

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM FORMULATION, CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS, AIMS OF THE STUDY, RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND WORK PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION

Man has from the beginning of history regarded the education of his/her child as a very important matter. Closely linked with man's education are among others his/her culture and religion. Man is a cultural and religious being and cannot be neutral. Manganyi (1992:8) states in this regard that in moulding a child and guiding him/her towards adulthood, education will always be influenced by the culture and religion of the society it is meant to serve. The child is taught from early childhood what is regarded by society as "good" and "bad".

Teaching children what is "good and beautiful" involves the philosophy of life of that community. That is why in this regard Luthuli (1978:3) states that education can be meaningful and be able to serve a purpose of leading a child to responsible adulthood when it reflects the philosophy of life of the people it purports to serve. Steyn, Behr, Bisschoff & Vos (1986:196) state that the particular content of a person's culture and religious beliefs can among others be described as his/her accepted philosophy of life. The main component of a philosophy of life is, however, the religious base of man's life. A philosophy of life stabilizes the life of people and reveals a consistency of values. According to Luthuli (1978:5) "every people lives in accordance with his/her (sic) own

philosophy, for it provides its members with a set of guiding principles for their conduct in general". This means that there is a close relationship between education and philosophy of life. These two concepts are intertwined and interdependent.

The type of education a child receives, slowly shapes his/her personal life-view and convictions. Every generation hands down its fundamental convictions and ideas to the young ones. The parents' fundamental beliefs will therefore determine the ultimate aim of their children's informal education. Formal education is also dependent upon the philosophy of life of the community through the formal education planners. Philosophy of life is therefore reflected in the educational system of a community (Manganyi 1992:9).

Against the above introductory remarks, the Religious Education developments in Zimbabwe secondary schools with special reference to the quest for a multi-faith approach will be discussed.

2. ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

At independence in 1980, the government of Zimbabwe inherited an educational system which had been designed to serve the interest of the former colonial power and regime. The Rhodesian educational system was a carbon copy of the British system. This meant that the whole curriculum was largely foreign and its contents did not address the socio-cultural context of the Zimbabwean learner. Zimbabwean students were expected to study Charles Dickens and William Shakespeare, learn about the rivers and mountains of

Europe and about the British royal family. Students were taught that Shona and Ndebele were inferior to the English language and that European forms of behaviour were preferable to African customs. Christianity was portrayed as superior to African traditional religion and students were expected to learn the biblical tradition only (Seminar on Education in Zimbabwe 1981:167).

Soon after independence (1980), the need for educational transformation was acknowledged, and a proposal on educational transformation was put forward in order to change the curriculum so that it reflects the socio-cultural context of the Zimbabwean learner. Teachers as well as academics in colleges and universities advocated for a change in the school curriculum. It was noted that the British curriculum was no longer useful and relevant as the British educational system perpetuated non-respect for African values and beliefs, colonialism and African oppression (Curriculum Development Unit 1981:3).

As from 1980, educational policy thus changed and was influenced by the legacy of colonialism and African oppression in Zimbabwe. As noted by Ter Haar (1990:135):

The proposed transformation of the educational system required certain changes which according to the then Minister of Education and Culture, Dr Mutumbuka, would consist of a change in the curricula from a highly academic and theoretical one to a curriculum suited to the developmental needs of Zimbabwe.

The presence in society of significant numbers of followers of religions other than Christianity was an important consideration in designing a new Religious Education

curriculum. The government having realised the multi-ethnic composition of society and the presence of followers of other religions began to redesign the Religious Education curriculum in order to make it relevant, viable and productive for Zimbabwe society. The Religious Education curriculum inherited at independence was christocentric, confessional and solely based on the biblical text. The government was initially, unable to change the syllabus and examination for the Ordinary Level School Certificate because the latter still belonged to the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) (Examination Council 1980:Personal experience).

In 1984, the government, however, began to localise the Religious Education Ordinary Level School Certificate curriculum, as this was the only way the government could have a local Ordinary Level School Certificate syllabus and examination. It was only in 1986, that the Ministry of Education was able to redesign the Grade 7 and Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level syllabi (Ministry of Education Reports 1996:Personal communication). The localisation process lasted till 1990. It was, however, only in 1990 that the Zimbabwean Religious Education Ordinary Level School Certificate syllabus was first used in schools.

In this new Religious Education syllabi there was no change in content, but only a change in the method of teaching Religious Education. The new Religious Education syllabi required teachers to employ the so-called life experience approach in the teaching of Religious Education (see pp. 28-29 of this chapter). Learners were expected to draw examples, facts and evidence from their own life experience or situation. The main

difference between the new and the old syllabi therefore was that the new enabled learners to apply the acquired knowledge to their own life situation and perhaps also draw examples, facts and evidence from the latter. These changes in methodology applied from Grade 7 to the Ordinary Level School Certificate (Examination Council 1990:Personal experience). Broadly speaking, the government realised that unless education is relevant to the needs of the learner, it is worthless.

Despite the adoption of the so-called life experience approach to Religious Education teaching in 1990, many educators were surprised to see that the content of the new Religious Education syllabi has remained unchanged and still was christocentric, confessional and biblically oriented. The new syllabi did not contain anything about the study of other religions, including African traditional religion (Curriculum Development Unit 1991:2).

Hence, in light of this problem a number of deliberations and publications on multi-faith Religious Education surfaced since 1991. The above were part of an advocacy for the introduction of a multi-faith approach to Religious Education; and Religious Education educators aimed at influencing the government to change the Religious Education syllabi accordingly (University of Zimbabwe/Utrecht 1991:1). As from 1997 the government took the lead in the multi-faith debate and is currently working on new syllabi, which will probably include the teaching of other religions (Religious Studies National Panel 2001:21-22).

It is now twenty-four years since the Zimbabwean government set in motion changes towards a new educational dispensation. This transition has dominated much of past and is still dominating current educational thinking and activity; and the major questions currently asked are: Has the government effectively addressed the problem of cultural alienation which was inherited from the previous (colonial) dispensation? What should the government do to promote multi-faith Religious Education in public schools as Zimbabwe being a multi-faith society?

Having identified the origin and nature of the main problem, it is necessary at this point to formulate the actual problem of the study.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study is primarily concerned to deal with the problem areas examined in the section **FORMULATION OF SUB-PROBLEMS** (see pp. 7-24 of this chapter). A clearly stated problem could be formulated thus:

IN WHAT WAYS SHOULD THE ZIMBABWEAN GOVERNMENT CHANGE THE CURRENT LIFE EXPERIENCE APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHING SO THAT IT ADDRESSES ZIMBABWE'S MULTI-FAITH SOCIETY'S EXPECTATIONS REGARDING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND REDRESS THE CULTURAL ALIENATION OF THE PAST IN THIS REGARD.

The problem, which underlies this dissertation, will in the following sections be examined in greater detail.

4. FORMULATION OF SUB-PROBLEMS

Closer scrutiny of the main problem reveals the existence of a number of sub-problems. These sub-problems will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.1 SUB-PROBLEM 1: CULTURAL ALIENATION AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The experience and existence of cultural alienation, which is linked to Zimbabwe's colonial past, is a key factor in understanding the main problem. It is important to note, that during the colonial period the missionaries converted many Africans to Christianity. Africans were told to “forget” their cultural traditions and religious beliefs and values. The missionary activities were aimed at cutting Africans away from their own culture, traditions, beliefs and values. Foreign dominance in Zimbabwe thus attempted to wipe out every trace of Zimbabwean cultural heritage, including religious beliefs and values (Makotose 2001:23-25).

The legacy of cultural alienation in Zimbabwe thus began with the arrival of Christian missionaries who set to pursue a set of objectives designed to promote their own interests. According to Mungazi (1991:2), the introduction of Western education by the missionaries to the Africans of Zimbabwe was poised to change permanently the way of life that Africans had known for hundreds of years. Mungazi (1991:2) further notes that:

History has portrayed and glamorized David Livingstone as a dedicated missionary who had a vision of Africa and of the life

and culture of its people radically transformed by Christian values and European culture.

Christianity as a distinctive product of Western culture was used by the missionaries and colonialists to control Africans in order to further their own interests. The introduction of Christianity and Western education for the Africans of Zimbabwe meant, in effect, the introduction of Western culture and beliefs and values with all the negative influences they had brought along (Mungazi 1991:3).

Ubah (1988:76) writing about the impact of the missionary activities on the Igbo religious life in Nigeria notes that the missionary teaching largely contradicted Igbo religious beliefs and practices. Because according to Ubah (1988:76):

There was no place in the new religion for the deities and the sacred animals. According to the new doctrine, the deities were man made objects, which were incapable of intervening in the affairs of men. The Christian message made no sense at all.

As in many parts of Igbo land, the first appearance of the missionaries in Zimbabwe was viewed as a bad omen. Ubah (1988:77) notes in this regard that:

There was absolutely no meeting point between the two religious cultures. Christianity completely rejected and sought to subvert and supplant the ... religious world. But more than abstract religious principles were at stake! Christianity sought to wipe out some of the basic foundations of ... society.

African beliefs, practices and values were described as pagan and primitive. Some cultural practices, such as witch-hunting, witchcraft, etc. were banned as they were said to be inconsistent with Western culture. This resulted in many Africans developing or adopting a negative attitude towards their own culture and religious beliefs and values

(Ubah 1988:77-79). On the other hand, according to Ter Haar, Moyo & Nondo (1992:39):

The condescending view of African traditional Religions as 'primitive' on the part of many Westerners is felt by Africans as particularly hurtful.

The activities of the missionaries thus led to a change in the cultural orientation and religion of the Africans, and eventually to cultural alienation.

With the advent of formal (public) education in the 1930s, the situation became no better as the latter was also used to transmit Western culture, traditions, beliefs and values at the expense of the indigenous culture, traditions and religious beliefs and values. Ter Haar *et al* (1992:42) note in this regard:

White dominance did nowhere in Africa, nor in Zimbabwe, leave the educational system untouched. Formal education was basically Christian in outlook, with little or no room at all for traditional religious beliefs and practices.

Makuvaza (1996:69) makes the following observations about the influence of the missionaries and colonialists in providing formal education to the Africans:

What can be deduced from the analysis of missionary education for the Africans is that the education was racist, exploitative and irrelevant for the Africans, especially exploitative because the interests of the African were completely disregarded.

The introduction of Christianity and westernisation thus also had a negative impact on formal (public) education in Zimbabwe. According to Ter Haar *et al* (1992:43), the manifestation of Christianity and westernisation allowed for a "European type of

thinking, acting and reflecting which basically ignores the cultural and religious traditions of the peoples of Africa".

Siyakwazi (1996:15) points out that both the missionaries and colonial administrators made no attempt to link African education either to African issues or African heritage. The former were only interested in evangelism and colonisation and viewed African culture as a hindrance to Christianity and westernisation. Siyakwazi (1983:15) therefore argues that schools were among others established to serve as instruments of direct evangelism calculated to weaken tribal ties. According to Siyakwazi (1996:15) the major problem of the Zimbabwe school system was and still is:

that it originated in a European environment that was alien to the African people and divorced from African daily life and in this way failed to prepare the African youth for life within an African environment.

During the colonial era, there was therefore also little or no room for the legitimate expression of African traditional religious beliefs and practices. The Religious Education teaching in schools was largely christocentric and perpetuated Western religious beliefs and values. Religious Education was therefore used to establish and foster Christian beliefs and values only.

Cultural alienation and its influence on Religious Education teaching had harmful effects for Zimbabwe's education. It resulted in some teachers believing that the purpose and role of Religious Education is to establish and foster the Christian beliefs and values only. These beliefs, therefore, force many teachers to oppose the inclusion of Religious

Education in the school curriculum; and as a result they are also against introducing and teaching Religious Education as an independent subject in their schools (Religious Studies National Panel 2001:21-22).

Religion, however, remains an important cultural aspect of Zimbabwean society, and it is essential that any Religious Education curriculum developed for Zimbabweans should acknowledge and relate to all religions practiced in Zimbabwe (Machokoto 1983:29; Religious Studies National Panel 2001:21-22). The current Religious Education curricula, in both primary and secondary schools, are still based on one religion only – Christianity (Religious Studies National Panel 2001:23). According to Machokoto (1983:29), Zimbabwe being a multi-faith and multi-cultural society, the teaching of Religious Education should recognise this fact.

Related to the problem of cultural alienation and Religious Education is the problem of commitment. Commitment in this context refers to a situation where some Religious Education teachers lose objectivity in their teaching and end up promoting or fostering their own personal beliefs, convictions or values at the expense of the beliefs and values held by the learners. Decades of Christian teaching in formal and missionary education has resulted in some teachers being converted, and, subsequently, wholeheartedly committed to Christianity. Jackson (1982:86) states in this regard:

Some teachers have chosen to conceal their personal views in an attempt to achieve a degree of objectivity, while others have continued in their attempt to foster faith.

A key question regarding this sub-problem is also, whether it is advisable that all Religious Education teachers should be committed Christians? Most of the Religious Education teachers in Zimbabwe are indeed Christian converts and this raises the question of objectivity. Pain (1982:16) argues thus:

Religious Education should be 'open'; it should neither aim to foster nor to undermine beliefs held by pupils; it should develop knowledge, understanding and the ability to evaluate ideas.

On the other hand, it can reasonably be argued that religious knowledge, understanding, and the ability to evaluate or assess ideas presuppose religious commitment. There is a need to clarify whether commitment to Christianity can inhibit the ability to teach multi-faith Religious Education successfully. It is also true that commitment may lead to indoctrination, which is not only harmful to the learners but also to Religious Education as subject (Religious Studies National Panel 2001:26).

There is also a general belief within the teaching profession that in order to teach Religious Education successfully one needs to be a committed Christian. Since Religious Education in Zimbabwe is primarily christocentric, confessional and based on the biblical text only, Christians also tend to wonder whether non-Christians would be able and should be allowed to teach Religious Education as a school subject (Religious Studies National Panel 2001:27).

The following questions arise regarding sub-problem 1:

- What is cultural alienation?
- What were the harmful effects of cultural alienation in Zimbabwe?

- What must the ZANU (PF) government do to address the harmful effects of cultural alienation?
- What strategies could be employed to change the view that the purpose and role of Religious Education is to establish and foster Christian beliefs and values only?
- What must be included in the Religious Education curriculum in order for the subject to be acceptable to all?
- How will teachers react to, for example, the introduction of multi-faith Religious Education teaching bearing in mind that most teachers are Christian converts?
- Will the Christian churches and mission schools accept multi-faith Religious Education as school subject in Zimbabwe?
- Will the implementation of the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching weaken or strengthen Christian beliefs and values?
- What is commitment?
- Is commitment likely to be a major problem in implementing an approach such as the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching?
- Should the Religious Education teacher necessarily be a committed Christian?
- What is the probable solution to commitment, as a problem and a product of the colonial past?

4.2 SUB-PROBLEM 2: LIFE EXPERIENCE APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHING

In order to understand the main problem fully, one ought to examine the so-called life experience approach to Religious Education teaching introduced soon after independence

in 1984 (see p. 4 of this chapter). At independence the ZANU (PF) government immediately realised that the then Religious Education curriculum totally ignored the life situation of the Zimbabwean learners; where African traditional religion and culture played an important part, especially in shaping the beliefs and values of the learners (Curriculum Development Unit 1981:3).

Soon after independence the need for change became more apparent and all stakeholders felt that the Religious Education curriculum was outdated and new methods of teaching the subject were required. The life experience approach (a method of teaching Religious Education that enables learners to interact with their day-to-day life experiences) was thus proposed (Ndlovu 1993b:1-2). With this proposal the ZANU (PF) government tried to replace the colonial Religious Education curriculum which was irrelevant to the needs and demands of the Zimbabwean society (Ter Haar 1990:135).

Ingram (as quoted in Chikomba 1990:60) points out that no society will allow its educational system to endure if it considers the system irrelevant or dysfunctional to the overall goals of society. The need for adopting the life experience approach as method of teaching Religious Education was therefore a continuing concern to all stakeholders.

Machokoto (1983:29) advocates in this regard:

The approach to teaching Religious Education should be child-centred, having something to do with the child's attitudes and values so that he becomes an acceptable and useful member of society.

According to Machokoto (1983:30), before teaching any Religious Education topic, the teacher therefore needs to ask himself/herself: “What do I intend to achieve by teaching this? What attributes, qualities, attitudes, values, religious concepts, morals or skills do I want to instil and develop in the learners?”

Moyo (1983:104) observes and argues, that Religious Education must not aim at indoctrinating the learners, but at assisting them in their quest for value, for religious truth, and for faith. It must provide the individuals the opportunity to discover for themselves those things, which make life meaningful and purposeful; help them to discover for themselves the relevance of religion for their lives. According to Moyo (1983:104) Religious Education has to be:

... relevant. It has to deal with issues that affect the child in his/her day-to-day activity; it must help the child to answer the question raised by his/her existence, and assisting in providing answers that satisfy the human predicament.

As stated by Maravanyika (1997:64), an effective curriculum should be able to answer questions related to the needs of the individual learner, the local community, and the wider society. Maravanyika (1997:64) further elaborates that issues related to the needs of the learner:

... would include the kind of knowledge that would assist the individual to answer the more existential and moral questions on the one hand, and those more utilitarian to do with earning a living after school on the other.

The 1999 Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training in presenting its findings noted regarding the colonial school curriculum that:

The school curriculum was said to be irrelevant to the country's developmental needs because it offers very little to develop children's natural talents that are useful in the local context (Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training 1999:242).

It is therefore against this background that the life experience approach in teaching Religious Education was proposed and eventually adopted by the government of Zimbabwe in 1986. It was felt that the approach would enable the learners to interact with their environment and culture leading to effective Religious Education teaching and learning.

Before the introduction of the life experience approach to the teaching of Religious Education in 1986, the government had already questioned the absence of African traditional religion in the post-colonial Religious Education curriculum. It is, however, interesting to note that the introduction of African traditional religion and other religions to the Religious Education curriculum was unacceptable to most Religious Education teachers and government officials at the time as most Religious Education teachers and government officials were, and still are, committed to Christianity. A significant number of the teachers were church practitioners and the majority of schools offering Religious Education were church schools. The stakeholders and the government thus preferred a curriculum that retained the christocentric, confessional and biblical element in Religious Education, yet allowing for the teaching of African traditional religion and other religions by enabling teachers to use examples or illustrations from the various religions (Ndlovu 1993b:4).

Despite the adoption of a life experience approach to Religious Education teaching in 1986, very few schools implemented it because there were no relevant instructional materials containing examples or illustrations from African traditional religion and other religions to use in the teaching of Religious Education. The government was thus faced with a daunting task in developing these materials. This was an important factor in adopting and teaching the life experience approach successfully in the Religious Education classrooms (Ndlovu 1993b:6).

Besides the lack of instructional materials, there was yet another factor which hampered the adoption of a life experience approach to Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe; the fact that most teachers were not trained in the teaching of religions other than Christianity, including African traditional religion. Most teachers were trained before teacher-training courses introduced and included a module on the teaching of “World Religions”, which includes African traditional religion as one of the religions. According to Chikomba (1980:63) the solution to this problem was:

In-service courses and workshops to revitalise the teachers’ knowledge, and provide insights into the innovation, helps to picue confidence, interest and motivation in the teachers. This has been lacking in the processes leading to changes in Zimbabwe.

In solving this problem, the government therefore found it necessary to develop suitable in-service courses in order to equip such teachers with relevant knowledge, understanding and expertise.

Questions that arise with regard to sub-problem 2 are:

- What is the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching?
- What are the advantages of the life experience approach?
- What are the disadvantages of the life experience approach?
- Why did the government opt for the life experience approach instead of the multi-faith approach soon after independence?
- What is the nature of the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching in the Zimbabwean context?
- To what extent did the adopting of the life experience approach solve a potential crisis between Christians and advocates of African traditional religion and the other religions?
- Why did the stakeholders prefer the life experience approach that retained the christocentric, confessional and biblical element in Religious Education?
- Is the life experience approach appropriate in the Zimbabwean context?
- What problems were caused by the introduction of the life experience approach?
- To what extent did the lack of instructional materials hinder the adoption and teaching of the life experience approach to Religious Education?
- What strategies did the government adopt in developing instructional materials for the teaching of the life experience approach to Religious Education?
- In view of the lack of instructional materials, was the introduction of the life experience approach therefore effective and successful?
- To what extent did lack of knowledge, understanding and experience in teaching African traditional religion and other religions hinder the implementation of the life experience approach?

- How did teachers compile their lesson plans and introduce African traditional religion and other religions in their teaching when not familiar with the subject content?
- How can the government change the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching so that it addresses Zimbabwe's multi-faith society's expectations?

4.3 SUB-PROBLEM 3: MULTI-FAITH APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHING

The life experience approach to Religious Education teaching which was implemented soon after independence was heavily criticised by most stakeholders since the Religious Education curriculum remained christocentric, confessional and biblical (see pp. 13-17 of this chapter) in spite of the fact that the religious composition of Zimbabwe is syncretic (part Christian, part indigenous) believers 50%; Christian believers 25%; indigenous believers 24%; and Muslim and other believers 1% (CIA 2002:3). Most of the critics wanted a change in content, which could rid the syllabus of its heavy Christian orientation, or even dominance. They believed that it was time African traditional religion and the other practised religions in Zimbabwe were to be included in the syllabus (Ndlovu 1993b:5). Ter Haar *et al* (1992:3) noted in this regard: "To date, African traditional religions are on the periphery in a Religious Education that is Christian in its content". Amid such controversy and concerns, a multi-faith approach was thus proposed.

The new educational dispensation in Zimbabwe led to the birth of the multi-faith concept. According to Moyo (1983:102), the creation of a new order in Zimbabwe demanded that

a new set of aims, purpose and role for Religious Education be drawn up. The primary aim, purpose and role of Religious Education can therefore no longer be evangelisation and conversion to Christianity as the case was before independence. For this reason, there was a need to redefine the aim, purpose and role of Religious Education, and to change its content according to the needs of a plural multi-faith society. Moyo (1983:103) explains the rationale for the redress as follows:

The change from scripture or Bible Knowledge to Religious Education must be viewed within the attempt to orientate our educational system towards our national goals, and to enable it to play its part in the process of social transformation in Zimbabwe.

The multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching was seen as ideal and appropriate, since the learner will be exposed to a wide range of religious beliefs and values. According to Moyo (1983:104):

Religious Education therefore must not aim at indoctrinating the students but at assisting them in their quest for value, for religious truth and for faith. It must provide the individuals the opportunity to discover for themselves those things, which make life meaningful and purposeful; help them to discover for themselves the relevance of religious truth for their lives.

It was inevitable that adopting a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching was going to lead to a paradigm shift in Religious Education teaching; and Religious Education as school subject thus becoming an open and academic enterprise. As the aim, purpose and role of the subject will then be neither to foster, nor to undermine beliefs and values held by learners, but to develop knowledge, understanding, and the ability to evaluate ideas (Pain 1982:16).

Machokoto (1983:29) as early as 1983 discussed the problem of the rethinking of Religious Education as a school subject in Zimbabwe; the issue of what should be taught, and how. His discussion includes the following views:

Religion is an important cultural aspect of a society and, as such, should be given an important place in the school curriculum. A nation is after all identified by its culture. The R.E. syllabuses ... in school are based mainly on one religion – Christianity – but since Zimbabwe is a multi-faith and multi-cultural society the teaching of R.E. should recognise this fact.

Machokoto (1983:29) further points out that it will be extremely difficult to enable learners to understand their own religion and culture if the approach to Religious Education remains christocentric, confessional and biblical. A Religious Education teacher in Zimbabwe needs to make learners aware of the various religious traditions in Zimbabwe, including African traditional religion. All religions should be treated in the same and equal manner.

Siyakwazi (1983:41) argues that African traditional religion should be taught in Zimbabwe schools. Indigenous African education including religion is also viewed by other scholars (Machokoto 1983; Moyo 1983; Nondo 1991; Ndlovu 1993b) as vital in the proper development and growth of an African child. According to Siyakwazi (1983:41):

In pre-colonial Zimbabwe, adults passed on to the young their knowledge, skills, mode of behaviour and beliefs in a type of education that placed emphasis on how to cope with the environment. Most of the learning was unplanned and children learnt directly from both nature and culture.

The absence of African traditional religion in the post-colonial Religious Education curriculum was thus seen by many role-players as a serious error by the ZANU (PF)

government because a large proportion of the population (74%) subscribed to it in one way or another. It was felt that its inclusion would enable the learners to discover and explore their own religious and cultural heritage (CIA 2002:3).

Upon attainment of independence the quest for relevance in education, including Religious Education became a continuing concern of government, and this led to the birth and implementation of the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching. The government agreed that although such an approach would not address Zimbabwe's multi-faith society's expectations, it would, however, make Religious Education more relevant to the Zimbabwe situation. The introduction of a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching at that stage would have been unacceptable to most Religious Education teachers and government officials as most of the latter were solely committed to Christianity. To accommodate and respect their commitment to Christianity it was decided to initially retain the christocentric, confessional and biblical element in Religious Education (Ndlovu 1993b:6; see p. 16 of this chapter).

Having implemented the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching, most stakeholders in time questioned the appropriateness of the latter approach to the Zimbabwe context, and expressed the need to introduce a Religious Education curriculum that would enable the teaching of African traditional religion and other religions. This led to the present-day quest for a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching (see pp. 19-20 of this chapter).

The acknowledgement of the presence in Zimbabwe society of significant numbers of followers of religions other than Christianity and the human rights philosophy of *Ubuntu*, i.e. to respect the freedom and right of others to hold personal beliefs and values, is a major factor in government and other stakeholders deciding to design a multi-faith Religious Education curriculum and to implement a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching for the 21st Century. It is therefore vital in this dissertation to examine and suggest recommendations to government and other stakeholders regarding the nature and methodology of the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching and how the latter can be implemented successfully in the teaching of Religious Education in Zimbabwe secondary schools.

The relevant questions that arise regarding sub-problem 3 are:

- What is the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching?
- What are the advantages of the multi-faith approach seen as the most appropriate approach by most stakeholders for the Zimbabwe context?
- What are the disadvantages of the multi-faith approach?
- Will the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching address the harmful effects of cultural alienation, if so, how?
- To what extent will a multi-faith approach address the problem of cultural alienation?
- Is the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching acceptable as a solution to the problem of cultural alienation?

- To what extent does the multi-faith approach address the problems caused by the introduction of the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching soon after independence?
- Will the multi-faith approach be acceptable to Christians in Zimbabwe?
- Will the multi-faith approach weaken or strengthen Christian beliefs and values in Zimbabwe?
- Which religions must be included in or excluded from the multi-faith Religious Education syllabus?
- Will a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching lead to a critical appreciation of other religions?
- To what extent will a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching minimise the problem of commitment?
- How can curriculum developers address the complexity of including all religions in the Religious Education syllabus successfully?
- What strategies can be adopted in developing relevant and appropriate instructional materials for multi-faith Religious Education teaching?
- What can be done to equip Religious Education teachers with relevant knowledge, understanding of and expertise in the teaching of other religions besides Christianity?
- How can the government introduce and provide in-service training courses for teachers who were trained prior to the introduction of the multi-faith approach to the teaching of Religious Education?

5. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Van Vuuren (1990:6) indicates that certain concepts used in everyday language with all kinds of confusing connotations must be re-examined and defined clearly by the educationist for otherwise they will cause intense uncertainty instead of clarity. Concepts contained in the theme of this study, namely “Religious Education in Zimbabwe secondary schools: the quest for a multi-faith approach” will be explained to give the reader a better scope of the problem.

5.1 RELIGION

According to Gunter (1990:189) religion in one form or another is a universal human phenomenon and the followers of the multiplicity of religions in the world educate their children in their traditional religion. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1990:1016) religion is commonly regarded as consisting of a person’s relation to God or gods or spirits. Worship is probably the most basic element of religion, but moral conduct, right belief and participation in religious institutions are generally also constituent elements of the religious life as practiced by believers and worshippers and as commanded by religious sages and scriptures.

Oberholzer, Van Rensburg, Gerber, Barnard & Moller (1990:132) state that man is a religious being. This can be proved by his/her yearning for final stability, absolute peace and utter certainty. Man cannot find these in the world of his/her own design, that is why he/she reaches for a higher power and security. This clearly indicates that man believes in a higher power which is God or a god. Du Plooy & Kilian (1980:103) also agree that

man is a religious being, and as such the youth at school age is open to religious influence. In education the religious aspect therefore plays a very important role. From the above explanations it can be concluded that man is a religious being. He believes in God or god(s). Religion involves the whole person and his/her activities and it is a way by which man approaches the ultimate.

5.2 EDUCATION

The concept “education” can be summarised as:

- a deliberate, intentional and purposeful activity that takes place through the intervention of an adult in the leading and uplifting of a child towards responsible adulthood.
- a human phenomenon and involves the transmission of knowledge, skills and values to an immature and dependent child by a mature and independent adult.
- normative and reveals itself as an event within a situation.

Two activities are central to education, namely, teaching and learning. Teaching is defined as the art to impart knowledge or skills. Learning on the other hand, is defined as a change in behaviour. Learning takes place when one adopts new or modifies existing behaviour patterns (Ndlovu & Gundani 2000:34).

5.3 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The concept “Religious Education” is presently used worldwide to refer to the subject in which the major world religions such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, etc. are taught. Educationalists have thus pluralised Religious Education as

university and school subject; by adopting this name the teaching of the major world religions is now forming an important part of the subject. In this connection, educationalists have also adopted and utilised the phenomenological approach to Religious Education teaching, where students are free to believe and study what they want to believe and study. For this reason, the former christocentric, confessional and biblical approach to Religious Education as university and school subject has been rejected in favour of the so-called phenomenological approach (Smart 1988:3).

However, in Zimbabwe, the concept “Religious Education” is still used to refer to Biblical Studies as subject. Smart (1988:3) notes in this regard that:

Many teachers in the system still retain the assumption that Religious Education means inculcating Christianity of a sort, and Biblical Studies is a powerful ingredient of Religious Education.

All Religious Education courses are currently therefore primarily christocentric, confessional and biblical; and there is no course that fully embraces other religions despite all efforts in this regard (see pp. 13-23 of this chapter). In the Zimbabwean context Biblical Studies still forms a powerful ingredient of Religious Education (Religious Studies National Panel 2001:10-11). In the context of this dissertation the concept “Religious Education” is an inclusive term, and is used to refer to the teaching of religion in education as well as the subject known as Religious Education, Religious Instruction, etc. as it was used historically.

5.4 CULTURAL ALIENATION

In this dissertation, the concept "cultural alienation" is a key concept, and defines the results of the practice of the former colonial government to inculcate Western culture and Christian beliefs, values and practices in the native inhabitants at the expense of their own African culture and religious beliefs, values and practices. Colonisation in Zimbabwe resulted, as elsewhere in Africa, in cultural alienation (Zvobgo 1999:vi).

According to Zvobgo (1999:vi):

Throughout the many decades of colonial rule in Africa, a situation was created in which the colonialists exercised complete control over all aspects of African life.

As noted in a previous section (see pp. 7-11 of this chapter), the actual manifestation of Christianity and westernisation on the African continent allowed for a European type of thinking, acting and reflecting which basically ignores the cultural and religious beliefs and values of the people of Africa. On the one hand, the missionaries in Zimbabwe instructed the African converts to get rid of their African beliefs and values, and on the other, the educational system was a carbon copy of the British system, and the African learners studied foreign content, such as British history, and the rivers and mountains of Europe. Hence, the African culture and religious beliefs and values were ignored, both in the school curriculum and in the everyday life of Zimbabweans (Seminar on Education in Zimbabwe 1981:167).

5.5 LIFE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

The concept "life experience approach" is another important concept in this dissertation, and refers to the post-independence approach adopted to teach Religious Education as

school subject. It refers to a teaching method where the lesson starts by exploring the experience(s) of the learner. In teaching the miracles Jesus performed to reveal God's kingdom for example, the syllabus would allow the teacher to look at miracles in today's Zimbabwean society before the actual study of the miracles in the biblical text (Religious Studies National Panel 2000:12).

Teaching a theme such as "power" would be approached by letting the learners collect, draw, or write about all the powerful things they know of: pumps, engines, lights, radios, etc. They would examine powerful words and compare them with weak words. They would collect stories about powerful people, living and dead, who have used power for good or evil, including some Old and New Testament characters. They would discuss how people have power over the lives of others and how Jesus used his power. Older learners could discuss powers helping us to do things when we feel unable to face doing them ourselves. This is a way of leading learners to look at appropriately chosen biblical material and relating what they find to the business of everyday living (Walton 1976:51-52).

The life experience approach to Religious Education teaching enables learners to talk about their own experiences, and assumes that in order for Religious Education to be effective, the curriculum should start by exploring the experiences of the learner first (Du Toit & Kruger 1998:177-178).

5.6 MULTI-FAITH APPROACH

The multi-faith approach is a recent development in the teaching of Religious Education as school subject. In a multi-faith approach, Religious Education is pluralised. Pluralism in Religious Education refers to the teaching of other religions besides the dominant or popular religion of a particular society. The primary aim of a multi-faith approach is not to indoctrinate learners with or against a particular faith. The approach is aimed at helping learners to understand and appreciate the colourful religious heritage (of Zimbabwe for example) and thereby to develop a sense of respect towards other human beings. It is also geared at closing the geographical and religious gaps between various communities - a space created in the name of civilization and Christianity (Du Toit & Kruger 1998:19).

In the past Religious Education in Zimbabwe was christocentric, confessional and biblical-based and thus allowed for the exploration of one religion only. Recent developments have argued for a change of the exclusivist approach where only one religion was studied to a multi-faith approach where more than one religion is studied (Du Toit & Kruger 1998:176-177).

In teaching miracles, as lesson theme, the teacher would interrogate the miracle genre in various religious traditions. This involves looking at miracles in African traditional religion by the *inyanga* (the traditional healer). The teacher will then look at miracles in Islam (the prophet Muhammad performing miracles), and finally, the miracles in the

Christian tradition. The learner at the end of the lesson has thus a broader or plural perspective on the lesson theme miracles. Smart (1982:1) points out:

There can be little doubt that for both social and personal reasons young people need to become acquainted with something of the range of human beliefs and practices. This is for personal reasons, because for good or ill our world is now a plural one, in which the different religious traditions are meeting in our cities and through the media. It is no longer possible for the Christian or the Hindu to isolate himself or herself from other faiths. It is better for people to face this pluralism and benefit from its riches rather than to retreat into too closed a commitment.

Another relevant example is the teaching of exorcism (casting out of demons), as lesson theme. This genre can be examined in various religious traditions as well. Learners can explore how this is performed in African traditional religion. They start by exploring the known and move to the unknown (traditional teaching principle). They may also examine this genre in Islam, and then move to the Christian (Catholic) tradition. It is important for learners to examine how Christians exorcise demons in today's society before they interrogate the biblical tradition. This leads to better understanding and appreciation (Religious Studies National Panel 2001:13).

In a multi-faith approach, all religions are given equal treatment. The basic idea is to give the learners an understanding of religion as such and develop a sense of respect towards other human beings. Religious Education then becomes an open and academic enterprise as opposed to a confessional and dogmatic exploration of one religion only – the so-called exclusivist approach. In adopting a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching, the intention is not only to foster the beliefs which are held by

learners, but also to encourage learners to develop a critical appreciation of the concept “religion”. For this reason, learners are able to evaluate religious ideas objectively. The multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching is therefore a method of teaching Religious Education that embraces all religions (Pain 1982:16).

5.7 ZIMBABWE

The landlocked country Zimbabwe measuring approximately 390 759 sq km has been known by the following names: Zambezi (1886), Charterland (for a short period), Southern Rhodesia (1890 to 1965), and legally until 1980, Rhodesia (used by the regime during the unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) period (1965 to 1979); Zimbabwe Rhodesia (used after the Internal Settlement in 1979) and Zimbabwe (the latter is the name of the independent state following the March 1980 elections (Official Year Book of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia No. 2 1930:1; Statistical Yearbook of Zimbabwe 1987:11). These names are used interchangeable in this study as circumstances dictate.

6. AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is threefold:

- to find out why there is still in Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools such a heavy (if not exclusive) emphasis on christocentric, confessional and biblical knowledge at the expense of a multi-faith approach recognising the religious pluralism in Zimbabwe, and where the first-mentioned undoubtedly embodies cultural alienation.

- to examine the successes and failures of the implemented life experience approach to the teaching of Religious Education soon after independence in 1980.
- to investigate, test and suggest a framework for implementing a multi-faith approach to the teaching of Religious Education in Zimbabwe secondary schools, and also in the rest of southern Africa.

To this end, the study intends to:

- examine past and present Religious Education curricula changes in Zimbabwe, and its effects on the teaching of Religious Education as school subject.
- examine the rationale for a paradigm shift in Religious Education teaching from a largely exclusivist (christocentric, confessional and Bible-centred) approach to a life experience approach on the one hand, and a multi-faith approach on the other.
- establish whether the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching is appropriate for the Zimbabwean situation.
- outline multi-faith Religious Education in respect to content and methodology.
- identify an appropriate framework for implementing a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching.
- explain how multi-faith Religious Education as school subject can be effectively adopted in the Zimbabwe secondary school curriculum.

It is hoped that after carrying out this investigation, meaningful suggestions would be presented to policy-makers and curriculum developers in Zimbabwe as well as in the rest of southern Africa.

7. HYPOTHESIS

After a general study of the literature, it became evident to the researcher that the following research hypothesis could be formulated to guide the research process:

A MULTI-FAITH APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHING IN ZIMBABWE CAN BE USED TO ADDRESS ITS MULTI-FAITH SOCIETY'S EXPECTATIONS REGARDING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AS SCHOOL SUBJECT AND REDRESS THE CULTURAL ALIENATION OF THE PAST IN THIS REGARD.

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In 1993 the researcher carried out a preliminary study entitled, "Religious Education: Its Character and Relevance in Zimbabwe Secondary Schools". The findings of this preliminary study revealed that there is still a heavy emphasis on the Bible and Christianity in Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools at the expense of other religions. Religious Education as subject in universities and colleges still fell under the auspices of the Faculties of Theology. It was further observed that the christocentric bias in Religious Education teaching hindered an open and academic exploration of Religious Education as school and university subject (Ndlovu 1993b:8).

The researcher was motivated to research into the topic (see title page) mainly as a result of this preliminary study. Current initiatives for change in the Zimbabwe educational

system for the 21st Century and the need for a relevant Religious Education curriculum for Zimbabwe secondary schools also motivated the researcher.

The topic was selected after observing the current initiatives in changing the way Religious Education as school subject is perceived and the apparent quest for a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching. The researcher, further, also took into account the availability of primary as well as secondary sources in pursuing such a topic.

The next step involved studying relevant literature. After a survey of the literature related to the topic, the main problem, sub-problems and the hypothesis (see p. 34 of this chapter) were formulated. Most of the literature studied included primary sources and secondary sources. This study relies on ideas from these sources. Primary sources used included Curriculum Development Unit policy documents, commission reports, reports from the Religious Studies National Panel and the Ministry of Education, circulars from the department of education, syllabus documents, education ordinances, official yearbooks and bulletins, working papers, parliamentary debates, etc. Secondary sources included various books, journals, newspapers, magazines and the internet.

The following methods as put forward in Howard & Sharpe (1983:11-35) were used to collect and interpret the data:

- **Survey method**

The various stakeholders completed questionnaires: Religious Education heads of departments, teachers, learners, university and college lecturers and curriculum developers. The issues investigated were:

- Religious Education curricula developments since independence: the relevance of the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools and the impact of the post-independence changes on Religious Education teaching.
- The opinions and views of stakeholders on the introduction of the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching: the relevance of the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe and the impact of this change on Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools.

The role of the survey method was to gather facts about the subject (Religious Education) and to establish the nature of existing conditions in this regard.

- **Statistical method**

The statistical method was used to obtain among others a sample of viewpoints on why the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching is viewed as an ideal and popular product for Zimbabwe; on what the government can do to reverse the harmful effects of the pre-independence period; on how the life experience approach can be adapted so that it addresses Zimbabwe's multi-faith society's expectations; and on what can be done to retrain and equip all Religious Education teachers with knowledge, skills,

values and attitudes to teach all value and belief systems successfully in their classrooms. The statistical data was used to support the findings and conclusion(s) of the dissertation.

- **Historical method**

The historical method was adopted to investigate the history of Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe. The historical method presents facts in time perspective showing what happened and the meaning of what happened. The historical method thus gathers facts about past events, assembles and interprets them. The historical method therefore leads to the ordering and evaluation of facts and the testing of conclusions by the inductive assembly of facts.

- **Philosophical method**

This dissertation adopted the philosophical method in its theoretical framework. The philosophical method emphasises qualitative data collection and analysis. It asks questions of value, meaning and significance. However, this does not make the philosophical method unscientific: it is based on logic and the rational process, which is indispensable to every research project. The use of the philosophical method in this research project stressed the rules of "right" thinking; how the results were obtained; how they reflect a relationship between the actual research and the topic of research; what meanings are entailed in findings; and how the findings bear on other relevant issues.

The collected material was then analysed and interpreted by means of the process of concept formulation. Concept formulation was thus one of the strategies in the data

analysis and it came out from textual data, observation and source data. During data analysis, apart from the concept formulation strategy, a process of explanation and prediction was also used. Explanation shows why things are the way they are and prediction demonstrates why they are likely to occur in certain ways. The hypothesis (see p. 34 of this chapter) usually seeks explanation or prediction or both.

The data was also critically evaluated in order to gain insight into the understanding of Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools with special reference to the quest for a multi-faith approach.

In the light of the data collected, the researcher in writing the report traced the development of the problem through time. The facts are ordered chronologically-thematically in the subsequent chapters (Howard & Sharpe 1983:36-37).

9. FURTHER WORK PROGRAMME

CHAPTER 2: The principal aim of this chapter is an historical survey of Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe under British colonial rule and since independence in 1980.

CHAPTER 3: This chapter is distinguished mainly by its concern with the various approaches to Religious Education teaching. Firstly, the chapter will examine the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching, with special reference to its origins, rationale, characteristics and advantages and disadvantages. Secondly, the multi-

faith approach to Religious Education teaching will be examined, also with special reference to the latter aspects.

CHAPTER 4: In this chapter, an analysis and evaluation of Religious Education curricula developments since independence will be done. The emphasis will, firstly, be on sampling by means of questionnaires of the views of heads of Religious Education departments, Religious Education teachers and learners, Religious Education university and college lecturers, and Religious Education curriculum developers regarding the Religious Education curricula developments since independence; and, secondly, on an empirical analysis of their views.

CHAPTER 5: This chapter includes findings, conclusion(s) and recommendations.