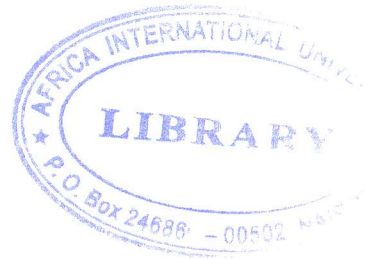


**PATTERNS OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS AMONG MASTER
OF DIVINITY STUDENTS AT THE NAIROBI EVANGELICAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**



by

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory research investigated the epistemological frameworks of students in the Master of Divinity program at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology. It explored the ways in which students describe those frameworks and how those descriptions related to their academic and ministry differences.

Twenty-seven students were purposively selected from two populations – first and third year students of African descent enrolled in full-time residential Master of Divinity studies at the institution. The data was collected through a semi structured interview which was recorded on tape. Data collected was transcribed, coded and analyzed using the constant comparative method.

The literature indicated that certainty of truth, flexibility to change views, handling conflicting knowledge claims, perception of ontological differences between knowledge domains, justification of truth claims, views of authority and sources of knowledge and perceptions about the processes of learning are frameworks through which people describe the nature of knowledge and nature of the processes of learning.

The findings show that students have a plethora of epistemological resources within these frameworks with which they would prefer to understand reality. Predominantly, they use rudimentary and naïve frameworks to explain the nature of knowledge and the processes of knowing. They consider knowledge to be absolute and certain; they believe that knowledge is externally located and must be given to them by authorities. They consider

biblical and theological truth claims to be qualitatively superior to other knowledge claims. These frameworks were further revealed in the ways the students justify knowledge claims, handle conflict, their flexibility to change and the perception of their learning. It was discovered that the resources the students use to address these issues were below their level of learning.

The research further investigated qualitative differences in epistemological frameworks of students in different years and programs of study, and different previous academic and ministry experiences. It was discovered that the descriptions did not vary with student differences. However, students in the Practical Theology group had a slightly different framework for viewing the certainty of knowledge from others and those students with non-theological backgrounds tend to approach learning differently than others.