

Can AI help us hear each other?

A restorative listening framework for interfaith youth dialogue

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Abstract

Facilitated interfaith youth dialogue programmes, whether conducted online, in person, or in hybrid form, create opportunities for young people from diverse religious and cultural traditions to meet, exchange perspectives, and learn together. Their deeper peacebuilding value can emerge when participants engage religious difference within safe and equitable learning conditions, particularly when sensitive questions and differing interpretations arise. This conceptual paper proposes a restorative listening framework for interfaith youth dialogue. Drawing on peace education, relational restorative practice, and interfaith dialogue scholarship, it conceptualises restorative listening as an ethical and relational practice in which participants' expressions are acknowledged, clarification is invited respectfully, religiously or culturally sensitive expressions are considered in context, and dialogue is guided towards mutual recognition, relational responsibility, and peace learning. The paper asks how participant reflections can inform restorative follow-up dialogue and what role AI can play in supporting this process. The framework comprises six movements: expression, reflective visibility, ethical human interpretation, restorative listening design, dialogical response, and peace learning and possible action. With appropriate consent, privacy, and anonymisation safeguards, AI may provisionally organise written reflections from digital boards, surveys, guided prompts, and session feedback into a Restorative Attention Brief. The brief may highlight recurring questions, clarification needs, contrasting interpretations, and possible topics for follow-up dialogue. Following targeted human review, facilitators determine whether and how a response is appropriate. AI is positioned as a limited organisational support tool rather than as a participant or decision-maker; contextual interpretation, ethical responsibility, and protection of relational trust remain with human facilitators. The paper contributes a human-led framework that offers facilitators and programme designers a structured way to connect participant reflections with restorative dialogue design and peace learning.

Keywords: restorative listening; artificial intelligence; interfaith youth dialogue; peace education; restorative practices



<https://doi.org/10.31039/ljss.2026.12.417>



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1. Introduction

Interfaith youth dialogue programmes create opportunities for young people to encounter religious and cultural difference, exchange perspectives, develop relationships, and imagine peaceful coexistence. Their peacebuilding value, however, cannot be inferred from participants occupying the same physical or digital space. Intergroup contact is shaped by status relations, cooperation, institutional support, facilitation, and the wider context of inequality and conflict (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Interreligious dialogue similarly requires more than polite conversation: it depends on sustained engagement, cultural and religious sensitivity, attention to power, and a learning orientation rather than a contest over which position is correct (Abu-Nimer, 2001, 2004; Abu-Nimer & Smith, 2016; Helde, 2021).

The distinction between negative and positive peace helps clarify the problem addressed here. The absence of direct violence can be distinguished from the presence of more just and life-supporting social relations (Galtung, 1969). Applied cautiously to facilitated dialogue, a session without visible hostility may be encouraging, but it does not establish that participants had equitable opportunities to speak, that religious meanings were represented with adequate context, that minority participants were not carrying an excessive representational burden, or that unresolved concerns could shape subsequent learning. Positive peace is therefore treated here as a relational and educational horizon rather than a condition inferred from a quiet or harmonious session. Critical peace education further requires attention to structural and cultural exclusion, dominant knowledge, and the responsibilities accompanying encounters across difference (Bajaj, 2019; Galtung, 1990; Hajir & Kester, 2020).

A practical difficulty arises because participants' questions, uncertainties, relational concerns, and emerging interpretations do not always become visible during a live session. Participants may need time to formulate a sensitive question, consider the significance of a phrase, or decide whether to share a perspective. Digital boards, short surveys, reflection cards, and guided prompts can extend opportunities for expression. Nevertheless, these reflections often remain fragmented, are reviewed only at a programme's end, or are treated as satisfaction data rather than material that may inform the next dialogue. Facilitators may also face multilingual reflections and limited preparation time. Artificial intelligence (AI) may assist with provisional organisation, but its use introduces risks of decontextualisation, bias, privacy violations, false certainty, and the conversion of relational meaning into automated labels (Alfredo et al., 2024; De Paoli, 2024; Miao & Holmes, 2023).

Inspired in part by the first author's participation in the Ikuméni interfaith youth dialogue initiative, this paper addresses the broader challenge of connecting post-session reflections with subsequent dialogue design. It proposes a human-led, ethically bounded Restorative Listening Cycle that functions as an inter-session facilitation process within an existing programme. The framework neither replaces a programme's curriculum nor assumes that AI is necessary for meaningful dialogue. AI may support reflective visibility by provisionally organising consented and anonymised written reflections, while restorative listening remains a human relational practice. Contextual interpretation, relational judgment, dialogue design, and ethical responsibility therefore remain with human facilitators. The paper asks: How can voluntary participant reflections inform selective restorative follow-up in multi-session



interfaith youth dialogue, with AI supporting reflective visibility without displacing human interpretation, participant agency, or relational trust?

The paper contributes a facilitation architecture connecting peace education, relational restorative practice, interfaith dialogue, programme adaptation, and human-centred AI. The framework establishes limits on AI-supported processing and provides a practical inter-session workflow designed for use across online, in-person, and hybrid interfaith youth programmes.

2. Literature review

Interfaith youth dialogue as peace education

Peace education provides the broad pedagogical orientation of the framework. It concerns not only knowledge about conflict but also capacities for critical reflection, nonviolent engagement, human rights, responsibility, and the transformation of relationships and structures that sustain violence (Galtung, 1969; Harris, 2004). A culture-of-peace orientation similarly connects education, dialogue, solidarity, respect for diversity, and the peaceful transformation of conflict (United Nations General Assembly, 1999). The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adds an important boundary: diversity is a shared human resource, but cultural claims cannot be used to diminish human rights (UNESCO, 2001). For interfaith dialogue, this means neither erasing difference in search of superficial consensus nor suspending critical and human-rights-based examination of particular practices. Participants require space to ask difficult questions while preserving dignity, contextual understanding, and recognition of the internal diversity of religious traditions. Within this framework, these commitments orient peace learning, understood as possible personal, relational, dialogical, and programme-level learning that may emerge through engagement across difference rather than as a predetermined outcome.

Critical peace education adds an explicit focus on power by asking whose knowledge is treated as neutral, whose experience is rendered exceptional, and how power shapes opportunities to participate (Bajaj, 2019; Hajir & Kester, 2020). A dialogue can be warm and still reproduce inequity if majority assumptions remain unnamed or if one young person is expected to explain an entire religion. Culture should not be treated as a fixed package uniformly shared by all members of a group; it is internally diverse, contextual, and experienced through multiple affiliations (Avruch, 1998). Ethical facilitation therefore requires cultural humility and a willingness to preserve uncertainty rather than translating every expression into a stable category.

These principles align with intergroup and interfaith dialogue scholarship, which treats encounter as a facilitated learning process rather than an inherently beneficial event. Intergroup dialogue has been described as a critical-dialogic process connecting personal experience, engagement across difference, analysis of inequality, and possibilities for individual or collective action (Nagda & Gurin, 2007). In interreligious settings, encounter programmes may be limited when power and conflict conditions are neglected (Abu-Nimer, 2001, 2004). KAICIID guidance translates this orientation into practice through active listening, shared ground rules, gradual engagement with difficult questions, and conditions



intended to support equitable and voluntary participation and sustainable relationships (Abu-Nimer et al., 2018; Helde, 2021).

Interviews with members of a youth interfaith community in the Philippines found that participants understood the significance of interfaith dialogue in terms of the person rather than religion alone, friendship, and collective participation in the community (Cornelio & Salera, 2012). United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 recognises the important role young people can play in conflict prevention and peacebuilding (United Nations Security Council, 2015). Accordingly, youth agency within the proposed framework is expressed through participants' opportunities to influence subsequent facilitation, articulate what meaningful learning looks like, and confirm, complicate, or contest interpretations returned to the group. Their reflections are therefore not treated merely as data collected about youth.

Relational restorative practice and the concept of restorative listening

Restorative justice and restorative practices contribute a relational understanding of voice, responsibility, and response. Relational accounts resist the idea that people can be understood as isolated individuals detached from the networks and conditions that shape their experiences. Instead, they direct attention to interdependence, the quality of relationships, and the responsibilities created by human interaction (Llewellyn & Morrison, 2018). In education, restorative practice has been used proactively through circles, dialogue, community-building, and pedagogical approaches not only reactively after a clearly defined incident of harm (Lodi et al., 2022; Vaandering, 2014). School Circles, for example, have been used proactively for community building and reactively for peacemaking, problem-solving, or responding to conflict (Procter & Dunlevy, 2015). This proactive role is central to the framework. It applies restorative principles to support dialogue, without treating every difficult exchange as an incident of wrongdoing or harm. Facilitators may therefore attend to participants' questions, uncertainties, or relational concerns even when no specific harm has been identified.

In this paper, restorative listening is conceptualised as an ethical and relational practice connecting participant reflection, human interpretation, selective follow-up, and peace learning. It is not presented as an empirically validated intervention. Restorative listening involves acknowledging participants' expressions, inviting clarification, considering religious and cultural meanings in context, and orienting dialogue towards mutual recognition and relational responsibility. It extends beyond active-listening techniques such as attentive reception and paraphrasing by connecting how participants are heard to dignity, power, representational burden, relational responsibility, and decisions about what, if anything, should happen next. Restorative listening does not require agreement or reconciliation. Nor does it assume that every difficult exchange constitutes harm or that every concern requires a public restorative process. Its purpose is to support contextual human judgment about what, if any, proportionate follow-up is warranted.

Facilitator preparation and contextual judgment are therefore central. Studies of educational peace circles emphasise carefully designed questions, ongoing professional learning, attention to quieter voices, and the facilitator's capacity to engage social conflict without allowing a circle format to conceal unequal power (Parker & Bickmore, 2020, 2021). A formally equal opportunity to speak does not guarantee equitable participation. Participants may face



different risks, language barriers, confidence levels, or pressure to speak for an entire community—a representational burden. Restorative listening therefore protects the right to pass, requires non-attribution when reflections are returned to the group, and does not treat silence as evidence of discomfort, exclusion, agreement, or consent.

Human-centred AI and reflective visibility

Human-centred AI distinguishes useful computational support from delegated human responsibility. High automation can coexist with meaningful human control (Shneiderman, 2020). In education, human-centred approaches emphasise learner and educator agency, stakeholder participation, privacy, reliability, and alignment with human purposes (Alfredo et al., 2024). UNESCO guidance similarly maintains that generative AI should support rather than displace human agency and pedagogical relationships (Miao & Holmes, 2023; UNESCO, 2022).

The framework assigns AI a bounded preparatory role centred on reflective visibility: making unresolved questions, contrasting interpretations, participation considerations, singular reflections, and uncertainties easier for facilitators to notice without converting them into diagnoses. With consent for AI-supported processing and prior anonymisation, AI may provisionally organise written reflections into a Restorative Attention Brief. This may assist when reflections are numerous, multilingual, or distributed across platforms. Following a human response decision, AI may draft provisional Bridge materials under a facilitator-defined purpose and protections; it neither selects the response nor decides whether a Bridge is needed.

Qualitative meaning is not reducible to textual similarity. An exploration of large language models in thematic analysis illustrates their organisational capacity and the continuing need for human interpretation and selection of final themes (De Paoli, 2024). Here, however, the Restorative Attention Brief is provisional facilitation material, not an authoritative representation of participant experience or an automated thematic analysis.

This boundary is especially important in interfaith dialogue, where religious language may be symbolic, contextual, multilingual, and internally contested. AI should not be authorised to infer participant meaning or intention, determine whether harm occurred, or adjudicate religious interpretation. Research on AI-supported empathic responses also indicates that computational assistance does not remove the need for human nuance, cultural sensitivity, and interpersonal connection (Schabasser, 2026; Sharma et al., 2023). AI may support preparation, but contextual interpretation and responsibility for listening remain human.

Ethical governance must precede tool use. UNESCO’s AI ethics recommendation and the NIST AI Risk Management Framework emphasise human rights, transparency, privacy, fairness, accountability, safety, and ongoing risk management (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2023; UNESCO, 2022). In youth programmes, these principles require understandable consent, an equivalent non-AI option, data minimisation, limited retention, and clear responsibility for reviewing and correcting outputs. AI must not profile participants, infer identity, score tolerance, or identify supposedly problematic individuals.

Table 1: From conceptual foundations to framework design requirements:



Literature domain	Core principle	Resulting design requirement
Positive and critical peace education	The absence of visible conflict does not establish equitable participation or positive peace.	The reflection process should keep visible questions, uncertainties, and perspectives that may remain unspoken during an apparently harmonious session.
Intergroup and interreligious dialogue	Dialogue processes and possible outcomes are shaped by facilitation, context, power relations, and the conditions of encounter.	Participant reflections should feed into a documented human response decision rather than remain end-of-programme feedback.
Relational restorative practice	Voice, acknowledgment, interdependence, dignity, and relational responsibility matter both before and after harm.	Restorative follow-up must be selective and must not compel disclosure, agreement, apology, forgiveness, or reconciliation.
Learning-oriented evaluation	Reflection and adaptation should occur during programme implementation, not only after completion.	Facilitators should document what informed subsequent facilitation, what remained unresolved, and what required adaptation.
Human-centred AI	Computational support must remain bounded by consent, privacy, participant agency, human oversight, and accountability.	AI may organise reflections and draft provisional materials within human-defined boundaries; facilitators retain interpretation and response authority.

Methodology: integrative conceptual design

This article is a conceptual design paper with a practice-informed illustration. Rather than testing a model empirically, conceptual papers clarify constructs, bring relevant literatures into dialogue, and propose frameworks for future inquiry and practice (Jaakkola, 2020; Jabareen, 2009). The framework was developed through an integrative conceptual synthesis rather than a systematic review. This approach supports comparison across theoretical and practitioner literatures to generate conceptual understanding (Torraco, 2005). Sources were selected purposefully for relevance to the defined problem and design functions; the review was not exhaustive.

Development proceeded in five stages. First, the authors identified principles across positive and critical peace education, intergroup and interreligious dialogue, relational restorative practice, learning-oriented programme evaluation, and human-centred AI. Second, they compared these principles around recurring concerns of expression, visibility, contextual



interpretation, relational design and response, learning, and action. Third, these concerns were organised into the six movements of the Restorative Listening Cycle. Table 1 links each literature domain to a resulting design requirement. Fourth, the framework was operationalised as the facilitator workflow introduced above and detailed in the following section. Fifth, the workflow was reviewed against the ethical and safeguarding requirements identified in the literature.

The general coordinator of Ikuméni authorised the programme to be named. Ikuméni is neither evaluated nor presented as an empirical case study; no personal information, participant quotations, identifiable reflections, or programme outcome data are used. The later illustration is a fictional composite inspired by the four-session format and dialogical environment of *Artesanos de la Paz*, not an account of an actual participant, reflection, session, or event.

The restorative listening cycle

The framework operates through short inter-session cycles without replacing a curriculum or facilitation method. Participants may submit a voluntary reflection after each session. The workflow connects reflection to a human-reviewed response decision and, only when warranted, an optional Restorative Bridge. A four-session programme provides up to three inter-session review opportunities followed by cumulative synthesis.

Figure 1: Operationalisation of the Restorative Listening Cycle as a selective inter-session pathway

Reflection and Visibility	Human Review and Response Decision	Optional Restorative Bridge Pathway
1. Expression Voluntary participant reflection 2. Reflective visibility Anonymisation and provisional Restorative Attention Brief	3. Ethical human interpretation Targeted Human Review Select one proportionate response • No follow-up • Curriculum integration • Confidential human follow-up • Safeguarding referral • Extended review Optional Restorative Bridge	If a Restorative Bridge is selected: 4. Restorative listening design Human-defined purpose and protections 5. Dialogical response Human-facilitated 15-minute Bridge 6. Peace learning and possible action Peace-Learning Record

Note. Movements 1–3 form the routine reflection and review process. The pathway branches after the human response decision; a Restorative Bridge is not automatic. Movements 4–5 apply only when a Bridge is selected. Movement 6 records learning after a Bridge or through cumulative programme review.



Movement 1: expression

Participants receive voluntary opportunities to express questions, uncertainties, or matters they did not raise publicly. A short reflection may invite questions, uncertainties, matters left unsaid, and suggestions for the next dialogue. Reflections may come from digital boards, online forms, chats, paper cards, or source-coded post-it notes transcribed after identifiers are removed. Participants may decline reflection or choose human-only review.

Movement 2: reflective visibility

Consented reflections are anonymised before AI-supported processing. AI may organise unresolved questions, meanings requiring clarification, contrasting interpretations, relational considerations, singular or low-frequency reflections, and human-review needs. Material excluded from AI processing follows the participant-selected human-review route. The output is a one-page provisional Restorative Attention Brief, not a diagnosis or final interpretation. Table 2 summarises the boundaries governing AI-supported visibility and preparation.

Movement 3: ethical human interpretation

Facilitators begin with the Brief and verify source-linked originals only when uncertainty, possible misinterpretation, contextual or translation caution, singular significance, human-only review, or possible use in a facilitator response requires it. They assess context, power, representation, relational significance, and what remains unknown. They ask whether the Brief presented an uncertain statement as definite, treated a majority perspective as neutral, or could expose or burden someone. A Restorative Bridge is selected only when collective dialogue is proportionate and can proceed without exposing or unduly burdening a participant. The facilitator then selects one of the proportionate response routes shown in Figure 1. Frequency does not determine importance: one reflection concerning dignity, unequal participation, or representational burden may warrant attention.

Movement 4: restorative listening design

When a Bridge is selected, facilitators define one restorative purpose and choose a suitable method (Bojer et al., 2008). The purpose may be to clarify meaning, distinguish curiosity from generalisation, reduce representational burden, or improve the formulation of difficult questions. Facilitators then select a context-appropriate listening or clarification method. The design protects non-attribution and the right to pass and does not require anyone to represent an entire tradition.

Movement 5: dialogical response

The selected matter normally returns to dialogue in a 15-minute Restorative Bridge; the facilitation team extends it only if essential content and participation protections remain intact. The facilitator reconnects it to prior learning without identifying contributors, explains the purpose and protections, and guides a protected listening activity aimed at improved understanding or clarified disagreement rather than consensus.

Movement 6: peace learning and possible action

Participants identify what became clearer, what remains unresolved, and what responsibility they will carry forward. Learning may be personal, relational, dialogical, or programme-level.



Participants may confirm, complicate, correct, or contest returned interpretations and suggest changes for the next cycle. Optional action may include revising dialogue agreements or creating a participant-led resource. Action is not required. The Peace-Learning Record documents the process without treating it as proof of trust, safety, consensus, reconciliation, or peace.

Table 2: Boundaries for AI-supported reflective visibility and preparation

AI may assist with	AI is not authorised to	Required human safeguard
Provisionally organise consented and anonymised reflections.	Infer identity, intention, sincerity, emotion, prejudice, or harm.	Verify source-linked originals when uncertainty, contextual caution, or facilitator use requires it.
Identify recurring questions while retaining contrasting and singular reflections.	Treat frequency as proof of importance or truth.	Retain low-frequency material and apply contextual judgment.
Prepare a provisional Restorative Attention Brief.	Decide whether harm occurred, who is responsible, or which response is appropriate.	Facilitators assess relational significance and select the response.
Support multilingual organisation.	Treat machine translation as authoritative religious interpretation.	Review translations contextually and preserve original wording when needed.
After human activation, draft provisional Bridge materials within the approved purpose and protections.	Decide whether a Bridge is needed, select the final activity, produce an unreviewed intervention, or mediate live dialogue.	Facilitators define the purpose and protections and accept, revise, or reject all drafts.

Practice-informed illustration: Artesanos de la Paz

The first author's participation in Ikuméni, a Latin American and Caribbean interfaith youth dialogue initiative, provided a practice-informed point of departure for considering how greater continuity might be created between dialogue sessions. This experience did not provide empirical data for the present paper and is not used to evaluate Ikuméni. The following fictionalised *Artesanos de la Paz* scenario contains no actual participant statement, identifiable information, programme event, or outcome. It illustrates how the proposed Restorative Listening Cycle might operate in practice.



Consider a fictional four-session online interfaith youth programme in which participants explore facilitator-selected texts and narratives concerning hospitality and encounters with religious difference in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions. After Session 1, participants submit short, voluntary Padlet reflections. Although the live discussion appears respectful and productive, the reflections reveal issues that were not fully visible during the session. One participant describes having previously been treated as a spokesperson for an entire religion (S01); another reports remaining silent because of uncertainty about using an appropriate religious term (S02); and another questions language that presents religious traditions as internally uniform (S03). Further reflections ask how hospitality applies to encounters at school or online (S04), whether welcoming difference requires agreement (S05), and note positively the similarities observed across traditions (S06).

After consent filtering, human-only routing, and anonymisation, AI may assist by producing a provisional Restorative Attention Brief. The Brief might identify everyday applications of hospitality (S04), the distinction between welcome and agreement (S05), internal religious diversity (S03), hesitation around respectful inquiry (S02), and possible representational burden (S01), while retaining S06 as a perspective that complicates an exclusively problem-focused reading. These categories remain provisional. AI is expressly prohibited from inferring participants' intentions or emotions, determining that prejudice, offence, exclusion, or harm occurred, interpreting religious doctrine, or deciding that a facilitator response is required.

Facilitators then undertake Targeted Human Review. They compare the source-linked reflections with the session context, check culturally and religiously specific language, preserve singular and contrasting perspectives, and reject or revise misleading AI groupings. They determine that the material does not indicate an immediate safeguarding concern or require correction of a particular participant. However, they judge that the relationship between hospitality, responsible inquiry, internal diversity, and personal representation may warrant further collective learning. They therefore select an Optional Restorative Bridge for Session 2. Its human-defined purpose is to connect hospitality with responsible inquiry, distinguish an invitation to share a personal perspective from an expectation to represent an entire tradition, and distinguish welcoming difference from required agreement.

The fifteen-minute Bridge begins with a neutral, non-attributive acknowledgment of the questions raised by prior reflections. Participants compare formulations such as "What does your religion say about this?" and "Would you like to share how you understand this within your own context?" and consider what each formulation invites, assumes, or leaves unclear. In pairs, participants practise asking an open question, listening and paraphrasing, while the speaker may confirm, complicate, correct, or decline to respond. No participant is required to disclose personal experience or speak for a religious community. The Bridge closes with the reflection, "One way I can welcome difference while asking or listening more responsibly is...". The planned Session 2 curriculum then continues.

Ethical safeguards precede this process. Participants should receive understandable information about what reflections will be collected, who will review them, whether AI may be used, how long material will be retained, and what human-only alternative is available. Programme participation must not depend on accepting AI processing, and consent should be



revocable where feasible. Only consented, anonymised reflections and the minimum contextual information necessary for review should be processed. Sensitive or identifiable disclosures require restricted human handling, and AI should not be used where adequate privacy, control, or anonymisation cannot be ensured.

Human review remains substantive rather than ceremonial. Facilitators are accountable for the interpretations they retain, the responses they select, and any risk of exposing or burdening participants. Participants should also be able to confirm, complicate, correct, or contest meanings returned to the group. After the Bridge, facilitators record what became clearer or remained unresolved, whether singular perspectives remained visible, how the reflections influenced subsequent facilitation, and which AI-generated groupings or suggestions were revised or rejected. These records indicate how the learning process operated; they do not establish that the Bridge produced safety, trust, agreement, or peace. This participatory emphasis on reflection, adaptation, and human accountability is consistent with interreligious peacebuilding approaches that integrate learning throughout implementation (Abu-Nimer & Nelson, 2021; Garred et al., 2021).

The illustration therefore shows the bounded contribution proposed for AI within the framework. AI does not resolve the issue, perform empathy, or determine the appropriate restorative response. Its limited function is to support source-linked reflective visibility. Restorative listening occurs through contextual human interpretation, voluntary participation, participant correction, and the capacity of reflections to responsibly influence subsequent dialogue.

Discussion and implications for peace education

The Restorative Listening Cycle reframes reflection from isolated feedback into a possible source of inter-session pedagogical and relational adaptation. Its value does not depend on identifying a problem after every session; it creates a documented process through which participant expression may influence what happens next. Transparent response routes also help distinguish curriculum integration, confidential or safeguarding attention, and optional restorative follow-up.

For peace education, the framework offers a practical way to avoid equating surface harmony or the absence of reported incidents with equitable participation. This is consistent with the argument that restorative group processes should not be evaluated through incident data alone (Procter & Dunlevy, 2015). By retaining difficult questions, contrasting perspectives, and low-frequency concerns, the Cycle may support clarified disagreement, relational responsibility, and youth influence over subsequent dialogue. These are possible learning processes rather than evidence that trust, inclusion, or positive peace has been achieved.

The framework complements existing approaches while serving a more specific function. KAICIID's dialogic process addresses the broader development of relationships and cooperation (Helde, 2021), while adaptive interreligious peacebuilding supports ongoing review and adjustment (Abu-Nimer & Nelson, 2021; Garred et al., 2021). The proposed Cycle adds a recurring inter-session architecture grounded in restorative relational principles. Within it, AI has a limited organisational and preparatory role; facilitators retain pedagogical, cultural, ethical, and relational authority.



Limitations and future research

The framework is conceptual and has not been empirically validated. Its six movements are an analytic synthesis rather than a universal sequence, and programmes may need to adapt their timing, terminology, and tools. Written reflection may privilege participants with greater linguistic confidence or digital access; anonymisation may be difficult in small groups; and machine translation may alter religious meaning. Facilitator bias remains possible with or without AI. The framework also cannot guarantee that participants will experience dialogue as safe; safety remains situated, relational, and open to participant contestation.

The next research phase should use participatory design to pilot the toolkit in a multi-session interfaith youth programme, potentially with Ikuméni's support. It should examine facilitator workload, differences between manual and AI-assisted organisation, the preservation of contrasting and low-frequency reflections, and participant-defined evidence of peace learning. Subsequent comparative research could explore how ethically governed AI-supported restorative listening may contribute across different interfaith youth dialogue and peace education settings.

3. Conclusions

The relevant question is not whether AI can listen like a human, but whether carefully bounded AI support can help facilitators attend to participant reflections without displacing human judgment, participant agency, or relational responsibility. This paper answers conditionally: AI may support reflective visibility and the provisional preparation of follow-up materials. The toolkit's predefined prompt templates provide a consistent structure for organising reflections across different dialogue themes and for identifying what may warrant attention within the Restorative Listening Cycle. However, AI does not determine whether the Cycle should lead to a particular response. Contextual interpretation, response selection, and the facilitation of restorative dialogue remain human responsibilities.

The Restorative Listening Cycle responds to a practical challenge in multi-session interfaith youth dialogue: participants may express important questions, uncertainties, or relational concerns after a session, yet these reflections do not automatically influence what happens next. By connecting voluntary reflection, a provisional Restorative Attention Brief, targeted human review, proportionate response selection, an optional Restorative Bridge, and a Peace-Learning Record, the framework offers facilitators a practical way to create continuity between sessions. It does not require every reflection to become an intervention, nor does it treat every difficult question as evidence of harm. Its contribution lies in helping facilitators notice more carefully, decide more responsibly, and return selected matters to dialogue without exposing participants or asking them to represent an entire tradition.

The accompanying toolkit translates the conceptual framework into an operational process designed for field application. Its standard workflow, predefined prompts, human-review requirements, response routes, and adaptable Bridge format allow it to be used across different dialogue themes and with reflections collected through digital or paper-based formats. This practical readiness, however, should not be confused with evidence of effectiveness. The next stage is to pilot the toolkit in a multi-session interfaith youth dialogue



programme and examine its operation through participant- and facilitator-informed data. A subsequent empirical paper should evaluate whether the process preserves contrasting and low-frequency reflections, remains manageable for facilitators, supports meaningful follow-up, and protects participant agency and relational trust. It should also identify what the framework enables in practice, where difficulties emerge, and which elements require revision.

The framework therefore concludes with a simple but consequential commitment: what young people express between sessions should not disappear there. When their reflections warrant acknowledgment or a response, they should have a responsible pathway back into human dialogue. Such a process may support youth agency by positioning young people not merely as participants from whom data are collected or recipients of a predetermined programme, but as active contributors whose reflections can influence the direction of subsequent dialogue and learning.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank the Ikuméni coordination team for permitting the programme to be named and for the practice-informed inspiration that contributed to the fictionalised illustration developed in this conceptual paper.



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