Xenophobia and Religious Education: Evoking an Education that Takes Responsibility in South Africa

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Abstract

Xenophobia, despite various interventions, remains a thorny issue in South Africa with implications to curriculum practices. Thus, the paper responds to questions and these are; what are the trajectories of xenophobia within the curriculum, and how religious education takes responsibility for it? We used critical emancipatory research to couch a qualitative study that strategically random sampled 12 participants who were school learners, non-South Africans employed as teachers, and principals. The findings suggest that, while South Africa has made strides in many aspects, the issue of xenophobia still taunts the beauty of the rainbow nation, thereby creating African exceptionalism, isolation and social crises that affect learners directly. The study also found out the xenophobia has implications to teaching and learning, thus, requiring the problem to be tackled at curriculum level. We argue that religious education has the impetus to contribute to mitigating the challenges associated with xenophobia from a curriculum angle.

Key words: African exceptionalism, religious education, school context, South Africa, xenophobia,

Introduction

The paper is presented at a time that the world is confronted with many challenges, among which COVID-19 and the global #BlackLivesMatter protests. The latter has reconfigured how Black people are (should be) perceived as human beings, that is, with dignity, like all other people. The protests were prompted by the death of George Floyd on May 26, 2020. In solidarity with Floyd's death, many governments, including that of South Africa, expressed concern and saw the need to rethink Black lives, and established mechanisms to protect the lives of Black people. While this is noble and an expected human gesture, some African countries, such as South Africa, still struggle to incorporate Black people from other parts of the continent in its society, as evidenced by the sporadic attacks against foreign nationals living in South Africa that happen from time to time. This triggers the question, where exactly do Black lives matter if black people in Africa are exposed to xenophobia and hatred, and are killed by fellow Africans. According to Crush (2000, p.10), "post-apartheid South Africa has shown little tolerance to foreigners; ostensibly to counteract the threat they pose to employment for South Africans. Stereotypes such as illegal migrants, job takers, criminals and disease agents are imposed on foreigners". It is, therefore, not surprising that there is fear and hatred towardsnon-South Africans

(Tella, 2016), which triggers xenophobia. It seems that religious education has remained mute in the face of these trajectories.

To this end, social trajectories, such as racism, antisemitism and xenophobia, often have a nexus with the type of education a country offers, or fails to offer. In South Africa, "xenophobia manifests in various forms, ranging from everyday street-level abuse to discrimination and harassment by government officials and recurring bouts of popular xenophobic violence in varying intensity and scale" (Misago et al., 2015, p. 20). With this manifestation in mind, xenophobia "is pervasive and requires a conscious and comprehensive diagnosis of the manifestation at the individual, state and inter-state levels" (Tella, 2016, p. 140), and in education, in particular. Post-colonial South Africa was reimagined as a rainbow nation, an idea that is enshrined in the Freedom Charter of 1955 (reported by Nagan, 1988, p. 439), which proclaims that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it", which evokes a non-racial and violence-free society that seeks to reverse the malevolence of apartheid. However, the reality is that foreign nationals remain at high risk in all sectors of South African society.

In the past two decades, South Africa has experienced an increase in xenophobia-related attacks on primarily Black foreign nationals, and even on some South Africans who are perceived to be 'too dark' to be South Africans (Claassen, 2017, Misago et al., 2015; Pillay, 2017; Du Rand et al., 2017). Acts of xenophobia, whether they target people who are in the country illegally or not, taunts the rainbow-nation image of South Africa. . The body of literature that has been generated since the increase in xenophobia that started in 2008, falls into one of two categories. One category represents scholars who problematise xenophobia as a response to social pressure due to factors such as adverse economic policies, a high crime rate, and perceptions of job losses to foreigners (Classen, 2017; Pillay, 2017). These scholars argue for government intervention to address these challenges. The second category involves schools that see South Africa becoming a hostile community, with government and non-governmental programmes failing to address the problem of xenophobia (Tella, 2015; Du Rand et al., 2017). To unpack the various opinions, we start with Tella (2015), who conducted research on xenophobia and argues that xenophobia does not only involve physical violence – it has many other forms, which immigrant people encounter on their day-to-day lives. The author concludes that "xenophobia is indeed pervasive and that effectively ameliorating this pathology requires a conscious and comprehensive diagnosis of the manifestation of xenophobia at the individual, state and inter-state levels" (p. 142). Research by Claassen (2017) argues that South Africa has become one of the world's hostile people. Claassen that the explanations of poverty, "relative deprivation, frustration with government, and social mobilization, with mixed evidence for resource competition", are some of the major triggers of xenophobia (p. 1). Research by Misago et al. (2015) argues that levels of continued violence and the general unsustainability of many programmes (such as workshops on human rights) have not achieved maximum impact, or been the most effective use of resources. Cognisant of the limitations current efforts to address xenophobia, they argue, "that UNHCR's should ...reconsider its partnerships, the premises on which it works, and the time frames and modalities it follows for implementation" (p. 10).

While we appreciate the efforts of various scholars to investigate the phenomenon, we note a gap that has not be addressed, namely, the role of religious education in mitigating trajectories of xenophobia in South Africa. Furthermore, this study is unique in the sense that it considers xenophobia within the school context from the point of view of critical emancipatory research. In the following section, we will discuss the theory underlying the study.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Emancipatory Research

This study is couched in critical emancipatory research (CER), which can be traced back to critical theory as developed by the Frankfurt School. The "Frankfurt Scholars attempted to collaborate with philosophers, economists and psychoanalysts" (Wellmer, 2014, p. 705), and the theory "emerged not only out of suspicions in the academy but also out of wider social movements and struggles against oppression which have found a voice in the academy" (Carrette & Keller, 1999, pp. 22–23). The theory is attributed to the "works of Habermas, who was influenced by Marxist perspectives on economic and social questions" (Schmidt, 2007, p. 2006). As a theory, it sought to respond to "historical and social conditions of crisis, and replace them with emancipatory ones" (Sinnerbrink, 2012, p. 370).

CER adds the concept of emancipation to critical theory, through the work of Habermas. According to Demirovic (2013), emancipation implies that all human beings should participate in producing and shaping their world as a whole, without discrimination, and meaningful participation in activities that make the world a better place for all. We believe CER i ideal for this study, since it provides "societies with common languages through which to address people's hopes and discontents" (Mendieta, 2005, p. 80). Furthermore, as stipulated by Held (1980, p. 250) CER "aims to further the self-understanding of social groups capable of transforming society", which is essential for promoting humanisation. The theory is relevant for underpinning this study beca it argues for the most humanising experience – one from which the researcher emerges more human, more humane, more cautious, with greater respect for and more open-minded to signals and messages from very diverse sources (Mahlomaholo, 2009, p. 225) that are pertinent for addressing social trajectories such as xenophobia. Lastly, the theory promotes matters such equity, social justice, freedom, peace and hope (McGregor 2003), which it considers as core to humanisation, the quest for transformation and igniting better ways of peaceful coexistence, especially in the context of xenophobia. The following section will address the methodology of the study.

Methodology

The study used qualitative research premised in a transformative case study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). We adopted this qualitative approach as it can provide an in-depth, intricate and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviours (Gonzales et al., 2008). The study used strategic random sampling and snowballing to identify school principals as participants who are knowledgeable about the dynamics of religion, immigration and curriculum. The participants' knowledge assisted them to suggest curriculum modifications that appreciate dynamics among people. The qualitative methodology allowed for interviews with 12 participants: four foreign nationals employed as teachers, five learners from outside South Africa, and three principals, to explore their experience of xenophobia, and the teaching of religious education. Prospective participants were invited via email, and they were requested to suggest a suitable time for the interviews. The study took place over three months and interviews where done via Skype for an hour three times a month.

The research was informed by two questions: What are the trajectories of xenophobia in the school context, and how can religious education take responsibility to mitigate the challenges posed by xenophobia? The study adhered to ethical considerations, such as requiring participants to sign consent forms, hiding the identities of the participants, and permitting voluntary withdrawal from participation (Yin, 2014). Data were coded according to the interview questions and categorised into major themes that emanated from the data, thereby forming the central findings. Thus, thematic analysis was used for data analysis to ensure the validity of the findings. Member checking was also done, by sending the coded data to the participants to ensure that the data reflected their contributions during the interviews (Birt et al., 2016).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

First, this section will address the findings and discuss the data relating to the first research question: What the trajectories of xenophobia within the school context? Based on the data collected in relation to this research question, we begin by arguing that xenophobia creates unsafe learning conditions.

Xenophobia Creates Unsafe Learning Conditions

The success of any education has one of its requirements for safe conditions for teaching and learning. Any form of threat jeopardises attempts to educate children, and renders the school corridors unsafe for teaching and learning. Xenophobia is a social pathology that threatens to create unsafe learning conditions, since learners and educators who are not South Africans are exposed to threats by local people and repeatedly reminded that their rights are limited – these acts do not create safe learning conditions. The results indicate that xenophobia poses a serious threat to African people, including South Africans, as observed in an interview with Mzula, who stated,

> *Xenophobic attacks [are] a serious threat to education, teachers and learners, since learners in my school are from different parts of the world and them feeling unsafe affects the learning process. This [is] against religious education; we teach our people to love one another regardless.*
> **In addition, Thabo, a teacher stated,**
> *we have a challenge in our schools, once the teachers and learners know you are a foreigners, their perception changes and they see you as one to do the donkey work at work. All tasks that local teachers refuse to do, you are expected to do them without complaining, so both us as teachers and learners are living in fear of the unknown.*

Xenophobia posed a threat in the school environment, and make foreigners feel unsafe in the school environment. Religious education, as taught as part of the subject life orientation, has done little to mitigate xenophobia. In fact, religious education, which has the impetus to create safe learning environments through its emphasis of living together peacefully and being accountable to God for human action, arguable is not taken seriously, which means learners do not exhibit tolerance of people that differ from them. It is this lack of tolerance in South Africa that makes it a site for violence, not only against foreign nationals, but also against women, children and the weakest members of society. Thus, considering the foregoing from the CER lens, narratives that seek to undermine people based on age, gender and nationality need to be exposed, and challenged, since such thinking does not resonate with the democratic aspirations of South Africa.

Xenophobia Instils Perceptions of Exceptionalism in Learners
One of the trajectories experienced in South Africa is exceptionalism, which is premised in Tella's (2016, p. 144) observation that "South Africans do not see themselves as Africans". Through such thinking, local people elevate themselves as having better ontological density than learners from other countries. Once this perception of superiority underlines the relationships that frame the schooling process, learning is affected. The situations is worsened when immigrant children perform better than local children; the immigrants are constantly reminded that immigrant children are failures in their home countries. Once the belief that they are of failures has been established in immigrant children, exceptionalism is created, which widens the gap between immigrant learners and South African learners further. As evidence of the foregoing, Nyathi, a principal reported,

> *What continues as a concern among the learners and educators here is the feeling that local people are very exceptional and privileged beings compared to immigrants. So learning becomes difficult based on the thinking that local people are exceptional beings*
> **In addition, Mnuku added that**
> *at school we are made feel less human beings, failure individuals to solve their country problems. So for us to survive this isolation and less human mentality, we are forced to hide our identity but eventually it comes out we are foreigners.*
> **In light of the foregoing, we agree with the observation by Misago et al. (2015, p. 23) that,**
> *historical and current institutional factors have combined with the country's socio-economic configurations to promote and sustain xenophobia and hostility towards foreign nationals as they continue to construct the South African citizen as 'exceptional' while rendering the migrant, particularly the poor African migrant, the 'violable other'.*

With this perception of exceptionalism in mind, religious education has failed to enact the idea that all human beings are equal before divine beings, and as such, there is a need to treat everyone with respect, regardless of nationality, race or geographic origins. According to Funk and Said (2014, p. 24), there is need for a religious curriculum that ensures the "recognition [of] diverse people which opens new possibilities both for intercultural relations and for a full development of the human personality". We agree with the observation by Preis and Russell (2006, p. 14), that "no rational religion preaches terror, but if our schools or society are not accommodative of all people, terror becomes inevitable". In short, learning conditions can improve if religious education positions learners to comprehend that no nation or race is exceptional, but all human beings are equal before God; all learners, regardless race, colour

or nationality, should participate meaningfully in the learning process, and religious education should be a starting point to tease this appreciation.

Negation of Knowledge Sharing

Another trajectory associated with xenophobia at schools is the negation of knowledge sharing among the learners and educators. People immigrating to South Africa from other countries presents the prospect of knowledge sharing, which is important for sustainable development. Once people afraid of what can happen to them in South Africa, knowledge production can be negatively affected in the long run. We argue that no nation can survive without it sharing knowledge; however, xenophobia poses a threat to knowledge sharing. In the context of a global pandemic such as COVID-19, collaboration among nations is particularly important. In the classroom, xenophobia affects knowledge sharing in various ways. Once immigrant learners experience the learning space as unsafe, they withdraw or transfer to friendlier schools, thereby limiting knowledge sharing, which is critical for addressing social problems that can be addressed by the contributions of multiple sources, which include immigrant learners and educators. We argue that no nation can live in isolation from others' knowledge. Due to xenophobia, immigration brings about the polarisation of ideas that are essential for the holistic survival of communities. However noble the idea of knowledge sharing may be, it is affected by xenophobia, as learners from other countries feel unsafe in South African schools, and this affects the sharing of knowledge and skills across disciplines. To buttress the foregoing, Mbazi explained,

> *Xenophobia makes many learners fear schools, the name calling is rampant, especially the use of the term makwerekwere. Once learners are referred this way, they withdraw from active participation or learning altogether. This affects knowledge sharing among learners.*
> **In support of this report, Ndex explained,**
> *When immigrant teachers and learners come to South Africa, they share knowledge and learning methodologies which improves performance, but xenophobia affects all efforts to share knowledge due to fear victimisation especially if the teacher or the student is an exceptional performer.*

From the above, it is clear that religious education, as a subject, has not managed to ensure the coexistence of people from different nationalities – this failure creates a knowledge gap. As Misago et al. (2015) argue, xenophobia in South Africa translates into a broad spectrum of behaviours, including discriminatory, stereotyping and dehumanising remarks, which, in turn, affect the sharing of indispensable knowledge.

Xenophobia Creates an Intolerant Society

The effects of xenophobia go beyond systematic violence and exclusion of immigrants, to instilling in people the notion that life is not important, and that it is dispensable. This idea could be one of the narratives that explain the increase in violence towards women and children in South Africa, even thought no research has established the correlations of these factors. Research findings have noted that a failure to address xenophobia in any society causes feedbacks, and manifests itself in intolerance of a number of variables, among which language and race – this discrimination does not affect only immigrants, but everyone, as Nyathi explained:

> *Xenophobia does not only affects the immigrants but also affects the society as well. The aftermath of xenophobia is that people are indirectly taught that lives do not matter especially when the perpetrators are not subjected to justice. There is that after thought that says life is not important.*
> **On the same topic, Ngulube stated,**
> *Once a society does not value any life of immigrant, it becomes difficult to convince them that the lives of women and children matters. The continued violent against foreign nationals is reflected by how the lives of the less powerful are treated in society.*

Violence against persons should be condemned from all possible angles, since does not dehumanise only the victim, but the perpetrator as well. With this in mind, there is a

need for a judicial response to counter the culture of impunity that enables perpetrators and related parties to profit from xenophobic violence, scapegoating, and other forms of exclusion. This should include efforts to promote rule of law by enhancing community-based conflict resolution mechanisms that respect constitutional principles of universal rights and due process (Misago et al., 2015, p. 15).

However, placing all hope for mitigation on legislation is inadequate. Curriculum and, in particular, religious education should occupy a central place to ensure that a tolerant society is achieved, not only for the sake of immigrant learners and educators, but also for women, children and the weakest members of society. In this way, and arguing from the position CER, the religious curriculum becomes emancipatory in nature.

Xenophobia Leads to Traumatic Experiences for Learners

Xenophobia as a social pathology leads to traumatic experiences for both victims and perpetrators, which ignites a need to enact peaceful coexistence and learning of people of different nationalities. Discussing this trajectory, Leo reported that

the stories of immigrant being killed are very scary and they become traumatic among learners who become victims of the phenomenon which they do not understand and have no control over.

In support, Mbazi reported that,

the pictures seen of people killed is beyond what is normal in a society, immigrant learners are traumatised and cannot cope with schooling especially when such things are taken lightly.

From the foregoing, it is clear that immigrants in South Africa are one of the weaker groups in society, and as a result, an easy target for the frustrations felt by many people due to their economic circumstances (Southern African Bishops Conference, 2013, p. 2). Vandeyar and Vandeyar (2017, p. 15) argue that xenophobia "disrupts not only the mental health but also the psychological functioning of both victims and perpetrators of racial and xenophobic injustices". In light of this claim, it is clear that there should be curriculum discourses that seek to undo the traumatic experiences caused by xenophobia, and our argument is that religious education could serve as a good starting point to stimulate debate about coexistence, guided by the divine expectation of coexistence and treating others in the manner we expect them to treat us. Traumatic experiences caused by xenophobia attacks, name shaming, and exclusion affects the performance of learners and, in turn, creates a hostile society that does not appreciate diversity. Thus, all scholars prone to social justice should embrace challenging xenophobia, since it does not create a world order that resonate swith democratic expectations of a post-colonial South Africa.

To reinvent a safe learning space that is free of xenophobia, we must present education that takes responsibility for addressing the social pathology of xenophobia. The follow section will address how religious education can emancipate learners into living together.

Teaching Living Together: Towards Religious Education that takes Responsibility

The second research question relates how religious education in South Africa can readdress the challenge of xenophobia. In responding to this question, we were aware that religious education is taught in only some schools, though this fact does not underplay the potential of the subject to ensure that social trajectories such xenophobia are addressed or mitigated to create enabling learning environments. In fact, we agree with the observation by Keast (2007, p. 14) that the "erosion of the religion in the educational landscape does not mean the end of the personal and social function of religious beliefs". While religion may no longer determine the way education is run, nevertheless it continues to play a key role, which is not necessarily limited to the private sphere.

While suggesting how religious education can mitigate xenophobia, we are aware that some people believe that religion generates conflict, particularly internal ones; consequently, its role in the overall peace process has all too often been overlooked (Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009). We suggest the following solutions to tap into the positive aspects of religion and to initiate a conversation that could ignite the teaching of living together.

Refocusing Content to Social Relations

A curriculum that is relevant to the 21st century speaks to social trajectories. It should address the lived realities of learners and emancipate them to use their energy to promote discourses that seek to ensure peaceful coexistence and living in unity in spite of diversity. We argue that, in addition to addressing the relationship between the divine and human beings, religious education should emphasise social relationships. The first four of the ten commandments are related to the relationship between God and humans, while the last six focus on the relationships between people. Premised on this understanding, religious education should place greater emphasis on how people should relate each other. In line with the foregoing discussion, Ndlovini suggested the following:

> *Religious education can assist to moderate people's attitude towards the immigrants. What is important that more content is added that emphasis human relations, love and living together.*
> **Ndazi said,**
> *Religious education is critical since many of religious texts emphases on the need for people to live together harmonious by peacefully resolving conflict where ever it may exists.*

The opinions expressed by the participants resonate with the observation by Preis and Russell (2006, p. 5), that "among religious traditions exist an underlying thread of unity connecting the great religious traditions. They each propound basic spiritual tenets and standards of behaviour that constitute the essence of social cohesion for peaceful co-existence". This co-existence is made possible through the basic tenets of religion, such as tolerance and respect (Jackson, 2011). In focusing on social issues, religious education takes multidisciplinary approach, with the intention of harvesting the potential of various fields to address xenophobia. In light of this, we agree with Held (1980), who points out that "interdisciplinary study in which philosophers, sociologists, economics, historians, and psychologists can unite for lasting working partnership…to formulate the philosophical questions which lead to methods of handling specific issues (p. 33). In short, a religious education that focuses solely on the relation between a divine being and man is not enough, instead, there is need for religious education that focuses on social relations as a means for survival and peaceful coexistence of different people. Through this approach, religious education becomes one of the variables that contributes to solving human trajectories.

Equal treatment of all religions as art for peaceful existence

Another important element that can address xenophobia is equating different religions in the religious education. In South Africa, as a former British colony, religious education is generally Christocentric, and pays mere lip service to other religions that are practiced in the country. Structural exclusion of various religions, through various strategies, such as lack of trained teachers for religions other than Christianity, has the impetus of creating conflict in society. Due to to a lack of knowledge of religions other than their own, prejudice and suspicion become the order of the day. In the event of social unrest, minority religious groups, especially those perceived as 'foreign', become targets by local people and are often supressed further through xenophobia. Thus, religious education should begin conversations that equate all religions, so that learners can gain knowledge of the religious other and devise strategies for coexistence with pluralistic appreciation. Hence, Hannam and Panjwani (2020) argue that religious education that seeks to mitigate xenophobia will need take plurality seriously. In the discussion, Sonto commented that,

> *Religious pluralism is critical in the curriculum to foster understanding of religious other. Failure to do, minority groups tend to be targets of xenophobia and always accused of various things which even the local pastors do*

Religious pluralism has the impetus to address xenophobia through the religious education curriculum. Hannam and Panjwani (2020, p. 385) argue further that "it is legitimate to expect religious education to play a more active role in promoting an awareness of plurality, as this is likely to mitigate against discriminatory behaviour". Through such an approach, religious education becomes a transformative endeavour, unembarrassed by the label 'political' and unafraid to consummate a relationship with

emancipatory consciousness (Kincheloe et al., 2011) and better able to mitigate xenophobia, a social trajectory that needs to be addressed from different perspectives. Religious education is one of the perspective that can be used to address xenophobia.

Inculcate Moral Responsibility

One on the trajectories of our time is a lack of morality. As a result, South Africa is one of the most violent and, perhaps, most intolerant societies towards people from outside its borders. The problem is that foreign nationals are being killed for various reasons, such as selling drugs and taking jobs South Africans believe were meant for them. While South Africans have the right to protect their country from opportunists, killing human beings is an inhuman way to express dissatisfaction with other nations. By killing people, society instils the idea among that life is not important; consequently, killing becomes the order of the day, affecting everyone in society. Thus, South Africa has high murder rate of women, children and the weakest members of society and we argue that this is due to lack of moral fibre. Religious education has failed to enact morality, which would involve humanity being respected despite different ideologies, religions, races, genders, etc. This research argues that morality is indispensable social fibre that can contribute to sustainable development. A failure to enact morality through the curriculum means a society is positioned to fail. We argue this way because morality shapes the attitudes and values of individuals and societies in terms of social behaviour, economic activity and political involvement. In the conversation, participants Dade and Mbazi noted the following respectively:

> *Ideal education is the one that appreciates that humanity is important, and divine. It cannot just be destroyed. Thus education must begin conversations of moral responsibility and religious education serves as a good starting point for such.*

> *Our society has lost morality. Yes, some immigrants are bad, but does not mean they need to be killed; we lack moral responsibility essential for social fabric. So religious education must assist our learners to make morality part of their lives. This way treatment of immigrants would be realised perhaps in our life time.*

Morality, as taught by various religions, is indispensable not only as a way to address xenophobia, but also to stop the rampant killing of women and children in South Africa. Education is a good starting point to eliminate this social ill. Almirzanah (2016, p. 239), postulates that morality enables "learners to see through the spectacles of other cultures and develop an empathetic understanding of another culture, consequently, learners become ready to empathise with other cultures". Morality has the impetus to ensure that "societies [work] to channel the energy of conflict into constructive rather than destructive channels" (Abu-Nimer et al., 2007, p. 131). Based on the foregoing, our argument is that schools are institutions that teach forms of knowledge, moral critique, values, and social analysis for the purpose of educating young people for critical empowerment, rather than for subjugation (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010, p. 142). In short ,religious education should prioritise inculcating morality in learners, as one of the social ingredients lacking in society. Once this is addressed through the curriculum, it is likely that xenophobia will also be addressed through the curriculum.

Significance of the Study or Work

The study is significant because it provides a different narrative for addressing xenophobia, which is through the religious education curriculum. Scholars have commented on xenophobia from a societal level, however, in this paper we zeroed in on the effects of xenophobia at school level, and argued that solutions can also emanate at school level, through adjusting the religious education curriculum in South Africa. The paper argued that religious education is uniquely placed to bring humanity into the heart of education and, in so doing, mitigate xenophobia (Hannam & Panjwani, 2020). Finally, this work is significant as it contributes to a conversation that can mitigate violence in society, and is informed by the observation by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) that,

> *What African people must be vigilant against is the trap of ending up normalising and universalising [xenophobia] as a natural state of the world, however, it must be unmasked,*

> *resisted and destroyed because it produces a world order that can only be sustained through a combination of violence, deceit, hypocrisy and lies* (p. 10).

Conclusion

Xenophobia remains a phenomenon that haunts South Africa. It is a social pathology that needs to be addressed head-on, and the religious curriculum at school level is a good starting point to initiate discussions that emancipate learners to achieve peaceful resolution of differences and coexistence. The paper reported on various trajectories that are caused by xenophobia in schools and suggested various ways in which the curriculum can mitigate these problems. In conclusion, we believe the curriculum is a good starting point for conversations that can reinvent a peaceful society, and religious education can be a tool for emancipating learners to address xenophobic attacks.

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