

Original Research

Examining the Dominant Ideology in the History Curriculum: A Case Study of Lesotho's Grade 9 History Syllabus

Atang Thulo 

Department of Languages and Social Education, Faculty of Education, National University of Lesotho, Roma, Lesotho

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses Lesotho's Grade 9 History syllabus to identify the dominant curriculum ideology embedded within it. Using a qualitative case study approach and document analysis, the syllabus aims, assessment objectives, skills, and suggested learning experiences were examined through content analysis. The findings reveal that the syllabus is overwhelmingly dominated by the scholar-academic ideology, with limited representation of learner-centred and social efficiency ideologies, and an almost complete absence of social reconstruction elements. This ideological imbalance prioritises content transmission over critical engagement, practical application, and social transformation. Consequently, the syllabus shows limited alignment with Lesotho's educational goals and 21st-century learning demands. The study recommends a more balanced integration of curriculum ideologies to enhance learner engagement, relevance, and the development of socially responsive and critically informed citizens.

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Corresponding Author:

Atang Thulo

Department of Languages and Social Education, Faculty of Education, National University of Lesotho,
Roma, Lesotho

Email: thuloatang@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The world is undergoing rapid change, and education is not separate from these developments. Globally, educational systems are being reviewed to identify which content best prepares learners for the challenges of the 21st century. As a result, many countries are re-evaluating their curricula to ensure they include contemporary issues and concerns. Curriculum is often described as the blueprint guiding all teaching and learning activities (Chan et al., 2023; Mulenga, 2015; Tenney-Socero & Sieplinga, 2021; Wolcott et al., 2020).

Similar to Botswana's curriculum, Lesotho's educational framework dates back to the colonial era, established through missionary efforts. The initial aim was to improve literacy to remove barriers between the Basotho and missionaries, which eventually extended to colonial officials. This initiative laid the foundation for formal education, primarily aimed at enabling Basotho to read the Bible and convert to Christianity (Mafela,

2010). Colonialists sought to eliminate communication barriers that hindered their interactions with the Basotho.

The Cape Code served as the foundational blueprint for African school curricula in the southern African British colonies, including Bechuanaland, Basutoland, and Swaziland. It became essential in achieving the region's socio-economic and political objectives. History was introduced as a separate subject in 1931, with content primarily focused on biblical stories and the history of the British Empire (Mafela, 2010).

Since 1967, history has been taught as part of a broader social studies programme rather than as a standalone subject. Prior to this, it was taught independently. This shift was introduced by the National Teacher Training College (Ntabeni, 2010). According to Ntabeni (2007), the number of schools offering history decreased considerably after 2006. Out of 230 secondary and high schools, only 17 continued to teach history, mainly driven by the personal interest of the school principals.

The Ministry of Education and Training introduced a new national history syllabus for all junior secondary schools following the publication of the Junior Certificate results in 2001. Schools could choose between the existing syllabus (512) and a newly developed alternative syllabus (513) (Ntabeni, 2007). Most schools opted for the alternative, probably because they found it more relevant and effective in their assessments.

In 2009, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy was introduced to assess the relevance of existing subjects. This policy led to the adoption of an integrated curriculum, which emphasised recently introduced subjects such as Life Skills, often at the expense of traditional subjects like geography, history, and religious education (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). In Iran, a study among higher education educators found that the learner-centred approach was most preferred, possibly because of the constructivist perspectives held by academic lecturers (Farahani & Maleki, 2014). Their opinions appeared to be influenced by their educational background and professional environment.

Conversely, a study conducted in Turkey yielded different results, indicating that social efficiency ideology was prevalent according to teachers' viewpoints. Educators in this setting viewed education primarily as a means to meet societal needs and promote behavioural change (Mizikaci et al., 2021). This demonstrates that the dominant educational ideology often mirrors stakeholders' perceptions of education's broader purpose. Therefore, this study is important in recognising the key ideology embedded within Lesotho's history curriculum at the Grade 9 level.

1.1. Problem statement

Despite global efforts to modernise education and align curricula with 21st-century skills, Lesotho's history curriculum, particularly at the Grade 9 level, continues to embody a predominantly academic scholar ideology, with limited integration of learner-centred, social efficiency, and social reconstructionist perspectives. This imbalance may impede the development of holistic, creative, and socially responsive learners. Moreover, the historical development of the curriculum, rooted in colonial and missionary influences, demonstrates a persistent disconnect between curriculum content and the socio-cultural realities of contemporary Lesotho. There is an urgent need to critically assess the dominant ideologies embedded in the current curriculum, ensuring it effectively equips learners to engage meaningfully with their communities and the modern world.

Irrespective of growing scholarship on curriculum ideologies internationally, there is limited empirical research that systematically examines how these ideologies are embedded within specific school subjects in Lesotho. Existing studies have largely focused on policy analysis, curriculum history, or general subject relevance, with little attention given to ideology as a lens for curriculum evaluation, particularly at the junior secondary level. This study addresses this gap by analysing the Grade 9 History syllabus to identify dominant curriculum ideologies and to assess their alignment with Lesotho's contemporary educational goals and societal needs.

1.2. Objectives of the study

The primary aim of this study is to analyse the Grade 9 history syllabus in Lesotho to identify the dominant curriculum ideology. Additionally, the study aims to assess the implications of these findings for the syllabus's relevance and effectiveness in achieving Lesotho's educational objectives.

1.3. Main research question

What is the dominant curriculum ideology embedded in the Grade 9 History syllabus, and what are the implications of these findings for the relevance and effectiveness of the curriculum within Lesotho's educational goals?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines four well-known curriculum ideologies: the scholar-academic ideology, social efficiency ideology, learner-centred ideology, and social reconstruction ideology. Curriculum ideologies reflect beliefs about the main aims of education, especially concerning the outcomes it should produce and the reasons for those outcomes (Marulcu & Akbiyik, 2014; McComas, 2024; Ramulumo &

Mnguni, 2023; Tahirsylaj, 2019). These four ideologies are recognised worldwide as core frameworks that shape educational practice: scholar-academic, learner-centred, social efficiency, and social reconstruction.

The understanding of these ideologies is crucial for educators, as it enhances their awareness of their own teaching methods and clarifies their educational objectives. According to Schiro (2013), educators who comprehend these ideologies are better equipped to handle curriculum complexities, collaborate with colleagues holding different perspectives, and communicate educational principles effectively to stakeholders, including curriculum committees, school boards, and communities. Moreover, this awareness enables educators to actively participate in public debates about education and to address misconceptions among those with differing opinions (Schiro, 2013). The discussion below is organised around the four ideologies mentioned.

2.1. Scholar academic ideology

This ideology is based on the belief that the main purpose of education is to pass on essential disciplinary knowledge to students. The knowledge provided comes from academic disciplines and aims to develop learners' intellectual abilities and equip them with the skills needed for academic and professional success (Schiro, 2013). It appears that this ideology still upholds the principles of missionary education, which was designed to prepare Africans to become ordinary labourers.

Furthermore, Mizikaci et al. (2021) support this view, emphasising that the core focus of this ideology is cognitive development. Proponents of this ideology see students as recipients of established knowledge, often through a "banking model" of education. Additionally, Schiro (2013) and Schiro (2008) argue that the ultimate aim of education is to cultivate intellectual elites by training students to think like experts in specific disciplines. In fact, it seems accurate to suggest that this ideology prepares students for "white" collar jobs, which are increasingly scarce in our country nowadays. In reality, it does not address the recurring problems facing our Lesotho today.

Equally important, Marulcu and Akbiyik (2014) further describe this ideology as a means of "civilising" learners through disciplinary knowledge. According to Farahani and Maleki (2014), learners are gradually inducted into academic disciplines and are eventually promoted to scholars when they demonstrate the capacity to think and act like academics. It is apparent that the scholarly academic ideology aims to create a broad community of disciplinary specialists and to make knowledge universally accessible. Indeed, this ideology appears to nurture professionals who will contribute to the body of knowledge.

Educators who subscribe to this ideology focus solely on academic knowledge, often neglecting social, economic, and political issues (Schiro, 2013; Farahani & Maleki, 2014). Teachers are regarded as "mini scholars" who serve as intermediaries between the curriculum and learners, responsible for delivering subject content accurately (Schiro, 2008; 2013). Their expertise is vital for ensuring the accurate transfer of disciplinary knowledge. It can be observed that this ideology fails to address modern challenges faced by Lesotho, such as high unemployment, rising crime rates, and a lack of innovation.

Assessment within this ideology is generally objective and focused on content, using both summative and formative evaluation methods to determine whether students have acquired the intended knowledge (Heywood, 2018). Memorisation and reproduction of content are often seen as indicators of academic achievement. This ideology is fundamentally teacher-centred, placing the educator at the centre of the learning process while students remain passive recipients (Heywood, 2018; Schiro, 2013). It seems that scholarly academics also promote epistemic violence, denying learners the right to control their own learning.

2.2. Social efficiency ideology

The social efficiency ideology primarily views education as a way to meet societal needs (Schiro, 1978). The proponents of this ideology view education as a method to prepare learners to work effectively and solve real-world problems in their communities (Alanazi, 2016). In support, Mnguni (2021) affirms that students are considered future contributors to society, and education aims to equip them with practical knowledge and skills to ensure their productivity. In line with that, Schiro (2013) agrees, emphasising the importance of raising children to become responsible and capable members of society. Inadequate education, therefore, is equated with diminished social value. In fact, this ideology seems to address modern issues effectively. If the curriculum is implemented efficiently, many of the current problems facing Lesotho could be resolved or mitigated.

Moreover, Education under this ideology is expected to lead to behavioural change (Schiro, 2013). Similarly, Tyler (1949) viewed education as a means to modify human behaviour. Complementary to that, Mizikaci et al. (2021) contend that the curriculum should shape learners into active members of their communities. Education should change learners' perspectives and, by extension, enhance societal well-being. It is evident that education under this ideology aims to cultivate learners who are advocates in their societies, serving as the voice of those who are voiceless.

Furthermore, Schiro (2020) emphasises that teachers play a central role in managing classroom learning environments. Also, Mnguni (2021) supports this by stating that teachers decide what is taught, how it is taught, and why it is taught. This authority highlights the dominance of the banking model of instruction,

where teachers deposit knowledge into passive learners. Therefore, the quality of teachers becomes a key factor in the standard of education and, by extension, the productivity of future citizens.

2.3. Learner-centred ideology

The learner-centred ideology emphasises the needs, interests, and experiences of the learner as the foundation of the curriculum (Schiro, 2008). Several scholars (Schiro, 2013; Marulcu & Akbiyik, 2014; Farahani & Maleki, 2014; Alanazi, 2016; Kasuga, 2020; Mnguni, 2021) argue that education should be organised to help learners discover their innate abilities and potentials, rather than merely transmitting knowledge or preparing them for the workforce. The researcher shares the view that education should assist students in discovering their potential. It appears that the curriculum of History should also aim to help learners discover who they are and where they are heading. This is only possible if learners are actively engaged in the learning process rather than where teachers act as being “Mr. or Mrs. know all”.

This ideology aligns with constructivist learning theories, which emphasise the learner’s active role in creating knowledge through interaction with peers and teachers (Mizikaci et al., 2021). Teaching strategies should therefore encourage active participation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Alanazi, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher’s role is redefined from being a transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers are expected to guide and support learners while encouraging them to make independent discoveries. It is apparent that, as a more knowledgeable other, a teacher should only mediate and scaffold to help reach the goals of History education and to instil the 21st-century skills that students are expected to acquire through education. For example, when a teacher is teaching the Scramble for Africa, he or she should let learners role-play, with the teacher providing guidance.

Schiro (2008) contends that schools should be safe, nurturing environments that enable learners to explore and develop their potential freely. Again, Schiro (2020) states that administrators and teachers must collaborate to create a supportive atmosphere. Similarly, Alanazi (2016), Kasuga (2020), and Mnguni (2021) emphasise the importance of establishing learning environments where learners feel motivated and valued. It can be seen that teachers need to foster an environment conducive to free learning. It is evident that teachers who are unfriendly towards students deprive them of the right to learn and discover themselves through education.

Assessment within this approach integrates with the learning process and emphasises skills acquisition over content reproduction (Mizikaci et al., 2021). Stenhouse (1975) observes that learners may perform poorly in formal examinations but demonstrate mastery through practical application of knowledge, highlighting a limitation of traditional testing. It is clear that the current curriculum of History should shift from a predominant formal assessment based on content to a focus on assessing practical knowledge, especially in this era where ChatGPT is taking over everything. It suggests that schools and institutions of higher learning should move away from assessments based solely on written exams and instead utilise presentations and practicals, as students will otherwise leave schools undereducated.

2.4. Social reconstruction ideology

The social reconstruction ideology is based on the idea that society is flawed and needs transformation (Kasuga, 2020). Mizikaci et al. (2021) and Farahani & Maleki (2014) argue that education should instil values such as freedom, justice, equality, and independence to address social disparities and promote equity. The researcher shares the same sentiments that education should enlighten students and prepare them to become future leaders of their communities. In the context of History education, this suggests that learners studying History should be seen as representatives of those oppressed in their communities, striving for excellence.

According to this ideology, schools are seen as platforms for nurturing values and relationships necessary for building a just and peaceful society (Schiro, 2013). In addition to that, Mizikaci et al. (2021) note that schools also reflect and reinforce existing socio-economic and class structures, making them vital sites for social change. It can be inferred that someone who has completed their education should embody a decolonised mindset, someone passionate about change and social transformation, free from epistemic violence, and unafraid to challenge the status quo. As a result, the History curriculum must have the capacity to instil these values in its students.

According to Mnguni (2021), schools are agents of transformation. He argues that education must address societal challenges such as racism, discrimination, gender-based violence, and economic inequality. Additionally, Farahani and Maleki (2014) acknowledge that education should help dismantle harmful cultural practices and replace them with values that benefit all members of society. Ultimately, Schiro (2020) affirms that the quality of education students receive determines their capacity to bring about positive change in their communities. Indeed, education should be the tool used to transform our societies. However, the critical question is whether history teaching and learning, with the quality of teachers that teach it and the curriculum it offers, is in a position to uphold these valued outcomes. That’s what this study is all about.

In the context of Lesotho, curriculum reform has increasingly been driven by concerns related to youth unemployment, declining learner engagement, and the need to equip learners with transferable 21st-century

skills (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). These challenges raise critical questions about whether existing curricula—particularly content-heavy subjects such as History—are responsive to learners' social realities. Curriculum ideology, therefore, becomes a crucial analytical lens for understanding how educational priorities are framed and whose knowledge and skills are valued within the school system.

While studies such as Raselimo and Mahao (2015) highlight opportunities and threats associated with Lesotho's Curriculum and Assessment Policy, they do not examine how curriculum ideologies are reflected at the subject level. Similarly, Ntabeni (2010) and Ndabeni (2007) provide valuable historical and pedagogical insights into History education, but they predate recent curriculum reforms and do not foreground ideology as an analytical framework. This study extends this body of work by offering a contemporary, ideology-focused analysis of the Grade 9 History syllabus.

3. METHOD

This chapter describes the research design, sampling method and size, data collection tool, data collection process, and the data analysis method used in the study.

3.1. Research Approach

This study employed a directed qualitative content analysis approach. Qualitative content analysis is appropriate when existing theory or frameworks guide the analysis of textual data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In this study, Schiro's (2013) four curriculum ideologies, scholar-academic, learner-centred, social efficiency, and social reconstruction, were used as predefined analytical categories to examine the ideological orientation embedded in the Grade 9 History syllabus in Lesotho.

Although the study reports frequencies of ideological occurrences, these counts serve a descriptive and supportive role rather than a statistical one. The primary aim was interpretive: to identify the dominant curriculum ideology and examine its implications for curriculum relevance. Therefore, the study is qualitative in orientation, not quantitative or mixed-methods.

3.2. Research Design

A case study design was adopted. Case study research allows for an in-depth and context-specific analysis of a bounded system (Yin, 2018). The Grade 9 History syllabus was selected as a single, bounded case because it represents an official policy document that structures teaching, learning, and assessment at the junior secondary level in Lesotho. This design enabled a focused examination of how curriculum ideology is articulated within a real-world policy context.

3.3. Data Source and Unit of Analysis

The sole data source for this study was the official Grade 9 History syllabus issued by the Ministry of Education and Training, Lesotho. The syllabus is a public policy document that outlines curriculum aims, learning experiences, skills, and assessment objectives. The unit of analysis was clearly defined as a discrete syllabus statement, including: individual aim statements, assessment objective statements, skill descriptors, and suggested learning experience items. Each statement was treated as one unit and coded independently. Defining the unit of analysis in this way enhances transparency and allows the analysis to be replicated.

3.3. Sampling Technique and Selection of Syllabus Sections

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select sections of the syllabus most relevant to curriculum ideology. The analysis focused on four main aspects: syllabus aims, assessment objectives, skills to be developed, and suggested learning experiences. These sections were selected because they explicitly reflect educational values, pedagogical intentions, and assumptions about learning key indicators of curriculum ideology (Schiro, 2013). Other sections, such as topic lists and content sequencing, were excluded because they provide limited insight into pedagogical orientation.

3.4. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was defined as a discrete codable curriculum statement. A codable statement included one aim statement, one assessment objective, one skill descriptor, and one bullet-pointed learning experience item. Each statement was treated as one analytical unit and coded independently. Where a sentence contained multiple instructional intentions, it was segmented into separate units. For example: "Teacher explains causes of colonialism and learners list key factors" was segmented into two units: (1) Teacher explains causes of colonialism; (2) Learners list key factors. This segmentation rule enhances clarity, transparency, and replicability of frequency counts.

3.5. Data Coding and Classification Framework

Coding followed a directed content analysis procedure using Schiro's ideological framework. Each ideology was operationalized using three criteria:

- a) Control of knowledge production
 - Teacher-directed transmission-Scholar Academic
 - Shared or learner-driven inquiry-Learner centred

- Civic or transformative orientation- Social Reconstruction
- b) Cognitive Demand
- Recall, description, reproduction- Scholar Academic
 - Analysis, reflection, reproduction- Learner-Centred
 - Critical examination of power, inequality, or justice- Social Reconstruction
- c) Nature of Expected Output
- Correct reproduction of disciplinary content- Scholar Academic
 - Independent reasoning or interpretation-Learner Centred
 - Normative critique or civic engagement- Social Reconstruction
 - Practical competency for societal functioning – Social Efficiency

Importantly, coding was not based solely on action verbs (e.g., “discuss,” “debate,” “explain”). Instead, statements were classified according to their dominant pedagogical function. For example, a discussion structured around teacher-provided answers and factual recall was coded as Scholar Academic. A discussion requiring independent source analysis or evaluative judgement was coded as Learner-Centred. A debate focused on contemporary social justice implications would be coded as Social Reconstruction. This operational approach reduces the risk of superficial or verb-based classification bias. Where a statement appeared to reflect multiple ideologies, it was coded according to the ideology most strongly reflected in its instructional purpose and expected learning outcome.

The study does not assume structural equivalence between syllabus components. Rather, it analyses how ideological orientations are distributed within each section and across the document as a whole.

3.6. Data Collection Procedure

The researcher systematically extracted all statements from the selected syllabus sections. These statements were compiled into an analytical table and read repeatedly to gain familiarity with the data. Each statement was then examined in relation to Schiro’s four curriculum ideologies.

3.7. Data Analysis

Analysis proceeded in two stages. First, statements were qualitatively interpreted and categorised according to the predefined ideological framework. Second, frequency counts were used to summarise the distribution of ideologies across syllabus components. These frequencies were used descriptively to support interpretation and were presented in tables and figures for clarity. No inferential statistical analysis was conducted.

3.8. Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Although the syllabus is a publicly accessible document, ethical research principles were observed. The document was analysed in its original context, and interpretations were grounded in established curriculum theory to minimise misrepresentation. An audit trail was maintained through documented coding decisions and analytical notes.

However, the study did not employ inter-coder reliability procedures, which limits the reliability of the classifications. To mitigate this, coding decisions were consistently guided by a theoretically grounded framework, and ambiguous cases were critically examined.

3.9. Methodological Limitations

The reliance on a single syllabus document limits the generalisability of the findings to other subjects or grade levels. Again, the absence of triangulation such as teacher interviews, classroom observations, or assessment analysis means the study captured intended curriculum ideology rather than enacted practice. Additionally, the use of a single coder introduces the possibility of subjective bias in classification.

Despite these limitations, the study provides systematic, theory-informed evidence of curriculum ideology within the Grade 9 History syllabus and offers a valuable diagnostic basis for curriculum review and reform in Lesotho.

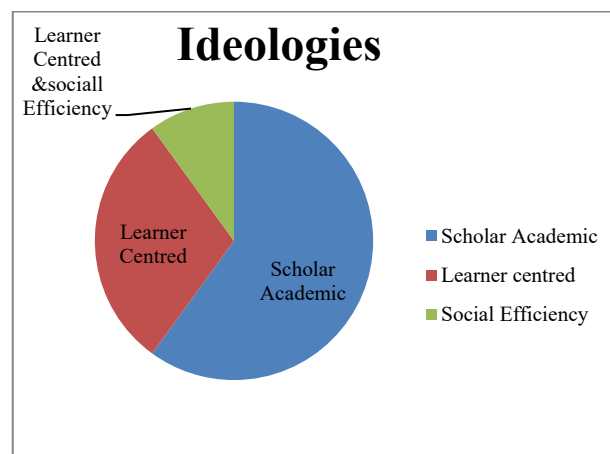
4. FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to analyse the Grade 9 History syllabus to identify the dominant curriculum ideologies embedded within it. This chapter presents the data collected, interprets the findings, and discusses the results in line with the objectives outlined in the introduction.

Table 1. Syllabus Aims and the ideologies

Aims	Ideologies
Stimulate interest and enthusiasm for the study of the past in order to instill and develop a sense of nationality and patriotism.	Scholar Academic
Promote the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of human activity in the past, linking it as appropriate, with the present.	Social Efficiency Scholar Academic
Help towards the appreciation and understanding of the uniqueness of the Basotho's divergent social and cultural values.	Social Efficiency
Promote understanding of basic historical concepts, such as cause, consequence, continuity, and change.	Scholar Academic
Encourage the development of literacy and essential study skills.	Scholar Academic Learner Centred
Provide a sound basis for further study and the pursuit of history as a personal interest.	Scholar Academic
Help develop a clear understanding of various forms and systems of governance and their bearing on nation-building.	Social Efficiency Social reconstruction
Acquire understanding of global events and their impact on Lesotho and the international community.	Social Efficiency Scholar Academic
Acquire understanding of Lesotho's relations with the international community.	Social reconstruction Scholar Academic
Critically analyse the role played by different classes, age groups, gender, and ethnic groups in the socio-economic and political development of Lesotho.	Learner Centred
Develop an awareness of environmental factors and their impact on the socio-economic and political development of Lesotho.	Learner Centred
Develop an awareness and management of emerging issues.	Learner Centred
Create awareness about emergent technological advancements and their impact on human life.	Learner Centred Scholar Academic
Develop skills, values, and attitudes that are needed for survival in the 21st Century and beyond.	Learner Centred

As shown in [Table 1](#), the aims of the History syllabus reflect multiple curriculum ideologies; however, the Scholar Academic ideology appears most frequently across the listed aims. While elements of Learner-Centred, Social Efficiency, and Social Reconstruction ideologies are present, they are less consistently represented.

**Figure 1.** Assessment Objectives (Grade 9 History Syllabus)

As illustrated in [Figure 1](#), the Grade 9 History syllabus is assessed through a single examination. The figure shows that knowledge and understanding account for a large portion, making up sixty per cent; followed by skills and analysis, which constitute a smaller part at thirty per cent; and finally, judgement and decision-making, comprising the smallest share at ten per cent. There is no assessment based on Social Reconstruction ideology, indicating a over emphasis on content mastery rather than transformative or civic-oriented competencies.

Table 2. Skills and the ideologies represented

Skills	Number of appearances in the topics	No. of topics analysed	Ideology
Analysis	7	6	Learner Centred
Description	9	6	Scholar Academic
Interpretation	1	6	Scholar Academic
Information Finding	3	6	Scholar Academic
Explanation	5	6	Scholar Academic
Debate	2	6	Learner Centred
Cooperation	1	6	Social Efficiency
Judgement	1	6	Learner Centred
Assessment	2	6	Learner Centred
Evaluation	2	6	Learner Centred
Problem Solving	1	6	Social Efficiency

As presented in Table 2, the analysis of skills across the six topics reveals that Scholar Academic skills (such as description, explanation, and information finding) cover a broad range of skills, with twenty instances, followed by the learner-centred ideology with twelve appearances, and social efficiency with two mentions in the content. There is no mention of social reconstruction ideology. Table 2 clearly demonstrates the dominance of Scholar Academic ideology within the skills component, with no representation of Social Reconstruction ideology.

The suggested learning experiences were also analysed to determine their ideological orientation. The majority of activities are framed “teachers and learners discuss...” and “Learners find information on...” both of which coded as Scholar Academic ideology because they prioritise teacher-directed instruction and information retrieval. In contrast, activities such as “learners reflect, match, assess, and role play...” and “teacher create a scenario...” were coded as Learner Centred ideology, as they encourage active learner participation and engagement. No learning experiences were aligned with Social Efficiency and Social Reconstruction ideologies, further confirming the dominance of Scholar Academic orientation within the syllabus.

Table 3. Suggested learning experience (Grade 9 History Syllabus) and Ideologies

Learning experience	No. of experiences	Ideology
Teachers and learners discuss...	48	Scholar Academic
Learners find information on....	15	Scholar Academic
Learners reflect, match, assess, and role play...	13	Learner Centred
Teacher creates a scenario...	1	Learner Centred

As shown in Table 3, Scholar academic dominates learning experiences with 63 instances, while learner-centred ideology accounts for 14 instances. In the case of social efficiency and social reconstruction, there are no learning experiences based on them.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis of the aims, assessment objectives, skills, and suggested learning experiences in the Grade 9 History syllabus indicates that scholar-centrism is the most prevalent academic ideology. This implies that the syllabus primarily focuses on delivering content knowledge rather than fostering transferable skills for real-world use. Evidence from the syllabus demonstrates that ideologies such as learner-centred, social efficiency, and social reconstruction, which emphasise developing practical and societal skills, are seldom represented.

Although teachers may possess strong pedagogical content knowledge, they are constrained by the structure and expectations of the syllabus. Since the curriculum acts as a blueprint for classroom instruction, teachers primarily focus on delivering content. This results in a classroom environment where practical skills are deprioritised. This finding aligns with existing research. Mizikaci et al. (2021), Mitchell & Stones (2022), and Wang & Horta (2025) argue that scholarly academic ideology prioritises cognitive development through disciplinary knowledge. Similarly, Schiro (2013) emphasises that the main aim of education under this ideology is to shape learners into scholars within a specific discipline. The Lesotho Grade 9 History syllabus reflects this aim by emphasising the transmission of historical knowledge rather than practical skills.

These findings might explain why History is often regarded as a "boring" subject (Akhan et al., 2023; Fru, 2015; Hargreaves et al., 2026; Teeger, 2023). The teaching methods based on the scholar's academic ideology are primarily teacher-centred, offering few opportunities for learners to engage with the

content or actively build their own knowledge. According to Vygotsky (1978), effective learning occurs through active participation and social interaction, where learners collaborate to develop understanding. The absence of such practices in the syllabus results in passive learning experiences, limiting learners' engagement with the subject.

6. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study show that the Grade 9 History syllabus is mainly influenced by the Scholar Academic ideology, with limited inclusion of Learner-Centred, Social Efficiency, and almost no Social Reconstruction elements. This imbalance in ideology significantly impacts the syllabus's relevance to students' needs and its ability to meet Lesotho's educational objectives. The dominance of the Scholar Academic ideology, especially in the aims, learning activities, and skills, indicates that the syllabus focuses more on theoretical knowledge than on applied, transformative, and contextually meaningful learning. Although this enhances academic rigour and helps students build a strong base in historical facts and concepts, it also limits opportunities for learners to connect historical knowledge to current social realities in Lesotho in a meaningful way. Such a narrow focus raises concerns about the syllabus's relevance, as it does not fully reflect the principles of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP), which emphasise contextual and culturally responsive education.

Furthermore, the virtual absence of Social Reconstruction ideology within the aims, skills, and especially assessment practices weakens one of the key national objectives of education in Lesotho: the development of responsible, critically engaged citizens capable of contributing to social transformation. Since the syllabus offers no structured opportunities for learners to evaluate social issues, challenge inequalities, or participate in constructive civic dialogue, its capacity to support nation-building and democratic participation is greatly reduced. The lack of reconstruction-focused teaching and assessment means that learners may acquire historical knowledge but remain ill-prepared to apply that knowledge to address current socio-economic and political challenges facing Lesotho. This gap limits the syllabus's contribution to long-term national development objectives.

The findings also show that although several aims specify learner-centred goals such as developing 21st-century skills, values, and attitudes, the recommended learning activities in the syllabus do not support these aims. Furthermore, the widespread use of teacher-led strategies, like "teachers and learners discuss..." and "learners find information..." limits active participation, collaboration, creativity, and inquiry-based learning. Only a few activities encourage reflection, role-play, assessment, or scenario-based learning, which are key components of learner-centred pedagogy. This gap between stated aims and pedagogical practice raises concerns about the syllabus's effectiveness in promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and other essential skills emphasised in Lesotho's education policies. As a result, the syllabus falls short of fully supporting the development of autonomous, reflective learners equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Assessment practices further limit the syllabus's capacity to achieve national education goals. The Grade 9 examination allocates sixty percent to knowledge and understanding, thirty percent to skills and analysis, and only ten percent to judgement and decision-making, with no component assessing social reconstruction skills. This setup promotes memorisation and basic comprehension rather than higher-order thinking, evaluation, or civic reasoning. As a result, learners are encouraged to recall information instead of critically engaging with it or applying it to real-world situations. Such an assessment structure conflicts with the CAP's focus on competency-based assessment and holistic learner development. Therefore, it restricts the syllabus's ability to foster effective teaching, meaningful learning, and the development of informed, analytical citizens.

In a nutshell, these findings demonstrate that the Grade 9 History syllabus only partly aligns with Lesotho's educational goals. While it effectively provides foundational historical knowledge, it falls short in fostering contextual relevance, learner-centred approaches, 21st-century skills, and civic engagement elements vital to national policy frameworks. Therefore, to improve both relevance and effectiveness, the syllabus would require a more balanced integration of ideologies, closer alignment between objectives and teaching methods, and an assessment structure that promotes higher-order thinking and social change. Without such reforms, the syllabus will continue to prepare learners solely to recall historical events, rather than to interpret, question, or apply them in ways that support Lesotho's social and national development goals.

The Lesotho Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) advocates for learner-centred, competency-based education that promotes critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, problem-solving, and civic responsibility (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009). These competencies align closely with 21st-century skills frameworks emphasised in national education reforms. While the Grade 9 History syllabus

reflects this policy direction at the level of aims, a closer analysis reveals a disconnect between these stated intentions and the suggested learning activities.

For example, one syllabus aim states that learners should “develop skills, values and attitudes needed for survival in the 21st century and beyond.” This aim was coded as learner-centred ideology due to its emphasis on skills development, autonomy, and holistic learner growth. However, the corresponding learning activities for several topics predominantly use formulations such as “teachers and learners discuss...” and “learners find information on...”. These activities were coded as scholar-academic ideology because they position the teacher as the primary knowledge authority and prioritise content acquisition over inquiry, collaboration, or problem-solving.

Similarly, aims related to critical analysis of social groups, emerging issues, and technological change suggest alignment with learner-centred and social reconstruction ideologies. However, the learning experiences rarely require learners to engage in debate, community-based inquiry, scenario analysis, or reflective tasks that would support these outcomes. Instead, the syllabus largely relies on teacher-led discussion and information retrieval, limiting opportunities for learners to actively construct knowledge or apply historical understanding to contemporary social realities.

This misalignment between policy, aims, and pedagogy weakens the syllabus’s capacity to fulfil the CAP’s vision of transformative and contextually relevant education. As a result, without learning activities and assessment practices that explicitly promote higher-order thinking and civic engagement, the inclusion of 21st-century skills in syllabus aims remains largely symbolic rather than functional.

7. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the Grade 9 History syllabus in Lesotho is primarily content-focused, rooted in Scholar Academic ideology. While disciplinary knowledge holds value, an excessive focus on content undermines the subject’s relevance in addressing real-world issues and in equipping learners with practical, transferable skills. The dominance is evidenced not only by more aspects emphasising Scholar Academic ideology but also the consistent emphasis on disciplinary knowledge, structured content deliver, and examination oriented assessment. Although elements of learner-centred, social efficiency, and social reconstruction ideologies are present, they are not deeply embedded within learning experiences and absent in assessment practices, suggesting limited institutional emphasis on civic transformation and critical engagement. The syllabus also demonstrates ideological imbalance at the level of curricular discourse and design. While the strong disciplinary focus ensures conceptual rigour, the limited integration of transformative and applied dimensions may constrain the curriculum’s responsiveness to contemporary socio-economic and civic challenges in Lesotho.

8. RECOMMENDATION

The study recommends a balance among the four curriculum ideologies, which requires deliberate alignment across syllabus objectives, content, pedagogy, and assessment. At the syllabus design level, curriculum developers should retain core historical knowledge associated with the scholar-academic ideology while framing learning outcomes that explicitly require learners to analyse, interpret, and apply historical knowledge to contemporary issues. For example, syllabus objectives could combine content mastery with inquiry-based outcomes, such as evaluating the relevance of historical events to present-day social challenges in Lesotho.

Furthermore, at the teaching and learning level, learner-centred and social reconstruction ideologies should be strengthened through the inclusion of participatory learning activities. These may include source analysis, debates on historical interpretations, group projects, and local history investigations that encourage learners to connect historical knowledge with their lived experiences and societal issues. Teachers should, for instance, use community-based case studies to examine themes such as colonialism, resistance, and nation-building in Lesotho.

Social efficiency principles can be integrated by linking historical learning to transferable skills such as critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving. The syllabus could explicitly identify these skills within each topic and suggest learning activities that develop competencies relevant to further education, citizenship, and the world of work.

Moreover, at the assessment level, balancing ideologies would require diversifying assessment methods beyond traditional examinations. In addition to written tests that assess content knowledge, the syllabus could recommend project-based assessments, presentations, and reflective tasks that evaluate learners’ analytical abilities, collaborative skills, and social awareness. Such assessment practices would reinforce learner-centred and social reconstruction goals while maintaining academic rigor.

Finally, the study recommends professional development for History teachers that is accompanied by syllabus reform to support the effective implementation of balanced ideological approaches. Training

programmes could focus on inquiry-based pedagogy, alternative assessment strategies, and the integration of local and national contexts into History teaching.

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AI USE STATEMENT

The author used ChatGPT to check grammar and language improvement.

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