

TEACHERS' AND HEAD TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SYLLABUSES 2044 AND 2046 IN SELECTED SCHOOLS OF KAPIRI-MPOSHI DISTRICT

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were to find out the attitudes of head teachers and teachers of RE towards RE as a school curriculum subject, and the attitudes of teachers of RE syllabus 2044 and their head teachers towards syllabus 2046 and vice versa (i.e. teachers of RE syllabus 2046 and their head teachers towards syllabus 2044). Six secondary schools in the categories of grant-aided, government or public, and private were chosen for the study in Kapiri-mposhi District of Central Province of Zambia. From each of the selected schools, the head teacher and three teachers of RE were purposively sampled for the study. Data were collected through interviews by using interview guides. The interview guides were designed in such a way that the items of discussion therein elicited responses that revealed respondents' attitudes (feelings, opinions and views) towards RE as a school curriculum subject and towards the two senior secondary syllabuses. The data collected revealed that all teachers of RE and most head teachers had positive attitudes towards RE as a curriculum subject, though one or two head teachers regarded the subject as a second class subject. Data further revealed that the teachers of RE syllabus 2044 had negative attitudes towards syllabus 2046 while negative attitudes towards syllabus 2044 were equally found among teachers of RE syllabus 2046. The study therefore, established that the teachers of RE syllabuses 2044 and 2046 had positive attitudes towards the syllabus they taught and negative attitudes towards the other syllabus. The study therefore recommended that the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) through the Directorate of Curriculum and Standards, Curriculum Development Centre, should either merge the two syllabuses to foster professional harmony among the teachers of RE. Additionally, offices in charge of inspection or monitoring of educational standards (SESOs, head teachers, HODs and HOSs) should be proactive and ensure that the subject is competently taught in schools.

Key words: Attitudes, Positive, Negative, Religious Education, Syllabus

Introduction

As widely understood, Zambian RE has passed through three developmental stages namely Denominational (1883-1972), Interdenominational (1973-1983), and Educational (1984 to-date). Thus for a few years after Zambia's independence in 1964, the denominational approach to RE continued in schools. Each denomination had its own syllabus for primary and junior secondary school, while the Cambridge Bible Knowledge syllabus continued to be used at senior secondary school level. Representatives from different churches used the 'right of entry' arrangement with government to continue teaching the subject in schools until 'Agreed' or Interdenominational syllabuses were introduced in 1972/73.

The main aim of the 1977 Educational Reforms was 'to create a system of education which was properly attuned to and more fully met the needs and aspirations of Zambians' (MoE, 1977). In line with this, from 1984, RE as a school curriculum subject was made more educational and Zambian in approach. At senior secondary school level, two new syllabuses were introduced: a 'Zambianised' version of *Christian Living Today* called *RE Syllabus 2044* and a modified version of the *Cambridge Bible Knowledge* called *RE Syllabus 2046* (ECZ, 1983). The new syllabuses became pluralistic by including aspects of other religious traditions in Zambia, including Zambian Traditional Beliefs, Hinduism and Islam. This was the beginning of the 'Educational Stage' in the historical development of the subject. Despite attaining the educational curriculum subject status, RE has continued to face internal and external challenges which have left stakeholders wondering whether the subject is not still the 'Cinderella subject' that it was in the past.

The Problem

Although RE has been a curriculum subject like any other since the 1980s, it has always received a lot of scorn, not only from other teachers, but from a big number of trained RE teachers themselves, with some refusing to teach the subject after leaving college or university (Mulando, 2011). The other issue is the division of the teachers over the two senior secondary school syllabuses. The teachers who teach 2044 do not seem to be ready to teach 2046 and vice-versa, as would be expected upon transfer from one school offering either 2044 or 2046 to another. So the subject has never really shed off the 'Cinderella status' that characterised it after independence (Smith, 1982). As such, there seem to be some attitude-related problems among the teachers of the subject, which we do not know and which needed to be investigated in this study.

Operational Definition of Attitudes

According to Richardson (1996: 102): 'Attitudes...are a subset of a group of constructs that name, define, and describe the structure and content of mental states that are thought to drive a person's actions.' Similarly, according to Bootzin (1991: 376), attitudes are traditionally considered to have three components, namely: the emotional (how we feel about an object), the behavioural (how we act towards the object), and the cognitive (our knowledge, beliefs and thoughts about the object). In this study, the same meaning of the term was applied to the way teachers of RE and their head teachers perceived the two senior secondary school RE syllabuses 2044 and 2046.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research paradigm involving a descriptive research design because there was need to develop deeper insights and understanding of the attitudes of RE

teachers towards senior secondary school RE syllabuses 2044 and 2046. There was need for interaction with the research participants in a natural and unobtrusive manner in order to get in-depth data. According to Leedy and Ormond (2005: 133), qualitative research methods are applicable when the core purpose of the study is to relate particular aspects of behaviour to the wider context, when the intention is to know the causes and effects of a certain phenomenon such as the one this study set out to investigate. Leedy and Ormond (ibid) further explain that in qualitative research, we dig deep, collect numerous forms of data and examine them from serious angles to construct a rich and meaningful picture of complex, multifaceted situations such as the one under we investigated.

The descriptive design strategy was chosen particularly for its effectiveness in systematic collection and analysis of data in order to answer questions concerning a given problem. Currently, there is need to address questions on attitudes of classroom teachers towards RE syllabuses 2044 and 2046. As such, the descriptive design strategy was found to be the most appropriate, considering its emphasis on description of highlighted behavioural data.

Population, Sample size and Sampling techniques

A population is a group of elements or cases whether individuals, objects or events that conform to specific criteria, and to which we intend to generalise the results of research (MacMillan and Schumacher, 2001). In this research study, the population comprised all secondary schools, all RE teachers, and all secondary school head teachers in Kapiri-mposhi District where both or either of the two senior secondary school RE syllabuses under discussion were offered. Since the research study was concerned with attitudes towards RE among teachers of the two subject syllabuses in the district, there was need to obtain views of the RE teachers who were the actual classroom teachers of the two syllabus under discussion in the selected schools.

White (2005) defines a sample as a group of subjects or situations selected from a larger population. Thus a sample population can be defined as the total number of units from which data can potentially be collected. In this study, the sample size comprised one head teacher and three teachers of RE from each of the six selected schools. The selected schools included two government schools, two privately owned schools, and two grant-aided schools in Kapiri-mposhi District, making a total sample size of 24 respondents as shown in the table below.

| <i>School Status</i> | <i>Number of Schools</i> | <i>Respondent category</i> | <i>Number of respondents</i> | <i>Syllabus offered</i> |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Government | 2 | Head teachers | 2 | 2046 and 2044 |
| | | Teachers | 6 | |
| Grant-aided | 2 | Head teachers | 2 | 2044 |
| | | Teachers | 6 | |
| Private | 2 | Head teachers | 2 | 2046 |
| | | Teachers | 6 | |

Cresswell (2002) postulates that in qualitative studies, the sample size does not really matter, as long as the most effective and appropriate instruments are used to generate data. Based on this premise, the researcher took the sample of 24 to be enough to provide useful information, especially that the interviews sought in-depth responses, spending an hour on each respondent. In other words, rich information rather than the number of participants is cardinal in qualitative research. Thus, the sample for this study was selected in a way that it ensured that the research questions which sought to establish the attitudes of the teachers of RE towards the two senior secondary school syllabuses were adequately answered.

Data Collection Methods, Instruments and Procedure

Due to the nature of the study and as earlier alluded to, face-to-face interviews were used as a data collection method. Face-to-face interviews, particularly those using semi-structured interview guides, are important because they allow the researcher to simplify or go through his or her questions once more in case the respondent has misunderstood or missed them. The use of interviews further allowed for probing where the researcher needed more clarification. In addition, semi-structured interviews were effective in that there was direct contact with the respondents as it is not only the responses that researchers should be interested in but eye contact and body language as well. Interviews may therefore help the researcher to obtain extra information or data on the issue being researched.

Wyse (2014) supports the use of face-to face interviews when she postulates that with any research project, data collection is incredibly important. However, several aspects come into play in the data the collection process. The three most crucial aspects include: the cost of the selected data collection method; the accuracy of data collected; and the efficiency of data collection.

Despite the rise in popularity of online and mobile surveys, face-to-face (in-person) interviews still remain a popular data collection method and many researchers such as Deakin and Wakefield (2014), Chen and Hinton (1999), and Bowden and Gonzalez (2015), strongly support this traditional method over online interviews. For them, surveys and other modes of data collection should be second choice alternatives because face-to-face interview method provides has several advantages over other data collection methods; these advantages include, accurate screening of information, capture of verbal and non-verbal cues, keeping focus on the topic of investigation/discussion, and capture of emotions and behaviours.

With regard to data collection procedure, the researchers made the head teachers of the six different schools for the interviews to be held on different dates and consent was given by all the six. At each school, the head teacher was interviewed first, followed by the three teachers of RE. The head teachers were interviewed in their offices while the teachers were interviewed in the Social Sciences Departmental offices. Both the head teachers and teachers were interviewed for about one hour. With the respondents' consent, all the interview sessions were recorded using a voice recorder for easy playback during transcription and data analysis. Besides, recorded information can be stored easily and longer. Ethical issues were strictly followed. Apart from their personal signed consent, each respondent was interviewed privately, and no interview findings were discussed or shared with anybody else, not even with the head teachers. This ensured that confidentiality was observed.

Data Analysis

White (2008) postulates that data analysis is the climax of a research study and involves selecting, categorising and comparing, synthesising and interpreting the information gathered to provide explanations of the phenomenon of interest. Since the study was qualitative in nature, the data gathered from the interviews were latter categorised and arranged according to key concepts, which corresponded with the research questions.

Findings

The main purpose of this section is to present the findings of the study. The data are presented according to headings derived from the main research questions used in the study.

1. *Attitudes of head teachers and teachers of RE towards RE as a curriculum subject*

In order to capture a holistic picture of attitudes towards RE as a curriculum subject, head teachers of the schools sampled were included in the study. The head teacher respondents were asked to indicate whether all subjects, RE inclusive, received equal attention and support from the central administration in their schools, and if not, to mention which subjects were prioritised and why. In response, the head teachers of the grant-aided and government schools indicated that all subjects in the schools were equally treated because they were part of the official school curriculum. One of the head teachers from a grant-aided school added: “For us in grant-aided or Church-run schools, RE is not only important but it is actually compulsory to all the pupils or classes.” Another head teacher from a public or government school further explained as follows:

RE is a very good subject both in terms of what it teaches the young people and the passing rate. The subject imparts morals to the learners and they also usually pass the subject very well and better than other subjects.

The only misgiving expressed by the head teachers was that most book suppliers had more science and mathematics books than those for social science subjects, including RE. They explained that this situation tended to make it look like the head teachers were prioritising mathematics and science in the purchase of teaching and learning materials. However, one head teacher of a private school had a different view from the others concerning RE as a curriculum subject. According to this head teacher:

RE is like a second class subject. Like Civic Education, for example, only about 50% of the pupils like and take it, hence more attention is given to what I can call first-class subjects such as mathematics and the sciences.

Coming to the teachers of RE, in-depth face-to-face interviews with them revealed that all the eighteen of them from all the three categories of schools had a positive attitude towards the subject generally. None of the sampled teachers said they did not enjoy teaching the subject, nor that it was bad.

Asked if they had any bad feelings or regrets about being teachers of RE, the teachers’ general response was that they were happy to be teachers of the subject. A teacher from a private school proudly said, “I do not feel marginalised as a teacher of RE as there is no difference between me and a science or mathematics teacher.” Similarly, another teacher from a grant-aided school said:

I do not regret that he I am a teacher of RE. Actually I have benefitted from being a teacher of the subject as I have fewer periods to teach than the teachers of mathematics and science who have more periods of teaching per week. This allows me to use the free time on either school work or private work.

The picture at the government schools was not different from that at the grant-aided and private schools. A teacher from one of the government schools proudly said: “All subjects on the school curriculum have equal status and importance, so there is nothing shameful about teaching RE.” Another teacher from the second government school added: “RE is perhaps one of the best and easiest subjects to teach; I enjoy teaching the subject so much that I don’t even want to be given classes in my other teaching subject.”

In summing up then, it was clear that the majority of the head teachers and all the teachers of RE who participated in the study had positive views and attitudes towards RE as a curriculum subject.

2. Views of head teachers and teachers whose schools offered RE Syllabus 2044 on Syllabus 2046

Among the six head teachers or school managers, three headed schools where RE Syllabus 2044 was offered, two headed schools where Syllabus 2046 was offered and one headed a school where both syllabuses 2044 and 2046 were on offer. The three head teachers were asked to give reasons for their choice of RE Syllabus 2044 and in response, they said:

- There is poor moral content in 2046.
- Syllabus 2044 has rich Bible passages, from which learners benefit a lot.
- We are mission schools with Christ as the foundation stone, so we need to build on this Christian foundation.

When asked to give other views on syllabus 2046, the head teachers of the two grant-aided schools strongly defended Syllabus 2044, saying that it was generally a better syllabus than 2046. When further asked if they could consider adopting the other syllabus (2046) in the near future, one of the two heads answered that he would have no problems switching to the Syllabus 2046, although he had no intentions of allowing such a change. The head teacher of the government school offering 2044 and 2046 said: “Both syllabuses are being offered side by side at my school and I have no problem.”

Out of the eighteen teachers of RE who participated in the study, eight taught syllabus 2044, with six coming from grant-aided schools and two from a government school. This group of teachers provided views on syllabus 2046 as presented below.

When asked to give their views on Syllabus 2046, two of the six RE teachers from the grant-aided school said:

- Syllabus 2046 is boring to teach because it was not properly structured.
- The syllabus does not give room for enough learner activities.
- I would not be comfortable to teach 2046 because the syllabus is too bulky, with 10 major topics as compared to 2044, which has only 5 major themes.

- The bulkiness of syllabus 2046 is an impediment to finishing the syllabus, which is every teacher's goal.
- Syllabus 2046 has too many Bible passages compared to syllabus 2044.
- Too many Bible passages tends to confuse the learners as they often mix up the passages as they memorise them.
- Syllabus 2046 is too evangelical and that is why it is so boring to teach.

In addition, one of the teachers from a grant-aided school was of the view that most teachers of syllabus 2046 seemed to be rigid and dogmatic in the way they taught the syllabus. He said, "Although syllabus 2046 does not have as many activities as syllabus 2044, the teachers should be versatile and eclectic as required by modern day teaching."

Another teacher from one of the government schools suggested that syllabus 2046 needed to be improved by including cross-cutting issues in order to make it more interesting. She explained as follows:

At the moment, teaching syllabus 2046 is like teaching or preaching in church because you start with reading from the Bible and end with comparison with other religious beliefs. As one of my colleagues said, there are very few activities for learners which makes the syllabus boring. If some cross-cutting issues such as gender-based violence (GBV), sexuality, the environment, social justice, substance abuse and other emerging issues Satanism, could be included, the syllabus would be more interesting to both teachers and learners.

In summing up, it was clear from the data that the teachers of syllabus 2044 and their head teachers had negative views about syllabus 2046 and considered their own syllabus (2044) to be better than the former.

3. Views of head teachers and teachers whose schools offered Syllabus 2046 on Syllabus 2044

Out of the total number of six head teachers interviewed for the study, three were heading schools that offered RE syllabus 2046; both private schools offered syllabus 2046 and one of the two government schools, which happened to offer both syllabuses 2046 and 2044. So, it is the views of these head teachers that will be presented under this section.

The head teachers of the private schools were asked to indicate whether RE was part of the school curriculum or subjects offered in their schools which RE syllabus in particular their schools offered. In response, one head teacher reported that previously, both RE syllabuses were offered side by side in his school, but later 2044 was dropped due to poor results, leaving only 2046 on offer. The other head teacher said only syllabus 2046 was on offer at her school. Asked to give other reasons (apart from poor results) for their choice of syllabus 2046 as opposed to syllabus 2044, the head teachers had the following to say:

- The syllabus is (Catholic) missionary oriented and we are heading private and not mission schools.
- The syllabus (2044) does not have reference materials.

- Syllabus 2044 has political overtones in its structure, which makes it boring and cumbersome.

The other head teacher whose school offered syllabus 2046 at a government school said he had allowed both RE syllabuses 2044 and 2046 to be taught at his school because he wanted to give a wider choice to both his pupils and teachers to choose their favourite syllabus. He argued that this would not only encourage both the teachers and learners but would lead to good results in the subject. His views on syllabus 2044 were that it had the same value and status as syllabus 2046. He said he had assessed the worth of syllabus 2044 and found that it equally good though, like 2046, it needed revision if it had to remain relevant to the Zambian educational system.

In further response to whether syllabus 2044 was too difficult as pointed by his colleagues, the head teacher said:

No subject is ever too difficult to be managed; if too was difficult syllabus 2044 would have long been phased out by CDC and the Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) would have discontinued examining it. Every subject is easy depending on the ability of the teacher and the determination of the learner to do well in that subject.

Out of the eighteen teachers of RE who participated in the study, ten taught syllabus 2046, with six coming from the private schools, and four from the government schools. This group of teachers provided views on syllabus 2044 as presented below.

Asked how comfortable they would be to teach syllabus 2044 if they were asked to do so, none of the teachers indicated their willingness to change. This unwillingness by the teachers to change to teaching a syllabus (2044) which they were equally trained for prompted the researchers to ask them to give reasons why. In response, the following views were given by the teachers:

- Syllabus 2044 is Catholic and politically oriented, for example, the teachings on ‘History of Christian Marriage’ under the major theme, ‘Man and Woman’ and sub-theme, ‘Courtship and Marriage’ have more Catholic overtones than any other Christian tradition.
- Most of the information under the dimension of ‘Church history’ in all the 5 major themes is mainly Catholic; some examples are: the ‘Roman Empire’, the ‘Ugandan Martyrs’, ‘Catholic Saints’ such as Ignatius of Antioch, Francis of Assisi, etc.
- It is because of this Catholic orientation that all Catholic mission or grant-aided schools favour only syllabus 2044 and not 2046.
- Syllabus 2044 is overloaded with political figures or champions like Dr..Kenneth Kaunda, Chief Albert Luthuli, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dom Helder Camara, etc.
- Not every teacher and learner in the classroom is Catholic, and not everyone likes to talk about politics in class as is the case in syllabus 2044.
- Syllabus 2044 is more difficult to teach than syllabus 2046, even though it has less content material to cover than 2046.
- What makes syllabus 2044 difficult to teach are the numerous in-built activities, coupled with some philosophical, psychological or sociological material in some topics; for example, topics like ‘Happiness’, ‘Justice in Society’, and ‘Unending Life.’

- The structure of syllabus 2044 means that teachers have to frequently alternate between class activities and actual teaching of concepts; additionally, they have to master the Bible contents as well.
- Syllabus 2044 is rather difficult to learn because the kind of memorisation of Bible passages required in 2044 was different from that in 2046; the former demands that passages should be memorised word for word, while the latter is flexible on this. The current generation of learners seem to have challenges in memorising and reciting long Bible passages such as Psalms 136 under the sub-theme of ‘Service’ and Psalms 19 under the sub-theme, ‘Search for God’.

Having given their views on syllabus 2044, the teacher respondents were then asked to suggest what they thought could be done to improve the syllabus. Their responses were as presented below.

- Adequate and appropriate teaching and learning materials for use by both teachers and pupils of the syllabus should be supplied to schools.
- Since syllabus 2044 is more Catholic, political and indoctrinatory in nature, it should be revised so that the Catholic and political content therein is removed.

In contrast to the foregoing views, one teacher from the government school where both syllabuses were offered argued that if teachers were always self-confident in the handling of both syllabuses 2044 and 2046, things would work well. He shared with the researchers and colleagues what happened at his school:

At my school, syllabus 2044 was almost abandoned due to the same issues being mentioned. But after a series of departmental meetings, the teachers were convinced that the syllabus was also good and not as difficult as they earlier thought. The teachers have now come to like the syllabus and enjoy teaching it just as they enjoy teaching syllabus 2046.

This teacher, however, added that he and his colleagues felt that the revision of the two syllabuses that took place in 2013 was not enough as the syllabuses were still more or less the same and in need of full revision so that they could become less Biblical.

In summing up, it was clear from the data that the almost all the teachers of syllabus 2046 and their head teachers had negative views about syllabus 2044 and considered their own syllabus (2046) to be better than the former.

From the foregoing data in all the three sections, the researchers concluded that most of the secondary school head teachers and all the teachers of RE interviewed had a positive attitude towards the subject as a curriculum subject as only one head teacher expressed a negative view of the subject, referring to it as a ‘second class subject.’ Similarly, the researchers concluded that all the teachers of RE syllabus 2044 interviewed had a negative attitude towards syllabus 2046, just as most of the teachers of syllabus 2046 (except one) had a negative attitude towards syllabus 2044. These negative attitudes towards each other’s syllabuses were based more or less on the same reasons.

Discussion of findings

This section will further discuss some of the main findings of the study above. The discussion will be done under the following two headings: attitudes towards RE as a curriculum subject, and attitudes towards RE syllabuses 2044 and 2046.

i) Attitudes towards RE as a curriculum subject

The study found that most of the head teachers and teachers viewed RE as a subject like any other subject on the Zambian school curriculum. This finding was in line the views and findings of Mujidrica (1995), Simuchimba (2001, 2005, 2012), Carmody (2004), Chita (2011) and Kamanga (2013) who all indicated that RE was established as a full curriculum subject in the Zambian school education system. The finding was further in line with the official position of the Ministry of Education (1977, 1996) and MESVTEE (2013) that social, spiritual and moral education or RE was an integral part of the school curriculum from primary to secondary school. Although RE may be an optional subject in some schools, particularly at senior secondary school level, it is generally considered as a very important social science subject in the country and there are more schools that offer it at senior secondary level than those which do not offer it.

However, the study also established that there was a minority view that RE is a ‘second class’ subject which was considered after ‘first class’ subjects like mathematics and sciences had been catered for. This finding and practice, mostly by some head teachers, confirms Mulando’s (2011) findings about RE lagging behind in the teaching of school subjects in the Copperbelt Province due to some negative attitudes towards the subject. The finding above is also in line with Mubanga (1994) whose study established that most head teachers preferred mathematics and science subjects to social science subjects, including RE. Head teachers are the civil servants who are at the implementation level of all government programmes in schools. Therefore, if the government holds all subjects to be important, head teachers should also do the same and avoid treating some subjects as inferior and others as superior. Preferences of certain subjects by the head teachers is not helpful in producing a holistic learner of the 21st century Zambia as envisioned by the Ministry of General Education in the *Zambia Education Curriculum Framework 2015* (MESVTEE, 2013: viii, ix).

Another important issue worthy discussing is that although all the teachers of the subject had a positive attitude towards RE, they equally felt that it was high time the two senior secondary RE syllabuses were adequately revised. Thus although the syllabuses were revised in 2013, nothing much had changed in the documents as topics were just shifted here and there and a few topics removed in both 2044 and 2046. What the teachers had in mind was a complete overhaul of the two syllabuses as in the case of the Zimbabwean RS curriculum which was completely overhauled (ter Haar *et al*, 1992). This finding was actually in line with Mujidrica (1995), Simuchimba (2005), Chizelu (2006), Carmody (2011), and Kamanga (2013), who have called for major revisions of the two senior secondary school RE syllabuses. This has led to questions as to how relevant Zambian senior secondary school RE is to the learners. In order to make the subject more educational and relevant to modern Zambian society, the syllabuses have to be fully revised in line with the recommendations of the above named researches and the views of the various stakeholders, such as teachers and religious leaders.

A demographic finding related to the attitudes of RE teachers towards the subject generally was that all the respondent teachers were adequately qualified to teach the subject in secondary schools.

They either possessed Secondary Teachers' Diploma or a Bachelor's degree in Religious Studies. The teachers' qualifications are necessary to ensure competence and quality in the teaching of the subject of their specialization. This is in total agreement with Hanson (1979) who rightly observed that the training of teachers and administrators in the education system improves on quality and confidence in the execution of their duties. Learners have confidence in their teachers partly due to the qualifications they hold. Being professionally trained teachers, the teachers of RE studied were full of self-confidence which in turn led to having positive attitudes towards RE as a curriculum subject.

Another important point that is likely to affect teachers' attitudes towards RE was lack of consultation and involvement in syllabus design and review. All the teachers interviewed called on the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) to involve them in planning and designing syllabuses. This finding is in line with Henze (1994), Mujdrlica (1995), Simuchimba (2001), and Carmody (2004), who all indicated that there was need for broader consultation on the design of RE syllabuses and that this had not been adequately done by CDC in the past. Although it is not practically possible to involve every individual teacher, the CDC needs to find a way of consulting teachers and other stakeholders whenever RE syllabuses are designed or revised in the country. This will help to promote the sense of ownership and confidence in the RE syllabus among the teachers.

Yet another factor affecting teacher' attitudes towards RE was availability of teaching and learning materials. Teachers who taught in schools where there were adequate teaching and learning materials tended to have positive attitudes towards the subject, and those that taught at a school where there were inadequate teaching and learning materials exhibited negative attitudes towards the subject. This finding is also backed by findings of a recent study done by Luangala and Mulenga (2011) who established that the quality of teaching in any education institution is mainly measured by the availability of teaching and learning materials. Their study found that most of the schools surveyed had inadequate or no teaching and learning materials at all. Furthermore, the *Curriculum Framework* (MESVTEE, 2013) has also explained that provision of relevant teaching and learning material resulted in having motivated school teachers and quality education. Motivated RE teachers would in turn shed off any negative attitudes and develop positive ones towards the subject.

Since, as explained above, teachers generally had a positive attitude towards RE, a factor that may negatively affect the teachers' positive attitude towards the subject is lack of monitoring by Senior Education Standards Officers (SESOs) with regard to how the subject was taught in schools. The teacher respondents indicated that they had not been monitored by SESOs since they started work. This meant that there was need to enhance monitoring strategies by the SESOs, head teachers or school managers and HODs if the teachers were to be encouraged and to continue with their positive attitudes towards RE as a curriculum subject. This was in line with Teachers' Curriculum Implementation Guide (MESVTEE, 2013:18) which emphasises the need for enhanced monitoring by responsible officers. The proposal by head teachers to enhance Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities in the schools and to constantly talk to erring teachers would also help to remove any negative attitudes the teachers may start developing towards the subject. Additionally, there was need for continued sensitisation by the Zambia Religious Education Teachers Association (ZARET) whose umbrella body is Social Sciences Teachers Association of

Zambia (SOSTAZ) on professional conduct by RE teachers in and outside the classroom, and clarification of any unclear issues that surround the subject.

Attitudes towards RE syllabuses 2044 and 2046

Data from interviews showed that the teachers of RE syllabuses 2044 and 2046 had negative attitudes towards each other's syllabuses for various reasons. One of these reasons was the perception among syllabus 2044 teachers that syllabus 2046 had more Bible content than syllabus 2044, but the teachers of syllabus 2046 equally perceived syllabus 2044 to be Bible content heavy. Although syllabus 2046 has a slightly higher Christian or Biblical content than syllabus 2044, the syllabuses stood almost at par in terms of Biblical and Christian material coverage. This finding was in line with Mujdrlica (1995) and Simuchimba (2005) who pointed out that syllabuses 2044 and 2046 were about 75% and 82% Christian, respectively. This state of affairs is not good for a multi-religious country like Zambia; the syllabus designers should have ensured that there was a fair coverage of other religious traditions as well to avoid possible negative attitudes among non-Christian stakeholders, including teachers. This scenario is further criticised by Simuchimba (2001) who argues that since the constitution guarantees religious freedoms for all, and the non-Christian religions are here to stay, Zambian RE should continue developing along the pluralistic approach whereby the coverage of the different religions is balanced. Mujdrlica (1995) also observes that all professionally minded teachers of RE should admit that the current Zambian senior secondary school RE syllabuses are too Biblical and need revision to become more inclusive of other scriptures.

Another reason for the negative attitude towards syllabus 2044 among the teachers of syllabus 2046 was that the former (syllabus 2044) encouraged memorisation of long Bible passages. This criticism of memorisation is to some extent justified. Although acceptable, rote memory is not good for education. As the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education explains, rote memory is not encouraged because it does not allow learners to think creatively (MESVTEE, 2013). The foregoing point is further supported by Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, where memory or recall of information is among the lowest levels on the ladder of knowledge and abilities.

Furthermore, it was unfair for teachers of syllabus 2046 to advance negative views regarding the aspect of memorisation of Bible content by learners in syllabus 2044 because both syllabuses require memorisation and full comprehension of Bible passages by the learners. Syllabus 2046 is equally Christian content-heavy and memorisation of Christian material cannot be avoided in its teaching, learning and assessment. In fact, the problem of memorisation of concepts should not be blamed on only one particular RE syllabus or subject, but the entire educational system. This is the system which the Ministry of Education (1996: 26) openly criticises as follows:

An excessively compartmentalised, overloaded and inflexible curriculum, a promotion of rote learning geared largely to the memorisation of facts, simply for the purpose of passing examinations, and an examination system that places heavy emphasis on factual information.

Though our educational system and learning materials are now based on the new educational policy document, *Educating Our Future* and the new *Education Curriculum Framework* of 2013, our senior secondary school RE syllabuses are still rooted in the *Educational Reform* policy document of 1977. This means that both syllabuses are still very heavily dependent on rote learning and the passing of examinations. In view of the foregoing, questions as to whether RE is assessable or simply examination centred have arisen in people's minds for a long time, but this was not the focus of this study. These are questions for another study.

Another interesting finding worthy discussing was that syllabus 2044 was Catholic-oriented and indoctrinatory in nature. In our view, this may be a wrong perception emanating from two factors. First, syllabus 2044 is historically related to the old RE syllabus called *Christian Living Today (CLT)*, which was used in Zambian secondary schools between 1975 and 1984. CLT originated from a Catholic seminary in Uganda and was brought into Zambia by the Ministry of Education to provide an alternative to *Cambridge Bible Knowledge (BK)* syllabuses at senior secondary school level (Simuchimba, 2005). Additionally, when the both CLT and Cambridge BK syllabus were Zambianised as part of the national education reforms in the late 1970s to early 80s, a Catholic educationist, Br Robert Martinou, based at St. Francis, a Catholic secondary school, was tasked to lead the revision work on the CLT. This history has led to the entrenchment of the view that syllabus 2044 is Catholic oriented. Second, is the fact that most grant-aided or mission schools, the majority of which are Catholic, offer syllabus 2044 and not syllabus 2046. This too has led the wrong perception that syllabus 2044 is a Catholic syllabus. Although Hyland and Bocking (2016) seemed to indicate that Catholic schools in Northern Ireland and some other parts of the United Kingdom were overtly confessional in their approach to RE, this scenario is not applicable to Zambia. What is true for Zambia, however, is that mission schools are conservative and more serious in their approach to RE than public and other private schools.

A counter perception or accusation by the teachers of syllabus 2044 here was that syllabus 2046 is too evangelical and hence boring to teach. Although this finding or point is partly in agreement with Masterton (1987) who explained the motivation of the designers of syllabus 2046 as being their allegiance to their Evangelical tradition of teaching the Bible, the perception held by the teachers of syllabus 2044 may not be entirely correct. This is because the syllabus is partly based on the former Cambridge Bible Knowledge syllabuses which included both ecumenical or neutral Christian content and what may be referred to as Evangelical Christian teaching. As for the syllabus being boring, any syllabus or subject material, including syllabuses 2044 and 2046, can be boring if not well prepared for and presented by the teacher. So the onus is on the teachers of the two senior secondary school RE syllabuses to use their professional expertise to teach the subject creatively in class.

The last finding or view worthy discussing here was that syllabus 2044 had more activities than syllabus 2046. The availability of activities in syllabus 2044 is a positive and progressive aspect which every educationist, teacher or learner is supposed to appreciate. As observed by the Ministry of Education (1996: 7), learner-centred approaches help to develop in the learners attitudes and skills that enable them to work independently and to take responsibility for their own learning. In line with this finding, the national *Education Curriculum Framework* (MESVTEE, 2013: 13), also encourages quality, learner-centred experiences in school education. Similarly, Doyle (2008) provides three clear rationales for learner-centred activities and teaching, which he believes are key to helping learners understand why we need them to take on the new roles and responsibilities

required of them in a learner-centred environment. The three rationales include; changes in our understandings of how humans learn, preparing learners for their careers and how school must prepare learners to be lifelong learners.

An interesting and unique perception held by one head teacher whose school offered 2044 was that there was 'no moral content' in syllabus 2046 and that syllabus 2044 needed to build on 'the foundation stone of Christ in the mission (Catholic) schools.' This perception reflected a very confessional view of RE and was in line with Simuchimba (2005: 174) who pointed out that many Zambians, including educationalists like this head teacher, still looked at RE as a subject with confessional or religious aims. The finding is further in line with Chizelu's (2006: i.) finding that many teachers were influenced by their religious affiliations or faith in their choices of which of the two senior secondary school syllabuses to teach and how to teach it in their schools. However, this situation is not good for Zambian RE as the subject is officially supposed to be educational rather than confessional as provided for in the educational policy documents, *Educating Our Future* (MOE, 1996) and *Zambia Education Curriculum Framework 2015* (MESVTEE, 2013).

Conclusion

In line with the objectives of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

With regard to the attitudes towards the subject as a school curriculum subject, it was established that despite the subject being looked down upon by other teachers, the teachers of RE and most head teachers exhibited positive attitudes towards the subject generally. The head teachers and teachers of RE felt that the subject was an important curriculum subject like any other on the school curriculum.

With regard to attitudes towards the RE syllabuses, it was clear that teachers of RE syllabus 2044 and their head teachers had negative views about RE syllabus 2046. Similarly, teachers of RE syllabus 2046 and their head teachers exhibited negative views about RE syllabus 2044. There was a strong conviction among the teachers of RE syllabus 2046 that syllabus 2044 was Catholic-oriented while the teachers of RE syllabus 2044 strongly felt that syllabus 2046 was too evangelical and biblical for modern Zambian society. Additionally, the choice of which syllabus to offer and teach in schools was largely influenced by the head teachers' and teachers' religious affiliation. Thus it can be further said that there is division among teachers of the two senior secondary RE syllabuses, which is not conducive for continued educational development of the subject.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The Ministry of General Education through the Directorate of Curriculum and Standards, Curriculum Development Centre, should take the bold step of merging the two syllabuses, 2044 and 2046, so that the current religious faith-related division among the teachers of RE over the two syllabuses can be overcome. This syllabus reform will actually be in line with the suggestions or recommendations of a few other earlier studies such as Mujdrlica (1995) and Simuchimba (2005) as the way forward for Zambian senior secondary school RE.

- ii. The Ministry of General Education through the Directorate of Curriculum and Standards, should direct all secondary schools to offer both RE syllabuses 2044 and 2046 until the two syllabuses are merged into one. This will help to begin to promote the spirit of unity and working together among the teachers of RE.
- iii. The Ministry of General Education through the Directorate of Curriculum and Standards, Education Standards Department, should encourage Senior Education Standards Officers, Head teachers, Heads of Department for social sciences under which RE falls, and Heads of Section for RE in schools to intensify their monitoring of RE teaching and learning in secondary schools in order not only to improve the standards of educations in the subject, but also to encourage positive attitudes towards the subject among the teachers.
- iv. For future research, an important topic that our study touched on but could not discuss fully is the role of subject associations (in this case, ZARET under SOSTAZ) in fostering unity among subject teachers, especially in subjects with more than one syllabus in operation in the school system like RE.

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