression. It is unlikely that you will be harmed in the study. However, you might feel uncomfortable during the interviews or distressed by discriminative processes and practices existing in the school pertaining to religion in education. If this does arise you can speak to me and I will consult on the issue, and/or refer you to someone who is best able to help. If there is a serious problem about your safety, I am required to inform the school psychologist/counsellor and the University of Pretoria. You can also contact the counsellor and psychologist below for help which will be free of charge:

- **Mr Aron Mokwena (Counsellor)** – Provincial Department of Education
  Tel: 013 766 5952
  Cell: 079 925 1232
- **Dr Sebakane William Mashaba (Psychologist)** – The Bohlabela Education District
  Tel: 103 766 7420
  Cell: 082 396 7091

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me on the contact details provided below.

Yours sincerely

Mr Tumelo Maganyane (Researcher)
Telephone: 083 937 5562
E-mail: tumelo.mag1@gmail.com

Dr Maitumeleng Nthontho (Supervisor)
Telephone: 012 420 2499
E-mail: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

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ANNEXURE G: Consent Letters of SGBs

INFORMED CONSENT FORM - CHAIRPERSON OF THE SGB

I _____ *SGB 1* _____ (full names and surname), Chairperson of the SGB for _____ *S.1* _____ school, give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to do research at the school. I understand that the data collected is independent from the school and will be used for the study: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools.** I also give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- My daily duties will not be disturbed.
- The researcher has my permission to interview me when I am off.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of the school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes only.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them regarding matters relating to this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to contact them directly.

Signed _____ Date: 13-09-2016

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INFORMED CONSENT FORM - CHAIRPERSON OF THE SGB

I _____ SGB 2 _____ (full names and surname), Chairperson of the SGB for _____ S2 _____, school, give permission/~~do not give permission~~ (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to do research at the school. I understand that the data collected is independent from the school and will be used for the study: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools.** I also give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- My daily duties will not be disturbed.
- The researcher has my permission to interview me when I am off.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of the school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes only.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them regarding matters relating to this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to contact them directly.

Signed: _____ Date: 14-09-2019

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INFORMED CONSENT FORM - CHAIRPERSON OF THE SGB

I _____ *SGB3* _____ (full names and surname), Chairperson of the

SGB for_____ *S3* _____ school, give permission/~~do not give~~

permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to do research

at the school. I understand that the data collected is independent from the school and will be

used for the study: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of**

religion in public schools. I also give permission/do not give permission (please delete which

is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- My daily duties will not be disturbed.
- The researcher has my permission to interview me when I am off.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of the school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes only.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them regarding matters relating to this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to contact them directly.

Signed: _____ Date: 13-09-2020

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ANNEXURE H: Consent letters (Principals)

INFORMED CONSENT FORM - PRINCIPAL

I _____ P1 _____ (full names and surname), principal

for _____ S1 _____ school, give permission/do not give permission

(please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to do research at the

school. I understand that the data collected is independent from the school and will be used

for the study: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in**

public schools. I also give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not

applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw their participation at any time should they wish to do so. The decision to withdraw will not be held against participants.
- Interviews will not be done during lessons but only in free periods or after school.
- Interviews will be done individually.
- My identity, that of the school, teachers and learners will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interviews will remain confidential.
- Participants will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- I will provide the researcher with a list of learners and their religious denomination who have been at the school for two or more years.
- I will provide the researcher with the school's policy on religion.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should participants withdraw their consent.
- I have received the contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters relating to this research.
- I have received the contact details of a counsellor and psychologist who can be contacted directly for free if the need arises.

Signed: _____ Date: __11-9-2019__

123

INFORMED CONSENT FORM - PRINCIPAL

I __P2__ (full names and surname), principal for __S2__ school, give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to do research at the school. I understand that the data collected is independent from the school and will be used for the study: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools.** I also give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw their participation at any time should they wish to do so. The decision to withdraw will not be held against participants.
- Interviews will not be done during lessons but only in free periods or after school.
- Interviews will be done individually.
- My identity, that of the school, teachers and learners will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interviews will remain confidential.
- Participants will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- I will provide the researcher with a list of learners and their religious denomination who have been at the school for two or more years.
- I will provide the researcher with the school's policy on religion.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should participants withdraw their consent.
- I have received the contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters relating to this research.
- I have received the contact details of a counsellor and psychologist who can be contacted directly for free if the need arises.

Signed: _____   Date: 12.09.2019

124

INFORMED CONSENT FORM - PRINCIPAL

I _____*P3*_____ (full names and surname), principal for _____*S3*_____, school, give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to do research at the school. I understand that the data collected is independent from the school and will be used for the study: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools.** I also give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw their participation at any time should they wish to do so. The decision to withdraw will not be held against participants.
- Interviews will not be done during lessons but only in free periods or after school.
- Interviews will be done individually.
- My identity, that of the school, teachers and learners will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interviews will remain confidential.
- Participants will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- I will provide the researcher with a list of learners and their religious denomination who have been at the school for two or more years.
- I will provide the researcher with the school's policy on religion.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should participants withdraw their consent.
- I have received the contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters relating to this research.
- I have received the contact details of a counsellor and psychologist who can be contacted directly for free if the need arises.

Signed: _____ Date: 19/09/2019.

125

ANNEXURE I: Consent letters (Educators)

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: EDUCATOR

I _____ _L.O.L._____(full names and surname) educator at
_____ _S1_____ school, give permission/do not give permission
(please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the
study: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public
schools.**

By agreeing to be interviewed I understand that:
- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- Interviews will not be done during my lessons but only in my free periods or after school.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of my school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about relating to matters of this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to contact them directly.

Moreme BM   11-09-2017
_____   _____
Signature (Educator)   Date

126

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: EDUCATOR

I _____ *LO2* _____ (full names and surname) educator at

_____ *S2* _____ school, give permission/do not give permission

(please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the

study: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools.**

By agreeing to be interviewed I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- Interviews will not be done during my lessons but only in my free periods or after school.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of my school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about relating to matters of this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to contact them directly.

_____
Signature (Educator)

13/09/2019
Date

127

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: EDUCATOR

I _____*LO3*_____ (full names and surname) educator at _____*S3*_____ school, give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the study: **Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools.**

By agreeing to be interviewed I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- Interviews will not be done during my lessons but only in my free periods or after school.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of my school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about relating to matters of this research.
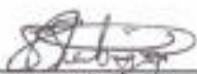- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to contact them directly.

_____   17/09/2017
Signature (Educator)   Date

128

ANNEXURE J: Consent letters (Parents and learners)

L1 - Parent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: PARENT/CAREGIVER

After reading the letter included, I give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview my child for the study. By agreeing to my child participating I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my permission at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me or my child.
- My child must also give permission to be interviewed and can withdraw from the research at any stage without giving a reason.
- Interviews will not be done during lessons but only in free periods or after school.
- My child will be interviewed on their own.
- The identity of my child and the school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- The interviews will be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should consent be withdrawn.
- I have received the contact details of a counsellor and psychologist who I can contact for free help if the need arises.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them on matters relating to this research.

Name and Surname of Parent *(please print)*: _____

Name and Surname of Learner *(please print)*: _____

Signature (Parent)   07. 09. 2019
                                                       Date

129

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: LEARNER

I _____ _Z I_____ (full names and surname), leaner from

_____ _S I_._____, school, give permission/do not give permission

(please delete which is not ʌ⁻ ʼʼcable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the

study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time
  should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- Interviews will not be done during my lessons but only in my free periods or after
  school.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of my school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the
  interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to
  contact them about matters regarding this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to
  contact them directly.

Signed: _____   Date: _11/69/2019_____

130

L2 - Parent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: PARENT/CAREGIVER

After reading the letter included, I give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview my child for the study. By agreeing to my child participating I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my permission at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me or my child.
- My child must also give permission to be interviewed and can withdraw from the research at any stage without giving a reason.
- Interviews will not be done during lessons but only in free periods or after school.
- My child will be interviewed on their own.
- The identity of my child and the school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- The interviews will be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should consent be withdrawn.
- I have received the contact details of a counsellor and psychologist who I can contact for free help if the need arises.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them on matters relating to this research.

Name and Surname of Parent *(please print)*: _____

Name and Surname of Learner *(please print)*: _____

Signature (Parent) _____

Date: 11/09/2019

131

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: LEARNER

I _____ *Israel £2* _____ (full names and surname), leaner from

_____ *Grade S/N* _____ school, give permission/do not give permission

(please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the
study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time
  should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- Interviews will not be done during my lessons but only in my free periods or after
  school.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of my school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the
  interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to
  contact them about matters regarding this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to
  contact them directly.

Signed: _____ *Abdullah* _____ Date: __11_/_09_/_2019_.

132

L3. Parent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: PARENT/CAREGIVER

After reading the letter included, I give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview my child for the study. By agreeing to my child participating I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my permission at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me or my child.
- My child must also give permission to be interviewed and can withdraw from the research at any stage without giving a reason.
- Interviews will not be done during lessons but only in free periods or after school.
- My child will be interviewed on their own.
- The identity of my child and the school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- The interviews will be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should consent be withdrawn.
- I have received the contact details of a counsellor and psychologist who I can contac for free help if the need arises.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them on matters relating to this research.

Name and Surname of Parent (*please print*): _____

Name and Surname of Learner (*please print*): _____

_____ 07/04/2019
Signature (Parent)   Date

133

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: LEARNER

I _____ *L 2* _____(full names and surname), leaner from

_____ *5 1* _____ school, give permission/do not give permission

(please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the

study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- Interviews will not be done during my lessons but only in my free periods or after school.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of my school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters regarding this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to contact them directly.

Signed: _____ Date: 11 / 0 9 / 2019

134

L4-Parent

L4
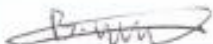
INFORMED CONSENT FORM: PARENT/CAREGIVER

After reading the letter included, I give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview my child for the study.
By agreeing to my child participating I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my permission at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me or my child.
- My child must also give permission to be interviewed and can withdraw from the research at any stage without giving a reason.
- Interviews will not be done during lessons but only in free periods or after school.
- My child will be interviewed on their own.
- The identity of my child and the school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- The interviews will be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should consent be withdrawn.
- I have received the contact details of a counsellor and psychologist who I can contact for free help if the need arises.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them on matters relating to this research.

Name and Surname of Parent (please print): _____

Name and Surname of Learner (please print): _____

_____
Signature (Parent)

13-09-2019
Date

135

© University of Pretoria

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: LEARNER

I _____ *L4* _____ (full names and surname), leaner from

_____ *52* _____ school, give permission/do not give permission

(please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- Interviews will not be done during my lessons but only in my free periods or after school.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of my school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters regarding this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to contact them directly.

Signed: _____ Date: 13 | 09 | 2019

136

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: PARENT/CAREGIVER

After reading the letter included, I give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview my child for the study. By agreeing to my child participating I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my permission at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me or my child.
- My child must also give permission to be interviewed and can withdraw from the research at any stage without giving a reason.
- Interviews will not be done during lessons but only in free periods or after school.
- My child will be interviewed on their own.
- The identity of my child and the school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- The interviews will be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should consent be withdrawn.
- I have received the contact details of a counsellor and psychologist who I can contact for free help if the need arises.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them on matters relating to this research.

Name and Surname of Parent *(please print)*: _____

Name and Surname of Learner *(please print)*: _____

_____   2019 - 09 - 12
Signature (Parent)   Date

137

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: LEARNER

I _____ L5 _____ (full names and surname), leaner from

_____ S2 _____ school, give permission/do not give permission

(please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the

study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- Interviews will not be done during my lessons but only in my free periods or after school.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of my school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters regarding this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to contact them directly.

Signed: _____ Date: 13 September 2019

138

6 - Parent   L6
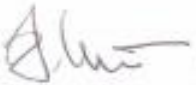
INFORMED CONSENT FORM: PARENT/CAREGIVER

After reading the letter included, I give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview my child for the study. By agreeing to my child participating I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my permission at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me or my child.
- My child must also give permission to be interviewed and can withdraw from the research at any stage without giving a reason.
- Interviews will not be done during lessons but only in free periods or after school.
- My child will be interviewed on their own.
- The identity of my child and the school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- The interviews will be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should consent be withdrawn.
- I have received the contact details of a counsellor and psychologist who I can contact for free help if the need arises.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them on matters relating to this research.

Name and Surname of Parent (please print): _____

Name and Surname of Learner (please print): _____

_____   11-09-19
Signature (Parent)   Date

139

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: LEARNER

I _____ *L6* _____ (full names and surname), leaner from

_____ *S2* _____ , _____ school, give permission/do not give permission

(please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the

study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- Interviews will not be done during my lessons but only in my free periods or after school.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of my school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters regarding this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to contact them directly.

Signed: _____ Date: 13 /09/2019

140

47 - Parent

⌐┐

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: PARENT/CAREGIVER

After reading the letter included, I give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview my child for the study. By agreeing to my child participating I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my permission at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me or my child.
- My child must also give permission to be interviewed and can withdraw from the research at any stage without giving a reason.
- Interviews will not be done during lessons but only in free periods or after school.
- My child will be interviewed on their own.
- The identity of my child and the school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- The interviews will be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should consent be withdrawn.
- I have received the contact details of a counsellor and psychologist who I can contact for free help if the need arises.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them on matters relating to this research.

Name and Surname of Parent *(please print)*: _____

Name and Surname of Learner *(please print)*: _____

_____
Signature (Parent)

12/02/2020
Date

141

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: LEARNER

I _____ _L7_ _____ (full names and surname), leaner from _____ _S3_ _____ school, give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- Interviews will not be done during my lessons but only in my free periods or after school.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of my school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters regarding this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to contact them directly.

Signed: _____ Date: _12|02|2020_

142

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: PARENT/CAREGIVER

After reading the letter included, I give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview my child for the study. By agreeing to my child participating I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my permission at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me or my child.
- My child must also give permission to be interviewed and can withdraw from the research at any stage without giving a reason.
- Interviews will not be done during lessons but only in free periods or after school.
- My child will be interviewed on their own.
- The identity of my child and the school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- The interviews will be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should consent be withdrawn.
- I have received the contact details of a counsellor and psychologist who I can contact for free help if the need arises.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them on matters relating to this research.

Name and Surname of Parent *(please print)*: _____

Name and Surname of Learner *(please print)*: _____

_____
Signature (Parent)

17/12/2020
Date

143

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: LEARNER

I _____ L8 _____ (full names and surname), leaner from

_____ 53 _____ school, give permission/do not give permission

(please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the

study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- Interviews will not be done during my lessons but only in my free periods or after school.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of my school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters regarding this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to contact them directly.

Signed: _____ Date: 12/02/2020

144

L9- Parent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: PARENT/CAREGIVER

After reading the letter included, I give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview my child for the study. By agreeing to my child participating I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my permission at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me or my child.
- My child must also give permission to be interviewed and can withdraw from the research at any stage without giving a reason.
- Interviews will not be done during lessons but only in free periods or after school.
- My child will be interviewed on their own.
- The identity of my child and the school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- The interviews will be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should consent be withdrawn.
- I have received the contact details of a counsellor and psychologist who I can contact for free help if the need arises.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them on matters relating to this research.

Name and Surname of Parent (please print): _____

Name and Surname of Learner (please print): _____

M.Mashigo
Signature (Parent)

12/02/2020
Date

145

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: LEARNER

I _____ L9 _____ (full names and surname), leaner from

_____ S3. _____ school, give permission/do not give permission

(please delete which is not applicable) for Mr. Tumelo Maganyane to interview me for the

study.

By agreeing to participate I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time
  should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- Interviews will not be done during my lessons but only in my free periods or after
  school.
- I will be interviewed on my own.
- My identity and that of my school will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the
  interviews.
- The research activities may be audio-recorded.
- The data collected will be used for research purposes.
- The data will be stored safely or destroyed should I withdraw my consent.
- I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to
  contact them about matters regarding this research.
- I have received contact details of the counsellor and psychologist should I wish to
  contact them directly.

Signed: _P. M. Seratane_ Date: _12/02/2020_

146

ANNEXURE K: Interview Schedules

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (SGB, school principal and LO educator)

Time of interview: _____   Duration_____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee_____   Pseudonym: _____

Male/Female_____

Study title: Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools.

Study purpose: To explore and understand how the schools promote the learners' right to freedom of expression.

Interview procedure: The interview will consist of nine questions of which you are not obliged to answer all of them should you feel uncomfortable to do so.

Note: There are neither wrong nor right answers in this interview.

Remember:

1. Everything we share and discuss will be treated as confidential and will not be revealed to a third party. I am interested in your personal understanding and experiences of how you experience and promote the learners' right to freedom of religious expression here at school and how the school enables the learners to exercise this right.
2. You are welcome to seek clarity should the need be.
3. Everything we share and discuss will be audio recorded.
4. You can stop participating at any time without giving any reason.

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Are there any questions that you would like to ask for clarification before we start?

Interview questions:

1. What do you understand by the right to freedom of expression?
2. Which religious orientations are present in your school?
3. How does the religion policy of the school provide for learners' right to freedom of religious expression?
4. What role do you play to ensure that learners exercise their right to freedom of religious expression?
5. What school practices enable learners to exercise their right to freedom of expression?
6. To which religious character does the school subscribe and why?
7. How does the school ensure that learners from religions other than the one it subscribes to, exercise their right to freedom of religious expression?
8. What challenges does the school encounter in promoting learners' right to freedom of religious expression?
9. How does the school overcome the above mentioned challenges?

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your experiences of how you promote learners' right to freedom of religious expression, your roles and responsibilities as the chairperson of the SGB, school principal or LO educator?

Concluding remarks

Thank you for taking your time to share with me this important and valuable information.

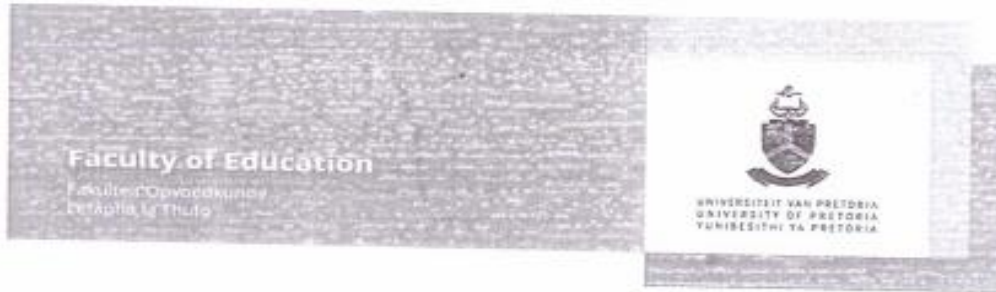I kindly request you to avail yourself for further clarity should I need it.

Should you have questions and/or additional information regarding this study/interview, do not hesitate to contact us.

Researcher: Tumelo Arnols Maganyane   Sign: _____

Supervisor: Dr MA Nthontho   Sign: _____

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Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (learners)

Time of interview: _____   Duration_____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee_____   Pseudonym: _____

Male/Female_____

Study title: Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools.

Study purpose: To explore and understand your experience of your right to freedom of religious expression in your school.

Interview procedure: The interview will consist of six questions of which you are not obliged to answer all of them should you feel uncomfortable to do so.

Note: There are neither wrong nor right answers in this interview.

Remember:

1. Everything we share and discuss will be treated as confidential and will not be revealed to a third party. I am interested in your experiences of your right to freedom of religious expression here at school and how the school enables you to exercise this right.
2. You are welcome to seek clarity should the need be.
3. Everything we share and discuss will be audio recorded.
4. You can stop participating at any time without giving any reason.

Are there any questions that you would like to ask for clarification before we start?

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<u>Interview questions</u>:

1. What do you understand by the right to freedom of religious expression?
2. How does the religion policy of the school provide for your right to freedom of religious expression?
3. What school practices enable you to exercise your right to freedom of expression?
4. What perceptions do you have about religious orientations different from yours?
5. How do your perceptions above influence your approach towards learners from different religious orientation?

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your experiences of your right to freedom of religious expression, your roles and responsibilities in enabling other learners to exercise the same right?
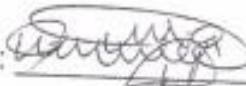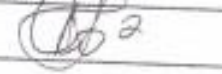
Concluding remarks

Thank you for taking your time to share with me this important and valuable information.

I kindly request you to avail yourself for further clarity should I need it.

Should you have questions and/or additional information regarding this study/interview, do not hesitate to contact us.

Researcher: Tumelo Arnols Maganyane   Sign:

Supervisor: Dr MA Nthontho   Sign:

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ANNEXURE L: Document Analysis

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

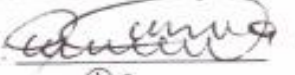### Document Analysis Schedule

Study title: Promoting learners' right to freedom of expression: The case of religion in public schools.

Study purpose: To explore and understand your experience of your right to freedom of religious expression in your school.

The following items will be used as the guidelines for the analysis of school religion policies on how schools promote learners' right to freedom of religious expression:

1. Which other legal documents were consulted during the crafting of the religion policy of the school?
2. For how many years does the religion policy of the school exist?
3. Who crafted the policy?
4. What was the purpose of the policy?
5. How does the policy provide for learners' right to freedom of religious expression?
6. Does the policy specify the religious character of the school? If yes, how does it provide for learners in other religious orientations?
7. What proactive and reactive strategies does the policy provide in dealing with contesting views of the parties involved?
8. What are the indicators that the policy fulfils what it is meant for?
9. After how many years does the policy qualify for review and by whom?

Researcher: Tumelo Arnols Maganyane   Sign: _____

Supervisor: Dr MA Nthontho   Sign: _____

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