

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

As noted by scholars such as Manganyi (1992:8), education is among others an important tool in moulding a child and guiding him/her towards adulthood. Society expects the child to be taught the values, beliefs and culture of that particular society so that the child understands and fits well into the society; as failure to teach the child what the society regards as “good” or “bad” may lead to conflict and disharmony (see Chapter 1, pp. 1-2). Scholars such as Thompson (1977:43) thus argue that education should be relevant to the socio-cultural context of the learner for it to be meaningful and useful in that society (see Chapter 3, pp. 112-113). The quest for relevance in education was also a major concern in post-independence Zimbabwe. Thompson (1977:43) argues in this regard that the educational systems of developing countries, including Zimbabwe, were patterned on imported (the colonial) models and therefore bound to be irrelevant (see Chapter 3, pp. 112-113).

Hence, upon attainment of independence in 1980, most Zimbabwean stakeholders were concerned that the British-oriented curriculum which was implemented in Zimbabwean schools years ago, would continue to transmit foreign values and beliefs. If it was not replaced by a more localised curriculum, education in Zimbabwe would continue to alienate the Zimbabwean learner from his/her culture and religion. Since independence

strenuous attempts were made to design and implement a curriculum in line with Zimbabwe's values, beliefs and culture.

But twenty-four years after independence most subject curricula in Zimbabwe are still British in character, including the school subject Religious Education. Redress proposals have been made with regard to Religious Education. The ZANU (PF) government seeks to introduce and implement a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching.

To this end, this dissertation investigated the problems caused by the British patterned Religious Education curricula. Historical developments in the subject were also traced; and the life experience approach was examined as part of the changes that were introduced by the government after independence. The dissertation also investigated the proposed implementation of the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching. The latter was done against the background of many years of cultural alienation. An empirical analysis of the views of the various stakeholders regarding the past and future of Religious Education as a school subject formed an important part of the study. The findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented in the following sections.

2. FINDINGS

2.1 A CRITICAL SUMMARY OF THE CHARACTER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHING DURING THE COLONIAL ERA AND AFTER INDEPENDENCE

2.1.1 Colonial era (1890-1979)

Zimbabwe was colonised by Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902) and his *British South Africa Company* in 1890. Missionary activities preceded the formal colonisation in 1890, and Christian missionaries consequently played an important part in African society during these years (see Chapter 2, pp. 42-44).

Christian missionaries also played an important part in shaping policy and decisions in Southern Rhodesia during the 19th century. The missionaries came to Africa convinced that European culture was superior to African culture and that it was therefore desirable for Africans to become “Europeans” or be “Europeanised”.

The opening of mission schools by the missionaries gave them an excellent opportunity to market and to promote Christianity as the most important means of ensuring the Africans’ salvation and advancement. Hence, Religious Education was introduced to the Africans in order to indoctrinate and to change the mindset of the Africans. The missionaries’ educational aim was to create a loyal and faithful servant who would continue to perpetuate the Christian gospel, and above all, provided cheap labour for the colonialists. Religious Education provided them with a platform to impart their own philosophy and ideology (see Chapter 2, pp. 55-56).

Religious Education was thus “a bait to trap” Africans into the religion of the Europeans (see Chapter 4, pp. 179-180). For this reason, the missionaries clearly designed a Religious Education curriculum that was pastoral in character with the sole objective to evangelise or proselytise the African. Hence, Religious Education was the major aspect of schooling. Religious Education exposed the children to elements of the Christian doctrines, daily prayers, bible stories and so on. It is against this background that the missionaries sought permission from the colonial administration to establish schools.

By the early 1920s, there was no coherent educational policy in the colony and this meant that each mission school could design and implement its own curriculum. Mission schools also provided their own certification for the courses and/or subjects they offered. Although the British government could send subject syllabuses to be used in the colony, the missionaries, however, remained with the mandate to design their own school curriculum and syllabuses, and to ensure the effective teaching thereof. Greater priority was obviously given to Religious Education as it was given more time and greater frequency. Church service was in most instances also held daily before lessons started.

African missionary education followed three basic lines: literacy, religion and practical training. African learners were taught how to read and to write; and the skill of reading was taught using the Bible. Cecil John Rhodes (see p. 267 of this chapter) believed that missionary religious influence would provide an ideological rationale for colonialism in

Africa, and that the use of the English language would in turn assist to spread Western values and beliefs to the African people (see Chapter 2, p. 49).

Upon colonisation, Rhodes was desirous of maintaining links with his motherland, Britain. Hence, the system of schools in the territory generally reflected the notion of British Empire loyalty among others also in terms of its adherence to British educational traditions (see Chapter 1, p. 42). For example, in the 1920s the British government provided syllabuses for all the schools in the colony. With regard to Religious Education as subject, the syllabus entitled: “Religious Instruction Excerpt for the use of schools in Southern Rhodesia” was printed in Britain and sent to Southern Rhodesia.

The British education authorities not only decided what was to be taught in the colony but also how it was to be taught. With regard to Religious Education, all Religious Education syllabuses were to be bibliocentric. The primary school syllabus mainly comprised Old Testament stories, though reference was also made to some of the New Testament stories. Learners were expected to have a detailed understanding of the biblical text and should study the events by rote learning and then recite the incidents (see Chapter 2, p. 64).

The European settlers established their own local government and were allowed to rule in any way they pleased. The aim of the colonial education system was to ensure that the Africans were christianised, and taught that Christianity is the only true religion. Consequently, the Africans were taught that their indigenous religion was “pagan”, and

that they needed to change from their evil ways. The colonial era was thus characterised by the demonisation of African traditional religion and the glorification of Christianity as the only religion that offered salvation. African traditional religion was demonised to the extent of calling the ancestral spirits “demons” and the traditional healer, a major resource person in African society, a “witch” (see Chapter 2, p. 78-79). Legislation such as the *Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1898* was put in place in order to change the mindset of the African. The main objectives of education during the colonial era was on the one hand, to make the African submissive to colonial rule, and on the other, to make him/her believe in everything that the European said: The “good” was “good” and the “bad” was “bad” (see Chapter 2, pp. 47-54).

The Africans in Zimbabwe were alienated from their culture and adopted foreign European cultural practices. Religious Education as school subject was also used as a tool to indoctrinate the African so that at the end of the day the “de-Africanisation” of the African would be achieved. The content of the Religious Education syllabus largely emphasized such virtues as faithfulness, obedience and love, using for example: Genesis 12:1-10, The faithful obeying the call of God (see Chapter 2, pp. 66-67).

Indoctrination was a useful strategy in changing the so-called pagan perceptions of the African, and making him/her a Christian convert who would obey all his/her master’s instructions. The colonialists truly believed that Africans should be taught to be faithful and obedient to their masters; and furthermore, industrial training should be a vital component of the school curriculum so that the Africans could be used as cheap labour.

The school curriculum was deliberately worked out in a way which ensured that Religious Education and industrial training occupied a prominent place. Religious Education exposed the learners to elements of the Christian doctrine, daily prayers, Bible stories and so on; and industrial training prepared the learners to provide their European masters with cheap labour (see Chapter 2, p. 53).

2.1.2 Post-colonial era (1980-2004)

Zimbabwe achieved its independence in 1980 after a long and protracted armed struggle. The war of liberation was fought mainly to gain recognition for and respect of people's rights with regard to among others culture, land, education and conditions of work. However, Zimbabweans also fought for independence so that they would achieve self-determination and control of their own destiny since everything was in the total control of the Europeans. The end of colonial rule (1890-1979) in Zimbabwe in 1980 marked the transition from servitude and domination of the African people by a white minority ruling class to independence (see Chapter 2, p. 83).

Upon attainment of independence in 1980, the newly elected ZANU (PF) government sought to revisit all institutions that perpetuated European control and rule. Education was among others seen as an important tool in restoring the dignity and rights of the African people. Policy-makers, educators and curriculum developers agreed that the British-crafted curriculum was no longer relevant to the new socio-political environment. The colonial policy of segregation in education among others was scrapped immediately. Europeans before independence had their own schools which were well-funded and well-

equipped; yet, Africans were relegated to under-funded schools which were congested, and which seriously lacked resources (see Chapter 2, p. 84).

Furthermore, the ZANU (PF) government immediately initiated curriculum reforms mainly to incorporate within the educational system values and beliefs that were consistent with the social and political aspirations of the Zimbabwean people, such as the inculcation of a work ethic, productivity, patriotism, and co-operation; as well as understanding of Zimbabwean regional and world history, culture, politics and ideology. The government also began to re-design most subject curricula, and Religious Education as school subject was indeed no exception. The aim of the revamping of the subject curricula was to come up with subject curricula which were relevant to the needs of the Zimbabwean learner and demands of the post-colonial Zimbabwean society (see Chapter 2, pp. 83-84).

The major task of the Religious Education curriculum developers in post-independent Zimbabwe was to change the British-crafted Religious Education curriculum from a christocentric to a learner-centred approach. The ZANU (PF) government wanted a more relevant curriculum that would address the needs and aspirations of the post-independent Zimbabwean learners (see Chapter 2, pp. 83-84).

Policy-makers, educators and curriculum developers therefore proposed a life experience approach to Religious Education teaching and the latter was quickly implemented. As the Zimbabwean learner was socially and religiously completely alienated from his/her

culture and religion, the life experience approach was thus presented as a solution to the problem of cultural alienation. In other words, it was an attempt by the government to reunite the Zimbabwean learner with his/her cultural and traditional heritage (see Chapter 3, p. 113). The life experience approach to Religious Education teaching was also introduced because of the need to address the personal development of the learners. In Religious Education teaching there is always a tendency to over-emphasise subject content at the expense of the personal development of the learner.

The ZANU (PF) government thus introduced the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching in order to make the Religious Education content relevant to the Zimbabwean learner. Many biblical concepts were seen to be difficult for young learners because they were far removed from the experiences of the learners. The life experience approach was specifically designed to utilise the learners' own experience as a jumping-off point for inquiry into the deeper and fuller implications of a particular concept (see Chapter 1, pp. 28-29).

Consequently, the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching implies a planned educational process which seeks to use the learners' needs, interests, and life experiences as a basis for the achievement of certain distinct educational aims. These are to provide the learners with an apparatus to:

- Practice the skill of reflecting on his/her own experiences at depth.
- Develop insight into himself/herself and his/her feelings.
- Develop insight into other people and their feelings.

- Develop insight into what constitutes a distinctly human relationship between the self and others.

Hence, the policy-makers, educators, and curriculum developers felt that with the advent of the life experience approach, it was possible to teach Zimbabwean learners the important African philosophy or value system of *unhu/ubuntu*. The philosophy of *unhu/ubuntu* teaches values to the Zimbabwean learners according to the moral and behavioural expectations of the community (see Chapter 3, pp. 123-125).

The ZANU (PF) government supported the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching because using this approach it was also possible to start teaching tenets of African traditional religion to Zimbabwean learners. A major characteristic of the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching is thus that it allows or enables the teaching of some African traditional values and beliefs that correspond to examples found in the Bible, for example, the teaching of the phenomenon of exorcism. After teaching the theme of exorcism using Luke 8:26-39, the teacher may further discuss various other ways in which demons may be exorcised, and compare the similarities and differences. Since religion is a universal phenomenon, it is possible to teach some tenets of African traditional values and beliefs using the life experience approach. The implementation of the life experience approach was thus vital to post-independent Religious Education teaching, and was consequently supported by all key stakeholders (see Chapter 3, pp. 124-125). However, the content should primarily remain biblical.

At the Junior Certificate Level (first two years of secondary school level – Forms one and two), more emphasis was put on moral education so that the teaching and learning of the subject would contribute to the moral moulding of the learners. At the Form 1 level, the government also introduced the teaching of tenets of the other world religions besides Christianity, such as Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and African traditional religion. Learners were expected to display basic knowledge of these religions. Despite the above changes, policy-makers, educators and curriculum developers felt that the changes at the Junior Certificate Level were superficial since there was no change in content. The curricula were still mainly christocentric and pastoral in character. Proposals were continuously put forward for the implementation of an academic and objective approach to Religious Education teaching such as the multi-faith approach. The quest for a multi-faith approach is and was therefore a continuing concern to most educators, policy-makers and curriculum developers in post-independent Zimbabwe (see Chapter 3, pp. 158-159).

Having implemented the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching, there was still concern from proponents of the other religious traditions in Zimbabwe, such as Islam, the Bahai Faith, and Hinduism that the post-independent Religious Education syllabus was still biased towards Christianity. The Muslims and the believers of the other religions were totally against the above syllabus and methodology. According to them it christianised their children. Against this background, policy-makers and curriculum developers were forced to revisit and revamp the Religious Education syllabus and methodology. Proposals were put forward by Religious Education lecturers and educators for the introduction of a multi-faith approach. The multi-faith approach to Religious

Education teaching in Zimbabwe arose amid continuous calls surfacing since independence in 1980 for a comparative study of religions taking into account the diversity of beliefs and practices in Zimbabwe. The presence of different religious groups such as the Muslims, the Bahais and the Hindus prompted the government to recognise the multi-faith character of the Zimbabwean society (see Chapter 3, pp. 157).

The main advantages of the multi-faith approach is among others that it, firstly, takes into account the diversity of values, beliefs and practices in Zimbabwean society. Secondly, it encourages a non-dogmatic and objective approach to the study of religion. The teacher is no longer an evangelist but an honest guide. The learner thus develops his/her own philosophy or theology of religion.

An all stakeholders conference was held at the University of Zimbabwe in 1991 to deliberate on the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching. The conference recommended among others that the government must move swiftly and implement the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools.

The government has, since then, worked on some proposed multi-faith syllabuses, particularly at the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level. The focus is now on the Ordinary Level.

The government, however, has not moved fast enough in implementing the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching. This is mainly because the Curriculum

Development Unit does not have the necessary resources to implement the proposals as put forward by the stakeholders (see Chapter 4, p. 228).

3. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the findings of the study, and in the light of the hypotheses formulated to guide the research process (see Chapter 1, p. 34), the following conclusions have been made:

3.1 Religious Education as a school subject in Zimbabwe was initiated by the missionaries whose main aim was to proselytise the Africans in Zimbabwe. The missionary objective, and later that of the colonial powers, was to change the mindset of the African in order to produce a faithful and loyal servant. The missionaries and colonialists saw themselves as superior to the so-called “pagan” Africans who desperately needed to be converted and civilised. Education, according to the missionaries and the colonialists, was thus supposed to follow three basic lines – literacy, religion and industrial training.

The many years of indoctrination during the colonial era (1879-1980) led to cultural alienation which not only produced faithful and loyal servants but also committed and dedicated converts who continued preaching the gospel of the Europeans long after attainment of independence in 1980. These Christian converts are totally against their own African culture and traditional religion. The latter situation also produced learners who fail to understand the culture and religion of their local community; the aspirations and beliefs of their community;

and as a result, there is an apparent identity crisis amongst Zimbabwe citizens today.

3.2 In the post-colonial era (1980-2004) new Religious Education teaching methodologies such as the life experience approach were adopted. The ZANU (PF) government believed that for Religious Education as school subject to be relevant, it ought to recognise and relate to the life experience of the Zimbabwean learner. It was necessary that Religious Education teaching incorporate the teaching of local content and examples where possible. Since religion is a universal phenomenon, similarities exist between the religions, and teachers could thus use local examples where possible. Upon attainment of independence in 1980, the life experience approach proved important in making Religious Education teaching relevant and viable for the Zimbabwean learner. The implementation of the life experience approach gave a new, innovative dimension to Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe, but the weaknesses of the life experience approach were soon apparent.

3.3 The quest for a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools which would address the cultural alienation, cultural and religious diversity of the Zimbabwe multi-faith society's expectations regarding the teaching of all religions in Zimbabwe secondary schools was still a continuing concern for all role-players. Policy-makers, educators, curriculum developers and parents all agree that the government should move swiftly and

implement multi-faith Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools.

Against this background, it is concluded that the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching is apparently the ideal approach to Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools as it promotes an academic and objective study of religion.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Religious Education teaching remains a very controversial issue in the Zimbabwean schooling system; particularly its role in moulding the lives of the Zimbabwean secondary school learners. Therefore, this study has investigated and discussed the character and relevance of Religious Education during the colonial period (1879-1980) as well as after independence in 1980. The problems regarding the Religious Education curricula in both periods were unveiled and discussed. In the final section of this chapter, recommendations will be made which may contribute to the effective and successful teaching of Religious Education as school subject in Zimbabwean secondary schools using a multi-faith approach.

4.1 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND MORAL EDUCATION

Since the introduction of Religious Education teaching by the missionaries, Religious Education and Moral Education were inseparable. The Bible was used as the chief vehicle for Moral Education. The current Religious Education curriculum still promotes

the teaching of some aspects of Moral Education. In teaching the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14) using the life experience approach, the teacher will discuss the content of the parable and then go on to ask learners to identify lessons to be learnt from the parable. The learners will obviously point out that the parable teaches about humility. These aspects of the lesson are centred on Moral Education; and it is also possible to teach some African values such as respect for elders using the above example.

However, debate is currently raging on whether Religious Education should be incorporated into a new subject Moral Education. In Zimbabwe, there is agreement that Moral Education, as integrated studies or as an independent subject, should be taught in all secondary schools, but educators are divided on the question whether or not Moral Education as school subject should then still be taught as a compulsory subject in all Zimbabwe secondary schools.

On the other hand, some role players feel that Zimbabwe need Social Education and Ethics, and not Religious Education. According to Hawke (1982:162), in the United States of America, for example, Religious Education is not permitted in public schools (i.e. state schools), yet, there is a great concern for Moral and/or Social Education. It is therefore vital that the government of Zimbabwe identifies the proper place for Moral Education in the Zimbabwe secondary school curriculum. As integrated studies or as an independent subject: in a Moral Education, Social Education or Religious Education curriculum.

It may not be easy to teach Moral Education using the multi-faith approach. Nevertheless, the government needs to develop a clear Moral Education policy and design an appropriate Moral Education curriculum to be used in the Zimbabwe secondary schools.

In the past, the main vehicle for Moral Education was the school assembly, including the daily or weekly dose of Religious Instruction. However, it is recommended that the teaching of Moral Education should be conducted in formal lessons, perhaps still as part of Religious Education as a school subject.

Because of the continuous decline in moral standards in Zimbabwe, and the problem of HIV/AIDS among the Zimbabwean youth, it is recommended that the teaching of Moral Education should be top priority for the government. Moral Education can either be taught as a separate subject, or preferably together with Religious Education as a kind of integrated studies. It is up to the policy-makers to decide the place of Moral Education in the Zimbabwean secondary school curriculum. As African values or morals are largely not taught in the current Religious Education curriculum it is recommended that the Moral Education component should also impart values such as *unhu/ubuntu* in order to produce a useful, respectful, humble, hardworking and productive citizen.

In the empirical study, (see Chapter 4, p. 204) stakeholders noted that there is an overemphasis on subject content in Religious Education teaching at the expense of teaching morals and values. It is recommended that Religious Education as school

subject may provide a platform for the teaching of morals and values as learners can derive moral lessons from biblical and other religious content. Multi-faith Religious Education teaching will especially promote the teaching of diverse morals and values. Each and every value and belief system has its own morals, but it is recommended that African morals and values in the case of Zimbabwe, should take precedence. For this reason, it is recommended that Religious Education should incorporate the teaching of Moral Education with special emphasis on African values and morals such as *unhu/ubuntu*.

4.2 MULTI-FAITH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND AFRICAN-ORIENTED PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

An African-oriented personal development of learners in the secondary phase of schooling using among others multi-faith Religious Education is of greatest importance in Zimbabwe. The many years of cultural alienation experienced during the colonial era (1890-1979) produced Zimbabwean citizens who failed to fit into the Zimbabwe society after graduating from school. However, the government has realised of late that school graduates are still out of touch with the needs and aspirations of the Zimbabwean community, and that they are also not familiar with the history and the religious and cultural practices of Zimbabwe. It is evident that the Ministry of Education since independence has been producing graduates who do not understand their own culture, needs, aspirations and religion. Hence, proposals are now being put forward for the compulsory teaching of Social Studies in schools in order to solve this problem. An African Renaissance is envisaged.

The issue of the African-oriented personal development of the learners is critical in educating the young, as education is concerned with the whole person. The role of the school among others is to produce graduates who will upon completion of their school careers be comfortable and useful in their own society. It is therefore recommended that role-players in Zimbabwe should determine whether the teaching of multi-faith Religious Education in secondary schools might contribute to promote the African-oriented personal development of the learners. Religious Education as school subject could, for example, be directed towards the fulfilment of some of the learners' personal needs, including religious and spiritual ones. It is significant therefore that curriculum developers should structure the new multi-faith Religious Education syllabus so that it promotes the African-oriented personal development of the learners. Currently, there is an overemphasis on christocentric and biblical subject content and evangelism, at the expense of African-oriented personal development; yet, it is important that the learner obtains knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of and for his/her environment.

It is recommended that multi-faith Religious Education should be developmental in so far as its purpose, content and methods are concerned. It should relate to the learner's needs and experiences, as well as the environmental and stage of conceptual development. In other words, multi-faith Religious Education should lead to harmony between the learner and his/her environment, and not to conflict. At the end the learner should relate to and understand his/her environment. Failure to achieve the above will lead to a crisis or

strain in the learner's life, and eventually in the Zimbabwean society (see Chapter 3, pp. 122–126).

4.3 MULTI-FAITH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE THEMATIC METHOD

The government of Zimbabwe has agreed to the implementation of multi-faith Religious Education teaching. However, role-players continue to debate how teachers will manage to teach all religions in one course. Some scholars have proposed that the different religions should be taught as options in the secondary school Religious Education syllabus.

This study recommends the so-called thematic method as the answer to the teaching of more than one religion in Religious Education, particularly at the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level and the Ordinary Certificate Level. The thematic method entails the teaching of topics/themes across the different value and belief systems. The following topics/themes can be taught using the thematic method (also see Chapter 3, p. 167):

- Name of founder and the life history of the founder
- How the religion started or originated
- Main beliefs or main pillars
- Miracles
- Healing
- Salvation
- Prayer

- Parables or Wise sayings
- Detailed analysis of selected texts and/or scriptures

The above topics/themes can especially be a useful guideline in Religious Education teaching at the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate level. Curriculum developers may decide on the number of papers to be taught. A guideline may be the following:

Paper 1: World Religions

Paper 2: Moral Education

The thematic method to multi-faith Religious Education teaching will thus enable learners to study one concept or aspect across the different value and belief systems. The learners will interrogate the concept or aspect and look for appropriate examples and then describe the concept or aspect in each value and belief system. Learners may then also discuss similarities and/or differences. This methodology will promote an objective and academic study of religion without indoctrinating the learners. Learners thus make their own value judgments and decisions. The thematic method will also eliminate the problem of bias and prejudice towards the learner's own value and belief system. As it has been noted from the empirical study (see Chapter 4, p. 224) learners and educators have a tendency to concentrate on the value and belief system which they are familiar with.

An essay-type examination or test question to test the learners' understanding of a religious concept such as "healing" or belief in life after death will be set in the following manner:

Answer the following four questions.

1. Outline the difference between faith healing done by a Zionist prophet and traditional healing done by *inyanga* or *isangoma*. (25)
2. Outline the importance of the *inyanga* or *isangoma* (traditional healer) in the life of the Zimbabwe community. (25)
3. State the similarities and differences between Islam and African traditional religion about the belief in life after death. (25)
4. In your community how is death and illness defined or explained? Support your answer with reference to at least **two** religions found in your community.(25)
(Ndlovu 2000:21-22).

The above questions may be set for Advanced Level learners. However, for Lower Secondary Level (Form 2) learners, the following question may be appropriate:

1. Describe how Jesus healed the Blindman at Bethsaida. (Mark 8 verses 22–26).
Then compare this method of healing to that of an *inyanga* or *isangoma*. (25)

In the above examples learners are primarily concerned with concepts rather than the different value and belief systems. Such a method leads to an objective and thorough understanding of religious concepts and phenomena; hence, the teacher does not get the opportunity to evangelise as he/she is forced to concentrate on the religious concept or phenomenon in question.

The thematic method works very well if applied together with the phenomenological method (see pp. 289-290 of this chapter). It is important that the teacher approaches each religious concept or phenomenon with empathy, sensitivity, objectivity and accuracy. The above attributes are all derived from the phenomenological method to Religious Education teaching.

The thematic method is thus recommended in multi-faith Religious Education teaching as it will lead to a more objective study of the religious concepts or phenomena of the different value and belief systems. In addition, it also removes bias, prejudice and distortion; and forces the teacher to focus on concepts or phenomena rather than theological presuppositions.

4.4 MULTI-FAITH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The implementation of the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwean secondary schools will lead to inter-religious dialogue as it will help learners understand what the essentials of among others African traditional religion are and how people who embrace these should be understood and valued. This can be done in a broad thematic context, such as healing, spirit possession, ancestor calls, etc.

Multi-faith Religious Education teaching is the ideal contemporary approach for teaching Religious Education as a school subject because it among others relates to the global community and avoids the risk of indoctrination. The multi-faith approach to Religious

Education provides the learners with more than just one or two opportunities to relate the information which they are confronted with to what they know through their own life experience or to what they can imagine as important to other people. This makes it easy for the Religious Education teacher to make the information relevant to the learners. Hence, multi-faith Religious Education will certainly produce a critical learner who is objective and academic in his/her perception of religious phenomena. The learner will approach any religious phenomena without bias, prejudice or previous assumptions.

Currently in Zimbabwe, the values and beliefs of the community appear to be polarized in a number of extreme viewpoints (Christian, Islam, Hinduism and the Bahai faith). The multi-faith approach to Religious Education thus stands at crossroads from which each value and belief system could benefit through inter-religious dialogue.

It is therefore recommended that the Zimbabwe government move swiftly in implementing the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching at all levels, from junior school level to advanced school level (Form six). Any further delays at this point will among others further jeopardise the fruitful discussions between government and representatives of the different religious traditions in trying to find an amicable solution to the problem of the current secondary school Religious Education curriculum.

4.5 MULTI-FAITH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD

The successful implementation of the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching heavily relies on the phenomenological method to the study of religion. To proceed phenomenologically in the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching, learners describe as faithfully as possible and with an emphatic feeling whatever the beliefs, the faith and the religious practices under study.

The phenomenological method seeks to describe accurately what the learner sees, and this leads to objectivity perhaps within the heart of subjectivity. When using the phenomenological method the learner is encouraged to suspend or bracket his/her previous assumptions concerning the phenomenon in question. If learners are, for example, studying the phenomenon of witchcraft hunting, and they visit a witchcraft hunter, they should trust and believe that witchcraft hunting may be real. Perhaps previously they would have believed that witchcraft hunting is magic. The learner should then suspend any preconceived judgment or previous assumptions and describe the phenomenon as objectively and accurately as possible.

In sum, the phenomenological method entails a sympathetic description of religious phenomena. Another concept that is frequently used in this regard is empathy: the learner should approach any value and belief system with empathy. For example, the learner may be a Christian, but in studying Islam, he/she should approach the topic/theme under discussion with empathy and bracket any preconceived assumptions previously

held. It is therefore recommended that the phenomenological method will form an important part of successful and effective multi-faith Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools (see Chapter 3, pp. 161-165).

4.6 THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT UNIT

In 1998 the ZANU (PF) government restructured the Curriculum Development Unit, and abolished the post of writers. A skeletal staff remained at the Unit and each of the Education Officers were since then responsible for two or more subjects. This rationalisation process has, however, compromised the operations of the Unit, and resulted in most syllabuses not being reviewed for more than ten years. In the Religious Education section, very little progress has been noted. The post of the writers that was abolished by government was key in the production of syllabus documents and learner support materials.

This study therefore recommends that the government adequately fund the Curriculum Development Unit and ensure adequate staffing of all relevant sections in the Unit. The Curriculum Development Unit should then update and review each syllabus after a period of five years; as some syllabuses have not been reviewed ever since they were produced or changed after independence in 1980. Most subject curricula are now outdated and irrelevant to the current situation. There is therefore an urgent need to review the syllabuses and take into consideration recent developments in each individual subject. The above is also applicable to Religious Education as school subject.

In future, syllabuses, especially the Religious Education syllabus should continually be reviewed in line with national values and the aspirations of the community, including changing socio-cultural values and beliefs. From this study, it was evident that most syllabuses are still British-oriented with minor or no changes at all; and this means that these syllabuses are no longer relevant to the current situation in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is no longer a British colony and there is therefore urgent need to review all syllabuses. For example, in 2002 the Minister of Education scrapped all History syllabuses (2157, 2168 and 2166) and replaced them with local History syllabuses which recognised the historical developments in Zimbabwe. The previous History syllabuses were largely focused on European History, particularly 2157 and 2168. The same *modus operandi* should be followed with regard to Religious Education.

However, the problems experienced in the Unit will continue to prevail unless the government provides adequate funding and human resources to man the Unit. This study thus urged the government to move swiftly in this regard.

5. FINAL REMARKS

The quest for a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools is a continuing concern in Religious Education teaching circles. Religious Education educators therefore want the government to move swiftly in implementing the teaching of multi-faith Religious Education in all secondary schools. The major concern regarding Religious Education teaching in 2004 is that the imported British Religious Education curriculum is still being taught in most Zimbabwe secondary

schools 24 years after independence. The changes that were made after independence were largely superficial and cosmetic.

The Religious Education curriculum should be relevant to the socio-cultural context of the Zimbabwean learner for it to be useful and acceptable. From this study, it is evident that it is vital that any future Religious Education curriculum should relate to the daily experiences of the Zimbabwean learner.

Some of the proposals in the empirical study emphasised that the government should get rid of the pastoral or confessional approach to Religious Education teaching and move towards an objective and academic approach such as the comparative study of religions, i.e. the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching. Furthermore, Christianity should no longer be the dominant religion in Religious Education teaching. Learners should explore all religions equally and objectively. The government should thus move swiftly in creating a level ground and introduce a comparative study of religions as opposed to a pastoral or confessional study. An academic and objective approach to Religious Education teaching is critical to the survival of Religious Education as a school subject in Zimbabwe secondary schools.

The above is, however, by no means an exhaustive account of this theme. *Religious Education in Zimbabwe secondary schools: The quest for a multi-faith approach* is such a comprehensive theme that justice cannot be done to it in one single dissertation. The

following themes may, therefore, be researched in order to further expose the possibilities in this regard:

- Multi-faith Religious Education and moral development.
- Multi-faith Religious Education and personal development.
- Multi-faith Religious Education and religious pluralism.