

**A critical assessment of the challenges encountered in implementing the  
Updated Religious Studies Curriculum in Zimbabwe secondary schools.**

**By**

**Wilson Zivave**

**Student Number: 53309278**

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY**

In the subject

**Religious Studies**

At the

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**Supervisor: Dr G.J. Mason**

## Declaration

Student number: 5330-927-8

I, **Zivave Wilson**, declare that **“A critical assessment of the challenges encountered in implementing the Updated Religious Studies Curriculum in Zimbabwe secondary schools.”** is my work and that the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature: 

Date:

**Dedication**

I dedicate my study, posthumously, to my mother, Tsvakai Mudarikwa, who gave me mutual, spiritual and material support throughout the period of my studies. You passed on before I completed my studies. You have been an inclusivist, pluralist and tolerant mother who believed that all religions are avenues of salvation. Continue to rest in peace, Dhliwayo.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank God who over the years has given me strength, protection and courage to embark on this academic journey. I say, “*Munoramba muri Mwari*” [You remain the Lord forever].

I express my sincere and profound gratitude to my promoter, Dr Garth Mason for his constructive criticism and support during my research studies. Dr G Mason, you have been a reservoir of optimism for me when the journey seemed impossible. I have learnt a lot from your objective analysis of my work.

I also want to thank my wife, Dr Angela-Billiet Shoko for her undoubted and unwavering support during my intellectual journey. Appreciation goes further to my daughter, popularly known as Twin daughter, Kunashe Belicia Zivave. You are my inspiration. To Panashe, Tomutendaishe and Anenishe; thank you for being my lieutenants. My appreciation also goes to my father, Tapiwanashe Zivave, for his love and support during my studies. I also express my sincere thanks to FRS teachers in Zimbabwe for their role in ensuring that my study was a success. I appreciate their scholarly input in my studies. God bless you. Special thanks go to Ms Chabuka, Mr Courage Dube, Mrs Pascalia Ncube, Mr Chibango and Mr Hardlife Mapfumo for their motivation and support during my studies.

My deepest and heartfelt gratitude goes to Mr R Gorimbo and Dr M. Mazuruse who taught me Ordinary Level and Advanced Level Religious Studies, respectively. They laid the foundation for my Religious Studies journey. Without you, my achievement would not have been this far. I look back and boldly say that’s where it all started. I really appreciate the contributions of my teacher, friend and advisor Dr M. Mazuruse as well as Prof J Gonye for proof-reading my work and giving me scholarly insights. I also thank Prof I Mhute and Prof G Makaudze for their encouragement throughout my studies.

My deepest appreciation also goes to Matabeleland North, Hwange district Religious Studies teachers and schools inspector Mr Ndlovu for Hwange district, for their support which they gave during my studies. My appreciation also goes to the permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Mrs Tabela, as well as Matabeleland North Provincial Educational Director, Mr Mpofu, for assisting me to carry out this research successfully in secondary schools.

## **Abstract**

In 2017, Zimbabwe started to implement the updated Religious Studies curriculum under a new policy framework. However, there have been policy gaps and challenges in implementing the new curriculum. There has been little scholarly attention on curriculum reforms, particularly on Religious Studies policy and implementation challenges. The lack of inclusive policy formulation and hurried implementation of the policy has affected the desired goal to promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism. The Religious Studies policy, which was implemented in 2017, allows the teaching of religions such as Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Contrary to the stated policy, secondary school teachers continue to lack policy fidelity as they use confessional approaches among other pedagogical and philosophical approaches, which present challenges in secondary schools. The purpose of this study was, thus, to critique policy and implementation challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe's secondary schools, interrogating the gap between the policy and curriculum implementation. Literature suggests that factors that inhibit policy implementation of a multi-faith Religious Studies policy in multi-faith societies include resistance by dominant religion, unpreparedness to meet reforms, teachers' personal background and lack of support from government. This study sought to develop an understanding of policy gaps and challenges faced in implementing the updated Religious Studies curriculum which is multi-faith oriented. The study further aimed to gain an understanding, from policy implementers, of how policy implementation challenges affected their teaching objectives. The Effective Curriculum Policy Implementation (ECPI) theoretical framework guided this study since the intention was to conduct the research as well as to contribute to effective policy implementation and reduce challenges affecting the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. A mixed research approach was employed where semi-structured open-ended questionnaires, individual interviews and document analysis were used to collect data. Forty Religious Studies teachers in secondary schools responded to a questionnaire. Two senior Religious Studies teachers, one ZIMSEC official and two District Schools Inspectors were purposefully selected to participate in the study through interviews. It emerged from the study that there were some policy gaps in the 2017 updated Religious Studies policy and the implementation of the policy had several challenges. The major challenges identified include the following: inadequate policy framework, unavailability of educational material resources in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum, lack of resources, lack of technical support, personal background of teachers, educational levels of teachers, pedagogical deficiencies of teachers,

lack of supervision, influence of responsible authority like the church, dropping of the subject and biased summative assessment. A critique of policy implementation and challenges indicates that they are mainly related to exclusivism due to dominance of one religion in the old curriculum as well as weak policy framing which hinder acceptance of other religions. Participants believed that the challenges they faced could be resolved and they proposed some intervention strategies. The study recommends that curriculum review of 2023, particularly in Religious Studies, should take into consideration intervention strategies such as in-service training of teachers, capacitating teacher training institutions to educate trainee teachers with methods that take into consideration multi-faith societies and government financing curriculum reforms. The study concluded that inclusivism, tolerance and plurality could be achieved if a multipath policy was implemented effectively.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Policy Implementation, Multi-Faith, Inclusivism, Tolerance, Plurality

## Table of Contents

### Contents

<b>Declaration.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
Table of contents.....	vi
Appendices.....	xiv
List of Table of contents.....	xv
Acronyms.....	xvii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background to the study .....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem .....	13
1.3 Aim of the study.....	13
1.4 Research objectives.....	13
1.5 Research questions.....	14
1.6 Justification .....	14
1.7 Theoretical framework.....	17
1.8 Research methodology .....	18
1.8.1 Research design .....	18
1.9 Data collection instruments.....	19
1.9.1 Questionnaires.....	19
1.9.2 Interviews.....	20
1.9.3 Document analysis .....	21
1.10 Population of the study .....	21
1.10.1 Population sampling.....	21
1.10.2 Sample size .....	22
1.11 Data analysis .....	23
1.12 A Brief review of related literature .....	23
1.13 Scope of the research .....	28
1.14 Ethical considerations .....	28
1.15 Definition of terms .....	29
1.16 Organisation of the study.....	31
1.17 Conclusion .....	31

<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>33</b>
2.0 INTRODUCTION .....	33
2.1 CURRICULUM PLANNING, DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTATION IN ZIMBABWE... 34	34
2.2 THE CONCEPT RELIGIOUS STUDIES. ....	34
2.3 RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM .....	35
2.3.1 Religious Studies in the Colonial Period .....	36
2.3.1.2 The role of Colonial Government education policies in shaping Religious studies. ....	38
2.3.1.2 The influence of missionaries on Religious Studies during colonialism. ....	44
2.3.2 Critique of the inherited colonial Religious Studies syllabus .....	48
2.3.3 Post-independence Religious Studies .....	49
2.3.3.1 Situating Religious Studies within the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (CIET) of 1998 .....	50
2.3.3.2 The 2017 updated Family and Religious Studies curriculum. ....	52
2.4 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT .....	54
2.5 CURRICULUM POLICY PLANNING.....	61
2.6 CURRICULUM POLICY DESIGNING.....	61
2.7. WAYS USED TO EFFECT CURRICULUM CHANGE AND IMPLEMENTATION. ....	63
2.7.1 Top-down approaches.....	64
2.7.2 Bottom-up approach.....	65
2.8 RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION.....	66
2.9 PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN ZIMBABWEAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS .....	73
2.9.1 The concept of pedagogy .....	74
2.9.2 Confessional Approach.....	75
2.9.3 Neo-Confessional Approach.....	76
2.9.4 The Spiritual Approach.....	76
2.9.5 The Doctrinal Approach.....	77
2.9.6 The Kerygmatic Approach.....	78
2.9.7 The Life Themes Approach .....	79
2.9.8 The Critical Realist Approach.....	80
2.9.9 Interpretive Approach .....	80
2.9.10 The Particularist Approach .....	81
2.9.11. The Dialogical Approach.....	81
2.9.12 The Typological Approach .....	82
2.10. PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES RELATED TO ZIMBABWE.....	83
2.10.1 The Life Experience Approach.....	83
2.10.2 The Phenomenological Approach.....	88
2.10.4 Socio-Religious Hybridity Strategy (SRHS) .....	93



2.10.5 Multi-Faith Approach .....	93
2.11. PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN ZIMBABWE.....	100
2.12 PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.....	104
2.13 LEARNING THEORIES IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES .....	110
2.14 WHAT IS CURRICULUM REFORM .....	119
2.15 RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM REFORM IN ZIMBABWE .....	121
2.16 POLICIES IMPLEMENTED TO ENHANCE THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE UPDATED RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN ZIMBABWE.....	127
2.17 CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AFFECTING RELIGIOUS STUDIES .....	135
2.18 THE CHALLENGES IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF RS IN THE ZIMBABWEAN CURRICULUM. ....	141
2.19 SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM .....	144
2.20. CONCLUSION.....	145
<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>147</b>
3.0 Introduction.....	147
3.1 Research paradigm.....	147
3.2 Research design .....	147
3.4 Research methods .....	152
3.4.1 Quantitative research.....	152
3.4.2 The rationale behind mixed methods research.....	154
3.4.3 Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods design .....	155
3.4.4 Sequential exploratory mixed methods design .....	155
3.4.5 Embedded mixed methods design.....	156
3.4.6 Triangulation mixed methods design.....	156
3.4.7 Reasons for using mixed methods research .....	156
3.5 The interface between qualitative and quantitative research methods.....	157
3.6 Qualitative research .....	159
3.8 Population of the Study.....	160
3.9 Sample and sampling techniques .....	160
3.10 Data Collection .....	161
3.10.1 Data collection methods.....	161
3.10.2 Interviews.....	161
3.10.2 Questionnaire .....	164
3.11 Data collection procedure and the application of data collection tools.....	165
3.12 Validity of the instrument .....	166
3.13. Method of data collection .....	166
3.13.1 Administering of questionnaires .....	166

3.13.2 Document analysis .....	167
3.14 Data presentation and analysis .....	168
3.15 Validity and reliability of data collected .....	168
3.16 Ethical considerations .....	169
3.17 Conclusion .....	170
<b>CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>171</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	171
4.2 Presentation and analysis of data from questionnaire .....	172
4.2.1 Demographic information of teachers.....	172
4.2.4 Highest qualifications in Religious Studies .....	174
4.2.5 Levels at which selected teachers taught Religious Studies component.....	175
4.3 PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS FROM RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM POLICY IMPLEMENTERS (TEACHERS).....	176
4.3.1 Data presentation from questionnaire responses.....	176
4.4 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES FROM INTERVIEWS.....	220
4.4. THEME 1: WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND WHEN YOU HEAR ABOUT THE UPDATED CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK?.....	223
4.4.1.1 Change of syllabus and learning content .....	223
4.4.2.2 Home-grown course outline.....	225
4.4.2.3 Policy document.....	226
4.4.2.4 Teaching methodology.....	227
4.4.3 THEME 2 WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF CURRICULUM REFORM IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES? .....	227
4.4.3.1 Colonial Religious Studies.....	228
4.4.3.2 Inherited colonial Religious Studies .....	228
4.4.4 THEME 3 WHY HAS RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM IN ZIMBABWE UNDERGONE REFORM?.....	230
4.4.4.1 Decolonising the curriculum.....	230
4.4.4.2 Compliance to the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry in Education and Training report.....	231
4.4.4.3 Change of learning content and methodology .....	232
4.4.4.4 Change of the religious composition of Zimbabwe .....	232
4.4.4.5 Implementing multi-faith approaches .....	233
4.4.4.6 The Constitution of Zimbabwe .....	234
4.4.5. THEME 4: WERE THE TEACHERS INVOLVED IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM PLANNING AND DESIGNING? IF NO-WHY?.....	235
4.4.5.1. Top bottom approach .....	235
4.4.5.2 Mixed approach .....	236

4.4.6 THEME 5: HOW WAS THE UPDATED FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES (FRS) CURRICULUM DISSEMINATED TO TEACHERS? .....	238
4.4.6.1 Media .....	238
4.4.6.2 Workshops and cluster meetings.....	240
4.4.6.3 Organisational hierarchy .....	241
4.4.6.4 Minutes and seculars .....	242
4.4.7 THEME 6: WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY THE TERM POLICY?.....	242
4.4.8 THEME 7: WHAT ARE THE POLICY GUIDELINES FOR RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND HOW DOES IT INFLUENCE YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE? .....	244
4.4.8.1 Teaching from a multi-faith perspective .....	244
4.4.8.1 Equality of religions.....	245
4.4.9 THEME 8: WHICH POLICIES SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED TO ENHANCE THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES (FRS) IN ZIMBABWE? .....	247
4.4.9.1 Multi-faith implementation .....	247
4.4.10 THEME 9: TO WHAT EXTENT DO TEACHERS ADHERE TO THE UPDATED POLICY ON FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES (FRS) IN YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE? .....	249
4.4.10.1 Teaching of all religions .....	250
4.4.10.2 Bias against Indigenous Religion and Islam .....	250
4.4.10.3 Dropping of the subject in mission schools .....	251
4.4.10.3 Teaching of Cambridge syllabus.....	252
4.4.11 THEME 10: WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CURRENT POLICY ON EDUCATION IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES? .....	253
4.4.11.1 Religious extremism .....	253
4.4.11.2 Bias towards Christianity .....	254
4.4.11.3 Dropping of the subject in the school curriculum .....	255
4.4.11.4 Exclusion of other religions .....	256
4.4.11.5 The subject is elective .....	256
4.4.12 THEME 11: TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE CURRENT RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM RELEVANT IN PROMOTING INCLUSIVISM, TOLERANCE AND PLURALISM? .....	257
4.4.12.1 Multi-faith approaches .....	257
4.4.12.2 Constructivism .....	257
4.4.12.3 Exclusion of minority religions.....	258
4.4.13 THEME 12: CAN YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN THE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES THAT YOU OFTEN USE IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES (FRS)?.....	259
4.4.13.1 Learner-centred pedagogies .....	259

4.4.13.2 Teacher-centred pedagogies.....	260
4.4.14 THEME13: HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERISE YOUR TEACHING STYLE? CONFESSIONAL, MULTI-FAITH, HYBRID, LIFE-THEME APPROACH.....	261
4.4.14.1 Multi-faith approach .....	262
4.4.14.2 Life-themes approach.....	262
4.4.15 THEME 14: TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT PROMOTE INCLUSIVISM, TOLERANCE AND PLURALISM BEING PROMOTED IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES? .....	263
4.4.15.1 Bias towards the old Religious Studies curriculum. ....	263
4.4.16 THEME 15: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS? .....	265
4.4.16.1 Shortage of relevant learning material .....	265
4.4.16.2 The syllabus being too wide and congested.....	267
4.4.16.3 Interpretation of the syllabus.....	268
4.4.16.4 Lack of technical support.....	269
4.4.16.5 Lack of professional development .....	269
4.4.16.6 Lack of qualified teachers .....	270
4.4.16.7 Christian background of teachers.....	272
4.4.16.8 Lack of supervision.....	272
4.4.16.9 Dropping of the subject in mission schools .....	273
4.4.16.10 Rejection of the subject.....	275
4.4.16.11 Bias towards the old curriculum .....	276
4.4.16.12 Pedagogical rigidity .....	277
4.4.16.13 Failure to accept religious diversity/Intolerance .....	278
4.4.17 THEME 16: SUGGEST THE BEST WAYS OF ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AFFECTING THE UPDATED RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS .....	278
4.4.17.1 Provision of learning material.....	279
4.4.17.2 Internet connectivity .....	280
4.4.17.3 Curriculum review .....	281
4.4.17.4 Establishment of religious boards to oversee the curriculum .....	283
4.4.17.5 In-service training .....	283
4.4.17.6 Training of teachers of religion.....	285
4.4.17.7 Improved supervision.....	286
4.4.17.8 Increased technical support.....	287
4.4.17.9 Removing bureaucracy in approving books.....	287
4.4.17.10. Supporting teachers to develop learning content .....	288
4.5 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION .....	288
4.5.1 Updated curriculum framework.....	289

4.5.2 Religious Studies national syllabus .....	290
4.5.3. Past Examination Papers .....	295
4.5.6. Newspaper Reports .....	302
4.6 Conclusion .....	306
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND LITERATURE CONTROL.....</b>	<b>308</b>
5.1 Updated Curriculum Framework .....	308
5.2 Curriculum Planning and Designing.....	310
5.3 Curriculum Policy and Implementation .....	311
5.4 PEDAGOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES.....	313
5.4.1 Pedagogical Issues in Religious Studies .....	313
5.4.1.2 Multi-faith approach .....	313
5.4.2 Philosophical Approaches in Religious Studies.....	314
5.4.3 Learning Methods in Religious Studies .....	315
5.5 FACTORS WHICH LED TO THE CURRICULUM REFORM OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN 2017. ....	316
5.5.1 The Value of the Updated Religious Studies Curriculum.....	319
5.6 RELIGIOUS STUDIES POLICY AND POLICY GAPS IN ZIMBABWE.....	321
5.6.1 Policy gaps in the Updated Religious Studies Curriculum. ....	323
5.7 POLICY AND CHALLENGES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UPDATED RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN ZIMBABWEAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS. ....	325
5.7.1 Top-down policy planning and designing.....	326
5.7.2 Intolerance in Christian mission schools .....	326
5.7.3 Lack of training institution.....	327
5.7.4 Lack of funding from government .....	328
5.7.5 Lack of relevant Learning material .....	328
5.7.6 Syllabus interpretation .....	329
5.7.7 Lack of qualified personnel.....	329
5.7.8 Teachers' personal background .....	329
5.7.9 Congested syllabus.....	330
5.7.10. Dropping of the subject.....	330
5.7.11 Lack of technical support.....	331
5.7.12 Internet connectivity .....	331
5.7.13 Lack of Supervision of policy .....	331
5.7.14 Biased Summative Assessment.....	332
5.7.15. The elective nature of the subject .....	333

5.8 SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN ZIMBABWE. ....	333
5.9 THE PARADIGM SHIFT TOWARDS RELIGIOUS INCLUSIVISM, TOLERANCE AND PLURALITY .....	336
5.10. Conclusion .....	338
<b>CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>341</b>
6.0 Introduction.....	341
6.1 Summary .....	341
6.3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	347
6.3.1 RELIGIOUS STUDIES POLICY CHALLENGES.....	348
6.3.1.2 Bias against Indigenous Religion and Islam .....	348
6.3.1.3 Dropping of the subject in schools.....	349
6.3.1.4 Teaching of Cambridge Syllabus .....	350
6.3.1.5 Religious Extremism.....	350
6.3.1.6 Exclusion of other religions .....	351
6.3.1.7 Subject is elective .....	351
6.3.2 RELIGIOUS STUDIES IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES .....	352
6.3.2. 1 Learning material .....	352
6.3.2.2 Interpretation of the syllabus.....	353
6.3.2.3 The syllabus is too long and congested.....	354
6.3.2 .4. Dropping of the subject in some schools .....	354
6.3.2.5 Bias towards the old curriculum .....	355
6.3.2.6 Lack of training of teachers. ....	356
6.3.2.7 Pedagogical rigidity. ....	356
6.3.2.8 Failure to accept diversity .....	357
6.3.2.9 Lack of technical support.....	358
6.3.2.10 Personal background of Teachers .....	358
6.3.2.11 Lack of supervision. ....	359
6.3.2.12 Summative assessment challenges.....	360
6.5 Conclusion of chapter .....	361
Reference .....	363

## **APPENDICES**

<b>APPENDIX 1:</b> Questionnaire for Religious Studies Teachers .....	389
<b>APPENDIX 2:</b> Interview Guide for Teachers .....	397
<b>APPENDIX 3:</b> Interview Guide for Schools Inspectors.....	398
<b>APPENDIX 4:</b> Interview Guide for ZIMSEC Official.....	399
<b>APPENDIX 5:</b> Informed Consent .....	400
<b>APPENDIX 6:</b> Request for Permission to Conduct the Study.....	401
<b>APPENDIX 7:</b> Permission to Conduct Research from MoPSE. ....	403
<b>APPENDIX 8:</b> Permission to Conduct Research from Provincial Education Director ....	404
<b>APPENDIX 9:</b> Research Ethics Clearance Certificate.....	405

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Sex and ages of participants.....	171
Table 4.2: Level of education attained Religious Studies teachers' qualifications .....	172
Table 4.3: Teachers' Highest Qualifications in Religious Studies.....	173
Table 4.4 Perception on the understanding of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.....	175
Table 4.5: Reasons for the understanding and misunderstanding of the updated Religious Studies curriculum on table 4.4.....	175
Table 4.6: Knowledge about policy implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. ....	176
Table 4.7: Policy gaps in the updated Religious Studies curriculum.....	178
Table 4.8: Reasons why they are some policy gaps on table 4.7.....	178
Table 4.9: The perception on Religious Studies curriculum design and approach.....	179
Table 4.10: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.9.....	179
Table 4.11: Rating of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.....	181
Table 4.12: Reasons for the rating of the Updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) on Table 4.11. ....	182
Table 4.13: The extent to which Religious Studies has gone under reform.....	185
Table 4.14: Table 4.13 Reasons why Religious Studies has undergone reform. ....	186
Table 4.15: Knowledge about smoothness of the updated Religious Studies curriculum implementation .....	188
Table 4.16: Reasons for respondents' ratings of the smoothness of the curriculum implementation on the responses on Table 4.15 .....	188
Table 4.17: Perception on challenges in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.....	190



Table 4.18: Challenges noted by respondents in the implementation of Religious Studies on table 4.17 .....	190
Table 4.19: Perception on how the challenges are affecting effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.....	193
Table 4.20: Good pedagogical approaches to Religious Studies.....	195
Table 4.21: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.20.....	196
Table 4.22: Appropriate learning theories which suit the updated Religious Studies curriculum.....	198
Table 4.23: Reasons for choosing learning theory on table 4.22.....	199
Table 4.24: Perception on how the current policy should be implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.....	201
Table 4.25: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.24.....	201
Table 4.26: Problems of the current policy on the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.....	202
Table 4.27: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.26.....	203
Table 4.28: Responses on whether the Religious Studies curriculum promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism.....	205
Table 4.29: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.28.....	205
Table 4.30: Responses on solutions to the challenges facing effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. ....	207
Table 4.31: Views and reasons on solutions affecting effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.....	208
Table 4.32: Perceptions on whether Religious Studies curriculum promotes national values such as tolerance, inclusivism and plurality. ....	211
Table 4.33: Views and reasons for responses on Table 4.32.....	211
Table 4.34: Responses on the supervision of the updated Religious Studies policy implementation. ....	213
Table 4.35 showing views and reasons for the choices on Table 4.34.....	213
Table 4.36: Responses on the role of Religious Studies summative assessment in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.....	215

Table 4.37: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.36.....	215
Table 4.38: Responses on the availability of relevant learning material to the needs of the updated Religious Studies curriculum objectives. ....	216
Table 4.39: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.38.....	216
Table 4.40: Interviewees and their designations .....	218
Table 4.41: Themes and categories of responses from the interviews .....	218

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

**A.U:** African Union

**AIDS:** Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome

**ASC:** Agreed Syllabus Conference

**ASC:** Agreed Syllabus Conference

**BICC:** Brethren in Christ Church

**BSPZ:** Better Schools Programme – Zimbabwe

**CDTS:** The Curriculum and Technical Development Services

**CDU:** Curriculum Development Unit

**CIET:** Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training

**CNE:** Christian National Education.

**CRS:** Christian Religious Studies

**ECPI:** Effective Curriculum Policy Implementation

**FAREME:** Family, Religion and Moral Education

**FRS:** Family and Religious Studies

**HIV:** Human Immuno Virus

**HOD:** Head of Department

**I.R:** Indigenous Religion

**ICT:** Information Communication Technology

**MoPSE:** Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

**NPRE:** Nation Policy on Religion Education.

**RE:** Religious Education

**RI:** Religious Instruction

**RS:** Religious Studies

**SBCD:** School Based Curriculum Development

**STEAM:** Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics

**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

**UNFPA:** United Nations Population Fund

**UNICEF:** United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

**ZANU PF:** Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front

**ZIMSEC:** Zimbabwe School Examination Council

# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

## **1.0 Introduction**

The teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe since independence up to the current situation following the adoption of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is a contested terrain in academic discourse. Christocentric approaches were used in the teaching and learning of the Religious Studies curriculum despite the fact that Zimbabwe is a multi-religious society. This study focuses on a critique of policy implementation and challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The aim of this study is to analyse the challenges affecting the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe. This is done by interpreting and reacting to the Policy regarding the teaching of Religious Studies in secondary schools. It must be emphasised that Religious Studies is a pillar of morality, ethics and critical thinking in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where immorality and inhumanity are global challenges (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020:304). Thus, the current chapter introduces the study by presenting the background to the study and statement of the problem. The aim of the study, research objectives and questions are also captured. It also offers a brief review of related literature, and it discusses the significance of the study, theoretical framework and the research methodology. Finally, it presents the scope of the study, definitions of key terms and the conclusion.

## **1.1 Background to the study**

The 1999 Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (CIET 1999) noted the weaknesses of the old Religious Studies curriculum and recommended a curriculum review. The effecting of the recommendations was not immediately attended to until the adoption of the New Constitution of Zimbabwe in 2013. The adoption of the New Constitution in 2013, which recognised religious diversity, offered fertile ground for curriculum reform in Religious Studies. In this context, there was a curriculum review process in 2015 to embrace these new constitutional provisions which called for religious inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Seen in this light, Prinsiloo (2008:244) confirms that “the Constitution celebrates diversity and encourages pride in culture and religion as well as protecting individuals and communities from coercion and discrimination”.

In 2016, the curriculum review process was completed and the implementation of the review started in 2017. This curriculum review saw the transformation of Religious Studies, as an academic subject in the Zimbabwean curriculum, from a Christocentric Religious Studies curriculum to a multi-religious curriculum which caters for four religions found in Zimbabwe. This is because Zimbabwe is a rainbow nation with various religious traditions notably; African Indigenous Religion, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Baha'i Faith, Hinduism and Rastafarianism (Zivave 2019: 1). It is for this reason that Maposa (2014), citing Sibanda (2010:298), states that Zimbabwe's religious landscape is complex because it is a "fertile ground for many religions, notably, African Indigenous Religion, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Baha'i Faith, Hinduism and Rastafarianism". The existence of diverse religious traditions in Zimbabwe entails that the Religious Studies curriculum should be inclusive so as to promote pluralism and tolerance in society.

From a historical perspective, the coming of colonialism in Zimbabwe led to the rise of Religious Studies as an academic subject in missionary established schools. It is within this context that Ndlovu (2004:48) says, "The arrival of the missionaries in Zimbabwe since 1859 is an important factor in understanding the character of education." Christian missionaries played an important role in the development of the Religious Studies Curriculum as they are credited with the establishment of formal education as well as the Religious Studies Curriculum. The Education Policy Framework was also introduced by missionaries in an endeavour to teach Africans to read and write so that they could read the Bible for themselves (Maravanyika 1990:4). This implies that colonial education was proselytising and indoctrinating in nature.

Colonialism played a critical role in making Christianity an exclusive religion through Religious Education. The colonial government established formal education which was dual in nature (Dube, Mufanechiya and Mufanechiya (2015:76). It was dual in the sense that it was meant to indoctrinate and enculturate. The colonial Religious Studies subject syllabus was used as an instrument to advance Western European culture (Gundani and Ndlovu 2000:34). This led to the denigration of African belief systems because of the Christocentric syllabus. As a result, it greatly impacted on pupils who adopted Christianity as the sole religion for salvation (Dube et al 2015:76). This meant that other religions such as Indigenous Religion were treated as evil and lacking a clear concept of salvation. Indigenous Religion's academic relevance in the education curriculum was undermined since it was considered a religion of illiterate people. Christianity was advanced in the colonial Religious Studies curriculum. Concurring with this

assertion, Zvobgo (1996:255) argues that Religious Education was introduced into the formal secondary school curriculum during the colonial era as a proselytising instrument, hence, its cultural bias and prejudice. This marked the beginning of exclusivism and intolerance in Zimbabwean schools and subsequently in the society.

At independence in 1980, there was a cosmetic transformation of the colonial educational system in Zimbabwe as it remained largely Christocentric. In support of this, Maposa (2014:79) believes that in “the teaching and learning of Religious Education as a school subject, the methodology was founded on monolithic Christocentric approach that espoused the Biblical examples.” This shows that in 1980 “it was difficult to shade off the vestiges of the past colonial education system” (Maposa 2014:79). The learner was separated from his or her African spirituality due to the Religious Studies curriculum which was Christocentric. Policy makers in the independent Zimbabwe tried to recognise Indigenous Religion by incorporating it in the Religious Studies curriculum.

In January 1998, a twelve-member committee under Chairperson Dr. Caiphaz Nziiramasanga was appointed by the then President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, to inquire into the country’s entire education system (Government of Zimbabwe 1999). The commission’s report contained findings, challenges and recommendations which were far-reaching and were expected to guide educational reform at all levels into the new millennium for a considerable length of time (Mawere 2013:1078). Exclusivism was noted as a challenge to the Religious Studies curriculum. The commission recommended a curriculum, which, among other things, promoted inclusivity and equality of the citizens, irrespective of gender, race or religious affiliation. In 2017, the full recommendations of the commission report were implemented and an updated Religious Studies curriculum known as Family and Religious Studies (FRS) was introduced. It focuses on the study of Indigenous Religion (I.R), Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The inclusion of these four religions while ignoring others implies that policy formulation was done from top to bottom. The policy catered only for religions which had numerical superiority. Dube (2019:258), in relation to the adoption of the new curriculum in 2017, avers that “it made changes to the study of religion, and infuses Islam, Indigenous Religion and other biblical religions, namely Judaism and Christianity.” Thus, there was a paradigm shift in terms of curriculum content and methodology. The new curriculum attempted to “limit the exclusionary approach of Religious Studies, and there was hope that the new curriculum would be neutral, non-hierarchical, and acceptable to religious organisations”

(Dube 2019:258). It is this move that has created many challenges in the implementation of the new policy framework in Christian dominated society.

In 2013 the Constitution of Zimbabwe influenced the Religious Studies policy to become a multi-faith one. It should be noted that the constitution is the supreme legal document which regulates how other policies are formulated and implemented. As such, section 4 chapter 56 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe focuses on forms of discrimination, including religious discrimination. Below is an excerpt of this law:

#### **1.1.1 Chapter 4 Section 56: Equality and non-discrimination**

- (1) All persons are equal before the law and have the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.
- (2) Every person has the right not to be treated in an unfairly discriminatory manner on such grounds as their nationality, race, colour, tribe, place of birth, ethnic or social origin, language, class, religious belief, political affiliation, opinion, custom, culture, sex, gender, marital status, age, pregnancy, disability or economic or social status, or whether they were born in or out of wedlock.
- (3) A person is treated in a discriminatory manner for the purpose of subsection (3) if
  - they are subjected directly or indirectly to a condition, restriction or disability to which other people are not subjected; or
  - Other people are accorded directly or indirectly a privilege or advantage which they are not accorded.
- (4) Discrimination on any of the grounds listed in subsection (3) is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair, reasonable and justifiable in a democratic society based on openness, justice, human dignity, equality and freedom.

In this study, any discrimination of indigenous religion, Islam or any other religion is a negation of justice and freedom of worship. The Constitution of Zimbabwe clearly indicates that all religions are equal and no discrimination of religion is allowed (Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013:29)

Furthermore, chapter 4 section 60 also talks about freedom of conscience. Below is an excerpt of that legal instrument:

#### **1.1.2. Freedom of conscience**

- (1) Every person has the right to freedom of conscience, which includes—



- (a) Freedom of thought, opinion, religion or belief; and
- (b) Freedom to practise and propagate and give expression to their thought, opinion, religion or belief, whether in public or in private and whether alone or together with others.
- (2) No person may be compelled to take an oath that is contrary to their religion or belief or to take an oath in a manner that is contrary to their religion or belief.
- (3) Parents and guardians of minor children have the right to determine, in accordance with their beliefs, the moral and religious upbringing of their children, provided they do not prejudice the rights to which their children are entitled under this Constitution, including their rights to education, health, safety and welfare.
- (4) Any religious community may establish institutions where religious instruction may be given, even if the institution receives a subsidy or other financial assistance from the State”

In this study, learners have freedom of thought, opinion and belief. This means that in the classroom environment the teaching of one religion violates the rights of learners. The 2013 Constitution further indicates that religions like Christianity, Judaism, Islam or any other religion can build schools, but they should not compel learners to accept a religion which is not theirs in these schools.

**Section 75 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe offers the right to education for all. It states that:**

- (1) Every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has a right to—
  - (a) A basic state-funded education, including adult basic education; and
  - (b) Further education, which the state, through reasonable legislative and other measures, must make progressively available and accessible.
- (2) Every person has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions of reasonable standards, provided they do not discriminate on any ground prohibited by this Constitution.
- (3) A law may provide for the registration of educational institutions referred to in subsection (2) and for the closing of any such institutions that do not meet reasonable standards prescribed for registration.
- (4) The State must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within the limits of the resources available to it, to achieve the progressive realisation of the right set out in subsection (1) (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013:37).

It is clear that the Constitution of Zimbabwe calls for non-discrimination of each other on the basis of religion. Chidester (2006:8), commenting on the South African constitution, believes that the provisions and protections of the new Constitution provided the framework for adjudicating religious interests within a secular state. This is true to the Zimbabwean context where the Constitution provides all religions legal support to exist as well as being taught in the educational curriculum. This is the thrust of the updated Religious Studies syllabus which seeks to celebrate religious diversity. Policy on Religious Studies is based on the interpretation of the constitution. The Religious Studies syllabus observes the Constitution as stipulated by Section 60 on provision of freedom of conscience, stating specifically that:

1. Every person has the right to freedom of conscience, which includes

- freedom of thought, opinion, religion or belief,
- freedom to practise and propagate and give expression to their thought, opinion, religion, or belief whether in public or in private and whether alone or together (Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013:30)

In 2015, Zimbabwe started to review the curriculum in line with the recommendations of the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry. The review was meant to make the Zimbabwean curriculum for primary and secondary schools relevant to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning outcomes and needs. It is in this context that the Religious Studies curriculum was updated to become Family, Religion and Moral Education (FAREME) as well as Family and Religious Studies (FRS) for primary and secondary schools, respectively. However, the implementation of the reviewed Religious Studies curriculum started in January 2017 throughout Zimbabwe. The updated Religious Studies curriculum became a multi-faith one as the teaching of religions rather than religion was introduced. Learners should have the understanding of the religions of the world and other worldviews that may provide the opportunity for a deeper sense of self-realisation and broader civil acceptance because they are not living in isolation. The whole school community should have such vital experiences (Modipa 2014:32). The new syllabus also advocates for religious diversity and pluralism in line with the constitutional provisions which state that there should not be religious discrimination on whatever basis. Every religion has the right to be propagated and be practiced. For this reason, Damons (2017:43), after analysing the South African constitution, concluded that “the constitution is religion neutral”. This is the case with the Zimbabwe Constitution which is also religiously unbiased, but

cultivates religious tolerance, inclusivism and plurality. In fact, the Constitution of Zimbabwe endorses the existence of more than one religion in the country. However, the implementation of the policy has been affected by a lot of challenges which this research seeks to critique.

The nature of multi-faith Religious Studies policy has attracted the attention of academic researchers, theologians and politicians alike, since its adoption in 2017. The Religious Studies policy cascades directly from the Constitution of Zimbabwe where freedom of worship, and non-discrimination on the basis of religious beliefs are upheld by the constitution. This is a new policy direction, which is neither confessional nor does it offer a lip service to the multi-faith approach unlike the abolished policy as per the recommendations of the Nziramasanga Commission of Enquiry. The new policy is mirrored by the new Family and Religious Studies (FRS) syllabus which is divided into two levels in secondary school education; Ordinary level, and Advanced level.

This section discusses the updated Religious Studies syllabus looking at the aims, approaches and pedagogies of the subject as presented by the syllabus. This part is quite significant as it helps in ascertaining whether the new policy is being implemented or not. Given the value of a syllabus in comprehending the Zimbabwean policy on Religious Studies, it is important to note that the updated Religious Studies (FRS) learning area is a four-year syllabus for form 1-4 and two years for form 5-6 that provides learners with opportunities to harness cognitive, religious and moral experiences. These experiences help the learners to understand, interpret and apply religious and moral concepts to their everyday lives. The syllabus demands a multi-faith approach to the study of religion which makes learners to be aware of their respective religious identities in the context of *Unhu/Ubuntu*, religious plurality, as well as both their horizontal and vertical relationships with their respective families, communities, nation, the global village and the natural environment (ZIMSEC 2015:3). The Family and Religious Studies syllabus' main objective is to develop a critical reflection of socio-economic and political issues, religious tolerance, and initiative in terms of formulating ideologies that help in transforming the learners to contribute to sustainable development (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015). This means that learners should be exposed to various religions without bias. The Family and Religious Studies syllabus enables learners to develop skills in problem-solving, critical thinking, decision making, conflict resolution, leadership, self-management, communication and enterprise. The syllabus follows a spiral approach that will lead learners to grow into mature relationships, with religious and moral

thinking and practice. The learning phase will see learners being assessed through both continuous assessment and summative examination.

The updated Religious Studies syllabus is based upon a learner-centred, hands-on, multi-faith, non-proselytising and non-confessional problem posing approach (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:4). This approach encourages initiative, self-motivation, reflective thinking and practical application of concepts to everyday life. This means that constructivism is the premise of learning Religious Studies under the new policy. This study, therefore, examines how the current Religious Studies policy can promote inclusivity, tolerance and pluralism in a multi-faith society using constructivism learning methods. The methodology comprises the following teaching and learning methods: lesson delivery and note taking, discussion, drama, role-play and simulation, video and film show, e-learning, group work, research, case studies and educational tours. The above suggested methods are enhanced by the application of methods that employ multi-sensory approaches to teaching such as individualisation, totality, concreteness, tactility, stimulation and self-activity. Furthermore, the Family and Religious Studies as a learning area encompasses the cross-cutting themes listed here-under: Gender, health, environmental management, enterprise, children's rights, human rights, sexuality, heritage as well as good citizenship, social responsibility and governance and conflict transformation, tolerance and peace-building.

### **1.1.3 Aims of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) form 4 syllabus.**

The aims of the syllabus are to:

- Promote the religious and moral development of the learner.
- foster an understanding of the importance of belonging to a family, religion and community as a whole
- enable the learner to appreciate religious and cultural diversity in Zimbabwe
- integrate the concept of *Unhu/Ubuntu* with various religious beliefs in shaping the character and behaviour of the learner
- promote national heritage and identity
- develop the spirit of national consciousness and patriotism
- enable the learner to appreciate the value and dignity of hard work and teamwork for sustainable development through their respective religions
- enable the learner to appreciate the impact of technology on religion and moral values

## Syllabus Objectives for form 1-4

According to ZIMSEC Syllabus (2015:3) at the end of the course learners should be able to:

- outline various religions in Zimbabwe
- describe the main features of a religion
- identify heritage sites of religious importance in Zimbabwe
- explain the significance of heritage sites and how they foster national identity
- define the concept of *Unhu/Ubuntu*
- relate the concept of *Unhu/Ubuntu* to the various religious beliefs in Zimbabwe
- explain the role of religion in fostering teamwork, hard work and good citizenship
- understand the importance of ICT in the study of religion
- discuss the effects of ICT on religious and moral values

### 1.1.4 Aims of Advanced Level syllabus

The aims of the syllabus are to:

- enable the learner to appraise the four religions in Zimbabwe
- integrate the concept of *Unhu/Ubuntu* with various religious beliefs in shaping the character and behaviour of the learner
- develop critical consciousness of how religion shapes identity and national values
- enable the learner to evaluate the role of religion in fostering the dignity of hard work and teamwork for sustainable development

### Syllabus Objectives.

By the end of form 6 learners should be able to:

- identify the key aspects in the four religions in Zimbabwe
- apply concepts from the religions in problem solving
- evaluate the elements of *Unhu/Ubuntu* in the Indigenous Religion
- delineate the traits of *Unhu/Ubuntu* in Judaism, Christianity and Islam
- discuss concepts in the four religions that shape identity and national values
- assess the role of religion in fostering the dignity of hard work and teamwork.
- enable the learner to evaluate the role of religion in fostering the dignity of hard work and teamwork for sustainable development (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:4).

From the above, the updated Religious Studies syllabus also known as Family and Religious Studies is a radical departure from the old syllabus which was en-faithing and dogmatic. The syllabus is a policy document which is derived from the national curriculum and is broken into

topics. The Family and Religious Studies syllabus for Ordinary level is a four-year course, and for Advanced level, it is a two-year course. It is a learning area which focuses on selected concepts in four religions in Zimbabwe; Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam from form one up to form six (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:1). Thus, the new Family and Religious Studies (FRS) syllabus thrives on promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The name FRS resonates well with curriculum content and the objective of the syllabus to promote religious plurality. It inculcates in the learners the invaluable ability to hold responsible dialogue where they tolerate each other's religion in a peaceful environment (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:1). Klutz (2016:12), commenting on the role of Religious Education in Vienna, argues that the subject "keeps an eye on the development of children's and young people's identities as well as on an appropriate handling of the diversity of religions and beliefs." This is true with the new Family and Religious Studies syllabus where schools and educational curriculum should not transform the identity of learner. Any curriculum which changes the identity, especially religious identity of learners poses a danger which can result in the "extinction of religious minorities".

The rationale for the subject is to facilitate the respect for human dignity and diversity. This is because Zimbabwe is home to various religious traditions. Supporting this view, *The Chronicle* of 1 September (2000:5) states: "The pluralistic character of Zimbabwean society consequently calls for a new approach in the teaching of religious beliefs and practices". This approach is a multi-faith approach which respects religious beliefs of every human regardless of his or her religious affiliation. It also seeks to develop *Unhu/Ubuntu*, social responsibility and ethical principles from the religions. This is because all religions have virtues and ethical principles which they offer to humanity. Respecting another despite religious differences enables learners into critical, self-driven and responsible citizens who participate in sustainable development. As noted previously, syllabus covers aspects of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Thus, the new policy recognises the existence of various religions in the Zimbabwean society and this enables learners to reflect on their lives within their socio- political and economic context.

This syllabus is based upon a learner-centred, hands-on, multi-faith, non-proselytising and non-confessional problem-solving approach (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015: 3). This means that the new policy emphasises a pedagogy that caters for the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> learners' needs. This is in line with what Ndlovu (2004:155) notes that there is need for a multi-faith approach which is more

“academic and open study of religion in Religious Education”. The teacher is seen as a facilitator of learning rather than as a distributor of knowledge. The student in this new curriculum framework is an active participant who can contribute to the successful implementation of the new curriculum. Furthermore, the new curriculum is bias-free and it does not uplift one religion at the expense of the other. It recognises religious diversity and uses a multi-faith approach. This approach develops critical thinking, evaluation, synthesis and practical application of concepts to everyday life (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:3).

Kuiper (1990:19) argues that the multi-faith approach to Religious Studies teaching is the ideal product for Zimbabwe, as it will enable the inclusion of African traditional religion and other religions in the school curriculum. Ndlovu (2004:156) believes that multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching helps learners to discover the true nature of Religious Education. The learner develops an insight into religion or religious truths that will not lead to a particular faith position, but an experience of understanding the nature of the subject (Woodward 1982:41). This results in the application of concepts from religion to problem solving and synthesis of religious concepts which leads to a moulding of a learner who is cognisant of religious diversity. It is because of this reason that Ndlovu (2004:159) admits that the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching is thus seen as the answer to Zimbabwe’s past problems regarding the subject Religious Education in secondary school. These problems include indoctrination, exclusivism, intolerance and disrespect of other people’s religious views and beliefs. Therefore, Religious Studies becomes a panacea by “liberating learners from ignorance of the tenets of other religions” (Ndlovu 2004:159).

The methodology comprises the following teaching and learning methods: lecture and signing, group work and discussion, seminars, workshops, drama, role-play and simulation, video and film show, e-learning, discovery, projects, research and assignment and case studies as well as educational tours. These methods are learner-centred and they encourage collaboration and teamwork in solving problems. Thus, the new Family and Religious Studies (FRS) subject fosters virtues in the learner and also promotes problem-solving and critical thinking. This is different from the old curriculum which was dogmatic and treated the learner as a blank slate. The old Religious Studies curriculum teaching methods were exclusivist and absolutised leading to religious fundamentalism in the Zimbabwean society. Religious fundamentalism refers to a practice whereby a believer does not want appreciate other religions (Matemba 2011). The methods used bred intolerance, hostility and violence against other religions such as Indigenous

Religion and Islam. In terms of aims, the updated Religious Studies curriculum wishes to enable the learner to appraise the four religions in Zimbabwe, namely; Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Islam and Christianity (Zivave and Muzambi 2022). Therefore, this syllabus does not glorify one religion at the expense of the other. It appraises all the religions.

Furthermore, this Religious Studies policy document values all religions in moulding good behaviour and ethical conduct. This implies that the policy is aimed at promoting *Unhu/Ubuntu* which is an African moral principle which enhances humanness. For this reason, the aim of this new Family and Religious Studies (FRS) is to “integrate the concept of *Unhu/Ubuntu* with various religious beliefs in shaping the character and behaviour of the learner” (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:3). This shows that all religions are reservoirs of moral principles. Christianity is not the only religion with moral principles but also religions like Indigenous Religion, Judaism and Islam. To add on, the aim of the syllabus is to develop critical consciousness of how religions shape identities and national values. As such, religions such as Indigenous Religion are appraised for shaping Zimbabwean identities. Other religions complement in the shaping of identities and national values. Lastly, the thrust of the Family and Religious Studies (FRS) is to enable the learner to evaluate the role of religion in fostering the dignity of hard work and teamwork for sustainable development. This means that Christianity, which dominated the previous curriculum, is not the only religion which can lead to sustainable development, but that all other religions have a fundamental role to play in national development and the promotion of good citizenship.

From the above, it is clear that the Zimbabwe government adopted the multi-faith policy in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in order to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. However, the new policy has been implemented amidst several challenges. It is this policy gap that this study seeks to fill by critiquing policy and implementation challenges of the updated Religious Studies curriculum, also officially known as Family and Religious Studies (FRS). The reception of the updated Religious Studies curriculum has been ambivalent as there are lots of “fears, confusion, misgivings and conflict” in the Zimbabwean education landscape (Zivave and Muzambi 2021). The new Religious Studies policy was crafted in haste and the implementation of the policy has been marred by a myriad of challenges. This is the reason why the scope of this study is to critique policy implementation and challenges affecting the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. The central concern and focus of this research is how the policy gaps impact on Religious Studies as well as how the policy implementation challenges affect Religious Studies in the promotion



of inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Therefore, in order to get to the empirical evidence it is crucial to explore and analyse various policy documents and policy implementation challenges regarding the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The study seeks to analyse the challenges faced in the implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum framework by looking at the problems currently being faced in the teaching and learning of that updated Religious Studies curriculum or the Family and Religious Studies (FRS) subject in Zimbabwe's secondary schools. This is because whenever there is curriculum change there are bound to be challenges associated with the transition from the old curriculum to the new curriculum framework. Challenges like unpreparedness, resistance to curriculum change, shortage of relevant learning material and lack of financial support affect the implementation of a new curriculum in the light of the new policy. This has been the case with Religious Studies in Zimbabwe, which was only overhauled in 2017. An updated Religious Studies curriculum was introduced and is currently being implemented up to 2022 where a review of the new curriculum will be done.

## **1.3 Aim of the study**

The aim of this study is to critique the policy implementation and challenges regarding the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe's secondary education in a context where there has been a problem of a Christocentric teaching of religion in secondary schools. This is because Zimbabwe is a nation which constitutionally celebrates religious diversity because of its belief in freedom of worship. Religious Studies augment this constitutional provision in promoting inclusivity, plurality and tolerance through a curriculum which is multi-religious.

## **1.4 Research objectives**

The main objective of this study is to critique policy implementation challenges involving the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe's secondary schools. The specific objectives for this study are:

1. To examine factors which has led to the curriculum reform of Religious Studies in 2017.

2. To explore how Religious Studies curriculum was planned, designed and implemented as well as the pedagogical and philosophical approaches in Religious Studies.
3. To examine factors which led to the curriculum reform of Religious Studies in 2017.
4. To critique policy gaps in Religious Studies education in Zimbabwe.
5. To survey challenges of the current policy and challenges of the implementation of the updated Religious Studies in Zimbabwe's secondary schools.
6. To proffer solutions to the challenges in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe.

### **1.5. Research questions**

1. Why has Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe undergone reform?
2. What are the pedagogical approaches and philosophical approaches to Religious Studies in Zimbabwean secondary schools?
3. What are the challenges in the teaching and learning of RS in the Zimbabwean curriculum?
4. Which policies should be implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe?
5. What is the impact and challenges of the current policy on education in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies?
6. What are the proposed solutions to the challenges of Religious Studies?

### **1.6 Justification**

In recent years, religious inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism have been increasingly recognised in educational policies as well as national policies. It is because of this reason that the Zimbabwean government updated the Religious Studies curriculum. However, there have been challenges in implementing the updated Religious Studies curriculum. There is need for the smoothening of Religious Studies multi-faith policy and this is what this research would bring by critiquing the policy implementation and challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe's secondary education.

Many research studies have been done in the field of Religious Studies old curriculum but not within the context of the updated curriculum which is multi-religious in nature. The 2017 Zimbabwe updated Religious Studies curriculum, which is more diverse, has not received scholarly attention yet. Firstly, research studies on the study of more than one religion have

been done focusing on primary education. This is because at primary level other religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Indigenous Religion were cosmetically looked at in the old curriculum. This current research focuses on secondary education which has now adopted the teaching of many religions. A detailed critique of policy implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum stretching from the post-2017 period shall be made. Dube and Tsotetsi (2019:241) note that “the new curriculum in Zimbabwe, as a state-making project that is arguably devoid of, or has covert policy networks, has resulted in religious curriculum resistance”. This research seeks to fill the knowledge gap created by the introduction of the new curriculum. The research intends to make the updated Religious Studies curriculum a success in terms of effective implementation in secondary schools.

It has also been noted that most research studies mainly focused on a multi-faith approach in a Religious Studies curriculum that was more Christ-centred. Indigenous Religion and Islam, in particular, were treated as the ‘other’ religions. The multi-faith approach has been advocated for in a Religious Studies curriculum that had previously been more indoctrinating than inclusive. In fact, the old curriculum celebrated religious monopoly of one religion. This research seeks to make a more comprehensive analysis of the updated Religious Studies curriculum which covers many religions unlike some previous research studies which tried to justify multi-faith approach to the study of one religion. This means that previous research studies looked at the implementation of the multi-faith approach in the study of Divinity, which was Christian-based teaching. It is within this context that multi-faith and pluralistic pedagogies become relevant in the new curriculum that promotes religious tolerance, inclusivity and pluralism. It is also worth noting that all religions are influential in shaping morality and that they are mediums of salvation. This implies that all religions have an avenue of salvation. To this end, the study of Indigenous Religion, Christianity, Islam and Judaism as per the new policy framework is important in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

The study builds on existing research in Religious Studies as an academic discipline as well as on the effective implementation of a policy framework. It opens up a new area of research in the Zimbabwean society and fills a gap on existing literature, especially on the implementation of a new curriculum policy on Religious Studies. The research draws literature from education and Religious Studies to understand the challenges and policy on the Religious Studies curriculum. This research is important in informing the readership, especially policy makers, on effective policy formulation and implementation regarding the updated Religious Studies subject in order to promote inclusivity, plurality and tolerance in a multi-religious Zimbabwean

society. It is intended that this study will contribute significantly to the body of knowledge concerning policy formulation and implementation in Religious Studies in Zimbabwe. The current body of knowledge is based on the old curriculum rather than the current updated curriculum.

The study is vital in enhancing effective teaching and learning of Religious Studies in this era where there is religious diversity and multi-culturalism. The society is no longer under colonialism. The new policy on the updated Religious Studies curriculum facilitates the shifting from an indoctrinating Religious Studies curriculum to a more inclusive, tolerant and plural one. In support of this, Dube and Tsotetsi (2019:241) state that “policy networks in religious circles can exorcise coloniality, which centred religion on a contested terrain within the mainstream curriculum practice.” Coloniality is a key constraint and a site of struggle because it hinders political progress towards authentic African humanity, social transformation and economic development (Kaunda 2015:76-77). This means that inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism are authentic African values that should be exuded by the updated 2017 Religious Studies curriculum.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the socio-religious situation seems to influence the kind of changes acceptable in Religious Education at a time when many national curricula are being revised for them to be more responsive to changes in society (Matemba 2009:49). Societies have changed to become multi-faith ones as opposed to mono-faith ones. This is true with regards to the new curriculum in Zimbabwe, which, in an attempt “to replace a Christocentric Religious Studies subject, [has] created new challenges, which have led to some schools deciding to cease offering the subject” (Dube and Tsotetsi 2019:257). These challenges are attributed to the historical dominance of Christianity in the public sphere in general and in Religious Education in particular. This dominance “influences societies’ reluctance for change towards inclusive approaches” (Matemba 2009:49) as well as to policy inconsistencies on a multi-cultural Religious Studies. This research focuses on policy implementation challenges surrounding the updated Religious Studies curriculum, an issue that is important for national development in Zimbabwe. There is need for a clear and robust policy for Zimbabwe’s education system to develop. As such, if Religious Studies as a subject is treated as a vital subject that shapes morality and how we treat each other as humans, the nation can then develop socially, economically and politically. It is, therefore, necessary that a study on policy implementation and challenges on the updated Religious Studies curriculum be carried out so that distortions and misconceptions about other religions are removed. As such, policy networking by players

in the field of religion is crucial in order to create an atmosphere that promotes peace and accepts people of different religions (Dube 2019:257).

### **1.7 Theoretical framework**

A theoretical framework is defined as a set of terms and relationships within which a problem is formulated and solved (Badugela 2012:12). Thus, a theoretical framework deals with salient features connected to the research problem and proffers solutions which are comprehensive in mitigating the problem being discussed. Thus, this research is based on a theoretical framework known as the Effective Curriculum Policy Implementation (ECPI) (Maluluke 2015:10). This framework is based on the assumptions that;

- Teachers perform well when there is no curriculum change in the education system. This is based on Piaget (1977:7-8) who states that “assimilation and accommodation is necessary for curriculum implementers like teachers”. He argues that the training of teachers at colleges and universities in a particular curriculum is needed to prepare teachers for them to assimilate and adopt to a change in curriculum. The implementation of a new curriculum requires a change of principles, teaching approaches and methods. There has to be a pedagogical transformation which happens through assimilation and accommodation for teachers to implement a new curriculum framework.
- Teachers, who are the curriculum and policy implementers, should be motivated. Maslow (1943:370) states that teachers must be motivated. This results in the successful implementation of the new curriculum. Teachers must be incentivised for them to perform at optimum level.
- Successful curriculum implementation should begin at primary school level. This implies that for effective curriculum implementation to take place, it has to begin at the foundational level of the education system.
- Successful implementation of the new curriculum requires financial support. If resources are scanty, it affects the full implementation of the curriculum.

Thus, this theoretical framework looks at the challenges of curriculum change including the challenge for policy implementation, management of the curriculum, availability of resources for curriculum implementation as well as instructional leadership responsible for the implementation of new curriculum policy, monitoring and supporting of policy implementation as well as staff development.

## **1.8 Research methodology**

This section on methodology deals with research procedures followed in gathering data. By definition, “methodology” refers to “a way of thinking about and studying social phenomena” (Dube 2016:5, citing Corbin and Strauss 2008). On the other hand, Bogdan and Taylor (1975:75), argue that the term ‘methodology’ generally refers to the process, principles, and procedures by which researchers approach problems and seek answers. This means that research method is a systematic way of collecting, organising, analysing and interpreting the data using research procedures. It must be noted that this study employs a mixed methods research as shall be explained below under research design.

### **1.8.1 Research design**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1997:106) a research design refers to the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions. This simply means that a research design is an outline of a plan used when conducting research. This is because the research cannot be done haphazardly but should be done in a systematic manner. Kombo and Tromp (2006:70) note that a research design is “the glue that holds all the elements in a research project together to try to address the central research questions.” This means that a research design is a procedure with steps of how the study is conducted to respond to the research problem. For McMillan and Schumacher (1997:106), a research design refers to the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions. This simply implies that a research design is an outline of a plan used when conducting research. This is because the research cannot be done haphazardly but should be done in a systematic manner. Kombo and Tromp (2006:70) voices that a research design is ‘the glue that holds all the elements in a research project together to try to address the central research questions’. This means that a research design is a procedure with steps of how the study is conducted to respond to the research problem.

In this study, I adopted a descriptive survey as a research design. Yin (2003:20) describes a research design as “a logical plan for getting from here to there, where ‘here’ may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and ‘there’ is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions”. The survey design is defined as “the method of securing information concerning a phenomenon under study from all or a selected number of respondents of the concerned universe whereby the investigator examines those phenomena which exist in the

universe independent of his action” (Kothari and Garg, 2014: 89). This implies that in this study, data on policy implementation challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary school was gathered without direct contact with the respondents. This study employed sample survey whereby only Hwange Urban and peri-urban District Religious Studies was surveyed using questionnaires. This was done to save both time and money but yielding more accurate results than in census survey. The study enriched the survey design by using questionnaires because they enable soliciting of information from various cases and a large number of 40 participants helps in generalising results from the sample to a population (Maree, 2007). Hence, the survey strategy enhances an extension of the generalisability of the findings on the policy implementation challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum.

## **1.9 Data collection instruments**

The researchers will employ questionnaires, interviews and document analysis to collect data in relation to policy implementation challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe’s secondary schools.

### **1.9.1 Questionnaires**

The questionnaire is used as the research method under the qualitative research design. Tshuma and Mafa (2013:126) define a questionnaire as a document containing questions designed to obtain information from the sampled respondents, usually composed of open-ended (unstructured) and closed-ended (structured) questions. Thus, a questionnaire is a research tool through which respondents are asked questions in a predetermined order. This is done in most cases when one cannot readily meet all the respondents but desires responses by sending them questionnaires. The quality of the research related to the designing of the questionnaire is important for it leads to collecting precise data in order to answer the research questions and attain the research objectives (Saunders et al 2003). Usually, a questionnaire is constructed for a specific research topic and tends to gather various kinds of data such as current opinions or patterns of behaviour. Through the use of a questionnaire, it is easier to have a critical analysis as well as make some key interpretations, comparisons, identification of trends and relationships of the phenomena under study. Questionnaires are complementary to research interviews because those who would not be readily available for interviews would have

questionnaires sent to them so that they would give their views on Religious Studies policy and curriculum implementation challenges.

### **1.9.2 Interviews**

A qualitative research design also involves the use of interviews. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1996) quoted in Creswell et al. (2000:67) an interview could be described as “any conversation or interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, with emphasis on the social situations that provide research data”. This means that interviews are vital in that they provide a platform for the researcher to probe the interviewee further where clarity is needed. Thus, open ended questions will be used for they are flexible to alter questions depending on the participants’ responses. The semi-structured interview guide will be used for Family and Religious Studies (FRS) teachers and other experts from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as well as Zimbabwe School Examinations Council. The purpose of interviewing is to allow the researcher “to gather descriptive data in the subject’s own words” and to access unobservable variables (Creswell et al 2000:67). It is because of this reason that interview guides are used. They are used to standardise the comparability of responses while reducing prejudices on the part of the interviewer. A tape recorder, notepads, and pens will be used to record the information collected from the interviews. This is done as a point of reference in situations where the researcher may misplace the information. These tools are important in making alterations and modifications when need arises during the research process.

The researcher starts with the designing of the research instruments which include the questionnaire, semi-structured interview guides, and document analysis checklist. The Family and Religious Studies syllabuses will be analysed, followed by questionnaire distribution to teachers of Family and Religious Studies in selected schools from Zimbabwe’s Matabeleland North province. After the distribution of questionnaires, data from subject specialists from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) inspectorate as well as ZIMSEC are collected through in-depth interviews using a semi structured interview guide. The study will utilise triangulation of methods because it reduces weaknesses that are associated with the usage of one method. Interviews enable one to get as much information as one can. Interviews are useful when one wants detailed information about people’s thoughts and attitudes (Boyce and Neale 2006:3).



### **1.9.3 Document analysis**

To complement the use of questionnaires and interviews, the study also utilises document analysis which involve evaluating documentary material such as minutes, letters, circulars, syllabi, inspectorate reports, and other policy documents related to the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Seen in this light, Maluleke (2015:14) states that document analysis refers to the evaluation of “both public documents like policy documents, empirical research, minutes of meetings, official reports and private documents like personal journals and diaries, letters, internet information”. These documentations will be analysed to provide a better understanding of the research problem as well as the solutions. Creswell (2003:223) says such documentary materials are unobtrusive sources of information. Such documents provide extra information and help to verify information obtained from other sources. To obtain information on curriculum implementation and policy challenges, empirical research studies from documented material are important in the understanding of policy challenges and implementation of the updated 2017 Religious Studies subject in secondary education. This study uses both public and private documents that are verified and clarified data from interviews and observations.

### **1.10 Population of the study**

A population is a group of people with the same characteristics (Creswell 2014:160). In this study, the targeted population comprises of Family and Religious Studies teachers, inspectors of education responsible for Religious Studies as well as the subject manager of Religious Studies at Zimbabwe School Examinations Council because they have the same common defining characteristic of ensuring that policy is effectively implemented. Thus, the targeted population includes all teachers and educational inspectors in charge of Family and Religious Studies from selected secondary schools from Matabeleland North province in Zimbabwe as well as the subject manager in charge of the Family and Religious Studies at the Zimbabwe School Examination Council.

#### **1.10.1 Population sampling**

A sample, according to Cohen (2007) is a subset of the original group selected from the whole group taken to represent the whole group. Punch (2005:101) notes that “all research, including qualitative research, involves sampling. This is because no study, whether quantitative or qualitative or both, can include everything. You cannot study everyone, everywhere doing everything.” Thus, a representation of the whole shall be selected, and judgement shall be

made from that sample. A sample is important as it makes the research manageable because it is difficult, if not impossible, to deal with the whole population.

The essential purpose of any research is to be able to generalise research findings and there are two basic types of generalisation. The first is, statistical generalisation, when a probability theory is used to assume that the finding from a small sample will yield the same results in a larger population (Punch, 2005:101). It depends on the survey research for a representative sample that allows for generalisation.

This study will use purposive sampling. Palys (2008) defines purposive sampling as that method according to which group participants are chosen according to pre-selected criteria relevant to particular research questions. In this study, forty-two selected Religious Studies teachers from the Matabeleland North province provinces of Zimbabwe, one ZIMSEC subject manager in charge of assessment of Religious Studies as well as two educational inspectors responsible for the subject under study will be sampled. This sums up a sample of forty-five respondents. The choice of purposive sampling is because the researcher believes that respondents of interest possess the required quality towards supplying the data needed.

### **1.10.2 Sample size**

Cohen and Manion (2006) assert that a sample is a sub-group of population. Therefore, sampling involves selecting part of population that is a smaller group of people who will provide data for analysis by responding to survey questions. In this research, purposive sampling will be employed to select 40 Religious Studies teachers from four different types of schools where Religious Studies is taught. Hence, the sample size will be comprised of 40 Religious Studies teachers from government run schools, rural district council schools, mission schools and private schools. Selecting teachers from various school types is important in determining the extent to which policy implementation is adhered to by private schools. Teachers will be grouped according to secondary school types. Two senior teachers, two educational inspectors and one subject manager will be purposively sampled from one province to make a total sample of forty-five.

A total of 40 updated Religious Studies teachers from the Matabeleland provinces secondary schools will be purposively sampled for questionnaires. Two senior teachers, two inspectors and a ZIMSEC official will be purposively sampled for interviews. Religious Studies teachers will be selected for this study because they are key implementers of the Religious Studies

curriculum while inspectors and ZIMSEC official are policy supervisors and monitors. Teachers who have been teaching the updated Religious Studies syllabus are critical in contributing to the analysis of the policy implementation challenges regarding the new curriculum with special reference to the updated Religious Studies subject, which could promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

### **1.11 Data analysis**

Data analysis is the apex of the research which involves selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting the data gathered to provide a reflection of the matter under study. Since the study is a mixed method one, information that is collected through questionnaires, interviews, observations and document analysis is classified and arranged according to key thematic issues which correspond to the research questions, and is presented in a narrative form. The process of data analysis is informed by the theoretical framework which is primarily based on curriculum implementation. It is done manually and the variables that were analysed include Religious Studies policy, curriculum implementation and curriculum challenges. The analysis involves comparing the interviewees' responses with observations and the data gathered from related literature concerning Religious Studies policy and implementation challenges. Analysis of data is done timeously after the information is collected to reduce loss of important information.

### **1.12 A Brief review of related literature**

When undertaking a research of this nature, it is important to review literature made available by others who have done research on issues which are related to Religious Studies as a curriculum subject as well as policy matters connected to the subject. Literature review will shed some light on the studies undertaken and also help in the formulation of hypotheses. Tuckman (1972:291) recognises the importance of a literature review when he explains that:

The purpose of the literature review is to provide a basis for the formulation of hypotheses. In other words, articles are not reviewed for their own sake, but as basis for generalization from them to your own study.

Literature review helps the researcher to have a firm grasp on what has been researched on and also what has not been researched on with the aim of identifying research gaps that need to be

filled. It also helps the researcher to understand what other researchers have done which improves the study by looking at what has not been researched.

In the light of the main thrust of literature review, recent studies have shown that in general, education is one of the most effective means of preventing intolerance (UNESCO 2014: 174). As such, a number of scholars locally and internationally have done their research on Religious Studies and have concluded that the subject has a positive role in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. This research is motivated by scholarly contribution on Religious Education by British, the Commonwealth as well as Zimbabwean scholars. Literature is important in understanding the Zimbabwe's Religious Studies policy and challenges in its implementation since the Zimbabwean educational system borrowed much from the British educational system.

In Britain, Grimmit (1987) undertook an exploratory study of the contributions that Religious Education could make to pupils' learning. Grimmit saw Religious Education's educational significance in inculcating morals and religious literacy. This means that the subject should serve educational aims and not simply those of religion. Therefore, Religious Studies teachers should be educators and not preachers. Teachers are transmitters of Religious Education rather than evangelists. He also dealt with the pedagogical aspects of the subject where he re-emphasised the need for Religious Studies to be included in the educational curriculum because of its role in moulding character and behaviour. His study has been more philosophical and sociological and can thus act as a theoretical foundation for an understanding of Religious Studies as a curriculum subject. It will, thus, inform this study, especially on the personal development of the Zimbabwean learner.

Wright (1993) studied Religious Education in secondary schools in Britain and believes that the 1988 Education Act of Britain led to radical changes in Religious Education in that country. He also underpinned the legal framework that gave support to the confessional approach of Religious Education which came as a result of Christian worship in schools. He notes that the phenomenological approach is the solution to the problems of teaching people of various religious backgrounds. His study concluded that teachers should not be confessional in the approach to the subject. The situation is similar to the Zimbabwean context where approaches to Religious Studies should evolve from being confessional to being phenomenological as well as educational, and adopting a multi-faith approach.

Jackson (2004) also conducted a research where he raised important issues with regard to Religious Education in the face of increasing plurality in British society. He argues that in the late 1950s, Religious Education in Britain was a form of Christian instruction with spiritual, moral and civic goals aimed at serving a predominantly Christian Britain. With the passage of time in Britain, the dominance of Christian community changed to a multi-religious community. According to Jackson (2004:8), Religious Education in Britain had responded positively to religious diversity with the emergence of pedagogies which took into “consideration plurality, inclusivity and tolerance within the context for Religious Education.” His study noted that Christian indoctrination to students is not healthy in a plural and diversified society. For him, Religious Education should promote plurality. Further, he considered calls that encouraged that the teaching of Religious Education ought to promote plurality in the British society. For him, the most appropriate pedagogical response to plurality in the school was to provide a policy framework which catered for a multi-religious society. Jackson (2004:8) calls for Religious Studies syllabi design that are linked to pedagogical issues. This study by Jackson is important in Zimbabwe where multi-religious groups are found, including Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, among other religions. As an academic discipline in Zimbabwe, Religious Studies has evolved a lot since independence up to the present day. His justification of Religious Education as a curriculum subject was the need for religious plurality and appropriate pedagogy. This is also what this research advocates for in Zimbabwe.

Matemba (2011) also did a comparative study of the evolution of Religious Education in Malawi and Scotland from 1970 to 2010. The study sought to draw analogies between the two nations and to indicate significant points of difference regarding key issues that underpin this development between these two countries that have a historical relationship dating back to 1859. The study concluded that without government intervention and support from other key stakeholders Religious Education would continue to be regarded as a marginal curriculum subject. This is relevant to the study in Zimbabwe because the latter is a country which has undergone curriculum reform with Religious Studies being considered a marginal subject. In South Africa, Prinsloo (2008) conducted a research on a critical evaluation of the South African policy on religion and education of 2003. He concluded that historical religions like Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Indigenous Religion should be treated with respect. For him, policy and curriculum documents on the study of religion(s) will contribute to learners’ growth in religious competence. This will result in a plural and democratic society. His evaluation of the

Religious Studies policy is vital in critiquing the current policy in Zimbabwe so that Religious Studies becomes an integral part of a plural and democratic society.

In Zimbabwe, a number of researches have been conducted. It is important to understand what Religious Studies scholars in Zimbabwe echo. Mavheneka (1999) conducted a research on the status of Religious Education at secondary school level in Zimbabwe, sixteen years after independence. In his study, he notes that the attitudes of schools towards Religious Education were more positive. This is because the subject does not require a lot of financial backup. The study was mainly on how the subject was viewed in Zimbabwean society, particularly in the education sector. It is how the subject is viewed which leads to challenges in implementing the policies on Religious Studies.

Nondo (1991) carried a research on multi-faith issues and approaches in Religious Education with special reference to Zimbabwe. This study was revisited by Ndlovu (2004) who also conducted research on Religious Education in secondary schools in Zimbabwe where he advocated for a multi-faith approach. His research was mainly on multi-faith approach in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. He argued that the arrival of the missionaries in Zimbabwe in 1859 was an important factor in understanding the character of education. For him, Christian missionaries played an important part in the development and history of Southern Africa, including Rhodesia, during the 19th century which impacted on Religious Studies pedagogy in the present-day Zimbabwe. Marashe, Ndana and Chireshe (2009) studied Religious Education in Zimbabwe focusing on the teaching of African Traditional Religion in primary schools. They argued that African Indigenous Religion is an important component of the Religious Studies curriculum. This current study will bring a comprehensive understanding of Religious Studies in secondary schools, focusing not only on Judaism and Christianity but also on Islam and Indigenous Religion.

Furthermore, Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi (2013) also critiqued the old Ordinary Level Religious Studies syllabus and concluded that it had some inadequacies and was insensitive to the contemporary modern world. They recommended a comprehensive Zimbabwean Religious Education policy that was non-discriminatory, non-exclusive but accommodative and global in its approach to the study of religion. They further argue that policy is a theoretical guide to the review of the syllabus because the current scenario enables planners to take advantage of lack of policy and protect their personal interests and inclinations in the study of religion. This current study advocates for an inclusive Religious Studies curriculum, hence it critiques the

updated 2017 curriculum by analysing its multi-faith policy and implementation challenges. The study seeks to contribute to an understanding of the new curriculum which is inclusive of African traditional religion, Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

Dube (2017) conducted a research on the socio-religious hybridity strategy that attempted to respond to the problems of Religious Studies in Zimbabwean secondary schools. He notes a multiplicity of challenges with the current multi-faith approach to Religious Studies, which excludes other local religions from the old curriculum reviewed in 2016. Dube believes that the old curriculum is largely Christocentric, implying that the Christian religion is extensively covered. This is because the old curriculum did not give space to other religions as it concentrated on Christianity. Dube (2017) further notes that the monolithic curriculum ignored the fact that some of the children have a religious orientation that may not necessarily be Christian. The old Religious Studies curriculum failed to respond to religious abuse which promoted exclusivism and intolerance. His study proposes a socio-religious hybridity strategy and his focus was on the old Religious Studies curriculum. Dube (2017) advocates for a Religious Studies curriculum that promotes social justice, equity, recognition, inclusivity, and improvement of human conditions. This current study seeks to go further from where Dube (2017) left and contribute to the body of knowledge on the challenges of implementing the updated Religious Studies curriculum in an effort to move towards a religiously inclusive, tolerant and plural society.

Although other religions have been introduced in the new curriculum to promote peaceful co-existence of various religious groups and consequently improving the lives of people through the study of religion, there have been a lot of challenges in terms of implementing the new policy on Religious Studies. The researches done, particularly in Zimbabwe, focused mainly on the old curriculum looking at Religious Studies at primary school level, pedagogical issues in secondary school Religious Studies as well as syllabus interpretation and critiquing the challenges of the old curriculum. This current study is based on the new curriculum adopted in 2017 focusing on policy implementation challenges of Religious Studies within the context of the new curriculum. It is this gap that this research seeks to contribute towards filling by offering solutions to matters pertaining to Religious Studies policy and planning so that challenges that continue to affect the subject are reduced.

### **1.13 Scope of the research**

As noted above, the scope of this thesis is to analyse policy implementation challenges affecting Religious Studies in Zimbabwe from colonial period to the present day. Thus, this research shall be composed of six chapters, including the first chapter which is the introduction of this thesis. The second chapter provides theoretical framework as well as literature review of Religious Studies and its implementation issues that have emerged in the wider discourse on contemporary Religious Studies. The third chapter describes the research methodology. The fourth chapter focuses on data presentation while chapter five focuses on analysis of findings and literature control. Chapter six is the conclusion which provides summary of findings and recommendations to the policy implementation challenges in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. The chapter addresses several issues which present a summary of the main findings, implications of the study in Zimbabwe, the limitations of the study and areas for further study suggested.

### **1.14 Ethical considerations**

Since the study will be conducted mostly in schools, permission will be sought from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE). The purpose of the study shall be made known to all the participants before their participation in the study. The researcher will write a letter to the Provincial Educational Directors requesting permission to collect data from Religious Studies teachers in Zimbabwe's secondary schools. After permission is granted, the researcher will design a consent form to be signed by participants. This form will indicate how information will be collected, and also explain the procedures to be followed during the investigation. The consent form will also clarify how the participants' privacy will be protected and how the confidentiality of the information they provide will be secured. The researcher will pledge to protect the information collected from public scrutiny until the actual publication of the research. He will treat all the participants with respect and give them due consideration. Thus, the respondents would have an informed consent form which enlightens them of their right to participate and to withdraw from the study at any time. The respondents are further requested to sign the informed consent forms. This is important because the participants' right to privacy, dignity and informed consent are upheld and guaranteed.

The above behaviour is informed by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:62) who stress that it is crucial to ensure that participants' right to privacy is always protected through the promise



of confidentiality. This means that although the researcher is aware of the participant who provided specific information, the information will be used only for the purposes of research and the name of the participant will not be attached to the information given. In his presentation of confidentiality and the right to privacy, Kimmel (1988), cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:62) notes that one general finding that emerges from the empirical literature is that “some potential respondents in research on sensitive topics refuse to cooperate when assurance of confidentiality is weak, vague, not understood or thought likely to be breached”. The researcher will ensure confidentiality by not using the names of the respondents or of the schools.

### **1.15 Definition of terms**

**Curriculum:** Mohanasundaram (2018:3) defines curriculum development as a planned, a purposeful, progressive, and systematic process to create positive improvements in the educational system. On the other hand, Makaram (2015:13) curriculum development refers to both a logical and a creative way to add new learning experiences to the lives of student. This means that curriculum development is the logical planning, designing, implementation and evaluation of the learning experiences of learners taking into consideration learning opportunities, materials, equipment and other resources required for learning. In this study, curriculum refers to the teaching and learning content as well as teaching methodology.

**Policy implementation:** refers to putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabuses and subjects (Makamure and Chikumbu 2000:50). This implies how the course of study is put into operation by teachers as instructed by those with authority. In this study curriculum implementation refers to how teachers are teaching or delivering Religious Studies curriculum and how assessment is done at school and national level.

**Curriculum change** refers to the transformation in the objectives of learning, namely which competences, knowledge, values and attitudes should acquire (Gourdard, Pont and Huang, 2020:8). Gilbet (2010) views curriculum change as the change of content knowledge, including its selection and organisation is curriculum reform. This implies that curriculum change means change in learning content, teaching methodology and learning outcomes.

**Inclusivism:** is a philosophical concept which deals with accommodating others and it acknowledges the existence of a multi-faith society as well as the advantages of having such a society. Matemba (2011:40) argues that inclusivism refers to being open to the idea that other

people should be given the space to express their religious views in education as well. This is an approach which is tolerant and promotes religious dialogue.

**Plurality/ Pluralism:** refers to the celebration of religious diversity in a multi-cultural society. For others, pluralism is the condition of society in which numerous distinct ethnic, religious, or cultural groups coexist within one nation or civil polity (Skeie 2002:2). This means that it is a condition in society that creates a platform for people in society to celebrate religious diversity through dialogue without requiring others to leave their religious beliefs.

**Policy:** is derived from the French term *policie* and a Latin word *politia* which means a plan of action that is taken by an individual or organisation or the government. For Torjman (2005:1) policy refers to a plan of action that is aimed at achieving the desired objective of all members of the society with the intention to protect, guide and address their concerns. In this thesis, policy refers to a direction of taking a particular action.

**Religious Studies (RS):** is the study of a religious phenomenon from liberal approach than a confessional approach. Damons (2017:30) defines Religious Studies as the study of religion as a universal phenomenon and of religions found in a variety of cultures. Religion is studied without converting learners but is done to make learners recognise, comprehend and appreciate religious beliefs and practices (Grimmit 2000). It results in one getting knowledge than belief about a particular religion being studied. In this study Religious Studies means the non-confessional approach to the understanding of religious concepts from various religions. To be precise Religious Studies in this context is the teaching about religions as contrasted to teaching religions.

**Family and Religious Studies (FRS):** is a learning area in secondary education in Zimbabwe which enables learners to understand family issues and Religious Studies issues from a non-confessional approach (Zivave and Muzambi, 2022). It is a secondary “syllabus that provides learners with opportunities to harness cognitive, religious and moral experiences. These experiences help the learners understand, interpret and apply religious and moral concepts to their everyday life” (MoPSE 2015:4). To be precise, it is curriculum concerned with understanding family dynamic in relation to various religions and it enables learners to learn religious truth from a non-confessional approach. In this study, FRS is just an improved version of Religious Studies curriculum which focuses on the teaching and learning of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

**Religious Education (RE):** is a learning area that aims to develop children's understanding of the world's religions (Jackson, 2020). It focuses on making learners who are adherents of a particular religion more informed about their religion. In most cases, Religious Education is offered by a teacher who is a part of the religion which he taught who communicate the content of the religious tradition to the student in order to inculcate them more deeply in the faith and to help them better understand their own religion (Grimmit 2000).

### **1.16 Organisation of the study.**

- **Chapter 1:** Provides an introduction to the study through comprehensive background to the study.
- **Chapter 2:** Provides a critical review of the literature and theoretical framework on the curriculum implementation, pedagogical and philosophical issues in Religious Studies, curriculum change in Religious Studies, challenges which affect Religious Studies when there is curriculum change.
- **Chapter 3:** Focuses mainly on the research methodology. It includes a description of research methodology and reasons for the selection of methods and instruments or techniques used to collect data.
- **Chapter 4:** Provides a detailed analysis of the policy implementation and challenges faced in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum from data collected, and critiques the findings of the research and the interpretation of data.
- **Chapter 5:** Presentation of findings on policy implementation and challenges affecting the updated religious studies curriculum in the light of reviewed literature.
- **Chapter 6:** Summarises the entire study by providing a detailed outline of the challenges in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum and offers recommendations.

### **1.17 CONCLUSION.**

Chapter 1 offered an introduction to the study by explaining the background to this study, the problem and aim of the study. The study has shown through a brief review of related literature that despite numerous research and publication works on abolished Religious Studies curriculum, there has been scanty information on the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe. The teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is experiencing challenges with regard to implementation. The implications of the non-implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in-line with the new curriculum

policy framework informs the need for this study. The chapter has discussed the theoretical framework, the methodology and the scope of the study. Issues of research methodology and data collection methods were also treated in chapter 1. Towards the end, the chapter turned to issues of sampling, data analysis, data verification, and ethical considerations, clarification of key terms and/or concepts, and structure of the thesis. It was established in this chapter that the research is a mixed methods one composed of both qualitative and quantitative. The study will analyse important documents as well as gather data through interviews to answer some of the research questions. Effective Curriculum Policy Implementation theoretical framework will be employed to ascertain the challenges in the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The chapter has shown that curriculum change in Religious Studies in particular poses a challenge for policy implementation in Zimbabwe. This research then, seeks to identify challenges affecting Religious Studies teaching and learning as well as providing a solution to the problem affecting Religious Studies as an academic subject. Chapter 2 turns to a treatment of other scholars' contributions to the pedagogical and philosophical issues related to Religious Studies which are vital in the promotion of inclusivity, tolerance and plurality with the intention of locating research gaps that this thesis will attempt to fill.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter has discussed the research problem, its context and the methodology used in the study. This chapter is, therefore, a mixture of theoretical framework and review of related literature. The theoretical framework for this thesis is Effective Curriculum Policy Implementation (Maluleke 2015) which connects to the research problem and proffers solutions which are comprehensive in mitigating the problem associated with policy. The research further offers an analysis of previous research and scholarly work on policy, curriculum implementation, pedagogical issues, philosophical issues, and challenges affecting Religious Studies as an academic subject. This chapter commences by discussing the concept Religious Studies and gives a scholarly insight on new trends affecting Religious Studies in the contemporary society. This is important in understanding issues affecting the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe. The chapter further explores curriculum designing and implementation with particular reference to Religious Studies in Zimbabwean secondary schools from independence era up to the era of the updated curriculum. The chapter further looks at pedagogical and philosophical issues in a way to identify research gaps that can be tapped in to promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism in a multi-religious society. There is plenty of research work on pedagogical approaches and philosophical issues in Religious Studies that are important in the understanding of Religious Studies as an academic subject in the education sector.

The aim of this literature review is to discuss what has already been investigated on the topic of curriculum implementation. As such, thematic frames have been adopted to address crucial areas in the study. These thematic frames provide literature on how Religious Studies curriculum is planned, designed and implemented in Zimbabwe, why Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe has undergone reform, and curriculum implementation in Zimbabwe. Literature review on pedagogical approaches and philosophical approaches to Religious Studies, appropriate learning theories in Religious Studies curriculum, policies which enhance the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies in Zimbabwe, challenges in the teaching and learning of RS in the Zimbabwean curriculum as well as problems associated with the current policy on education in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is also done. The ultimate objective of the review is to highlight the gaps in the existing knowledge and indicate what the current study could possibly do to improve policy

implementation and overcome the challenges associated with the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. As such, literature review helps the researcher to locate his study “solidly in the secondary literature in order to provide the reader with a theory base, a survey of published works that pertain to the current investigation and an analysis of that work” (Hofstee 2006: 91). This section marks the significance of Religious Studies policy planning, designing and implementation.

## **2.1 CURRICULUM PLANNING, DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTATION IN ZIMBABWE.**

Curriculum planning, designing and implementation are determinant factors in the successful implementation of a new curriculum framework in the education system the world over. The discussion of curriculum planning, designing and implementation becomes relevant to this study which is concerned with the policy implementation and challenges of the updated 2017 Religious Studies curriculum. Before exploring what literary works say about curriculum planning, designing and implementation in the light of Religious Studies, it is prudent to define the concept Religious Studies first.

## **2.2 THE CONCEPT RELIGIOUS STUDIES.**

The definition of Religious Studies is quite elusive among several scholars (Grimmit 2007:1). For some, it is the study about a religion while for others it is the study of religions (Grimmit 2007; Chetty and Smit, 2013). In some countries such as Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and South Africa Religious Studies is called Religious Education (R.E) or Religion Studies. In Singapore it is regarded as Religious Knowledge (R.K). Tan (2008:1) says Religious Knowledge (R.K) is “contrasted to Religious Instruction (R.I)” because it teaches about religion rather than teach religion. The various names given to the subject have a bearing on how the subject should be offered in the school curriculum. Religion and education are related in three ways; education into religion, education about religion, or education from religion (Grimmit 2000:7). The first, education into religion or learning religion, refers to the student’s introduction into a specific religious tradition with the aim to promote the individual’s personal and moral development through building a religious identity in a particular tradition.

In the Zimbabwean context, Religious Studies is regarded as Family and Religious Studies (FRS), which means it focuses on “the study of the respective historical backgrounds, beliefs

and practices, practitioners, rites and rituals of selected religions in Zimbabwe and their impact on an individual, family and local, national and global communities respectively (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education 2015:2). The thrust of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is to ensure that teachers do not indoctrinate learners but make learners aware of religious truth claims in a non-confessional manner because Zimbabwe is a multi-religious society. Therefore, Religious Studies in this context is a non-confessional study of religions, their histories, and their contemporary roles and meanings. In this study, the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum is the same as Family and Religious Studies. The two terms, 'updated Religious Studies' and 'Family and Religious Studies (FRS)' will be used interchangeably. Whilst several scholars have defined Religious Studies from confessional and non-confessional perspectives, it is the misunderstanding of the concept that has led some people to imply that Religious Studies is confessional (Robb 2003: Thompson 2004: Wright 2004). This study, therefore, explores Religious Studies or alternatively, Family and Religious Studies, as the teaching and learning of religions in the classroom.

## **2.3 RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM**

The term curriculum is from the Latin word *currere* which means run (Egan 2003:10). Generally, a curriculum is a body of subjects or subject matter prepared by the teachers for the students to learn. It is synonymous to "course of study" and "syllabus". The Oxford dictionary of English (2010) defines 'curriculum' as the subjects that are included in a course of study or taught at school or college whereas. Gwarinda (1993:23) defines curriculum as the vehicle through which educational goals are attained in a given educational system. Tanner (1980:13) defines 'curriculum' as the planned and guided learning experiences and intended outcomes, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences under the auspices of the school, and for the learners' continuous and wilful growth in personal social competencies. Tyler (1949) defines 'curriculum' as all the learning of students which is planned by and directed by the school to attain its educational goals while Taba (1962:10) believes that curriculum is "a plan for learning." Wheeler (1978) avers that curriculum is "the planned experiences offered to the learner under the guidance of the school. On the other hand, Eisner (1985) says 'curriculum' is "a course, or a classroom can be conceived of as a series of planned events that are intended to have educational consequences for one or more students." It is clear that existing definitions of curriculum have been influenced by modes of thought, pedagogies, and political as well as cultural experiences. In fact, there is no single complete

definition of the concept. It is because of this, that the definition of curriculum is fragmentary, elusive and confusing.

In this thesis, I argue that curriculum refers to the whole course content offered in the 2017 updated Religious Studies. The course content includes Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam which are taught from a multi-faith perspective. It deals with the learning experiences of the learner with all the religions found in Zimbabwe. Below is a discussion of the historical development of the Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe.

### **2.3.1 Religious Studies in the Colonial Period**

The beginning of formal education in Zimbabwe is attributed to missionaries who worked together with the colonial government in creating policies that guided the teaching and learning of Religious Studies and other subjects during the colonial era. In this section, I focus on the policies that had a direct influence on the teaching of Religious Studies or Religious Education. The colonial policies assumed that Africa had a religious vacuum; hence, the role of the missionaries was to fill the vacuum through education (Dube 2016:62). It is this assumption that led to a curriculum design that was aimed at teaching Africans about Christianity as the one and only true religion. In this study, I am going to explain the role missionaries played in influencing policy on the Religious Studies curriculum and the educational decisions that affected the Africans. I focus on three selected policies, which I believe still influence the curriculum development of Religious Studies. Furthermore, this section analyses the role of the missionaries in shaping the Religious Education curriculum. In this context, Religious Education means the transference of knowledge about one religion in schools. This means that strong emphasis will be on one religion's beliefs and practices. The section will thus explore salient historical developments of the colonial period which have a connection to the role played by missionaries in the introduction, teaching and learning of Religious Education in Zimbabwe as well as the curriculum development of Religious Studies. The landmark years in the political history of Zimbabwe from 1890 to the present provide a framework for the discussion, because of the educational reforms and policies that were formulated as well as being implemented in various historical eras.

Missionaries did not only influence the colonisation of Zimbabwe but also the curriculum offered to indigenous people during the colonial era. It should be noted that in 1890 Cecil John Rhodes, through the British South African company, colonised Zimbabwe and also imposed a western European education curriculum in the country, which glorified white beliefs. The



curriculum the colonial government offered to the black indigenous people was similar to that of the country of the colonial master. This is supported by Challiss (1980: VI) who argues that “the system of schools in the territory generally reflected the notions of British Empire loyalty and adherence to British educational traditions”. It is this system that alienated indigenous people from their religious beliefs as they adopted the religion of the colonial masters.

The policy of educating Africans using European curriculum affected the Religious Studies curriculum. Indigenous people were taught Christianity from a confessional approach. This is because the religion of the Indigenous people was vilified and condemned. Masaka and Mukungurutse (2017:211) aver that “the denial of the humanity of the indigenous people and indeed their religion laid the ground for the imposition of the hegemonic powers’ paradigm and the attempts at destroying that of the indigenous people.” There was a deliberate effort to destroy the identity of African people by destroying their culture and religion. Ndlovu (2004:43) says one of the reasons for this was that the British introduced a policy of stabilisation. Part of the stabilisation process by the colonialists was not only the disarmament of African religious beliefs but also the taking of land away from indigenous people. Land was part of the indigenous religious belief system. By expropriating the land, the rich African religious heritage was replaced by the imported white heritage. The implementation of the stabilisation process by the colonial government resulted in Christianity being the standard measure of civilisation, religiosity and true spirituality while other beliefs were considered the epitome of being uncivilised, paganistic and archaic.

Missionaries contributed to the displacement of land, religious heritages and natural resources as they worked to ensure that the selfish political objectives of settlers were fulfilled. This shows that missionaries had purportedly been sent from Britain to civilise Africans who were considered as inferior to other races. Ndlovu (2004:46) supports this where he says missionaries saw this as a way of putting into practice the Christian belief that in the eyes of God all men are equal. This was done through evangelism which spread the message of equality to Africans. However, their evangelism was theoretical as there was a clear division of society in terms of black and white. White culture and beliefs were considered superior to Africa’s. Their aim was to de-Africanise Africans of their rich religious heritage and their culture. Ciaffa (2008:212) supports this, saying “colonialism violently disrupted African cultural traditions and imposed a new form of civilisation which was foreign to African way of life.” This objective was played by missionaries who were the repository of formal education. They did this through Religious Studies in order “to ensure that Africans would misplace their religious

uniqueness and embrace the European Christian view” (Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi 2013:226). This was done to advance white political interests which aimed at taking all means of production from indigenous people. As such, they used Religious Studies education in the form of Christianity as a means of pacifying Africans so that they would not fight back and reclaim their lost heritage. Indigenous people were made to believe that the kingdom of heaven was for those who cultivated peace and who were Christians. For them, a new Africa, with the spiritual guidance from Christian missionaries and settlers was necessary. This implies that Africans were seen as people without a religion and there was, therefore, the need to colonise Africans and give them spiritual light.

### **2.3.1.2 The role of Colonial Government education policies in shaping Religious studies.**

The historical foundations of Religious Studies curriculum is traced back to missionaries during 18<sup>th</sup> century. Seen in this light Ndlovu (2004:47) says the arrival of missionaries in Zimbabwe from 1859 is an important factor in understanding the character of education, and consequently Religious Education, in Zimbabwe prior to independence. These missionaries were of Christian orientation in terms of their religious affiliation. Their role was to preach the word of God as well as provide literacy education. It is because of this reason that they later established schools which became centres of evangelism and education. Although missionaries differed ideologically with the colonialists in their treatment of Africans, the two worked hand in glove to destroy the Indigenous Religion of the Africans. Nkomazana and Setume (2018:2) say “missionary education systems were embedded in Western Christianity.” This led to the colonisation of the minds of the Africans as everything that was associated with indigenous people was seen in bad light. It was not only Western thinking and knowledge that was promoted by western missionaries but also Christian beliefs and spirituality.

As previously adumbrated, colonialists acted as ambassadors of the British system of governance and did a lot in the oppression and repression of black indigenous people. The objectives of the colonialist was based on the “exploitation and the pauperisation of the colonised” (Memmi 1990:18). This exploitation and pauperisation of the indigenous people by the white was seen as something that was divinely sanctioned. Scholars like Challis (1980:27), Chung and Ngara (1985:45), Farquhar (1960:53) observe that they portrayed themselves as superior to the Africans in every respect and were thus fulfilling a divinely inspired mission as purveyors of civilisation. It is this domination by white people that led to the dragging of the indigenous people to the social, economic, political and religious periphery. Thus, a caste

system based on race and gender was established. A prominent white supremacist in the name of Cecil John Rhodes is quoted by Atkinson (1972:13) saying:

I contend that we are the finest race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings. What alteration there would be in them if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon rule?

Ndlovu (2004:48) says a “dehumanizing and exploitative relationship existed between the coloniser and the colonised.” This created an unjust society which promoted exclusivism and a monoculture which celebrated European economic, political and religious heritage. This implies that the colonisers saw themselves as harbingers of civilisation, which they brought to the black people by oppressing and treating them like inhuman beings. Memmi (1990:25) laments this where he says an oppressor is an uncouth fragmented human being, a cheat, solely preoccupied with his privileges, who transforms the colonised into a victim of oppression, a dehumanised and broken being who has to accept his own degradation. I notice that colonisers, through their educational curriculum, particularly Religious Studies curriculum, indoctrinated Africans to be pacified citizens by teaching and preaching Christianity as the true religion. This study seeks to decolonise colonial Religious Studies that was inherited at independence.

The Religious Studies curriculum was designed from top to bottom by white missionaries as a means of glorifying the white men’s culture and religion. The primary objective of the missionary curriculum was to promote literacy by ensuring that indigenous people were able to read and write as well as being receptive of Christian teaching. Reading and writing was crucial in the evangelism process of the “uneducated and irreligious African society”. Seen in this light, Ndlovu (2004:48) argues that the missionary education enabled Christian converts to read and understand the scriptures. This marked the great influence of missionaries on the education of the Africans who socialised indigenous people into believing that education begins with knowing the Christian God and being converted to Christianity. For Atkinson (1973:96) the primary business of missionaries was evangelism. On the other hand, Ndlovu (2004:49) believes that the emphasis of missionary education was solely on Christian moral and religious instruction, which they saw as fundamental to the lives of the Africans. This implies that Catechism which enabled the conversion of indigenous people was the main focus of missionaries. This led missionaries to introduce Christian education which later evolved to become Religious Studies. Missionaries, therefore, should be credited for the establishment

and development of an education system in Africa as well as Religious Studies curriculum. This is the reason why the old curriculum had a bias towards biblical oriented religions and even the teachers of the updated curriculum are finding it difficult to shift from confessional ways of teaching. In this study, I intend to unpack how the Religious Studies promoted exclusivism at the expense of other religions which were intentionally excluded from the curriculum as a way of cementing colonial hegemony.

The Religious Studies curriculum which started as Christian education and introduced by white missionaries lacked qualities such as tolerance, inclusivity and plurality. This is because the Religious Studies curriculum which they offered was largely dogmatic and confessional. This is supported by Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi (2013:227) who state that “Religious Education in particular, in Zimbabwe, became more of catechetical teaching and also biblical teaching alone” during colonialism. This shows that Religious Education was a means of promoting Christian evangelism since their aim was to change the Africans from traditional life and religion to Christianity (Methodist Church 1946:1). The missionary teaching influenced the character of the Religious Education curriculum into a Christo-centric and exclusive one. It is because of this that missionaries played an important role in the birth and development of Religious Studies curriculum which promoted intolerance and exclusivism. This study seeks to advocate for inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism by deconstructing the colonial policy which is affecting the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

Although missionaries and colonisers belonged to two different institutions, religion and politics, respectively, they had one common agenda. This agenda was to promote European hegemony which was not only put in place to destroy the religious and cultural identity of the indigenous people but also to dispossess the indigenous people of their land. Thus, missionaries’ and colonisers’ complicity complemented one another in this agenda. Missionaries influenced colonialists and colonialists influenced missionaries on the social, economic, political and religious issues affecting the indigenous people. Zvobgo (1994:12), states that "Rhodes believed that missionary religious influence would also provide an ideological aim for colonialism in African society", and that the use of the Religious Studies curriculum was an important tool. This is supported by Dube (2017: 57) who observes that Religious Studies is associated with colonisation. The Religious Studies curriculum was used to shape the faith of indigenous people to renounce their native religious beliefs and practices. Through Religious Studies missionaries were “able to sell Western values and beliefs to the Africans” (Ndlovu 2004:50). This means that the Religious Education that was offered to

black indigenous people was a British policy that was approved and promoted to make sure that Africans were under the control of the colonisers. This means that controlling or colonising the indigenous people started with the brainwashing of Africans by missionaries who taught Africans that “Christianity is the religion” and others were not. In order to impose their own religion and thought systems on the indigenous people, the colonial settlers and their missionary accomplices had to conveniently deny the existence of a religion among the indigenous people of Zimbabwe, that deserved recognition and respect as their own (Gelfand 1968: 65; Gelfand 1981: 62-65; Wiredu 2003: 27; Wiredu 1998: 17; Taiwo 1998: 9; Kaoma 2016:63). This study therefore seeks to unpack how the updated Religious Studies curriculum upholds indigenous beliefs and practices as a means of promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

Missionary schools were established to advance the interests of white settlers. The London Missionary society was the first to establish a mission school which was officially opened by Robert Moffat in 1859 at Inyati in Matabeleland. Religious Studies became a compulsory subject that used to indoctrinate Christian beliefs and practices among learners. Thus, mission schools were established to educate, evangelise and offer spiritual healing to Africans and advance the interests of the colonisers. Zvobgo (1994:13) argues that missionaries at that stage intended to pursue their own set objectives, specifically designed to promote their own interests. This implies that mission schools were not established to advance the interests of white settlers and push Africans to the periphery. This marked the beginning of Christian exclusivism in Africa and particularly in Zimbabwe. Rosca (2018:142) believes that followers of an exclusivist approach can be found amongst several religions, such as Christians and Muslims who are all biased because of their own religious beliefs which advocate for radical monotheism. For this reason, Christianity became an official religion that was taught and practised in missionary schools as well as British government institutions during colonialism. I argue that, today, Christian mission schools find it difficult to embrace the teaching of other religions which are against Christian principles. Exclusivism and intolerance was cultivated during colonial period.

Mission schools led to the adoption of Religious Education which was Christo-centric in order to improve literacy and increase membership to Christianity before and after 1890. However, there was a clash of interest between mission schools and the colonial government with regard to the quality and nature of education. This is because “the colonial officials were only interested in education that would produce cheap labourers” (Ndlovu 2004:51). The role of

Christian missions in providing formal education has, however, always been subordinate to the overall plans and philosophy of the government (Ndlovu 2004:51). By 1899 the colonial government became aware of its advantage over the missionaries in this regard, and began to enact the first legislation for education (Education Ordinance 18 of 1899:2; Huggins 1939:16; Southern Rhodesia 1901:100). This gave the colonial government “power to formulate its philosophy of education based on its objective of training Africans to make a contribution to the economic development of the country by functioning as labourers” (Mungazi 1991:6). It is within this context that missionaries wanted to offer confessional education while the colonial government focused on education that would advance their interest by creating a literate cheap labour market. This is because they wanted their agricultural based economy and industry to be supported by cheap labour. As such, education ordinances were formulated between 1899 and 1910. The current Religious Studies curriculum, however, advances the interests of all native Zimbabweans. Thus, the current study is informed by multi-faith approach rather than confessional approach.

In 1910, the Graham Commission was set up to investigate the character of African education. The Commission was to assist with policy formulation in matters dealing with African education (Ndlovu 2004:52). The Commission noted that the churches were underfunded and that there was a lack of clear policies regarding the operations of churches in African education (Ndlovu 2004:52). The Commission advocated for a policy which was meant to “foster and encourage mission activities by increasing aid.” As such, there was consensus between the government and missionaries regarding the education policy. The Graham Commission recommended that “more emphasis should be placed on the teaching of literacy and numeracy; increased government control should be placed over mission schools; all African schools should be placed under the supervision of European missionaries; and external supervision of mission schools should be done by government inspector” (Ndlovu 2004:52). This implies that there was union between two bed fellows; the colonial government and missionaries, in order to control Africans through an educational policy and religion. Although the two had agreed to three fundamentals, namely; literacy, religion and practical training on educational policy to Africans, there was a challenge in policy implementation as “it was not clear who should control African education or what kind of curriculum must be taught in African schools” (Southern Rhodesia 1924-1954:21). It was after this commission that Christian education became mandatory. This is in contrast to the updated Religious Studies curriculum where

Christian education is no longer mandatory because the current policy encourages the teaching of religions.

In 1920 the Keigwin policy or scheme was drafted to enhance the learning of practical subjects and eventually, Religious studies. Dube (2017:62) avers that the Keigwin Scheme was set up to look into the education of the natives. It was named after the then director of native development, H.S. Keigwin. This educational policy intended to open industries in villages. As a pilot project, he opened two industrial African schools at Domboshawa in Mashonaland in 1920 and Tjolotjo in Matabeleland in 1921 (Zvobgo 1981:13). The Keigwin policy stipulated that the government should “develop village industries such as basket making, chair making, pottery, tile work and other crafts which would not compete with European trade and products” (Rose 1970:242). He sought to develop the concept of a unified curriculum pointing to all means by which Africans could raise their levels of production and provide themselves with more comfortable living conditions (Atkinson 1972:98; Dube 2016:62). The Keigwin policy was to “deny indigenous people’s advancement into the modern industrial economy, consequently, Africans were denied advanced skills for self-sufficiency and self-determination in the social-economic order” (Shizha 2011:19; Dube 2016:62). Thus, this policy wanted to promote technical and practical skills among learners. The strategy here was to channel Africans towards subjects that did not demand or enhance critical thinking, enabling a dogmatic and confessional approach to religion (Dube 2016:63). Practical subjects required less critical thinking skills; and Religious Studies offered from a confessional approach did not demand critical thinking skills.

It was this policy which led to antagonism between missionaries and the colonial government because the policy wanted to make learners self-reliant thereby creating a labour challenge for the white industry. This antagonism was as a result of imposition of Christian religion. In defending the imposition of Christianity on the indigenous people of Zimbabwe, Keigwin (1923: 17) reports that “the fundamental necessity of Christian teaching for those who have been led to abandon much of what was to them their religion should always be recognised.” The missionaries tended to look with suspicion on any form of literary instruction not grounded in Christian teachings (Atkinson 1992:101). The Keigwin Scheme for Africans became “a subject of debate among the colonial officials and church leaders... not because it was in the hands of missionaries or not but because of what it was designed to do” (Mungazi 1991:4). This suffices to say, any learning that was not grounded on Christian principle was deemed incomplete. Therefore, Religious Education remained a Christian form of instruction.

Although missionaries were not against a policy of industrial education as enshrined in the Keigwin scheme, they were anxious to promote formal academic education and RS in particular (Dube 2016:62). This is because Religious Studies enabled them to prepare young Africans for church, particularly during the early days when missionaries were unacquainted with local conditions and the languages and customs of the people (Zvobgo 1996:17). The conflict between the missionaries and colonialists became apparent when the missionaries emphasised Religious Instruction [which was later called Religious Studies] (Dube 2016:62) and the latter emphasised manual labour as a more appropriate form of education for Africans (Mungazi 1991:3). To this end, the Keigwin policy relied much on the help of the missionaries to convert and position Africans into understanding that African religiosity was impracticable, primitive and did not have a space in the progressive processes of development (Dube 2016:62). Therefore, this policy centred mainly on the promotion of practical skills but due to the influence of the church, the policy also advanced Religious Education which was Christian oriented. This policy did not recognise the existence and promotion of other religions other than Christianity. Thus, the Keigwin policy influenced the learning of practical subjects as well as Religious Education. However, the current updated Religious Studies curriculum focuses on the teaching of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam because the policy is multi-faith in orientation.

### **2.3.1.2 The influence of missionaries on Religious Studies during colonialism.**

Missionaries were key architects of Religious Studies curriculum development during colonialism from 1890 to 1979. They planned, designed and implemented a Religious Studies curriculum with the main objective of advancing Christian interests as they controlled mission schools' and public schools' curriculum. They introduced Religious Studies for Africans. Ndlovu (2004:54-55) says missionaries played an important role in the education of Africans, particularly in introducing the subject Religious Education, then known as Scripture or Religious and Moral Instruction. This curriculum was didactic and evangelistic in nature. This is in total contrast to the updated Religious Studies curriculum which does not seek to convert but to make learners have knowledge about religions. The current study assumes that the updated Religious Studies policy does not seek to convert but to inform.

Curriculum refers to a course content offered to learners. Missionaries also played a vital role in regulating the learning content and character of Religious Studies. They disapproved any curriculum content which they deemed was against Christian ethos. Ndlovu (2004:55) argues



that missionaries were convinced that any future development in African education was to be built on a Christian foundation. Christianity was considered as important in grounding and shaping "... the professional, academic and moral training of their subjects" (White 1996: 18). This view is further corroborated by the Secretary of the Missionary Conference in 1925 who outlines the aim of Religious Education teaching as follows:

We are not dealing with Europeans but with natives. When you educate the native you weaken tribal customs and in consequence, unless we are careful to instil religion into the mind, as well as educating him, we are taking away something without putting anything in its place (Report of the Hadfield Commission 1925:59).

From the statement by the secretary of commission it is clear that the Religious Studies policy was to convert Africans by replacing indigenous religious belief system with Christian belief system. Religious Education was used as an instrument to convert Africans. For Christian missionaries and white settlers, Africans were a people without a religion. They were a people whose customs were archaic, backward and retrogressive. Ubah (1988:82) argues that "religious instruction exposed children to elements of the Christian doctrine, daily prayers, bible stories and so on. At the same time fierce attacks were mounted on traditional religious beliefs, and efforts were made to subject them systematically to criticism and ridicule." As such, the role of missionary education according to Maravanyika (1981:17) was to proselytise the African, and hence it was concerned with teaching the African to read so that he/she could read the Bible for himself/herself. The missionaries, thus, introduced Scripture or Religious and Moral Instruction as a platform to teach biblical truths or to communicate the Christian faith (Moyo 1983:101). This is further supported by Ndlovu (2004:55) who says that the subject Religious Education was also seen as an important tool towards achieving the "desired outcome" that is to Christianise and to bring "enlightenment" and "civilization". To this end, many scholars like Atkinson (1972) Crowder (1968), Mungazi (1991) and Ramose (1986), among others, agree that missionary provision of education, had the main objectives of Christianising, bringing "enlightenment" and "civilization" to the Dark Continent (Makuvaza 1996:66). The role of missionary Christian education was to bring light to the lost (black indigenous people). Ndlovu (2004:56) believes that "the missionary endeavour in the provision of education, especially Religious Education, to Africans in colonial Zimbabwe should be seen in this context." However, the current updated Religious Studies curriculum does not paint other religions in negative light. It seeks to appraise all religions as equal as demanded by the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

The Religious Studies curriculum was designed by the church during the colonial period. The department of Education (1940:1) during the colonial period argued that it was up to the individual church denominations to design their own curricula. Ndlovu (2004:56) believes that missionaries took advantage of this situation to influence what was taught in the mission schools. It was the principal responsibility of missionary societies to establish a significant number of schools (Chimhundu 1992: 97; Morris 1930: 38) and to 'educate' the indigenous people of Zimbabwe to accept the superiority of Christianity and its agents (Gelfand 1968: 66). This resulted in the indoctrination of learners as many religious-affiliated schools wanted to present their religious doctrines as exclusively true and absolute. Indigenous Religion and any other religion were despised. In support of this, Masaka and Mukungurutse (2017:12) argue that the denigration of the religion of the indigenous people of Zimbabwe has led to its exclusion from the school and university curricula during the colonial period. This even impacted on the post-colonial Religious Studies curriculum. Chitando (2005:181) says "the current low status of ATRs in the academic study of religion is largely due to the tendency by missionaries to minimise the indigenous traditions of Africa." This shows that Indigenous Religion did not meet the standard measure of what a religion of civilised people is. This led to the dominance of Christian religion. For this reason, Masaka and Mukungurutse (2017: 12) says "Christianity became the sole religion that was taught in the school curriculum." Christianity is currently being taught alongside Judaism, Indigenous Religion and Islam. The curriculum now focuses on the teaching of religions.

Initially, the Religious Studies curriculum had no teaching resources and most missionaries used the Bible as the curriculum content to teach literacy skills. Ndlovu (2004:56) says "emphasis was on the life as well as the teachings of Jesus Christ and some Old Testament scripture passages and the aim in teaching Africans to read was to enable them to read and understand the word of God as contained in the Bible." Mathematics was also included in the school curriculum and learners were taught simple mathematical skills such as addition, subtraction and multiplication (Sowing and Reaping 1948:15). This implies that Religious Studies was the first curriculum subject to be offered to Africans although there was no Religious Studies between 1930 and 1940. Missionaries acted as curriculum designers and it is because of this reason that missionaries were thus able to influence the content of Religious Education and determine their own methodology (Sowing and Reaping 1948:16).

According to Ndlovu (2004:57) the first official Scripture Syllabus for mission schools in Rhodesia was proposed by the then Secretary of Education J. Cowie in 1949. Ndlovu (2004:57)

further notes that mission schools that offered Ordinary Level, used the Cambridge School Certificate syllabus in form three and four, beginning in 1942 which sought to rectify the weaknesses of the Keigwin policy which valued practical subjects at the expense of human sciences subjects like Religious Studies. This implies that from 1890 to 1948 there was no clear policy regarding Religious Studies. In support of this view, Dube, Mufanechiya and Mufanechiya (2015:76) state that during the period between 1896 and 1942 there was no unified syllabus for R.I. This meant that there was no robust policy regarding Religious Studies. Ndlovu (2004:57) argues that the lack of policy during the period prior to 1949 enabled the Christian missionaries of different denominations to spread the Christian values and beliefs as they saw it fit. Dube, Mufanechiya and Mufanechiya (2015:76) say the lack of a unified syllabus was attributed to the fact that there were many missionary groups which occupied Zimbabwe with different theological aspirations and religious ideologies. These included the London Mission Society, Mennonites, Roman Catholics, Lutheran, Dutch Reformed, Methodists, Anglicans and others. This means that the Religious Studies syllabus content was denominational specific. There was a competition of indoctrinating the indigenous people with various church doctrines under the guise of Religious Education. Concurring with the above assertion, Zvobgo (1996) argues that Religious Education was introduced into the formal secondary school curriculum during the colonial era as a proselytising instrument, hence its cultural bias and prejudice. In this context, the current updated Religious Studies is non-proselytising as different religious cultures are taught to make learners aware of various religions.

During this period, according to Circular No. 1 of 1949, children who belonged to, among others, the Roman Catholic Church and Jewish faith continued as in the past to receive their sole Religious Education lessons during school time from members of their own faiths (Department of Education 1949:1-2). This meant that each denomination was free to influence the Religious Education content in accordance with its own doctrines (Department of Education 1949:1). Thus, the Religious Studies curriculum was initially denomination-oriented. Every denomination used schools as agents of evangelism in the spread of their religious doctrines.

Missionaries thus had a strong influence in shaping the Religious Education subject content, character and methodology in this period (Ndlovu 2004:58). Following Ndlovu, the emphasis in this study is on Religious Studies in secondary education which officially commenced in 1942 after the introduction of the Cambridge School Certificate syllabus in Zimbabwe. The

historical epochs of Religious Studies in secondary education will be explored below with the intention of relating it to the current status of Religious Studies at last.

### **2.3.2 Critique of the inherited colonial Religious Studies syllabus**

As previously adumbrated, the coming of colonialism and missionaries in Zimbabwe led to the rise of Religious Studies as an academic subject. The colonial government established formal education which was dual in nature (Dube et al 2015:76). At one end it was a means of subversion and at another a means of indoctrination. The Religious Studies syllabus inherited from colonialism was confessional and was used as an instrument to advance western culture by chastising African belief systems. This led to cultural alienation and loss of identity. The colonial Religious Studies syllabus was thus a means of removing Africanism from indigenous people. Zvobgo (1996:255) states that Religious Education was introduced into the formal secondary school curriculum during the colonial era as proselytising instrument, hence its cultural bias and prejudice. Furthermore, in their research on the Zimbabwean Ordinary level syllabus, Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi (2013:222) indicate that the old syllabus was just a continuation of the colonial denominational legacy that saw missionary denominations such as the Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Reformed Church, Lutherans and Methodists being turned to more universal Christian teachings through a Christian-oriented syllabus. Thus, the colonial syllabus was largely Christocentric, extending into the post-colonial era.

The subject name ‘divinity’ shows the exclusive nature of the subject in terms of how it perceives other religions. For this reason, divinity is a concept which refers to a supernatural being that is considered to have some powers to control human life and the environment in general (Smith 2016: 279-280). Masaka and Mukungurutse (2017:214) say the term is misleading, contentious and mono-focal in nature in describing the content of the syllabus. The term is more of a Christian term and “to call it ‘Religious Studies’ is to dilute its disinterested, critical and objective attributes” (Masaka and Mukungurutse, 2017:214). Thus, the name gives an impression that Christian religion is the sole and authentic religion that deserves exclusive dominance in the educational curriculum. Divinity, therefore, according to Museka (2012a: 25) does not reflect the cultural diversity of the people who constitute the Zimbabwean society. This Divinity curriculum acted as a carbon copy of Christianity. In this study, the updated Religious Studies curriculum does not take Christianity as the sole religion worthy to be

studied. Indigenous Religion and Islam, which were previously discriminated against, are also taught.

It should be noted that the old curriculum, that is the 9154 A level Divinity papers 1, 2 and 3 as well as the Religious Studies at O' level adopted during the post-colonial era were Christocentric to the extent that they superficially dealt with Indigenous Religion and other religions such as Islam. The problems of RS are thus embedded in the colonial legacy such that religions of other religious groups have failed to attain space in the curriculum (Dube 2016:2). Marashe, Ndana and Chireshe (2009:38) aver "that soon after the attainment of independence, the Zimbabwean government, through the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, recommended the teaching of African Religion in the schools." This recommendation was an attempt to accommodate Indigenous Religion in an otherwise exclusive religious curriculum which had given preferential treatment to Christianity. Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi (2013:222-223) further state that the old curriculum syllabus posed challenges to advocates of Africanisation because it was alienating to the pupils' cultural, religious values and experiences. The old Religious Studies syllabus which was known as Religious Studies and Divinity at Ordinary Level and Advanced Level, respectively, was alien to the experiences and values of the Zimbabwean people who had different religious beliefs. The syllabus was Christocentric and Maposa (2014:76) agrees that "despite the Zimbabwean Government policy (ZANU PF Election Manifesto, 1980) and the Nziramasanga Presidential Commission Report on the Inquiry of Education and Training (1999) [having] declared that the entire Religious Education curriculum adopt the Life and Multi-faith approaches as methodologies in the teaching and learning processes," up to 2016, the Religious Studies curriculum remained basically Christocentric in content and ethos. The learning process favoured Christianity and denigrated other religions found in the Zimbabwean society. On the contrary, the updated Religious Studies focuses on Indigenous Religion (I.R), Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is more inclusive and pluralistic in nature. However, the single-faith approach to Religious Studies which was inherited by the Zimbabwean government at independence created a challenge to the current multi-faith society. Exclusivism was bred by this approach to Religious Studies which emphasised more value to Christianity and also denigrate other religions.

### **2.3.3 Post-independence Religious Studies**

Several scholars have documented the history of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe up to the abolished Religious Studies curriculum (Ndlovu 2004; Dube 2016). The studies have shown

that the development of the Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe can be traced back to the missionaries of the colonial period. Shumbayaonda (2015:31) observes that curriculum initiatives were introduced by missionaries at the turn of the twentieth century (early 1900). The general objective of this curriculum was to indoctrinate the Africans so that they facilitate easy colonisation of native Zimbabweans. This would improve missionary evangelism. For this reason, mission schools were established to ensure that Africans were converted. This implies that missionaries developed the Religious Studies curriculum to make Africans learn the Bible. This colonial Religious Studies curriculum was flawed in the sense that it was Christo-centric and widened the gap between Africans and their religion by creating a privileged religion (Gwaravanda, Muzambi and Masitera 2013:224). The curriculum ignored the religious needs of the African people. It was a curriculum designed to safeguard the interests of colonialists who worked in cahoots with missionaries from European countries (Zivave and Mhute 2021). It should be noted that the abolished Religious Studies curriculum is a product of colonialism.

At independence, the Religious Studies curriculum did not change. Muhamba (2020:3) supports this where he says that despite the attempts to localise the educational system, the government continued with the British oriented school curriculum. This is because the Religious Studies curriculum continued to harbour the beliefs of the colonial masters as Christianity dominated in the educational curriculum. Many people still maintained that there was only a single path to God through Christianity (Muhamba 2020:3). Indigenous Religion, Islam, Judaism and other religions remained on the periphery of the national educational curriculum (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020:304). This was caused by the confessional approach to the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. Pwiti and Ngoro (1999:143) observe that “in much of Southern Africa, for example, the introduction of Christianity led to the creation of new values which, in the long term, led Africans to neglect and despise their past cultural values.” Missionaries viewed themselves as agents of social and religious change with the mandate of civilising Africans. It is within this context that many educators and learners shunned other religions. Being learned was associated with the embracing of Christianity and treatment of other religions as gateways to hell. It is these weaknesses that have resulted in the formulation of the new policy in 2015 and its implementation in 2017.

### **2.3.3.1 Situating Religious Studies within the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (CIET) of 1998**

In January 1998, the government of Zimbabwe selected a twelve-member committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Caiphas Nziramasanga to inquire into the country's entire education system. This subsequently led to a curriculum review and consequently curriculum change (Gwaravanda et al 2013; Zivave 2020). The terms of reference of the enquiry mandated the Committee to "address more specifically areas in the education and training systems requiring reform on short-term, medium-term and long-term basis (Government of Zimbabwe 1999). A number of educational matters were explored in great detail culminating in a comprehensive 644-page report published and presented to the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe in August 1999. The Commission's report contained findings, challenges and recommendations which were far-reaching and were expected to guide educational reform at all levels into the new millennium (Mawere 2013:1078). This is because education curricula can never remain relevant and perfect for all ages as society changes (Munikwa 2011; Zvobgo 1996; Shiundu and Omulando 1992). As previously argued, the curriculum should be relevant to the societal needs and designed in a way that it meets the current economic, political and educational demands.

The 1998 CIET made several recommendations which were partially implemented from the early 2000s up to the year 2016. The Commission noted that the surrogate curriculum had several weaknesses which include:

- there was lack of national values/philosophy to guide learners in the surrogate curriculum,
- it did not uplift the virtues of self-reliance and entrepreneurship/enterprise and business skills
- it offered little to develop the learners' natural talents and aptitudes,
- it did not aggressively promote the teaching of Science, Maths, Technology, Vocational and Technical subjects and indigenous languages,
- it did not place adequate premium on Early Childhood Development education and non-formal education, and
- the curriculum was examination oriented.

From a Religious Studies perspective, the Commission recommended that there should be the teaching of Religious Studies from a multi-faith approach. It is within this context that Indigenous Religion was introduced as a means of reviving the African religious heritage that has been displaced by the colonial education curriculum which treated Indigenous Religion as bad religion. Thus, the Commission recommended for the introduction of Indigenous Religion

because of the “distortions and biases of the Western colonial administrators and Christian missionaries about African culture” (Sibanda 2018:299). Furthermore, the religious plural nature of the Zimbabwe society led the Commission to recommend the equal treatment of all religions in the education curriculum. Thus, the subject was commended for its ability to promote morality, co-existence and tolerance in people (Grimmit 2007). It is this reform that has motivated this study to look at the challenges associated with the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The older curriculum had been designed to preserve white interests and paint African belief systems as bad and backward. Religious Studies studied at both primary and secondary education favoured only one religion, Christianity (Museka 2012; Dube 2016, Zivave et al 2020). This created a religious ‘caste’ system where Christianity became the superior religion because it was considered as the model religion.

Scholars discuss how Religious Studies has developed from the colonial period to the present but did not consider far reaching consequences in reforming the Religious Studies curriculum so that other religions can enjoy the constitutional right to be taught and learned at school. Hence, this study investigates how the Religious Studies curriculum development in the colonial period impacted on policy formulation and the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

#### **2.3.3.2 The 2017 updated Family and Religious Studies curriculum.**

Research on the updated Religious Studies “in Zimbabwe indicated that the reforms were meant to promote diverse religions that are found in Zimbabwe” (Dube 2021; Zivave et al 2020). For this reason, in 2015 a new policy on the education sector was drafted and it was implemented in 2017. This policy culminated in the change of policy with regard to Religious Studies. Seen in this light, Dube and Tsotetsi (2019: 242) state that “in 2017 Zimbabwe rolled out a new curriculum, which made changes to the study of religion, and infuses Islam, Indigenous Religion, Christianity and Judaism.” This means that the updated Religious Studies curriculum limited the teaching of a single religious tradition in Zimbabwe.

Changes of the curriculum, particularly Religious Studies, was influenced largely by the adoption of the new constitution. The Constitution of Zimbabwe recognises that Zimbabwe is a home to many religions, including Indigenous religion, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. All this shows that Zimbabwe is a pluralistic country housing different religions and Religious Studies curriculum should, therefore, embrace pluralism and inclusivism. It is because of this reason that the updated Family and Religious Studies



curriculum was introduced from form one to six. The updated Religious Studies curriculum is more inclusive in terms of accommodating other religions in the learning spaces. Dube (2017:166) argues that “for religion to be viable in society and meet the needs of diverse learners, it is important that schools open their doors to teach all religions and cultures available in the community, not in principle only but also in praxis”. Thus, the current updated Religious Studies curriculum meets the needs of all learners of diverse religious background.

The adoption of Family and Religious Studies as an academic discipline in the updated curriculum has created some problems for Christianity which had been enjoying the monopoly in the national curriculum. Religions like Indigenous Religion and Islam have been resisted by some Christians who do not value religious diversity. This is contrary to the main objective of the Family and Religious Studies adopted by Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) to promote a multi-faith state in a multi-cultural Zimbabwean society. According to the new ZIMSEC Syllabus, Family and Religious Studies is a multi-faith, non-proselytising approach to the study of religion which makes learners aware of their respective religious identities in the context of *Unhu/Ubuntu* and religious plurality (INDIBus 2015:2). Musaka (2012a: 25), Musaka (2012b: 56), Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi (2013: 230), and Machingura and Mugebe (2015: 136) appeal to what they refer to as the ‘multi-faith approach’ as a corrective measure to the present exclusive dominance of the Christian religion which is a legacy of the old curriculum. According to these authors, the ‘multi-faith approach’ recognises the diversity of religions through incorporating them into the syllabus and teaching them (Masaka and Mukungurutse 2017:218). This is what the updated Family and Religious Studies curriculum for both primary and secondary education advocate for because the “seed of peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance should be planted early in the hearts of children at the basic level of education in order to raise a new generation of peace-loving citizens of this great country” (Yusuf 2013:229). This study examines how the current updated Religious Studies promotes tolerance by teaching Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. While studies have looked at the old curriculum and noted that it promoted intolerance, this study seeks to critique how the current policy promotes inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

The updated Religious Studies curriculum has realistically moved towards the multi-faith approach unlike the previous one which was a “mismatch between the syllabus objectives and content” (Gwaravanda et al 2013:221). This updated Religious Studies curriculum is more inclusive and promotes religious plurality as it caters for other religions. Thus, there has been a real pedagogical shift which adopted a multi-faith approach. This is in line with Religious

Studies educationists like Peter Woodward (1982) cited by Jackson (2013:37) who say "some of the best teaching of Religious Education today is based on a multi-faith approach in a multi-cultural situation." This reflects that the main purpose of the new curriculum is not converting learners, but to make learners understand how various religions function and exist in the world. Thus, the following recommendations are suggested for policy makers as well as teachers to improve the subject. In fact, the new Family and Religious Studies syllabus gives an in-depth knowledge of the learners' own religion as well as the religion of others. This will reduce the prejudice associated with religious ignorance among teachers and learners, thereby promoting tolerance, inclusivism and plurality. All this literature on the updated Religious Studies curriculum helps this research in assessing the extent to which policy implementation and challenges affecting Religious Studies are understood by other scholars.

## **2.4 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

Several processes of curriculum development have been identified in the literature. Mohanasundaram (2018:3) defines curriculum development as a planned, a purposeful, progressive, and systematic process to create positive improvements in the educational system. On the other hand, Makaram (2015:13) notes that curriculum development refers to both a logical and a creative way to add new learning experiences to the lives of students. This means that curriculum development is the logical planning, designing, implementation and evaluation of the learning experiences of learners taking into consideration learning opportunities, materials, equipment and other resources required for learning. It is done using existing policy and it also involves implementation of the curriculum. In light of the Religious Studies, curriculum development is shaped by policy in the production of learning content and teaching methods. Commenting on curriculum development, Makaram (2015:1-2) says:

Curriculum development presents both a strategic process challenge as well as a policy challenge. For example, should the policy aim to teach what is of value, as embodied in subject disciplines, and for deep understanding in preparation for competing in the global economy? Or should policy aim for a personalized curriculum that recognizes students as active partners in their learning and develops their potential as a person?

Thus, curriculum development provides a policy challenge to various curriculum disciplines like the updated Religious Studies one. There have been changes to the Religious Studies curriculum (content) in order to meet the demands of the modern country. Changes or developments happening around the world and in Zimbabwe in particular result in curriculum change because curriculum needs to be updated to address the society's needs. Kurasha and

Chabaya (2013:55) concur with this where they note that “curriculum development is a key educational process for educational developers for schools and higher education as it allows an educational course to be designed to meet defined needs” while Bishop (1985: 136) believes that curriculum development should analyse the educational situation as it exists in a particular country. It is within this context that curriculum development is, therefore, “an improvement, change or modification on already existing educational programmes” (Kurasha and Chabaya 2013:55). However, the development of an effective curriculum guide has several vital steps which are on-going. This implies that curriculum development is a cyclical process which progresses from evaluating, designing, implementing and re-evaluation of the curriculum in line with policy framework. For this reason, Makaram (2015:16) says that the curriculum development process involves four interrelated phases: curriculum shaping, curriculum writing, preparation for implementation and curriculum monitoring, evaluation and review. This has been the case with Religious Studies, which, from colonial period up to the present, has undergone transformation. This study seeks to fill in the gap regarding how re-evaluating the curriculum promotes inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

Basically, there are two schools of thought with regard to curriculum development (Mfanichiya 2015:16). These include the traditionalist orientation as well as the progressive orientation. The schools which support the traditional view of curriculum development argue that schools teach systematically basic knowledge according to a set syllabus and the teachers follow the manuals step by step and knowledge consists of facts, concepts and skills that must be mastered through memorisation and drill (Gatawi 1994). On the other hand, the progressive school of thought argues that the curriculum should be relevant to the society’s needs in terms of its content. Progressive educators see knowledge as more than a product that has to be mastered and they argue that students must interact with the world around them and interpret it. This is true of the Religious Studies learners who need to interact with various religions and interpret them without being influenced by the teacher to have a negative bias against one religion at the expense of the other. This will enable Religious Studies students to solve the problems that affect them.

Progressive orientation has the following characteristics:

- Learners are subjects rather than objects. This means that learners are at the centre of discovering the religious phenomena.

- Students must establish meaning for their lives through understanding and interpretation of various religions on their own.
- Curriculum involves interaction between teachers and learners, between learners and learners, between learners and curriculum content. This means that the teacher is not the centre of religious knowledge. (Sims and Jerrim 2022:36)

The main thrust of this research is to critique the updated Religious Studies curriculum that was introduced in Zimbabwe in 2017 by interrogating the whole process of curriculum development. It argues that the curriculum development must be progressive rather than traditional. The curriculum should always constantly be reviewed with the intention of making what is being learnt relevant to the needs of the learners. Thus, in this sub-section I will dwell on factors contributing towards curriculum development, curriculum designing, curriculum policy planning and implementation as well as relevance of Religious Studies in the education curriculum in Zimbabwe. All this is necessary as it lays a sound foundation for understanding the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum implementation and the overall policy challenges.

#### **2.4.1 Factors contributing towards curriculum development in Zimbabwe's secondary education system**

Curriculum mirrors the environment in which it operates. The relationship between education and society is dynamic and interactive (Makaram 2015:22). It is because of this reason that Gwarinda (2013:98) says curriculum represents the consensus in society as to what pupils should learn. This means that Religious Studies curriculum is a representation of the culture of followers of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam who constitute the religious composition of Zimbabwe, the country where the curriculum is offered. The curriculum reflects the educational, cultural, social and economic aspirations and vision of the Zimbabwean society to promote tolerance, inclusivism and plurality. This implies that the updated Religious Studies curriculum takes into account the goals of education, teachers' capabilities and availability, learning content, the objectives, learning methods, evaluation procedures, the physical environment and the learner at large.

Curriculum development is affected by several factors which affect its planning, designing, implementation and evaluation. These factors, according to Lemmer and Badenhorst (1997:267), should take into account the short-term and long-term needs, interests and potential of those who are to be educated. As such, ideological, political as well as economic aims are

salient factors which affect the Religious Studies curriculum development. In order to understand how the Religious Studies curriculum is planned, designed and implemented, which are also vital stages in the development of the curriculum it is prudent to discuss the factors which contribute towards curriculum development in secondary schools. This has a direct influence in comprehending how the Religious Studies curriculum is developed. The Zimbabwean 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum has been developed taking into consideration the country's religious composition, economic development needs and social needs. The decision to develop an updated Religious Studies curriculum was necessitated by the following factors.

#### **2.4.1 Technological advancement**

In recent years, there have been technological developments which have outpaced the developments in educational curriculum. Technological advancement is a factor which contributes to curriculum development. Developments may be related to pedagogy, such as open learning where learners can tune in to the lesson and access information via satellite (Kurasha and Chabaya 2013:60). The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education [MoPSE] (2015:9) says that the advancement in technology has resulted in greater access to depositories of information and knowledge hubs worldwide. In this context, learners have learnt about the existence of various religions of the world through technology. This might have also led to the review of the Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe. To add on, teachers are no longer seen as the sole sources of knowledge and information but are now seen as facilitators of learning processes. This is true of Religious Studies teachers, who, through advancement in technology, should not limit learners to access knowledge about other religions. Technological advancement influences knowledge acquisition, and within the context of the updated Religious Studies, it has led learners to be aware of various religions of the world.

#### **2.4.2 Demands by students**

Meeting learners' needs is an important factor which contributes to curriculum development. Due to globalisation and advancement in technology, learners' needs have changed as compared to the past. Furthermore, learners now come from multi-ethnic and multi-religious groups. It is because of this reason that curriculum development has been shaped by the needs of the learner and society at large. Kurasha and Chabaya (2013:61) state that a curriculum that fails to meet the expectations of learners is deserted right away. The old Religious Studies was shunned by learners who belonged to Indigenous Religion and Islam because it did not promote

religious inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The success of a Religious Studies curriculum is measured against its ability to meet the needs of every learner in a multi-faith society. The current study examines how the updated Religious Studies curriculum meets the needs of learners in a multi-faith society through the teaching of religions.

#### **2.4.3 Political Ideologies**

Curriculum development is influenced by politicians as these are the directors of a political ideology which is perpetuated by what the learners learn. The political manifestos of the ruling party drive how the country's curriculum is designed. It is because of this reason that Kurasha and Chabaya (2013:61) say educational policies are subject to influence from politicians and political groups. Furthermore, Makamure and Chikumbu (2000:22) opine that "education is regarded as a political activity...Politics determine and define the goals, content, learning experiences and evaluation strategies in educational curriculum." As such, changes in policies or political ideologies affect the education system, particularly the curriculum offered to learners in a particular country. In this regard, the updated Religious Studies curriculum was influenced by the desire to meet the needs of learners of diverse religious backgrounds in order to promote nation building. This is because funding of educational programs comes from political players who run government institutions.

#### **2.4.3 Society expectations**

Society has its own expectations when developing a curriculum. As such, the aims and objectives of the curriculum should take into consideration what the society expects from the product of an education system. The aims and objectives of the RS curriculum are to promote tolerance and respect of every Zimbabwean's religious belief. Any curriculum which does not fit into the general perceptions of the society becomes irrelevant. The curriculum in Zimbabwe since colonial times has tended to be overly academic (CIET 1999) and Christo-centric. However, the trend today is to pay increased attention to competency development, that is, learners' abilities to mobilise their knowledge, skills and attitudes independently and creatively in order to address different challenges (MoPSE 2015:9). The Zimbabwean societal needs have changed since independence to embrace values such as tolerance, inclusivity and plurality, which are key to economic growth and peaceful co-existence. It is against this background that the updated curriculum was developed in order to ensure that the curriculum is responsive to the socio-economic needs of the country. Kurasha and Chabaya (2013:62) concur with this saying, "the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes imparted to learners are

expected to prepare them to fit in society.” Therefore, members of the society are an integral part in curriculum development. Society expects that the curriculum address its philosophies and its expectations for the future (Kurasha and Chabaya 2013:62). Thus, the curriculum has a close relationship with the society in which it operates. For this reason, in Zimbabwe, for example, subjects such as sex education and political economy have proved difficult to include in the curriculum because of the resistance from some religious groups (Makamure and Chikumbu 2000:23). This is true within the context of the current updated Religious Studies curriculum where society is not receptive to a curriculum design which undermines their beliefs and religious identity.

#### **2.4.4 Authority**

The state has a moral responsibility to define the content and purposes of education (Kurasha and Chabaya 2013:62). It is the prerogative of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) to exert authority with support from Acts of parliament to determine curriculum planning, designing and how it is implemented. The Curriculum and Technical Development Services (CTDS) has the mandate of evaluating the country’s curriculum as well as enabling the quality assurance of the curriculum is strongly monitored. The state determines the curriculum content used in schools is up to standard as well as offer technical support in terms of curriculum implementation. This implies that the updated Religious Studies curriculum has been influenced from the top to bottom to ensure that it meets the aspirations of all Zimbabwean who belong to diverse religions. This study seeks to explore how top to bottom approaches affect policy implementation in light of Religious Studies.

#### **2.4.5 International influence**

Kurasha and Chabaya (2013:63) argue that membership to various international organisations has influenced curriculum reform and development. As such, affiliation to the Commonwealth, United Nations and its specialised agencies like UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNFPA, and the African Union (A.U), has led to the introduction of programmes such as HIV/AIDS Education, Environmental Science Education, Culture and Heritage, Health Education and Gender Issues into the curriculum. Donors influence curriculum development in order to make sure that their aspirations are met through the sponsorship of certain areas in the country’s education system. This, however, creates a problem because curriculum development should be based on the country’s needs and not the donor’s needs.

#### **2.4.6 Industry and commerce**

The curriculum is influenced by the demands in industry where graduates from the education system are channelled to. Employers also have an input in curriculum development because they know the curriculum that is marketable in the world of work (Kurasha and Chabaya 2013:64). Any curriculum which does not involve employers who are in industry and commerce has the potential of producing irrelevant products. For the curriculum to be relevant to the needs of the country, industry and commerce is involved as they provide a benchmark of what a curriculum should offer and produce.

#### **2.4.7 Globalisation**

Curriculum development is done to meet the needs of the global village (Kurasha and Chabaya 2013:64). Globalisation has affected the secondary education system due to improvements in access to information. Thus, curriculum development is done taking into consideration the “ever changing expectations of the respective communities in their development into knowledge-based societies (Law 2010:64). Globalisation has provided a rationale for restructuring the educational curriculum worldwide in order to meet the needs of industry with new knowledge and skills.

#### **2.4.7 Policy makers**

Policy makers develop the curriculum as a mechanism of revising the existing curriculum or adaptation of the existing curriculum in order to meet the needs of the society. As such, policy makers are viewed as major stakeholders in curriculum development. They initiate and veto policies which affect the curriculum. The Zimbabwean educational curriculum has been revised and this has attributed to policy makers who wanted to align the education of the country with the interests of the ruling class as well as modern educational trends. It is apparent that the interests of politicians are to promote all religions so that they do not become unpopular.

#### **2.4.8 Pedagogical and curricular shifts in education**

The education system has changed greatly over the past decades. Traditionally the education system has been dominated by the teacher as the fountain of all knowledge (Moyo and Hadebe 2018:4). Memorisation of theoretical knowledge and pouring of knowledge into the learner by the teacher has been the tradition in Africa, including Zimbabwe. However, this has changed through the use of more innovative and critical pedagogies which are learner-centred because



of the changes in pedagogical models. This has transformed the philosophy of education, particularly educational theory and practice. Thus, there has been a pedagogical shift, namely; from teacher-centred approaches to learner-centred approaches which promote critical thinking among learners and, thus, leading to human development as well as mitigation of contemporary challenges. Learner-centred pedagogies by teachers promote creativity, research and critiquing techniques, scepticism, ability to solve problems and motivation among learners. Moyo and Hadebe (2018:6) argue that the 21st century Zimbabwe teacher is not only a facilitator of skilful teaching and learning but, both a social and critical pedagogy researcher to mitigate diverse educational challenges.

## **2.5 CIRRICULUM POLICY PLANNING**

Policy planning in Religious Studies has been largely discussed, debated, and finally endorsed as part of the entire Zimbabwean national curriculum. However, policy implementers of Religious Studies in the classroom situation have not received enough technical and material support from the government. Indeed, Dube (2020) observes that the updated Religious Studies curriculum policy implementation has experienced a lot of challenges due to improper planning. Curriculum planning is a process that is done at national level, provincial level and local level. In Zimbabwe, “curriculum is centrally planned by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture’s Curriculum Development Unit (CDU)” (Kanyongo 2005:67). Planning is done reflecting the national goals. It involves the selection of philosophical beliefs, curriculum goals and objectives which are derived and later translated into the classroom as desired learning outcomes among students taught. Planners also take into account the national values and cultural inclination of the country. This is because planning should support national values, goals, culture and aspirations. When planning “consultation such as open public consultation and targeted consultation with the key stakeholders including teachers and education experts is done” (Makaram 2015:17). An important reason for including Religious Studies in Zimbabwean curriculum is that the subject contributes significantly to the transformation and development of Zimbabwean society by promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality, which are some of the principles that underpin the philosophy of the updated curriculum.

## **2.6 CURRICULUM POLICY DESIGNING**

Curriculum development is a process that involves many different people and procedures. It involves curriculum planning and designing. Thus, there are two stages in curriculum

development, namely; curriculum planning and curriculum design. Curriculum design refers to the ways in which we position the curriculum components (Mohanasundaram 2018:4). These components include aims, goals and objectives, subject matter/content, learning experiences and evaluation approaches. As such, curriculum design is “developed with expert advice, provides broad direction on the purpose, structure and organization of the learning area (Makaram 2015:17). George (1984:7) also supports this by saying “in curriculum design scholars within the various disciplines, experts in associated applied fields, creative artists and critics in the arts and in literature can be involved.” The involvement by all these scholars and experts is good as it can “result in capturing the ethos, unifying actions and human dynamism characteristic of the various disciplines from which the subjects derive” (George 1984:7). These experts are in the development of learning content as well as teaching approaches. This is because curriculum design acts as a point of reference on the final curriculum documents for learning areas required in the education system. It involves the planning and systematic creation of subject content, methods of delivering the subject and aims of the subjects taught in a given country or at school. Designing a curriculum is important in making sure that educational goals are attained. The goals of the updated Religious Studies curriculum are to promote religious beliefs of all native Zimbabweans. Attainment of educational goals rests on subject content and educational policy. Shumbayaonda (2013:27) says “in order to achieve the country’s goals of the Zimbabwean educational curriculum, policy makers perform a lot of tasks”. These tasks in Religious Studies include curriculum designing, curriculum implementation and supporting the curriculum with proper structures as well as resources. Designing of a curriculum also involves the drafting of the Religious Studies syllabus which caters for the needs of all learners.

The curriculum design in Zimbabwe is highly centralised. Makamure and Chikumbu (2000:39) say “in Zimbabwe, for example, the curriculum is centrally developed.” A centrally designed curriculum is planned and developed by one office at national level. This implies that the learning content and objectives of the curriculum are decided by one office for the whole nation to follow. Makamure and Chikumbu (2000:39) argue that “the actual work in designing the curriculum may be completed by a contracted consulting company, a parastatal organisation or a division of the Ministry of Education”. The centralised curriculum was introduced by the missionaries and colonial government as a way of giving homogenous education to Africans and was inherited by the independent Zimbabwean government. Thus, the centralised curriculum has been in use during both the colonial and post-colonial periods. This has created

problems as the review of the curriculum was always done by armchair critics who were not aware of the challenges of the learning content, resources and the learning environment. Teachers who are curriculum implementers have been largely side-lined from the process of curriculum review. It is in the light of this side-lining of teachers in curriculum review that there has been resistance by teachers to implement changes found in the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

## **2.7. WAYS USED TO EFFECT CURRICULUM CHANGE AND IMPLEMENTATION.**

One of the recurring themes in Religious Studies teaching in secondary schools today is the efficacy of implementing the policy of multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum using the top-bottom approach, bottom-up approach or both. It is because of this that research on policy implementation around the world indicates that there is debate on ways of implementing curriculum change in order to improve the quality of learning among learners. Policy implementation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be learner-centred with the aim of improving critical thinking, reflection and problem-solving among learners (Pedzisai, Tsvere and Nkhonde 2014: 164). The curriculum has been updated and there is policy direction which has led to changes in schools and classrooms approaches to Religious Studies. This has created challenges in implementation and there are gaps that exist between the current Religious Studies policy and Religious Studies teachers who are the implementers of the policy in schools. Although the top-down policy implementation strategy has been used to plan and design Religious Studies curriculum, the actual implementation has been overwhelmed with numerous problems. This is precisely because curriculum plan and design are too centralised making policy implementation difficult because there is communication breakdown between policy makers and policy implementers. In this regard, Morris and Scott (2003:71-84) contend that many policies remain impossible dreams that cannot be implemented for different reasons. According to Sayed and Jansen (2001:23), policy failures are due to approaches to curriculum implementation. The next sections explain, in detail, two approaches to curriculum change and implementation namely top-down approach and the bottom-up approach. Understanding approaches to curriculum change is vital in comprehending the updated Religious Studies curriculum implementation and how it affects important stakeholders in curriculum implementation including teachers.

### **2.7.1 Top-down approaches**

This is an approach that is a “centrally driven curriculum innovation and usually associated with a large scale curriculum reform initiated by centralised policymaking bodies” (Healy 2011:43). Top-down approach refers to innovations that were developed by an expert group or a centralised body outside the school, with the expectation that the school would adopt to change (Morris 1995). Therefore, in simple terms, top-down approaches refer to policy decisions that are made by those in power who control the education system for those at lower levels such as teachers. The teacher in this approach is a policy implementer and his input is hardly considered by policy makers. Decisions, learning objectives and content are designed by the powers that be and the teacher is there to ensure that these learning objectives and content are adhered to. McDonald (2007:2) says the top-down approach provides a tight package of directly linked objectives, content and assessment instruments that are perceived to teacher proof curriculum. The role of the teacher in this approach is a passive one and development of the curriculum is done without the input of the teacher. The approach requires policy fidelity and adherences by implementers.

The main objective of this approach is to “achieve high levels of congruence in the planning and implementation of the curriculum as it is implemented by teachers and evaluated” (Elmore 2007; Healy 2011:44). On the other hand, Smith and Lovat (2003:197) argue that the primary goal of this approach is to maintain control and to increase efficiency through powerful and coercive strategies. So, for this approach to be successful the teacher needs to be motivated and if the teacher lacks motivation the success of curriculum implementation is slowed down. The teacher is a key stakeholder in this approach who requires support and motivation from those in control of the social, political and economic system. Religious Studies have lacked motivation and support in implementing the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

In Britain, Japan and Norway the top-bottom approach has been used but it has not been successful because “teachers tend to adapt to the curriculum than adopting it” (Healy 2011:44). Furthermore, policymakers lack an understanding of how to implement curriculum change and this ends up affecting curriculum implementers. Large scale curriculum changes which use this approach require a lot of monitoring and resources. Despite these criticisms of this approach, the approach has a positive bearing on the social and economic development of a country. Healy (2011:44) says the approach “leans towards centralised, prescriptive curriculum change and social cohesion through the exercise of power by dominant social group”. In relation to

Religious Studies in Zimbabwe, the top-down approach has enabled teachers to accept that they are policy implementers and policy makers. Religious Studies teachers teach other religions like Islam, Judaism and Indigenous Religion, despite the fact that many of them are of strong Christian background (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020). They are forced to do that because of the existing policy guidelines which demand them to take instruction from the top. Thus, the approach promotes tolerance, democracy and inclusivism. No religion is treated as the other when curriculum is implemented using the top-down approach.

### **2.7.2 Bottom-up approach.**

A bottom-up curriculum change refers to the management of the curriculum at school level and where curriculum is designed at school level (Brad 1983:5). It is an approach that dominated Australian schools between 1970 and 1980 when the government institutionalised the formation of the School Based Curriculum Development (SBCD) in 1975 as a response to the weaknesses of the top-down approach and teacher proof curriculum packages (Lovat 2003; Healy 2011:45). The school-based curriculum development was hinged on government ministries for education from curriculum bodies.

This approach has an advantage of taking into consideration environmental factors in which curriculum change is being implemented at a local level. In essence, this approach to curriculum is designed by teachers who are technocrats of particular subjects at school level. Healy (2011:45) says this approach democratised curriculum change and gave control of curriculum development to those who were deemed to be real experts, teachers (Kemmis and MacTaggart 1988). Thus, there was a paradigm shift as teachers were in control of the curriculum design, content and implementation at a school level. This approach gives ownership of the curriculum to the teachers and also makes them real experts in their subject areas. As such, this is the approach that was advocated for by Hilda Taba (1962:10) who saw it as effective for the curriculum to be designed and implemented from bottom to up. However, in countries where this curriculum change approach has been used, it has been discovered that “the approach failed to take into account the fact that human beings tend to act out of their self-interest and the subjective meaning they make out of life” (Smith and Lovat 2003:197). This approach assumes that “human beings are logical, rational and that change can occur consistently with logical argument and evidence” (Healy 2011:45). Furthermore, curriculum design at lower level can mismatch the national educational objectives. Fullan (2001) argues that even though this approach was successful, there has been a regular failure to connect with

central authority. This approach needs resources from outside the school and from inside for it to be successful. The teacher who is central in the development of this curriculum may lack support from internal structures. Brad (1983:12) admits that “the rise in the need for accountability in education, the transferring of teachers to other schools, lack of expertise in curriculum design and lack of incentives for curriculum participation all contribute towards the difficulties in effectively participating in the School Based Curriculum Development movement.

This approach has strength of analysing local factors before designing the curriculum leading to effective curriculum planning and organisation. It has also increased the output of action-based research in schools. The teacher is valued as a curriculum designer and they value the participation of the teacher and his or her ownership of innovation (Healy 2011:46). In relation to Zimbabwe, the approach is not applicable as decisions are made at the top. The teacher is not a curriculum designer but an implementer of a curriculum designed by policy makers. It is this perception that has resulted in some teachers resisting curriculum change.

Much of the literature has looked at curriculum approaches in implementing reviewed curriculum. There has also been literature that suggests that while top-down curriculum implementation is important, it is not sufficient to realise the full objectives of the updated curriculum. It should be understood that the focus of this study is to critique policy implementation and challenges found in implementing curriculum change with particular focus on Religious Studies. The study is done to empirically determine the best approach to effective non-confessional Religious Studies curriculum implementation which will reduce challenges which affects the subject in secondary schools.

## **2.8 RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION**

While many countries such as Britain, Indonesia, South Africa, Malawi and Botswana have been implementing a multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum amidst several challenges, Zimbabwe only started to implement its reform in Religious Studies in 2017. Given the value of Religious Studies in shaping religious identity, promoting nation building, peace building and preserving *Unhu/Ubuntu* among other reasons (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020), it is important to ascertain how Religious Studies has been implemented in Zimbabwe since 2017.

Curriculum implementation entails putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabuses and subjects (Makamure and Chikumbu 2000:50). This implies that

curriculum is put into operation. Curriculum implementation is the second phase in curriculum design and the refinement and implementation of the curriculum. This happens when policy makers transfer the policy formulated to technocrats who are known as permanent secretaries and their deputies. The duty of these top civil servants is to ensure that policy is refined using their technical expertise and to ensure the successful implementation of the curriculum when it goes to the lower levels of curriculum implementers. Shumbayaonda (2013:27) says when the policy has been refined, a foundation for implementation would have been laid by policy makers. The learner and the teacher are important in the implementation of a curriculum. Makamure and Chikumbu (2000:50) assert that the learner is, therefore, the central figure in the curriculum implementation process. Implementation takes place as the learner acquires the planned or intended experiences, knowledge, skills, ideas and attitudes that are aimed at enabling the same learner to function effectively in a society (University of Zimbabwe 1995: 8). On the other hand, Stenhouse (1979: 4) identifies the teacher as the agent in the curriculum implementation process. She argues that implementation is the manner in which the teacher selects and mixes the various aspects of knowledge contained in a curriculum document or syllabus. Implementation takes place when the teacher-constructed syllabus, the teacher's personality, the teaching materials and the teaching environment interact with the learner (University of Zimbabwe 1995: 9). Curriculum implementation requires a lot of time, expertise from the teacher and resources for it to be fruitful. Ndawi and Maravanyika (2011:68) view curriculum implementation as the process of the school facilitating the interaction between the learner and the curriculum by the teacher. In this context, the key stakeholder in curriculum implementation is the Religious Studies teacher who facilitates interaction between the learner and the curriculum. It is because of this reason that the learner, the teacher and educational directors are the key human resource in policy implementation with regard to the updated curriculum. It is my assumption that the study of Ndawi and Maravanyika (2011) helps to understand effective curriculum implementation strategies.

Research on Religious Studies policy implementation has been done in Europe with regard to Religious Education. The policy is done while being regulated with international conventions. As Gearon (2014 p. 8) argues, Religious Education in Europe is "compelled to compliance with international standards." International standards require treatment of all religion as equal. According to Willaime (2007), Religious Education policy implementation is guided by conventions. Hendek (2022) has identified the five principles of the European Religious Education policy which include the place of Religious Education, the model of Religious

Education, the aims of Religious Education, the right of withdrawal from Religious Education, and finally consultation. The main objective of the policy is to promote tolerance, dialogue, respect, sensitivity to religious diversity, appreciation of religious diversity, knowledge of religious diversity, inclusivism and religious plurality (Council of Europe 2007; Jackson 2014; Handek 2022). On the other hand, the Religious Education policy implementation is meant to prevent “ignorance, stereotypes, misunderstanding, prejudice, intolerance, fanaticism, religious divide and address controversial issues” (Council of Europe 2008a: 5; Jackson 2014: 15; Hendek 2022:256). It is clear that the aims of the policy are to promote religious diversity, inclusivity, tolerance and plurality in any multi-faith society. The study by Hendek on Europe as a whole reflected that the European Religious Education policy implementation advocates for objective, neutral, impartial, and inclusive Religious Education, which involves the study of various religions and beliefs and their diverse interpretations. This would promote inclusivism, tolerance and understanding and combat ignorance and intolerance among pupils in schools (Hendek, 2022).

Gillard (1991) also studied the implementation of Religious Education in Britain. He observed that British society is a multi-faith one and Religious Education needs to be multi-faith approach as a way of avoiding “triumphalist Christian missionary approaches” (Cole 1983:87). Jackson (2017) also looked at Religious Education implementation and argued that state funded schools in Britain needed to shift from confessional to non-confessional approaches which are more inclusive. The policy has been influenced by what he termed pluralisation of society due to migration. For him, teaching single faith is not relevant in a society composed of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, Christians and Judaists. The policy in Religious Education in Britain is premised in the national law which has led to the review of Religious Education through the 1988 Education Reform Act. The Act has influenced the teaching of Religious Education from a multi-faith approach. The main drivers of policy change and implementation was secularisation and pluralisation. The thrust of the policy was to promote religious diversity. However, the Religious Education (RE) policy and practice in Britain continues to be influenced by Christianity as the bottom-up approaches to curriculum designing and implementation continue to impede the multi-faith approach. Syllabuses for RE in community schools in England are drafted at local level by an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) prior to the 1988 Education Reform, which includes four committees: representatives of teachers; the Church of England; other denominations and religions; and local authority representatives (Jackson 2013). The 1988 Education Reform Act brought in changes which strengthened RE’s



place in the curriculum and acknowledged some recent developments in the subject. The subject changed from Religious Instruction (R.I) to Religious Education (R.E) as a way of embracing various religious beliefs. All state funded schools had to abide by the new policy of teaching religions and not one religion. However, the policy did not force private funded schools to adopt the new Religious Education policy. Jackson (2013) believes that the National Framework policy in Religious Education had the strength of promoting inclusivism and tolerance among learners of different religions represented in Britain. It is clear that the Religious Education policy implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act is being done in state-funded schools only and church-run schools have their own policies which preserve their faiths. This study examines policy implementation in Zimbabwe where Religious Studies is designed from top to bottom as opposed to the British Religious Education which is a bottom-up approach.

In Africa, Religious Studies curriculum implementation has been done in Botswana, Malawi and South Africa. In the Botswana context, Dinama (2010) studied teachers' understanding and implementation of the multi-faith Religious Education curriculum in Botswana junior secondary schools. Botswana updated its Religious Education curriculum in 1994 through the Revised National Policy where it adopted the multi-faith curriculum from a Christo-Curriculum. The main thrust of this policy was to foster societal values such as tolerance, respect for persons and mutual understanding (Botswana Government 1995). The policy did not single out any particular religion for study but gave the decision to curriculum implementers to choose the religion to teach. Teachers chose religions that they preferred teaching about and this created policy challenges as one religion was taught at the expense of the others. This is different from the Zimbabwean updated Religious Studies which requires teachers to teach Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Therefore, this study fills in the gap left by the study in Botswana by looking at policy implementation which demands the teacher to teach prescribed religions. Be that as it may, the policy in Botswana was marred by challenges in its implementation because of lack of human resources and the teachers had gaps in content knowledge, teaching techniques and strategies in order to implement the policy. Thus, in the context of this study, challenges in the implementation of policy may assist in improving Zimbabwe's policy implementation strategies in Religious Studies.

Chidester (2003) studied the history of Religious Education in South Africa and also examined curriculum change in South Africa with the focus on the curriculum for religion education. He argues that the independent South African Religion policy was motivated by the South African constitution. The South African Constitution safeguards human rights and forbids discrimination on religious grounds, thus ruling out any form of ‘privileged’ Religious Education (Chidester 2003). He notes that Christians wanted to maintain the apartheid Religion studies curriculum because they view theirs as the privileged religion. Furthermore, Ntho-Ntho and Nieuwenhuis (2015) also studied the subject in South Africa interrogating the policy on Religion Studies and they note some challenges in the implementation of policies as way of improving the teaching practice of Religion Studies in the classroom. Just like with the Zimbabwean updated Religious Studies policy, the South African policy strived to be more inclusive, deviating from the apartheid Religion Studies policy which focused on indoctrinating Christian education. Therefore, the South African policy strove to prompt recognition, understanding and appreciation of the different religions, in the context of a civic understanding of religion, with a view of creating a platform for enlightened religious literacy (Ntho-Ntho and Nieuwenhuis 2015). Chetty and Smit (2016) also studied the implementation of the updated Religion Studies in the post-apartheid era South Africa. The post-apartheid South African Religion Studies in secondary school is aimed at providing learners with the opportunity to develop a deeper sense of self-realisation and a broader civil tolerance of others as well as balance the familiar and the foreign in ways that give them new insights into both (DoE 2003; Smock 2005). They note that the implementation of Religion Studies policy in the FET Phase had ‘critical’ problems with the actual implementation. Some of the policy implementation challenges noted include lack of qualified teachers; learning material and the bias of teachers on few religions in which they have knowledge as opposed to the full curriculum. So, the promulgation of the National Policy on Religion and Education in 2003 marked the transformation of Religion Studies from a single-faith approach to Religious Education (Christian Religious Education) to a multi-tradition approach to Religious Education in order to promote knowledge about diverse religions for a diverse society (Chetty and Smit 2013). This is contrary to the inherited apartheid Religion Studies policy which was racist, divisionary and conservative (Ntho-Ntho and Nieuwenhuis 2015). With reference to my study, it can be concluded that the apartheid Religious Studies is the same as the inherited colonial Religious Studies curriculum which is exclusionary. There is, therefore, a need to decolonise the Religious Studies curriculum.

Literature from Europe concurs with Chetty and Smit's findings that there are lots of challenges as evidenced by the empirical data on Religious Studies in a multi-faith society in secondary education. In South Africa, Chetty and Smit (2013) have noted that multi-faith Religion Studies policies are developed by politicians and that not all interested stakeholders are consulted. Policy implementation practices in South Africa, as observed by Ramparsad (2001:287), are effectively controlled from within a small locus and with hidden processes of decision making, despite the rhetoric of decentralisation. As a result, such centralised policies, which demand the teaching of various religions, face resistance in areas where Christianity dominates or where Islam dominates (Dinama 2010). Generally, once a policy demands the teaching of various religions and the policy is designed from the top, there is resistance of the subject from those who feel their religion is threatened or underrepresented in the curriculum. Policy implementation constraints arise because the teacher is not involved in policy formulation (Ramparsad 2001:287). This situation applies to Zimbabwe where a substantial body of literature has documented the existence of a gap between policy makers and teachers who are implementers of curriculum policies. This gap is particularly noticeable in the resistance by teachers and the use of teaching methods and styles which do not promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism in Religious Studies.

In the Zimbabwean context, studies (Machingura and Mugebe 2015; Chimininge and Chikasha 2016) have reported on the relevance of the Religious Studies subject and the implementation of the multi-faith approach. Chimininge and Chikasha (2016) examine the relevance of Religious Studies as an academic discipline in secondary schools in Zimbabwe. It should be noted that their study focused on the abolished curriculum and they concluded that learners were dropping Religious Studies as an academic discipline. This is because the subject was exclusionary and did not take into consideration the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds. Machingura and Mugebe (2015) focused on the implementation of a multi-faith approach at A' Level. In their studies, Machingura and Mugebe note that the teaching and learning of Religious Education (R.E.) in Zimbabwe used confessional approach which exclusively favoured Christianity at the expense of other religions. They argue that the major problem arose from mistaking Religious Education for Christian Education and Religious Education teachers for pastors. Their study concluded that the confessional attitude hampered the academic and cross-cultural nature of Religious Education. Dube (2017) has largely critiqued the abolished curriculum exploring several challenges with the multi-faith approach used in Religious Studies which did not include other local religions in the curriculum. The

abolished curriculum was largely Christocentric and the updated curriculum is multi-religious. This study fills in the gap that has been created by the introduction of the updated curriculum, looking at policy implementation challenges in secondary schools rather than the teaching methods and relevance of the subject which were the focus of the studies by most Religious Studies scholars in Zimbabwe.

In the context of the updated Religious Studies curriculum, very few scholars have looked at subject implementation. Dube (2020) has looked at the challenges of religious extremism brought by the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) and commended the curriculum reconstruction because it addressed the lived realities and challenges students are facing in the 21st century. Muhamba (2020) looked at how Religious Education (RE) in secondary schools in Zimbabwe have developed in response to pluralism. He argues that the government, through its Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), has been implementing changes in RE in secondary schools with the hope of making it open to pluralism. However, the study shows that despite the government's efforts, little has changed in the teaching of RE in the classroom because of failure by the government to engage teachers in the implementation of the proposed changes. However, there are few empirical studies in terms of policy implementation and challenges in secondary schools. There is limited empirical literature on policy implementation and challenges regarding the updated Religious Studies curriculum to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Even in European countries like Britain, where it has been in schools since the 1970s, literature still lacks (Jackson 1999; 2013). In a collection of articles on pedagogies edited by Grimmitt (2000), there is little reference to policy implementation of a multi-religion syllabus because the articles concentrate on the relationship between religion and education as well as the relevance of the subject. Research on Religious Studies has generally looked at teaching methods and challenges of the abolished Religious Studies in Zimbabwe. More could be known about policy implementation and challenges associated with curriculum change in Religious Studies within the African context where the subject has largely been influenced by colonialism. It is against this background that the study aimed to critique policy implementation and challenges associated with the updated Religious Studies subject in Zimbabwean secondary schools so that policy in Africa should solve colonial injustices created by the use of an adopted curriculum from colonialism.

In Zimbabwe, the religious composition has changed to a multi-faith space (Zivave and Mhute 2021). It is this social, religious and political change in society that has led curriculum review and change in Zimbabwe. This was done to cater for the religious needs of all learners and the

broader society at large. It is because of this that a curriculum represents the consensus in society as to what pupils should learn (Gwarinda 2013:98). When curriculum is designed it is done for a specific group of people and for the benefit of that group. Thus, there is a close relationship between curriculum and the culture of learners as well as the culture of the nation as a whole. Gwarinda (2013: 99), citing Davis Lawton, argues that curriculum is selected from the following key features of culture, which include; the social structure, economic system, communication system, rationality system, technological system, morality system, belief system and aesthetic system. If these aspects are considered, the needs of the learner are met. The designing of a Religious Studies curriculum should take cognisance of the key features of the culture of the people in which it is learnt. This has led to the paradigm shift in the teaching contents of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe when the new curriculum was adopted. The best curriculum should be child-centred, society-centred, knowledge-centred, and eclectic. Gwarinda (1993:29) has redefined curriculum as an educational programme with aims, objectives, content, assessment procedures and evaluation procedures.

## **2.9 PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN ZIMBABWEAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

A review of pedagogical and philosophical insights in Religious Studies are vital because they provide a clear understanding of the dynamics related to the teaching and learning of Religious Studies which would result in inclusivism. Pedagogy deals with the appropriate ways to achieve effective teaching while philosophy is a discipline that utilises the methods and principles to understand and resolve issues in education, issues like the purpose and most basic methods of education or learning (Brickman 1964:19). Furthermore, philosophical issues are important in the understanding of the teaching and learning of Religious Studies as it helps the teacher to acquaint the learner with clear reasoning skills on religious matters. There is a link between pedagogy and philosophy in the sense that ways of teaching are informed by philosophical practice. Philosophical practice in this context refers to mechanisms of posing, analysing and solving religious problems that arose on the basis of fulfilling the spiritual needs of Religious Studies learners in the classroom. Philosophy ensures that the teacher is able to view and analyse religious issues from the perspective of the learner in the classroom as well as knowing how learners perceive various religions. I intend to present pedagogical and philosophical issues in Religious Studies as well as learning theories in Religious Studies. All these are necessary for one to have a robust understanding of key issues related to the implementation of the updated Religious Studies subject in secondary schools.

### **2.9.1 The concept of pedagogy**

Owusu and Danso (2014:79) state that the word “pedagogy” comes from the Greek word “paidagogeō” which literally means “to lead the child”. In ancient Greece, the “paidagogos” was a slave who supervised the education of his master’s son, and led him to school. Pedagogy is defined as teaching approaches or ways of imparting knowledge to learners. White (2004:5) says pedagogy is “the art and science of teaching” while Owusu and Danso (2014:79) say pedagogy is the “strategies or style of instruction.” This means that pedagogy basically deals with how best a student can learn and be receptive to the learning process. In support of this, White (2004:5) says pedagogy represents the underlying rationale that informs the selection of specific teaching strategies and is capable of incorporating an eclectic array of methodologies matched to the particular needs of the student cohort. Pedagogy, by nature, deals with procedures or strategies (methodology) for teaching and learning. It means how the teacher leads learners.

Pedagogy has a close relationship with philosophical issues in Religious Studies and it has to be augmented by a coherent, integrated philosophical stance based on constructivism. Skeie (2012:81) believes that the practice of teaching and learning about religion and world-views regularly raises discussions about the pedagogy of Religious Education. Pedagogically, religion is, therefore, used to learn about religions taught in Religious Studies. This is supported by Grimmit (2000:17) who argues that “a pedagogy of Religious Education aims at promoting a ‘particular kind (or several kinds) of interaction between the pupils and the religious content which they are studying’”. With reference to my study, it is implied that pedagogy should take into consideration multi-faith classroom environment.

There are about twelve different pedagogies of Religious Education and all of them, in one way or another, address the issues of learning about and learning from religion (Skeie 2012:82). From these twelve approaches Religious Studies pedagogical approaches are grouped into two, namely; confessional approaches and phenomenological approaches. Confessional approaches are strategies that are meant to convert the learners while phenomenological approaches seek to impart knowledge without converting the learner. These pedagogical approaches to Religious Studies suit the politico-cultural and religious contexts of the learner. At this juncture, pedagogical approaches that have been used in various parts of the world and also in Zimbabwe will be explored. The reason why understanding pedagogical issues in Religious Studies is necessary is that “no single religion has dominated the curriculum, as in the case of

Zimbabwe” (Dubey 2016:72). There has to be “productive pedagogies” which are student centred as well as being stimulants to the learners so that they become critical thinkers. Therefore, the discussion of pedagogical issues in Religious Studies is of paramount importance as it is the foundation of promoting inclusivity, tolerance as well as creation of a religiously pluralistic society. It is evident that in this study pedagogy is important in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism.

### **2.9.2 Confessional Approach**

Studies have shown that the confessional approach is used in countries where one religion dominates and the teaching of religion is meant to convert rather than to impart knowledge. A confessional approach can be described as a pedagogical approach based on a single religion while a multi-confessional approach is based on several pedagogical approaches to the same religion (Matemba 2011:22). This approach is often regarded as the evangelical method of Religious Studies. Its main objective is to spread a particular belief or doctrine to learners. The main aim of confessional Religious Education is to help learners on their journey to faith in one ‘true’ religion, say Christianity, whose doctrines are taught as the absolute reality (Rudge 1998:43). This method has been used in Zimbabwe during the colonial period as well as soon after independence. The approach has largely been criticised because of its apparent lack of an educational rationale (Jackson and O’Grady 2007:1). Furthermore, the approach is not suitable for a society that has a wide range of religious beliefs like Zimbabwe. It deviates from inclusivity by promoting one religion at the expense of others. Although this approach is in tandem with principles of children’s cognitive development, confessional approach is problematic in a nation where there are religions like Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam just to mention a few. Ndlovu (2004: 148) believes that a confessional approach or dogmatic approach will not enable learners to explore other religious beliefs and practices with sensitivity, respect and tolerance. The main challenge of this approach is that it promotes exclusivism which is a negation of the democratic society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, in the context of this study, there is need to have approaches which promote religious diversity and tolerance such as the multi-faith one.

The problems affecting Religious Studies as an academic discipline in Zimbabwe can be attributed to the confessional approach that has been used during colonialism and soon after independence. These problems shall be dealt with when looking at the challenges of Religious Studies in Chapter five.

### **2.9.3 Neo-Confessional Approach**

The neo-confessional approach to Religious Education is known by various names such as ‘renewed confessionalism’, ‘liberal-theological’ or ‘implicit’ (Matemba 2011:24). The neo-confessional approach to Religious Studies pushes the interests of one dominant religion but also accommodates the study of other religions. In this approach, the interests of the dominant religion are put first while the interests of other religions are cosmetically catered for. In neo-confessional Religious Education other religions are studied merely as ‘extras’ (Cox 1983). Therefore, while teaching in Religious Education is approached from the learners’ perspectives, issues such as moral questions, uncertainties, existential questions and so on are based on the theological underpinnings of the dominant religion in a country or community (say Christianity), while other religions are seen as offering an alternative but not the main theological view on religious issues under study (Matemba 2011:25). This has been the case with Zimbabwe from independence up to 2017 where Christianity has been given an unfair advantage over other religions in the educational system. This special treatment of Christianity has also impacted negatively on the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe.

### **2.9.4 The Spiritual Approach**

The shortcomings of the phenomenological approach is advocated by many modern scholars are that it is mainly concerned with descriptions of phenomena than the spiritual needs of the learner (Wright 2001). This has led to the rise of the spiritual approach whose main aim was to cater for the needs of the learner. This approach was propounded by David Hay (2006) who argued that the logical positivist inclination inherent in a phenomenological Religious Education was deficient because the spiritual side of religion was being side-lined. Logical positivism is the philosophical theory that believes that all knowledge must be verified through scientific methods such as experiments, observations, and logical/mathematical proof. This verification in phenomenology should seek to understand the subjective, lived experiences and perspectives of spiritual needs of the learner. For Hay, the spiritual approach permitted Religious Studies to go beyond mere description of religion in order to provide children with the opportunity to experience religion as well (Hay 1998:11). While dismissing the phenomenological approach, Matemba (2011:26) argues that the approach pays little attention to the spiritual aspect of the self. The spiritual approach to Religious Education can help to fill the pedagogical gap for those children in search of a spiritual meaning to pertinent issues of



life. From this context, pedagogical approaches to Religious Studies should address both religious issues and spiritual matters (Carmody 2010:19). As such, in Zimbabwe, Religious Studies has been focusing more on spiritual matters than religious facts.

### **2.9.5 The Doctrinal Approach**

This approach is largely en-faithing which means that it seeks to convert learners. It is also known as catechesis. Catechesis refers to the word of God that echoes in the heart of the hearer (Holohan 2010:2). It is the teaching associated with Christian rites of passage of baptism and it is also a mechanism of initiation into Christianity. This pedagogical approach started during the Middle Ages with the intention of enlightening people about catholic doctrines. Healy (2011:12) says catechism involves the use of word of mouth as a strategy to question and answer. The approach used a simple didactic style which was based on memorisation of the word of God (Ryan 2006:6). As such, this approach to Religious Studies or Religious Education “reflected an ecclesiology of the church as an institution with a siege mentality” (Lovat 2009:5). The church’s main teachings and doctrines were passed down to believers through catechism. This teaching was against modern understanding of Religious Studies that it has to be relative, liberal and promote tolerance because of its confessional basis. It should be noted that the approach was introduced as a stop gap measure during the recession of Roman Catholicism during the reformation period. It was introduced as a way of revamping Catholicism which was losing relevance because of Protestantism.

The weaknesses of the doctrinal approach were strongly met with educational changes in Europe, for instance, where the Munich method formulated by Dr A Webber was adopted by the Vienna catechetical congress in 1912. The new method involved five processes which are “preparation, presentation, explanation, combination and application” (Healy 2011:14). The objective of this process was to make teaching meaningful to the learner by making learning relevant to the needs of the learner in different life situations. However, the method continued to lack the ability to “inspire faith and encourage free and rational thought.” The coming of the new scientific and psychological perspectives influenced pedagogy. Catechism was criticised for the limitations it placed on the learning process (Buchanan 2010:34). Learners were treated as blank slates with no basic knowledge of religious truth claims. In fact, the approach as pedagogy was “prescriptive, passive and teacher centred” (Healy 2011:14). In this approach, the teacher had the monopoly of knowledge and during learning the students were treated as blank slates since learners’ participation during the learning process was limited. In Zimbabwe,

the approach was used during colonialism when missionaries controlled the curriculum learned at church run educational institutions. The approach was phased out when Religious Studies moved from the indoctrinating approach to critical inquiry of religions.

### **2.9.6 The Kerygmatic Approach**

The weaknesses of the doctrinal approach led to the development of the kerygmatic approach in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This approach is credited to a German Jesuit theologian Joseph Jungmann in around 1936, whose ideas were later pursued by his disciple or student by the name Johannes Hofinger. Hofinger transformed the teaching and learning of Religious Education in Europe and Australia through his insight which was intellectual and spiritual as well. It was during this era that the Roman Catholic theologians began to use modern and scientific approaches to Religious Studies in order to “proclaim the good news of Christianity and inspire young people intellectually and spiritually” (Healy 2011:15).

In response to the doctrinal approach which was considered monotonous, anachronistic and distant from the real life situation of the learner, the Kerygmatic approach was introduced. It was seen as commensurate with the everyday life of the learner and it used media to stimulate the interest of the learner. The Kerygmatic approach literally means heralding the good news (Ryan 2006:6). The approach brought much enthusiasm in learners as learning became more interactive in summoning learners to religious awareness and insights about God. Students were invited to know about God through Bible stories, songs, prayers, dances and other activities (Ryan 2006:6) According to Rymarz (2003:53) Biblical stories pushed students to critical enquiry and called them to action. However, this approach failed to be effective as Religious Studies teachers had a knowledge and skills gap. Thus, the Kerygmatic approach became a shadow of the doctrinal approach as the approach “did not meet the experience of learners” (Healy 2011:17). This is because teachers had little understanding of the task to be accomplished. There was a pedagogical deficiency in this approach as it was divorced from the life situation of the learner. Therefore, the implication for this study is that when pedagogical skills are enhanced, the teaching of a multi-faith syllabus from a non-confessional approach becomes possible and could result in the effective implementation of curriculum reforms in Religious Studies.

### **2.9.7 The Life Themes Approach**

Life themes approach is a teaching strategy that came out of Christian Religious Education. There are four main steps involved in the use of the Life themes approach or pedagogy (Onsongo 2002). The steps are Human Experience, Biblical Experience, Explanation and Application and Response in that chronological order. Owusu and Danso (2014:80) posit that:

Human Experience involves using the experiences of the learner as the basis upon which the religious material would be built, for example, the birth of siblings. The Religious (or Biblical) Experience is introduced to the learner from the Biblical text, e.g. the birth of Jesus Christ. The explanation involves giving an exposition on the Biblical text. The Application and Response stage involves relating the content to the lives of the learners, and giving them the opportunity to react and respond to the lesson that has been taught.

The main objective of this approach is to analyse life issues of learners and make the learner reflect on things that happen in their life situations within the context of what the Bible says. This view is augmented by Owusu and Danso (2014:79) who say, “The Life Themes approach or pedagogy seeks to examine the life issues of learners (students or pupils) and to encourage them to reflect on those issues against the Biblical messages that are presented to them”. This means that life situations are connected to teachings in the Bible. This approach was popular in Germany in the 1960s and 1970s (Matemba 2011:26). In Africa, this approach was commonly used in the teaching and learning of Religious Education in East and Central African schools between 1970 and 1990 (Onsongo 2002). The life themes approach has strength in that it is not alienated from the challenges affecting learners in their day to day lives. This is in line with the research findings of psychologists like Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg and Ronald Goldman who revealed that learners’ experiences played a major role in their learning process. Owusu and Danso (2014:80), citing Loukes (1965), argue that the success in other subjects has been achieved by using the learners’ experiences. They, therefore, suggest that the same success can be achieved in Religious Education if the same approach were used.

On the contrary, the approach is closely linked to one religion, specifically, Christianity. Learners are indoctrinated in this approach. This results in intolerance, exclusivism and dominance of one religion. If the approach is used in the study of all religions, “it can benefit children who come from a wide spectrum of religious experience other than Christianity” (Matemba 2011:27). This is because all religions have teachings which influence every life situation of humanity. In fact, all religions are repositories of moral and ethical guidelines which are critical in various life situations. It can be concluded in the context of this study that

life themes approaches may not be suitable in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum because the approach is convenient in the teaching of one religion, like in the old curriculum.

### **2.9.8 The Critical Realist Approach**

Andrew Wright is the proponent of the critical realist approach. According to him, the study of religion in schools should begin by accepting that the human knowledge of the world has gaps and ambiguities. Wright believes that this helps Religious Education to escape the anti-realist excesses of postmodernity which have dogged the subject for a long time (Wright 2004b). Furthermore, Wright notes areas of strength of the critical realist approach which include the idea that it ensures that children's freedom of belief is respected, tolerance of other people's beliefs is encouraged, learners can engage in constructive debate and learners are assisted in their pursuit of truth and truthful living (Wright 2007). However, Matemba (2011:27) believes that "despite these claims, the critical realist approach pays scant attention to the complexity of religion". Furthermore, the inadequacies of this approach are seen in its failure to "address fully the debate about the demanding nature of religious traditions to children in a Religious Education classroom" (Matemba 2011:27). In the context of this study, the critical realist approach can not fit well in the classroom where learners of diverse religious backgrounds are taught in one class.

### **2.9.9 Interpretive Approach**

An interpretive approach is a life theme approach which was formulated by Robert Jackson on the basis of ethnography. Matemba (2011:28) states that the interpretive approach considers the 'lived' religious experience of individual children and their wider engagement with religious traditions as the basis for learning in Religious Education (Jackson 1997). To ensure critical thinking in Religious Studies, the approach looks at the similarities and differences of language and experiences of children, differences between those in class (outsiders) and those depicted in texts (insiders) in order to look "for areas of overlap that can be used as a basis for discussing similarity and difference" (Jackson 1997:111). The interpretive approach involves the process of translation to help children understand and empathise with the religious experiences of others (Matemba 2011:28). It also involves the process of reflection by allowing children to make distanced critique of others' beliefs with the hope that inevitably they will subject their own religious assumptions to critical reflection (Jackson 2000:19). The weakness of this approach is that it tends to be more relativist and reductionist in nature.

### **2.9.10. The Particularist Approach**

This is an approach that is flexible in accommodating two or more religions in a multi-cultural society. Matemba (2011:29) says, “a particularist approach is used in situations where confessional/multi-confessional and multi-faith/phenomenological syllabi are sometimes offered simultaneously in one national curriculum of Religious Education”. It is offered in countries where there are disagreements over the nature of Religious Studies syllabus content. In Kenya, for example, there are three separate confessional syllabi for Hindu, Christian and Muslim children that are offered alongside each other in schools (Svensson 2007). In Uganda there exists two separate RE syllabi for Christian and Muslim children (Mwesigwa 2003). Furthermore, in Nigeria, the Christian syllabus is offered in South of Nigeria while in the north of Nigeria they offer a Muslim syllabus. In the case of Post-Soviet Latvia, the particularist approach adopted has produced four different RE syllabi, namely; ‘confessional’, ‘ecumenical Christian’, ‘Christian ethics’, and ‘world religions’ (Matemba 2011:29). This approach is difficult to implement and divides the society while, on the other hand, “religions that are not given their own curriculum see such arrangements as discriminatory” (Matemba 2011:29). Matemba further elaborates that this happened in Kenya where Jewish students demanded their own syllabus and threatened to sue the government if such a provision was not made. Arguing that the absence of a separate Jewish RE curriculum forced them to choose a syllabus with a different faith from theirs. It can be concluded in the context of this study that some Christian mission schools are lobbying for a separate curriculum so that they do away with the syllabus that threatens their faith.

### **2.9.11. The Dialogical Approach**

The Dialogical approach was developed by Heid Leganger-Krogstad in Northern Norway. This approach believes that Religious Education moves between the child’s personal experience and wider social experience and between the past in terms of tradition and history, especially the children’s own roots and the future. Furthermore, there is a gradual broadening of children’s experiences as they relate their personal concerns to selected cultural material, extending their horizons beyond family and locality to the region and nation and, in turn, to wider European and global issues (Jackson 2005:242). Pupils’ main individual concerns and questions are connected to the broader social and cultural issues, with local issues affecting them and acting as a medium in their learning process. Children’s dialogue enables them to understand other peoples’ cultures, which leads to a greater appreciation of other people’s religious beliefs.

However, this method can result in cultural erosion among the learners. It can be concluded in the context of this study that some parents are resisting the updated Religious Studies curriculum because it may cause loss of identity among learners.

#### **2.9.12. The Typological Approach**

This approach is a product of phenomenological studies of religions. It is mainly concerned with the teaching of Religious Studies in secondary schools and its main thrust is on what best can be done to teach Religious Studies using the phenomenological oriented approach. It is a method that was applied in Australia where it “influenced the development of state based Religious Education syllabus” (Buchanan 2010). There are about eight salient features of what should be taught in Religious Studies as prescribed by the typological approach. These include: beliefs, texts, stories, ethics, rituals, symbols, social structure and experience (Moore and Habel 1982:71). As such, religion is made of “discrete but integrated components” (Healy 2011:28). The main objective of this approach is to understand the historical background of a particular religion, basic tenets of a religion and how religion contributes to social stability through its teachings. In order to understand what religion is, there is need for learners to understand religious texts and their backgrounds. This approach underscores that Religious Studies should impart and develop skills by studying religions. Furthermore, this approach encourages the learning of one’s religious tradition as well as other people’s religious traditions, which can result in inculcating virtues such as tolerance, respect of one another and inclusivity.

In terms of strengths of this approach, it should be noted that the approach does not operate in a vacuum but that it is based on theories of human development derived from psychologists such as Piaget and Kohlberg as well as the curriculum theory of Stenhouse. The method takes cognisance of the learner’s cultural background which generate the zeal for learning in learners and in the process leads to effective learning. Furthermore, the method includes inductive reasoning and interpretation on the part of the learner. The major strength of this approach is that it is based on the learner’s cultural background as well as understanding other people’s religious traditions in the wider society. Moore and Habel (1982:74) developed a practical classroom approach from a phenomenological approach that built knowledge and building knowledge of other religious faiths and traditions. Thus, the method is knowledge centred more than en-faithing. The approach, if given a chance, may be applicable to Zimbabwe which is grounded in Indigenous Religious traditions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

## **2.10. PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES RELATED TO ZIMBABWE**

The above pedagogical approaches were mainly utilised in Western European countries and do not apply to the Zimbabwean education system, especially in the post-independence era. Below is an insight of pedagogical issues in Religious Studies that are related to Zimbabwe from independence in 1980 up to the present. This is because “the introduction of new teaching approaches in Religious Education in Zimbabwe after independence was also seen as leading to a paradigm shift in the pedagogy of Zimbabwean secondary schools” (Ndlovu 2004:114). This pedagogy was, according to Dzvimbo (1995:1), “reflective, liberatory and emancipatory so as to address the way teachers teach and students learn.” It is within this context that new pedagogies were introduced soon after independence to develop understanding, critical thinking, skills, values and attitudes among learners. It is against this backdrop that various approaches to Religious Studies teaching implemented in Zimbabwe since independence will be discussed in this section. These include the life experience approach, the phenomenological approach and the Multi-faith approach.

### **2.10.1 The Life Experience Approach**

Colonial Religious Studies in Zimbabwe was flawed in the sense that it separated the learner from his or her experience, thereby making learning more abstract than real. This is because Christianity, which was the core of the old Religious Studies curriculum, was “assessed as a more legitimate religion compared to others – a religion against which others are measured” (Dinama 2010:19). Biseth (2009:14) says that in such a situation, “the education system sends a message of a normative character since what is accepted, respected and seen as normal is represented in the classroom community.” Gundani and Ndlovu (2000:110) suggest that Religious Studies curricula should be designed to make pupils understand the subject within his or her own socio-cultural milieu. On the contrary, the post-colonial Religious Studies 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). This led to the paradigm shift which catered for the African learner’s experiences through the adoption of the life experience approach. Any learning of Religious Studies which does not take cognisance of the learners’ life experiences is inappropriate. Learners are able to relate their spirituality to life’s problematic issues (Dube 2016:79).

The focus of Religious Studies is to relate the curriculum to the life experiences of the people in which the curriculum is offered. As Grimmit (1982:136) puts it:

The first set of concerns arose from insights taken from developmental psychology and child centred theories of education. These concerns were accommodated in the 1960s by defining religion in terms of a natural theology of experience with strongly Christian affinities and seeing RE as promoting among pupils an activity of theological reflection which would lead them to a Christian interpretation of human experience.

The life experience approach was developed by Ronald Goldman and Douglas Hubery at Westhill College in Birmingham and the main thrust of the approach is to connect ordinary experience of children to the Bible. The approach also became known as the life theme approach” (Teece 2010:32). It has been used in many countries and, in Zimbabwe, it started in 1991 with an “aim to develop an insight into the religious and spiritual areas of experiences, particularly the African and Christian traditions which have profoundly affected our culture” (Gundani and Ndlovu 2000:110).

According to Goldman (1965:59), the experiential or life experience approach is based on the following principles which continue to have value and application to present-day Religious Education teaching, namely; human personal development, influencing educational perspectives, combining human beings’ cultural values and fulfilling personal needs of the learner. Furthermore, Religious Studies should meet the learners’ needs by using methods that help in the developmental processes as well as being based on the experience of the learner and his or her understanding.

It is clear that Goldman (1965:61) is in agreement with other advocates of child-centred theorists like Loukes (1965) who perceive Religious Studies as an academic discipline which can lead to personal development and growth of the learner. The life experience approach produces the total sum of a model person. Ndlovu (2004:118), citing Machokoto (1983:29), says Goldman’s views were a major forerunner to the development and implementation of the so-called life experience approach to the teaching of Religious Education in Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe, the life experience approach was advocated for when the country attained independence in 1980. This is because “the government of Zimbabwe was primarily concerned with replacement of the various subjects’ colonial content with more local, regional and national content” (Ndlovu 2004:119). However, the change of Religious Studies curriculum was affected by many stakeholders who had strong Christian orientation. The Religious Studies curriculum remained a carbon copy of the colonial Religious Studies curriculum which was



Christocentric. Ndlovu (2004:119) says the proposal for a life experience approach was made and was adopted in the early 1990's. This made the learner understand religious matters from his or her own perspective and experience.

From 1991 to early 2000, the Religious Studies curriculum largely adopted a life experience approach. The introduction of the Life Experience approach to the context of the Zimbabwean learner was "thus a negotiation of the views of the radical policy makers, curriculum developers, educational administrators and educators and the views of the conservative policymakers, curriculum developers, educational administrators and educators" (Ndlovu 2004:118-119). This approach has a firm foundation on "Christian Religious Education" (Dube 2016:80). It observes the life "issues of children and encourages them to reflect on them against the explanations given in religious texts" (Matemba 2011:26). The approach begins with an exploration of pupils' life contexts before moving to the religious texts. What comes first is the learner's experience before it is validated with religious texts. The objective of the approach was to assist "learners as they relate religion to their life experience" (Ndlovu 2004:116). The introduction of the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching was done with the view of producing learners with a better understanding of their heritage and also their moral principles or *unhu/ubuntu*.

The life experience approach has become very important in the teaching, learning and assessment of learners in Zimbabwe. The approach has the advantage of making Religious Studies relevant to the socio-cultural contexts of the learner and it accelerates pupils' understanding of Religious Studies concepts from the known to the unknown. Furthermore, it allows learners to understand their religious heritage and thereby promoting a sense of identity in learners. Lastly, the approach makes Religious Studies more fascinating to the learner in exploring and learning concepts related to his or her life situations. Be that as it may, the life approach has a major weakness of exposing the learner to indoctrination from the teacher. This is because if a teacher is a strong adherent to a particular religion, references will only be made to the religion which the teacher belongs to. Gundani and Ndlovu (2000:111) further state that the life approach may fail to develop within the learner an enquiring, critical and sympathetic approach to religion. On the other hand, Ndlovu (2004:14) says 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. It is within this context that the approach may lead the learner as well as the teacher to be confessional, thereby negating inclusivity, tolerance and

plurality within the learning environment. The implementation of the new curriculum which requires the study of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Islam and Christianity requires an approach that does not expect one to be intolerant of other religious beliefs but requires an approach that caters for the needs of learners of diverse religious backgrounds.

### **2.10.2 Tenets of the life experience approach.**

The life experience approach to Religious Studies teaching has the following salient features.

#### **2.10.2.1 It considers the *sitz im leben* of the learner.**

A key feature of life experience is that it takes into account the life situation and culture of the learners. It is not separated from the situational context of the learner. The approach explores the life situation and culture of the learners. Griffiths (1990:40) defines the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching as implemented in Zimbabwe as follows:

A basic pedagogical principle to start with the life situation of the learner then to the concept being taught. This implies that curriculum starts where the pupils are, in their own experiences and the experiences of other people who matter to them. The materials are designed to enable pupils to talk of these experiences and to take the culture and wisdom of other people seriously.

This definition implies that for Religious Studies to be “viable, relevant, and effective, it should start with the learners themselves and explore their life situation and culture” (Ndlovu 2004:126). What learners learn is connected to their experiences and leads to a better understanding of different life situations. Seen in this light, “The value of the school experience is most likely to be found in the way in which it can set children on the paths towards being receptive to the lessons to be learned from life as a whole” (Grimmit 1982:141). Considering the value of the life situation of the learners in Religious Studies is vital in making learning more effective. It is the assumption of this study that the updated Religious Studies curriculum explores the life situation of the learner as it begins with their personal experiences in their interaction with different religions in the society.

#### **2.10.2.2 Learner centredness**

The life experience approach in Religious Studies is characterised by the learner-centred approach with the aim of creating personal development and growth amongst learners. Learners have difficulties in understanding religious concepts outside of their life experiences. Life experience is, therefore, makes learning relevant to the learner as the learner is always made to understand using his or her life experience. Part of the thrust of the new curriculum is

to solve 21<sup>st</sup> century problems. This can only be realised when learning is student-centred. The learner is not a passive participant in the learning process but an important stakeholder in achieving learning objectives. Goldman (1965:197) makes the following remarks about the life experience approach as a learner-centred approach:

It leads children to integrate all they are learning and doing in all subjects within a world view of God as a creator and as the person who cares about his people.

Although this approach remained largely Christocentric in its outlook by making the learner committed to Christianity, the approach involved learners. It is within this context that the Kent Council of Religious Education Handbook of Thematic Material (1967:1) confesses that:

It is the prime object of the life experience approach to awaken children to the spiritual dimensions to show that religion belongs to life, to show that the life Jesus lived, His death and resurrection, and the stories which He told are of present importance because they are eternal; ... to open a path to a freely chosen commitment to the way of life that millions have trod through so many centuries; to make the Bible live again as the word of God to his people.

Ndlovu (2004:129) concludes that the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching is an approach that provides learners with an opportunity to examine the “religious interpretation of life” and engage in a personal quest for meaning, purpose and value. The life experience approach’s objectives are to give “learners a religious view of life and allow them to freely make up their minds how that view shall express itself in belief and practice” (Ndlovu 2004:129). This means that learning should not put some blinkers on the learner but should open other alternative religious views. This is the reason why the new curriculum in Zimbabwe envisages that Religious Studies is not a subject about converting people but a subject which introduces students to an appreciation of diverse religious views.

#### **2.10.2.3 Skills, values and attitudes**

The life experience approach to Religious Education teaching is not a knowledge-based approach. Rather, it is a skills-based approach. Ndlovu (2004:130) says it teaches learners skills as well as values and attitudes to cope more effectively with changing circumstances and new experiences. This is true within the context of a diversified religious society where all religions are resources of morality and better attitudes. This contributes to the personal development of the learner and the inculcating of values and attitudes which are critical for human survival. The life experience approach contributes to meeting the learner’s religious, spiritual and personal needs without falling into the trap of confessionalism or intellectualism (Smith 1969:127-128). Ndlovu (2004:130), citing Cox (1970:6), cements this by saying that the life

experience approach helps learners to master the skill of understanding the nature of the present secular, pluralistic Zimbabwean society. It helps learners think rationally about the state and place of religion in order to enable them to choose objectively between the many conflicting religious statements that are made in such a secular pluralistic society, to work out for themselves, and to be able to defend their own religious positions or their rejection of the possibility of having one. Therefore, Religious Education teachers have a role of enriching learners so that they “contribute towards their personal development, i.e. acquiring knowledge, skills, values and attitudes” (Ndlovu 2004:130). By adopting the life experience approach in teaching Religious Studies, teachers thus address some of the humanising educational objectives, including developing personal values, attitudes and skills, understanding, rationality, objectiveness, and unbiasedness in the learners (Weightman 1982:155). It can be concluded in the context of this study that personal values and attitudes towards other religions may not be easy because teachers may defend their religious beliefs.

### **2.10.2 The Phenomenological Approach.**

The phenomenological approach to R.E. is the brainchild of Smart (1968), a university professor at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom, who wanted to initiate innovation in the teaching of religions at university level (Dinama 2010:40). The approach basically uses Smart’s (1968; 1969) seven dimensions that are said to characterise each religion, which are: ethical, social, doctrinal, mythical, material, ritual, and the experiential. Historically, phenomenological approach has its roots in the Germany philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). This method started as a response to the flaws of confessional approaches to the study of religion. To corroborate this, Strihan (2010:25) notes that the phenomenological model is a retreat from confessional Religious Education which began in the mid-1960s. Etymologically, the term phenomenology is derived from the Greek word *phainomai* which means ‘that which manifests itself or reveals itself’. Chitando (1998:102) says phenomenology is the study of appearances. As such, the phenomenological approach does not allow the domination of one religion and it does not seek to convert the learner but to ‘inform’ rather than ‘convert’ pupils (Swann 1985:498). Grimmitt (2001: 6) explains that this approach seeks to involve students studying the religion from an empathetic approach and non-evaluative manner while acquiring certain capacities to understand the religion, and engaging in a reflective process. This means that the phenomenological approach is motivated by the need to enlighten, inform and conscientise the learner instead of indoctrinating the learner. Matemba (2011:23) believes that phenomenological Religious Studies is premised on the fact that in contemporary society

children should be exposed to a wide range of religious views and not just to Christianity as had been the case before.

This phenomenological approach is reactionary to the weaknesses of the confessional approach which is mainly suited in a country where one religion dominates. On the contrary, Zimbabwe is a multi-religious society and the phenomenological approach is popular because of its “neutrality, openness and pluralism which are valued” (Tan 2008:3). Christianity, Islam, Indigenous Religion and Judaism are lived religions in Zimbabwe. Therefore, there is the teaching of religions and study of religions. Teaching of religions is mainly concerned about converting the learner while study of religion is concerned with gaining knowledge about a particular religion. This means that the study of religions in schools makes schools institutions which transmit religious knowledge about religions of the world. Matemba (2011:24) believes that the phenomenological approach is associated with the teaching of world faiths in the common school. This is further supported by Machingura and Mugebe (2015:137) who argue that the multi-faith approach realises the importance of the teachings of various religions like Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and African Indigenous Religion in enriching the teaching and learning of Religious Education.

It is because of this reason that “the phenomenological approach in RE, demands the teacher to help students know and understand the concepts that underlie religion and not to convert them to a particular religion” (Dinama 2010:40). In Zimbabwe where there are people of diverse religious backgrounds and beliefs, this approach has been adopted in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies since early 2000.

#### **2.10.2.1 Characteristics of the phenomenological approach.**

There are five distinct characteristics of the phenomenological approach to the study of religions. These features are important in study of various religions of the world.

##### **2.10.2.2 Descriptive nature.**

One of the key objectives of phenomenological approach is to be thorough in describing a religious phenomenon. It tries to describe the nature of phenomena, how it manifests itself without being subjective. Therefore, the phenomenological approach explains the religious diversity, complexity of various belief systems.

### **2.10.2.3 Anti-reductionism.**

Phenomenological approach is liberating people from uncritical preconceptions that prevent them from becoming aware of the specificity and diversity of phenomena (Allen 2005:6). This is what is known as anti-reductionism whose objective is to broaden and sharpen the immediate experience and provide more accurate descriptions of the experience.

### **2.10.2.4 Intentionality.**

Intentionality refers to the property of all consciousness as consciousness of something. All acts of consciousness are directed toward the experience of something, the intentional object. The concept was mainly used by Husserl who adopted it from his teacher Franz Brentano between 1838 and 1917 to describe how consciousness constitutes phenomena.

### **2.10.2.5 Bracketing.**

Bracketing refers to the suspension of judgment when explaining a religious phenomenon. It is the suspension of beliefs and judgments based on an unexamined natural standpoint. The objective of bracketing is to free the phenomenologist from unexamined presuppositions, or of rendering explicit and clarifying such presuppositions, rather than completely denying their existence. The technical Greek name for bracketing for phenomenologists is *epoche* (Dube 2016:8) and it involves the suspending of one's presuppositions when explaining religious issues. According to Cox (1996: 26-27) "the phenomenologist wants to observe the phenomena as they appear rather than as they are understood through opinions formed prior to observations. Cox (1996:27) further asserts that "a non-believer can appreciate the meaning of religion in the believer's own terms because he has suspended his own personal or academic presuppositions by temporarily placing them within brackets (*epoche*) thus permitting him to cultivate a feeling for the believer's own faith position (empathy)". Therefore, there is an interconnection between empathy and *epoche*. Empathy simply means attempting to put yourself in another person's shoes so that you can see what the world looks like from there, and *epoche* is designed to help you do this without all sorts of prior judgements getting in the way; it is a bracketing-out of potentially distorting opinions and beliefs (Daniel 2012:132). In this study, it can be argued that bracketing may result in improving acceptance of religious diversity by learners.

### **2.10.2.6 The value of phenomenological approach**

The role of phenomenological approach in the study of religions cannot be underestimated. It is an influential approach which is suitable for a society that is characterised by religious

diversity. Matemba (2011:24) asserts that the phenomenological Religious Education has made an important contribution to the development of Religious Studies. The approach has enabled learners to have a great appreciation of “the diverse and sometimes conflicting life stances which exist and thus enabling them to determine and to justify their own religious position” (Singh 1986:233). This is important because contemporary society is no longer a homogenous entity and, as such, including a variety of religions for study is in tandem with the heterogeneous nature of modern society (Matemba 2011:24). Thus, the phenomenological approach promotes inclusivity, plurality and tolerance in society. The use of the phenomenological approach to Religious Studies assists learners to “understand the nature of belief and a range of belief systems” (Singh 1986:242). The other value of phenomenological approach is that it facilitates the learning of Religious Studies as an academic discipline rather than as means of en-faithing. Furthermore, the phenomenological approach to Religious Studies as a reaction to confessional approach, has engendered the development of nascent approaches to, and of RE (Buchanan 2005), a development that has brought renewed interest in the subject as societies strive to find ways of improving the teaching and learning of RE (Matemba 2011:24). Therefore, there are new approaches that have been formulated as a response to phenomenological approach.

On the contrary to the above noted strengths of the approach, the phenomenological approach is subjected to massive criticism by Western European social scientists. Some of the prominent critics are Donald Wiebe (1990), Robert Segal (1989) and Ivan Strenski (1990). These critics have raised contentious areas which makes phenomenological approach subject to criticism such as the claim of neutrality, the idea of irreducible religion and the allegation that a phenomenology of religion is theology in disguise.

Firstly, phenomenological approach is flawed in the sense that it is descriptive and does not emphasise critical thinking, which is a key feature of the 21<sup>st</sup> education system. It is because of this reason that Dube (2016:80) believes that the phenomenological approach “fails to take into account the questions that pupils pose about religion, just as it refuses to allow pupils’ existential concerns to shape the Religious Education curriculum.” In the same vain, Lovat (2001:570) says “phenomenological Religious Education is too heavily descriptive, values-neutral, and lacks a certain definitiveness in making an assessment between good and bad religious claims.” Tan (2008:3) argues that “the most common criticism is that it does not represent the true character of religion in its Herculean quest to avoid any religious point of view.” Such an approach reduces religious learning to “a bland process of listing and labelling”

(Wright 2001: 48). The result is that “scraps and fragments of different religious traditions” are presented which are meaningless, superficial and distortive of any real understanding of religion (Carr 1996: 171; Carr 1999: 453).

Furthermore, the approach also treats religions as almost the same, but on the contrary, “the dimensions of religions, which are its hallmark, are not universally applicable to all faiths” (Matemba 2011:23). Conroy and Davis (2009) question the ability of teachers and pupils to bracket when studying religion, arguing that if this is at all possible then it exists at a superficial and not the deeper level of those religious assumptions. Ekeke believes the approach treats “phenomena in isolation of history as if history is not necessary in determining how relevant a particular phenomenon is for religious practitioners’ and adding that ‘most times phenomenology lacks the ability to contextualise various religious phenomena so studied” (Ekeke 2010: 273). Barnes (2001: 572) has gone as far as suggesting that the phenomenological approach has a weaknesses and should not be used because it “falsifies the character of religion by the imposition of an alien schema of interpretation whereby religious experience is first divorced from religious doctrines and then accorded priority over the latter.”

The phenomenological approach is different from the multi-faith approach in that it aims at approaching a phenomenon from diverse faiths perspectives. I recognise the use of phenomenological approach in the multi-faith society but it is not an approach that is relevant in the classroom environment but in the study of a religion outside the learning environment. Here, I mean phenomenological approaches involve the use of epoche and bracketing by researchers who may want to know more about a particular religion. Phenomenological approach is an outsider view of religion and demystifies other religions (Grimmit 2000:7). Furthermore, I contend that a phenomenological approach deals with a scholar’s participation in religion in order to understand it. For the purpose of this study, phenomenology approach is not necessarily multi-pronged; the approach lets the phenomena speak for itself. It is a method that respects the believer and religion. Concerning multi-faith approach, it deals with a learner and not a believer in the light of the religion under study. This means that the multi-faith approach is relevant to the needs of a learner in the classroom since its main focus is on learning a religion in the classroom than a broader society. This is supported by Bell (1983:88) who says that multi-faith approach is based on the nature of education and nature of religion rather on what happens in society. So in this thesis, the two concepts are not similar.



In the light of the above-mentioned flaws associated with the phenomenological approach I argue that this approach is inadequate in addressing the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> learner such as being critical thinkers and not mere repositories of descriptive information. I, therefore, conclude that a multi-faith approach as recommended by the Nziramasanga Commission is more worthy using in Religious Studies in order to ensure pluralism, inclusivism and tolerance in a society since the Zimbabwe society is home to various religious.

#### **2.10.4 Socio-Religious Hybridity Strategy (SRHS)**

Despite the strengths and advantages of using a multi-faith approach in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies, Dube (2016) proposes the Socio-Religious Hybridity strategy. Dube (2016:4) notes that the promises of the multi-faith method to resolve Religious Studies problems became theoretical as “the approach has continued to promote the Christian religion in the curriculum, thereby acting as a technology of religious exclusion.” Earlier, Musaka (2012:64) notes that the multi-faith approach had failed to “redress the pedagogical concerns of Religious Studies in a pluralistic environment, in that, it rejects the claim that there is a religion which is uniquely true and superior to others.” The approach proposed by Dube (2016) is only relevant when dealing with the needs of Christianity and Indigenous Religion. The social- religious Hybridity strategy does not address a context where other religions like Judaism and Islam are involved. Furthermore, Dube’s proposition that the multi-faith approach is limited to the study of Bible knowledge which is in total contrast to the main objective of the updated curriculum whose essence is on the study of religions and not the bible. Therefore, I consider the multi-faith approach as valid in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies as opposed to the Socio-Religious Hybridity Strategy which does not cater for a situation where there are a number of religions being studied.

#### **2.10.5 Multi-Faith Approach**

Historically, the multi-faith approach began in the 1960’s in Britain. It was developed as a way of dealing with a multi-religious society which had developed as a result of “the influx of immigrants after the Second World War from 1939 to 1945 as well as immigrants brought about a multi-faith society” (Ndlovu 2004:149). This created multi-religious societies which affected the overall composition of learners in public schools in Britain. Members of other religions increased rapidly in both the public sphere, particularly schools. According to Thomas (1982:27), this was an important factor in the review of the Religious Education curriculum by

the British government. Thomas (1982:27) explores the following reasons why the multi-faith approach was introduced in Britain in the 1970s:

... secondly, we felt that since religion is a universal phenomenon, reflecting a search for truth, we should not impose strict limits on our exploration. Thirdly, we held the view that RE should help our pupils to understand the world in which they live. Without some knowledge of religion, how are pupils to understand history, politics, social pressures, art ...? Fourthly, we agreed that RE should aim to give an understanding of the relationships between people who are part of different cultures and societies. Finally, we all felt that RE should relate to the experience of our pupils. Our summary aims were stated as follows: to create a religious awareness; to relate to the experience of the pupils; to give pupils a body of knowledge.

The above-noted comments by Thomas show that there was need for a paradigm shift. It would be a shift from a Christocentric curriculum to a multi-faith curriculum that catered for all members of the society despite the differences in religious beliefs and orientation. It is within this context that a supplement was made to critique the Religious Education curriculum which had a bias against other religions. Hull (1975:113) lamented in the supplement that:

This was the first recognition through an agreed syllabus that in a religiously mixed society, Religious Education in the country schools cannot commend one faith and simply refer, in passing, to others.

This culminated in concerted efforts to change the whole outlook of the Religious Studies syllabus. In 1974 some basic features of world religions were introduced in Religious Education. This marked the formal introduction of the multi-faith approach in the study of religions in Britain. In this regard, Smart (1975:105) commented that a multi-faith approach is of great value in Religious Studies in that:

First, Religious Studies must transcend the information. Second it should do so not in the direction of evangelising, but in the direction of initiation into understanding the meaning of, and into questions about the truth and worth of religion. Third, Religious Studies should not exclude a committed approach, provided that it is open, and so does not artificially restrict understanding and choice. Fourth, Religious Studies should provide a service in helping people to understand history and culture other than our own. It can thus, play a vital role in breaking up the limits of European cultural tribalism. Fifth, Religious Studies should emphasise the descriptive, historical side of religion and thereby enter into dialogue with para-historical claims of religion and antireligious outlooks. The best interests of both Christians and non-Christians are served by these aims.

All societies move toward one direction in terms of the composition of their social structure. This implies that modern societies are all shifting from mono-religious outlook to a multi-religious outlook. The society is now composed of Christians, Muslims, Jews and other religious traditions. This is true of the society of Britain which moved from a mono-religious

society to a multi-religious society. So did the Zimbabwean society in 1980. The developments of a multi-faith approach in Britain inspired the development of the Religious Studies syllabi in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) since the education system of Zimbabwe was inherited from the British education system. It is because of this reason that Ndlovu (2004: 153) says that 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. Therefore, in 1991, at a Religious Education Panel Workshop, the following statement was uttered:

As teachers, officers, and academics, we have noted a trend in the manner in which Religious Education is perceived. One such change all over the world is the fact that Religious Education is fast becoming what I may call an academic and open enterprise (Ndlovu 1999:1).

The call was made amidst the implementation of the life experience approach and a close analysis of this statement shows that there was a need for a change in pedagogical approaches to Religious Studies because of the change of societal composition and objectives of the Religious Studies curriculum. Zimbabwe, as an independent country, was no longer obligated to follow the religion of the colonial masters as well as educate learners with the intention of indoctrinating them but to make learners aware of the existence of all religions of the world. Ndlovu (1999:1) argues that Religious Education teachers in Zimbabwe were no longer being viewed as evangelists or preachers but as academics. This means that the subject had moved from being confessional to critical enquiry of religions. The changes in the United Kingdom influenced views on Religious Education curricula review in Zimbabwe as well as pedagogical approaches to Religious Studies in Zimbabwe's secondary schools.

Just like in many countries where Religious Studies has been dominated by the multi-faith approach in present day, the religious demography in Zimbabwe pushed for the adoption of a multi-faith approach, a method which evolved from the phenomenological approach with the intention of catering for the needs of the religions of the world. Dube (2017:80) says because the phenomenology approach failed to address the challenges of religions in the curriculum, the government from 1997 has since "advocated for a multi-faith approach to Religious Studies teaching as it realised and acknowledged the presence of members of other religions besides Christianity in Zimbabwe society, and, consequently schools" (CDU 1999:1). The multi-faith approach is thus a response to exclusivism and stigmatisation of other religions in Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, the multi-faith approach became important as the society is more religiously

diversified and “the creation of a new order in Zimbabwe demanded that a new set of aims, purpose and role for Religious Education be drawn up” (Moyo 1983:102). 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 (Ndlovu 2004:20). For the avoidance of indoctrination, the multi-faith approach was adopted and it became more imperative with the introduction of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in 2017. The multi-faith approach’s main “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). With reference to my study, it can be argued that the multi-faith approach to the updated Religious Studies curriculum may result in learners developing a deeper understanding of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam as well as avoid prejudices against any religion.

Zimbabwe is a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious society comprising Christians, Muslims, Jews and Indigenous Religion followers. This makes a multi-faith approach suitable in the teaching of various religions. Although, Christianity has been made a dominant religion by Christian missionaries and colonialism, Zimbabwe has been home to various religious traditions. Dinama (2010:18) says in an environment where the Christian religion is elevated, respect of other religions is likely to be compromised. The role of the multi-faith is to treat religions as equal. Thus, the multi-faith approach seeks to redress the pedagogical concerns of Religious Studies in a pluralistic environment, in the sense that it rejects the claim that there is a religion that is uniquely true and superior to others (Museka 2012:64). The value of the multi-faith approach is that it acknowledges the existence of other religions as well as the equal understanding of these religions as champions of morality and avenues of salvation. Cush (2007:220) notes that “a non-confessional multi-faith approach is the argument that human culture past and present cannot be understood without understanding religions in the plural, there is need to understand the beliefs and values of our neighbours if we are to have any hope of living in harmony with them.”

Haar, Moyo and Nondo (in Ndlovu 2004:149) identified five principles that underpin the multi-faith approach which include: knowing about the religion, learning religion from an uncommitted approach, understanding the history and culture of a particular religion, being descriptive and being accommodative of all religions. These principles ensure that the learner is able to have a critical appraisal of religions being studied. The study of several religions in an academic discipline requires a multi-faith approach. The multi-faith approach fits

appropriately within the context of the adopted new curriculum framework which recognises religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Indigenous Religion. Dinama (2010:20), citing Felderhoff (1985), indicates that “a multi-faith Religious Education involves acquiring values such as sympathy, empathy and respect for other persons, and is expected to enable students to develop positive attitudes towards other people and institutions.” However, Dube (2016:80) questions the suitability of the multi-faith approach in Africa, especially where “Indigenous Knowledge System is taught with religion because it does not address the problematic issue of religious abuse.” On the contrary, I suggest that the multi-faith approach is suitable for the study of any religion and the confessional approach which has been used by curriculum implementers even when some partial review of the curriculum was done in early 2000 should be dismantled as it is against inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The multi-faith approach according to Gundani and Ndlovu (2000:113) is desirable because it makes learning more interesting, it gives learners an understanding of religion and an enquiring critical and sympathetic approach, promotes tolerance and develops knowledge, understanding as well as ability to evaluate religious facts and ideas.

From the above noted advantages, the multi-faith approach is a modern methodology that fits well with democratised societies which are punctuated with people of religious diversity. The approach is necessary in the teaching and learning of contemporary Religious Studies. It seeks to promote inclusivity, plurality and tolerance among teachers and learners thereby resulting in society which free from religious conflicts as well as a society with a strong moral fabric. In support of this Dinama (2010:20) echoes that advocacy for a multi-faith RE curriculum emanates from liberalism which encourages diversity, free thought, free expression and worship. I echo the strong sentiments that the multi-faith approach is a Siamese twin of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The effective implementation of the new curriculum is underpinned in the use of the multi-faith approach to ensure the success of updated Religious Studies curriculum which now includes Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

#### **2.10.5.1 Characteristics of the Multi-Faith Approach**

There are key features of a multi-faith approach as presented by scholars such as Kruger (1982), Olupona (1992), Smart (1988), Woodward (1982) and Ndlovu (2004). Below is an exploration of these features.

#### **2.10.5.2 Multi-faith Religious Education is phenomenological in nature**

As previously noted, the multi-faith approach to Religious Studies is a phenomenological method to the study of religion by the learner and not a believer. Olupona (1992:7) noted that “phenomenologically in the multi-faith approach learners describe as faithfully as possible and with an empathic feeling whatever the beliefs, the faith and the religious practices under study.” Firstly, Kruger (1982:17) notes that a phenomenological approach involves the return to the things themselves when he says, “It is the effort to rediscover and re-experience life itself directly underneath the layer of secondary scientific constructions. It wants to learn again how to see clearly and how to describe accurately what we see, before we start explaining scientifically...” This implies that a description of a phenomenon leads to objective understanding of a religious phenomenon but not from a believer’s perspective. This means that the multi-faith approach expands the learners’ knowledge of the religions and this in turn promotes tolerance and inclusivism in society. I reason that the updated Religious Studies which embraces the teaching of multi-faith syllabus will promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism despite challenges faced in the implementation of the new policy.

#### **2.10.5.3 Intentionality is a key feature of phenomenology.**

This refers to what the researcher wants to perceive vividly and describe adequately. Ndlovu (2004:161) says that this is how people themselves experience their own world. Kruger (1982:17), in this vein, emphasises the need to penetrate to the core of the peoples’ own experiences in order to effectively understand any religious phenomenon. According to Woodward (1982:37), the concept of intentionality entails a sympathetic and accurate description. Thus, the main focus of a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching is to see and describe religious phenomena as accurately as possible.

Phenomenology involves penetrating to the core of things. This phenomenal language is what is known as epoche, whereby everything is considered seriously and nothing is taken for granted. According to Kruger (1982:18) the observer, therefore, suspends all his/her previous assumptions concerning the phenomenon in question. Kruger (1982:18) elucidates as follows:

In order to concentrate better on the human consciousness of something, he even suspends his belief that something itself is real...The phenomenologists look at the world of madness and the world of normality with equal attention because to the people living in them, both are equally real. As he describes a religion he neither doubts nor endorses its truth value; the question itself is put on ice, the better to see, with untrammelled vision, the modes of certainty or doubt of the adherents themselves. In order to achieve as direct an exploration and description of a religious phenomenon as

possible, he has to approach it as free as possible from unexamined presuppositions in the form of pre-conceived ideas or prejudgements.

The teaching of Religious Studies using the multi-faith approach enables learners to study religious phenomena without any bias. The learner will be free from unexamined presuppositions in the form of pre-conceived ideas or prejudgements (Ndlovu 2004).

#### **2.10.5.3 Essences**

The multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching is premised on the view that learners look for the “essences” of things (Kruger 1982:19). The “essences” of things refers to their inner distinctive nature or the qualities that make an object or phenomenon what it is (Ndlovu 2004). Smart (1988:3) describes the importance of essences as follows:

In multi-faith Religious Education there is a tendency to stress a phenomenological approach which leaves students free to pursue issues without secret or overt evangelistic pressure (which in any case is counterproductive a lot of times).

The above described characteristic forms the basis of the multi-faith approach because it explains objectively what is religion is and reduces indoctrination by teachers on learners.

#### **2.10.5 4 Multi-faith Religious Education is plural**

Being plural is the feature of a multi-faith approach to Religious Studies. This means that the multi-faith approach operates well in an environment where there are various religious traditions (Smart 1988:5). It involves the teaching of Religious Studies taking into consideration inclusivity, tolerance and respect of other people’s religious beliefs and practices. All religions are mediators of salvation and equal. No religion is superior to the other.

#### **2.10.5.5 Multi-faith Religious Education is aspectual**

Religious Studies deals with “abstract” aspects of human life such as religious institutions, experience as well as behaviour and explores that particular aspect across the different religions (Smart 1988:5). The role of the multi-faith Religious Education is to identify “central concepts and issues across various religious traditions or beliefs that have application and importance across the range of religious experience” (Ndlovu 2004). Concepts like salvation are abstract and they are found in all religions. It is the duty of the multi-faith approach to explore such issues.

#### **2.10.5.6 Multi-faith Religious Education is multi-disciplinary or polymethodic**

The multi-faith Religious Education teaching includes many disciplines from sociology to psychology and from theology and anthropology.

#### **2.10.5.7 Multi-faith Religious Education is non-finite**

Multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching does not deal with one religious issue nor is it confined to a particular point of discussion. Ndlovu (2004) says there is no clear boundary to the concept of religion. In principle, it covers world views other than strictly religious ones. Therefore, the multi-faith Religious Education inculcates open and diverse viewpoints (Woodward 1982:15). Pain (1982:16) argues that an open approach to Religious Education assists the learner in formulating a philosophy or theology of life. This may entail a wide variety of worldviews, especially in a multi-cultural community.

Religious Education is, therefore, not confined to any concept. Issues to be taught are determined by policy makers. In Zimbabwe, for example, Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are taught in order to bring about the personal and moral development of the learner. The thrust of the new curriculum is to produce a learner who cherishes *unhu* or *ubuntu*. *Unhu* is a moral principle that is found in all religions. Moral code is a universal characteristic of religion. It is because of this reason that the multi-faith approach is non-finite and covers a lot of issues from an interdisciplinary approach. As such, for the purpose of this study, the importance of multi-faith approach cannot be overemphasised in its promotion of inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism as all religions are approached from a non-confessional approach. It is my assumption that the study by Ndlovu will assist in implementing the multi-faith policy and contribute towards the effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

### **2.11. PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN ZIMBABWE**

The world over, Religious Studies curriculum is faced with a lot of pedagogical challenges, which impact negatively on the teaching and learning of the subject. These pedagogical challenges are as a result of religious diversity, globalisation, secularisation and stigmatisation of other religions in public schools as well as society at large. Below is an insight of the pedagogical deficiencies that are found in Religious Studies, not only in Zimbabwe but the world over.

The paucity of information on various religions is a great pedagogical challenge amongst learners of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. There is need for dissemination of



accurate information when enlightening learners on religious issues. While most learners are aware of the existence of various religions of the world, most Religious Studies learners lack knowledge of such religions. Basigner (2010:3) observes that what learners claim to know about religions of the world is often inaccurate. Learners have limited knowledge and misplaced views of the religions of the world like Islam and Indigenous Religion. Accordingly, since most teachers agree that an “accurate factual understanding of religions is a necessary condition for effective communication and peaceful interaction among those with diverse perspectives, few educators deny that helping students gain a more accurate factual understanding of diverse religions is of vital importance” (Basigner 2010:3). The knowledge about various religions of the world suffers subjectivity since learners choose what they want to learn about a particular religion. Kasprisin (2003:421) argues that Religious Studies is based on “assumptions about human nature, society, and values ... that privilege one perspective over another.” This implies that the objective task of giving factual information about other religions to learners is flawed with a lot of subjectivity. This is because information about diverse religions is largely influenced by the embedded cultural coding and life experiences of the learner. This means that academic discourse, including discourse about religious studies, is fraught with this form of subjectivity on the part of both the learner and the teacher.

The main objective of Religious Studies is to create awareness on religions. However, educators have a duty to increase learners’ “cognitive and propositional understanding of diverse religious perspectives” (Basigner 2010:3). During the learning process learners have the task of clarifying their feelings about other religions and their followers. The desired goal is not simply to increase tolerance of other religions but to strengthen the belief that adherents of these religions have the right to believe and act as they do (Kasprisin 2003:421). Furthermore, the objective of Religious Studies is not to coax learners to agree with everything that followers of other religions believe in and do, but to “foster a more empathetic understanding of other religious perspectives, an understanding that encourages students to *appreciate* the other religions from the point of view of an adherent of that religion (Kunzman 2006:8). Warren Nord (1995:8) states that the goal of this empathetic approach is to help students “look at the world and human experience and feel it from the point of view of the categories of that religion.”

In the light of the above observation, it is critical to note that the intention of Religious Studies is not to encourage learners to accept the view that all religious perspectives are equally valid but rather to help learners appreciate the diversity of religious affiliations. Learners in public

schools are expected to appreciate differences in culture, ethnicity and religious belonging. This encourages peaceful co-existence and respectful interaction among learners of various religions accommodated at public schools.

Religious Studies is a subject which does not only require abstract description of a religious phenomenon but also an experiential approach. Learners should go beyond mere description of a phenomenon for them to acquire knowledge by also involving “directly experience these religions” for desirable learning outcomes to be achieved. Paul Hurst has argued that, for instance, “schools should teach ‘about’ religion, provided that is interpreted to include a direct study of religions, which means entering as fully as possible into an understanding of what they claim to be true, [an understanding that] will demand a great deal of imaginative involvement in expressions of religious life and even a form of engagement in these activities themselves” (Hurst 1974:187–188). Such involvement might include, for instance, a resource person to come and share with learners about Muslim beliefs and practices within an environment largely composed of a dominant religion like Christianity. It can also involve learners’ role-play on religious practices, for instance, look toward Mecca at the appropriate times each day. The effectiveness of direct experience is very strong in broadening a student’s empathetic understanding of a religion. However, it can lead to proselytisation of the learners. Furthermore, the experiential approach may reduce the value of the religion which is under study. This is exemplified with Indigenous Religion where Shangaan people, for instance, are becoming increasingly unsettled with the growing desire by outsiders to seek an understanding of their secretive religion(s) by watching or experiencing sacred ceremonies. They generally believe that observation can trivialise these ceremonies (Kasprisin 2003:422). Thus, this is a general challenge in Religious Studies.

The other pedagogical deficiency associated with Religious Studies curriculum is that various religions affirm conflicting doctrinal beliefs on significant issues. For example, while conservative Christians maintain that one must affirm certain beliefs about Christ as a saviour, conservative Muslims strongly deny this. Furthermore, Christians and Muslims are missionary religions which encourage their followers to convert those of other religions to their religious perspective. The other problem is that Christians and Muslims are taught by their sacred scriptures that other religions contain false beliefs.

The challenges noted above are difficult to solve within the Religious Studies education classroom. This is because the teacher has a role to attempt to convince students that all

religions are equally valid expressions of faith. For a teacher to encourage students to respect the right of adherents to other religions while retaining their current religious beliefs is a difficult task. This is despite the fact that the teacher has a mandate of encouraging learners to be tolerant of religious differences. Basigner (2010) however argues that “to encourage respect for the religious beliefs of others often carries with it the explicit or implicit assumption that it is inappropriate, if not unethical, to attempt to convince adherents of one religion that they should convert to another.” This creates a problem for the Religious Studies teacher where attempting to convince all students that it is wrong to convert results in legal and moral complications for the teacher. However, some scholars argue that there is no legal or ethical reason that a teacher should not expose students to the “positive commonalities” in diverse religious perspectives. My study is concerned with promoting inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism through the implementation of the updated Religious Studies policy. It is, therefore, imperative that pedagogical challenges are mitigated so that the teaching of religions from a non-confessional approach becomes feasible and this will improve implementation of the updated Religious Studies policy.

### **2.12.1 Pedagogical criticism of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe.**

A preliminary analysis of present pedagogy of Religious Studies reflects that the pedagogy of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe is strongly multi-faith in character. It was particularly designed to cater for a rainbow of religions like Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Indigenous Religion found in Zimbabwe. Admittedly, the colonial pedagogy which was confessional affected the full implementation of a multi-faith approach in the study of religions in Zimbabwe. A multi-faith Religious Education curriculum aims at promoting liberal values such as autonomy, freedom and tolerance and it can also encourage the search for common cross-cultural values in a pluralistic society (Wright 2004: 26). Although the reviewed Religious Studies curriculum calls for a multi-faith approach, Religious Studies in Zimbabwe has been exclusive and intolerant in character because of the dominance of Christianity in the religious space as well as the educational space. Many teachers who are implementers of the curriculum are Christians and they tend to follow a confessional approach to the study of religions. From a Religious Studies perspective, this a pedagogical challenge which needs to be rectified so that there is plurality, tolerance and inclusivity.

## **2.12 PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The above section has dealt with pedagogical issues in Religious Studies and in this section the philosophical issues related to Religious Studies are going to be explored and examined. This is because philosophical issues are the fundamentals in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. Philosophical issues in Religious Studies are important because they establish what sort of things the teacher wants the students to learn by describing how the teacher would want to teach. In other words, philosophical issues help the teacher to answer questions about the purpose of schooling, the role of the teacher, what should be taught and by what methods.

The quest of this research is to promote inclusivism and pluralism which are also philosophical concepts related to Religious Studies. Religious Studies is a subject which deals with beliefs and it is because of this reason that philosophical issues related to the subject are worthy to be analysed. This would allow the teacher to know the learning theories which facilitate effective learning. For effective learning to take place in Religious Studies, the teaching and learning methods should cater for the needs of all learners despite differences in religious beliefs and orientation. The teacher should create a learning environment which enables learning to take place by accommodating the religious background of learners as well as their religious affiliation. Dubey, Debey and Ndagi (1985:29) say a good deal of what the child is ready to learn or can learn, has to do with what he has already learnt before he comes to school. The religious background is important in Religious Studies as underpinned by the philosophical principles of promoting inclusivism and pluralism in the modern society.

The term philosophy is derived from two terms *philo* which means love and *sophia* which means knowledge. In this case, philosophy deals with truth claims and it encourages critical thinking. It is within this context that philosophical issues are necessary for curriculum design as well as in actual teaching and learning of Religious Studies. Religious Studies is a subject that is hinged on religious beliefs and from a philosophical point of view there is need to examine the truth of beliefs. This section will discuss the following philosophical issues related to Religious Studies: scepticism, exclusivism, inclusivism, relativism, reductionism and pluralism.

### **2.12.1 Scepticism**

Scepticism is a philosophical concept which gives religious persons the platform to be rational in their beliefs about a supernatural. On the other hand, King (2008:831) argues that “Once

such persons become fully aware of religious diversity, these beliefs often cease to be rational.” Thus, rationality obligates the believer to lower his or her confidence in religious doctrines to a point below the threshold of belief. This results in the sceptic to withhold his or her judgment. And the sceptics reserve judgment with respect to particular religious doctrines of other people. Matemba (2011:38) posits that sceptics believe that religious diversity is problematic because of the difficulties that multiple competing truth claims pose for Religious Education. It is argued that the main objectives of doing Religious Studies are to find truth and avoid error. Sceptics are adamant that all truth claims should be verified by allowing religious truth from various religious to compete. Thus, in Religious Studies, scepticism is important in making students exposed to various truth claims and allows the student to choose what is right for him or herself. Matemba (2011:39) says individuals ought to make personal decisions about which worldviews they want to follow as a standard guide for their lives free of communal coercion while Hobson and Edwards (1999:27) argue that while the subject “should remain open to a range of worldviews, ultimately the individual student will need to make a choice between these for himself or herself.” Applied to my study, the above philosophical approach exposes learners to various religious truth claims. For this reason, the teaching of one religion does not promote scepticism.

### **2.12.2 Exclusivism**

This refers to the belief that only one world religion is correct and all others are wrong. Only one religion provides an avenue for salvation and other religions are a gateway to hell. Exclusivism stresses that outside the one dominant religion there is no salvation. In this context, outside the church there is no salvation “*extra ecclesia nulla salus*.” This belief creates monopoly of religious spaces in the contemporary world. Thus, exclusivism tends to exclude all other religious traditions as untrue and inferior. In Christianity, they claim that their beliefs are true and where there are beliefs which contradict Christian teaching, the belief is regarded as a heresy. However, Garder (1988:97) believes that those who reject the view that the religious beliefs of others are not false live in a “fallacy of tolerance” and that kind of fallacy emerges when teachers refrain from concluding that the beliefs held by others are wrong. This philosophical position is well-connected with the confessional approach to the study of religions where the other religions are treated as the “other” and salvation is monopolised by one religion. In this study, it can be concluded that exclusivism is promoted when the teaching of one religion is done. This breeds extremism among learners who are exposed to one religion.

### 2.12.3 Inclusivism

Inclusivism is a philosophical concept which deals with accommodating others and it acknowledges the existence of a multi-faith society as well as the advantages of having such a society. Mokotso (2017:53) argues from an educational perspective that says “inclusivism seeks to address all barriers to learning and participation and create a situation where all are provided with resources to support their learning and participation in the education system.” From a Religious Studies perspective, it means an inclusion or allowing participation of all religious traditions in the mainstream Religious Studies syllabus. It is an approach which is tolerant and promotes religious dialogue. The essence of dialogue is the desire to listen and to talk to each other in order to reach a mutual understanding rather than to impose one’s own ideas. The participants in dialogue, whether Christian or non-Christian, must not necessarily compromise one’s distinctive belief and testimony. Thus, there is a mutual understanding and enrichment “though one has his or her religious beliefs, there is something to learn from the religious beliefs of others” (Hobson and Edwards 1999). This philosophical position argues that there is no religion which contains all truth. There is something important that can be learned from other religions. A Hindu leader of a Roma-Christina movement says “all religions are true; a Christian should not become a Hindu or a Buddhist.” This means that one has to maintain his religious affiliation despite interaction with the person from the other religion and this does not imply that those who support the inclusivist position want to abandon the view that their own beliefs are supreme, but rather that they are merely open to the idea that other people should be given the space to express their religious views in education as well (Matemba 2011:40). Inclusivism believes that salvation, liberation, and enlightenment are a reality to all religions. Thus, all religions are “mediators of salvation” because religions are equal in terms of what they bring to humanity.

Inclusivism as a philosophical position demands curriculum implementers to teach Religious Studies without being confessional or exhibiting their religious belonging and affiliation. However, critics of this philosophical position argue that teaching Religious Studies fully knowing that some of the teachings are false in the teaching content is very difficult. Matemba citing Gardner (1988:48) argues that Religious Studies teachers will undoubtedly have a commitment to a religious belief or other views and yet their professional commitment places them in an awkward position of teaching something they view to be false or that which they find philosophically objectionable. Inclusivism has a close connection with a multi-faith

approach to the study of Religious Studies particularly in multi-religious society like Zimbabwe which emphasise freedom of worship.

Inclusivism is an important aspect of inclusive education in the new curriculum framework which should not be neglected in the context of Religious Studies curriculum policies and the current study identifies as a gap which needs to be explored. In the context of this study, inclusivism is promoted through the updated Religious Studies curriculum which offers Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

#### **2.12.4 Relativism**

Relativism is a philosophical approach which argues that human experiences and cultures are relative to or dependent on contextual situations. For Matemba (2011:40) relativism assumes causality between various issues and the inter-dependent relationships that this engenders. Furthermore, the approach is the idea that all perceptions or beliefs which are religious or cultural are equally valid. No idea is better than the other. In relativism all religions are equally good and no religion has supremacy over other religions. This approach dismisses the dominance of one religion over the other. None of the religions has objective truth because all constructions of knowledge or understanding of reality are the fruits of a subjective experience (Erricker and Erricker 2000:27; Matemba 2011:40).

Paul Boghossian, the major critic of this philosophical approach, argues that relativists are misguided in their view that there is no objective truth or knowledge but only truth or knowledge from a particular perspective (Matemba 2011:41). For Boghossian, it is possible to create a body of knowledge that is not linked to the social or cultural context because objectivity in knowledge construction of religion is possible (Boghossian 2007:37). In relation to Religious Studies, relativism strongly supports non-confessional Religious Studies by using phenomenological or multi-faith approaches to the teaching and learning of religious studies. From a relativist perspective, the phenomenological approach, for example, is criticised because it tends to gloss over incompatible aspects of religions (Matemba 2011:41). This view has led relativism, particularly within the context of phenomenological approach to receive strong criticism and opting for an interpretive approach which can act as a cushion against the relativist position inherent in pedagogical approaches such as phenomenology (Jackson 1997). It can be concluded in the context of this study that the philosophical approach is against the values of inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism as the approach fits well in a confessional Religious Studies syllabus.

### **2.12.5 Reductionism**

Reductionism expresses the view that “everything in this world is really something else, either its parts or something that is more basic, and that the something else, is always in the end unedifying” (Matemba 2011:42). Reductionism refers to the method of explaining a difficult phenomenon by taking the whole apart to reveal its more elementary parts but without considering the relationships that exist between the parts (Harth 2004:12). It is within this context that Matemba (2011:42) says reductionism interprets religious propositions (that is their cognitive and ontological content) as merely the manifestation of the mind which can be easily explained in terms of psychology, sociology or other realms of philosophy and science, such as the fashionable tenets of Neo-Darwinism. Andrew Wright is critical of this philosophical position because for him it reinforces people’s scepticism towards religion. Reductionism has a weakness of falsifying the reality of religion, particularly the ambiguity caused by trans-religious and intra-religious tensions (Wright 1993). For others, reductionism is invalid because they do not adequately represent religious discourse, arguing that “there is considerable epistemological disvalue in rejecting the ontological claims of religious propositions” (Hobson and Edwards 1999: 41). Just like relativism, reductionism came as a result of strong debates over non-confessional approaches to Religious Studies such as phenomenology which are blamed for promoting “de facto reductionism in the mind of students that religious propositions are somehow fully explained through sociological, psychological and other concepts” and in the process ignore “the ontological claims that all religions make” (Hobson and Edwards 1999 41-42). With reference to this study, I argue that reductionism affects the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum from a multi-faith approach because the philosophical approach falsifies reality that not all religions are beneficial to learners.

### **2.12.6 Pluralism**

Pluralism refers to “the interaction of different values or other human traits in a society in order to necessitate happiness for all individual members of society” (Mokotso 2017: 49). It is because of this reason that religious pluralism refers to the phenomenon of religious diversity (King 2008:831). Mokotso (2017:47) further avers that religious pluralism is an approach where “religion is learnt from the inside and outside” and comparative approach is used to “promote understanding and appreciation rather than judgment” of any religion. For others, pluralism is the condition of society in which numerous distinct ethnic, religious, or cultural



groups coexist within one nation or civil polity (Skeie 2002:17). This is true to Zimbabwe and the rest of the world is home to various religious traditions. Netland (2001) argues that we live in a religiously pluralistic world, which shows that the world is a rainbow of religions.

Religious pluralism has been developed by John Hick who argues that there is a plurality of paths to salvation, and each of the great world religions offers such a path. He dismisses the view widely held by atheists and others that religion is only a human projection. On the contrary, utilising Immanuel Kant's distinctions of *noumena* (things as they really are in themselves) and phenomena (things as they are experienced by us given the categories of our minds), Hick argues that one's experiences and descriptions do depend on the interpretive concepts through which one sees, structures, and understands them (Kipsigei 2014:20). From a Religious Studies perspective, pluralism is a contested concept because "in plural societies this can be seen as an ideological position and not merely as a description of the state of pluralism" (Grimmitt 1994). Pluralism is also the condition in society that creates the space for people to celebrate diversity through dialogue, mutual respect and empathy without requiring that groups abandon or weaken their beliefs or positions in the process (Skeie 2006:15). Thus, in communities where pluralism exists, there are varied cosmological views. However, in some communities there are some religions that monopolised the way which religions are ranked. This is true of Christianity which emphasises the superiority of Christianity at the expense of all other religions. This is the spirit of fundamentalism that denies the reality of religious pluralism and freedom. Fundamentalism in Christianity and Islam does not tolerate the existence of other religious world views because they believe in self-righteousness and that their beliefs are the best.

There are three forms or four forms of pluralism which include equality of religion, revisionist pluralism, extended pluralism and radical pluralism. Equality of religion as a form of pluralism posits that all world religions are equally valid since they all respond to similar big questions people have about the purposes of life (Hobson and Edwards 1999). In simple terms, existential human problems are explained in all these religions. Secondly, revisionist pluralism refers to the revisiting of radical aspects of religious tradition "that are seen not to be compatible with post-Enlightenment modernist critical thinking and liberal-democratic living" (Matemba 2011:43). In simple terms, revisionist pluralism celebrates the most commonly shared beliefs of religions without emphasising the differences that exist among them (Hobson and Edwards 1999). For example, all religions believe in one Supreme Being but do not go beyond that belief. The third form of pluralism is extended pluralism which contends that religious and

non-religious beliefs all attempt to answer issues of ultimate human concern. Matemba (2011) says extended pluralism underscores that beliefs or issues which are accepted or rejected can only be done on the basis of how well they are argued or supported. There is no bias in this pluralism as religious views are presented impartially. The last form is radical pluralism which is based on postmodernism which uses an unconditional approach. It asserts that core beliefs and worldviews in religion are important in promoting a society with no conflicts as it promotes unity among different religious followers.

Since the world we live in is pluralistic, it is important in the study of religions to embrace inclusivism and pluralism as philosophical approaches to Religious Studies curriculum. This research seeks to fill in the gap left by other philosophical approaches and interrogate the relevance of inclusivism and pluralism in a multi-cultural and religious society. This is because pluralism gives a relevant philosophical conceptualisation for Religious Studies which is being taught amidst the existence of several culturally, ethnically and religiously different groups of people. As such, Mokotso (2017:49) believes that pluralism acknowledges that “coexistence of difference in values is real, inevitable, and unavoidable and has a potential to create interconnectedness that is desirable for societal benefits”. I argue that this philosophical approach is relevant to the study since the main objective of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is to teach about several religions that are practiced in Zimbabwe. The approach has a positive effect in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

## **2.13 LEARNING THEORIES IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

In this section, I will focus on salient learning theories which describe how learners learn within different context in Religious Studies. Learning is a sine qua non of survival (Ndlovu and Gundani 2000:34). This means that learning capacities differ depending on the environment, method of teaching and type of learners. As such, there are learning theories like behavioural, cognitive, humanistic, constructivism and social learning theory which influence learners’ performance and behaviour with regard to Religious concepts. . Below is an illustration of the principal learning theories which affects how students learn in Religious Studies. The differences between learning theories emanates from the fact that learning in Religious Studies has several dimensions. For some, learning in Religious Studies involves change of behaviour [behaviourism] (Ertmer and Newby 1993) while for others learning involves the grasping of certain skills and information about Religious Studies (cognitivism] (Jean Piaget 1952). For some, learning is not group tied but is linked to individuals as humans [humanistic] (Maslow

1987) while for others learning is impacted by the multi-faith environment [social learning] (Bandura 1986). Yet others think learners are not passive as they have existing knowledge which they accrue through discovery, interaction and collaboration in order to maintain their intellectual identity [constructivism] (Merriam and Caffarella 1999). Given the value of learning theories in achieving the desired goal to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality, it is important to examine the following theories in relation to the Religious Studies classroom environment. This will assist in coming up with the appropriate learning theory applicable in a multi-faith classroom. The area of applying learning theories in Religious Studies has been neglected by theorists. This thesis seeks to fill in the void by applying learning theories to the learning of the subject.

### **2.13.1 Behaviourism**

Behaviourism is an ideological position which sees the process of learning as a ‘mechanical process’ of associating stimulus (incentive) with response (Ertmer and Newby 1993). The learner is regarded as a ‘clean slate’ or ‘essentially passive’, with the process of learning shaped through positive or negative reinforcements. The behaviourist perspective is largely associated with its proponent Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1974) who posits that the mind at work cannot be observed, tested or understood, and hence the focus on ‘actions’ (behaviour) becomes imperative in the process of knowing, teaching and learning. For Gredler (2005:19) the behaviourist approach to learning is based on three assumptions:

- observable behaviours is more important than understanding internal activities;
- behaviours should be focused on simple elements – specific stimuli and responses; and
- The process of learning is defined by behaviour change.

Hence, behaviourists emphasise change in behaviour due to the influence and control of the external environment, rather than the internal thought processes of the learner (Merriam and Caffarella 1999). The behaviourist approach to teaching and learning relies on so-called ‘skill and drill’ exercises, which provide the consistent repetition necessary for the effective reinforcement of response patterns (Wray 2010: 44). Behaviourist teaching methods have proven most successful in facilitating mastery of content (i.e. memorisation) and more especially where the learning environment is time conditioned. Pedagogically, this would include giving the learner immediate feedback, breaking down of tasks into smaller steps, repeating instructions as many times as possible, giving positive reinforcement. However, the limitations of behavioural theory is that it tends to diminish the possibilities of human learning,

and does not take into consideration the effect of the broader environment in shaping the behaviour of the learner (Wray 2010: 44). This does not suggest an absolute rejection of behaviourism but, instead, questions the means rather than the ends (Chetty 2013:179).

In the context of Religious Studies learning, behaviourism suggests that all behaviours are learned through interaction with the environment. This means that learners as they interact with various religions in the society, learn a lot through their interaction with the environment where they live. They learn through what they observe in the environment where they live. In clarifying the complexities of teaching a multi-faith RE curriculum, Watson (2004) notes that teachers get involved in a more peculiar landscape, where they are expected to use the curriculum to bring about attitude and behaviour change. Since Zimbabwe is a multi-faith society, learners meet people of diverse religious traditions and they learn through interaction. I also argue that behaviourism can be utilised in classroom management, especially in Religious Studies.

#### **2.13.1.1 Application of behaviourism theory in the classroom**

The Religious Studies teacher can apply behaviourism in the classroom by “engaging students in hands-on, inquiry-based, and relevant learning activities, which provide intrinsic motivation” (Mwamwenda 2004:189). The teacher can also make use of rewards and punishment. Rewards like trinkets, pamphlets, praise, and recognition to motivate learners are given when students grasp Religious knowledge concepts, and punishment is given when they demean other religions and fail tests. Mwamwenda (2004:4) avers that learning occurs vicariously. The teacher can also make use of Religious Studies exercises and tests in a classroom, which require a teacher to help students practice skills so that the skill is reinforced. This makes learners learn as they revise concepts taught. It also reduces the bias of the students as they revise all concepts that are taught. The teacher who uses this learning theory in the class, needs to be exemplary, especially in the way he or she comments on a religion. This is because the learner can be deterred to understand about a particular religion on the basis of the behaviour of the teacher. The teacher should be nurturing so that learners are motivated to learn in order to get the approval from the teacher who acts as the guide (Mwamwenda 2004). In the context of this study, behaviorism can reduce bias towards religions which are labelled as bad and motivate learners to learn all religions. This promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism as bias is reduced.

### 2.13.2 Cognitivism

On cognitivism, Chetty (2013:180) says that one of the major proponents of cognitivism was Jean Piaget (1952) who contended that the behaviourist approach had failed to account for high order thinking skills and the critical position of the mind in the learning process. Hence, cognitivism acknowledges the associations established through ‘contiguity and repetition’ and ‘reinforcement’, but views learning as “involving the acquisition or reorganization of the cognitive structures through which humans process and store information” (Good and Brophy 1990:187). It is concerned with unobservable mental processes that individuals use to learn and acquire information. This implies that the process of learning is defined as a change in the learner’s schemata or an internal knowledge structure. Hence, learning is seen as an internal process, with the amount of learning dependent upon the processing capacity of the learner, the depth of processing, and the learner’s existing knowledge structure (Ally 2008:19). The cognitivist approach to teaching and learning involves memory, thinking, reflection, abstraction, motivation, and meta-cognition. According to Ertmer and Newby (1993: 56) knowledge acquisition is described as “a mental activity that entails internal coding and structuring by the learner”, with the learner being “an active participant”. In addition, the learner’s thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and values are considered to be valuable in the learning process (Ertmer and Newby 1993: 56). Cognitivists strive to make knowledge more meaningful by helping learners link it to existing knowledge. Thus, it recognises that each person’s observable performance is a useful clue to the individual’s internal organisation and use of knowledge.

The cognitivist approach involves the learner in the learning process and it uses hierarchical analysis to identify and illustrate prerequisite relationships of the concept being learnt. Furthermore, the cognitivist approach is more concerned with the structure, organisation and sequence information to facilitate effective learning. Ertmer and Newby (1993: 56) further states that cognitivism creates learning environments that allow learners to make connections with pre-existing knowledge.

The limitations of cognitivism are that learning is teacher-centred and information must be presented in an organised manner in order to achieve the most efficient learning, which may by default position the learner as a passive participant. Furthermore, due to learning being very structured, it becomes difficult for the learners to adapt to changes in what has already been processed and learned (Ertmer and Newby 1993: 56). Also, since working memory has limited

capacity, information needs to be organised in appropriate sizes or ‘chunks’ to facilitate effective processing (Ally 2008: 22). From a Religious Studies perspective, cognitivism works in the sense that it allows the learner to take an active role in the learning process as every learners’ needs are accommodated. This allows learners to make decisions on the existing knowledge concerning religions of the world. Thus, the study of religions than a study about a religion makes it possible for learners to embrace other religious views and beliefs which come with the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

### **2.13.2.2 Application of the theory in the classroom.**

The theory is applied in the classroom when the Religious Studies teacher works with students to verbally communicate their religious feelings about the concept being taught. The teacher using this approach can begin by teaching small concepts that are not intricate and move on to intricate concepts to provide a concrete learning experience in Religious Studies. To help students memorise religious concepts, the teacher can make use of ICT gadgets that help learners solve certain aspects that are problematic in Religious Studies. When using cognitivism, the teacher begins every lesson with Religious Studies related questions in order to activate the prior knowledge of learners so that they begin to think deeply about the topic under discussion. Learners are engaged in thinking, insights and problem solving (Mwamwenda 2004:192). This helps the learners to link the new learned concepts to previously retained ideas, increasing the likelihood that the new topic will be remembered by learners. Teachers empower students to learn through the Empowered Learning model, which ignites curiosity and background knowledge, then encourages hands-on investigations with specific learning targets, and ends the lesson by inviting connections (Mwamwenda 2004:173). I, therefore, argue that when cognitivism is used in the class, the learner is actively engaged in the learning process. Cognitivism helps students gain a deeper understanding of various religions. It is this deeper understanding which removes certain prejudices against some religions and it results in problem solving. This is because the learning approach gives students the chance to reflect on what they are learning and how it applies to other material. The essence of Religious Studies is to apply what they have learnt in their day to day lives. The teacher, in this case, is the facilitator of the inductive inquiry process. I argue that applying this learning theory makes Religious Studies a subject relevant in solving problems that characterise the 21<sup>st</sup> century such as religious fundamentalism, social unrest and immorality from a religious perspective and through learning as discovery.

### **2.13.3 The Humanistic Learning Theory**

The Humanistic learning theory emerged in the 1960s. It is a learning theory that is opposed to cognitivism and behaviourism and the perception of a human being as an object in scientific inquiry. Humanism originated from the belief in inherent human goodness and dignity and it contrasts Sigmund Freud's biological approaches which claim that human behaviour and cognition are determined by experience and prior events. Some of the humanist theorists are Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow whose theoretical frameworks were based on the understanding of human personality. Humanists emphasise the importance of responsibility for individuals' actions in the present moment as well as the value of every individual as a human being (Maslow 1987:7). This brings in happiness through self-achievement which is an ultimate goal in life.

The humanistic learning theory stipulates that the learner is in the best position to understand his needs. Therefore, the learner has to choose his situational condition which is not imposed on them by others. This would result in the learner being motivated. Zindi and Makotore (2015:46) believe that the source of motivation is the need to self-actualise. Thus, Humanist perspectives on learning argue that learning is as a result of a natural desire, a means of self-actualisation and that development of personal potential in learning lies in the process, not outcome. Learners should have more control over the learning process, which should be based on observing and exploring. The teacher should be a role-model encouraging the learner and providing him or her with reasons and motivation for every new part of the learning process (Maslow 1987:7). In this study, the theory can make learners understand and choose from the religions which are taught without being coerced by others. The learner should be motivated to learn the religions on his own so that there is attainment of self-actualisation in as far as the understanding of a religious phenomenon is concerned.

#### **2.13.3.1 Application of Humanistic Theory in the classroom**

Humanistic approach can be applied during the learning of Religious Studies in the classroom. The Religious Studies teacher would begin by checking the emotional well-being of learners so that the teacher could proactively teach them specific coping skills and strategies. The teacher provides his students a list of sub-topics to be taught so that learners can master the targeted topic. The teacher can set aside the time for students to learn about and create anything they want in Religious Studies through the syllabus provided by the teacher. The learning approach recognises that each student has religious needs and it teaches learners how to choose

a religion without being influenced. It empowers learners to set their own goals and determine how they want to learn Religious Studies. In this approach the teacher is a leader and encourages learners to evaluate their own work after the topic has been done. The learners need to self-actualise so that they can learn Religious Studies effectively. In the context of this study, the teaching of the updated Religious Studies curriculum may result in learners learning without being influenced by the teacher. This may result in the embracing of all religions as equal.

#### **2.13.4 Social Learning Theory**

The major proponent of the social learning theory is Albert Bandura (1986). One of the main things that he was concerned with was how cognitive factors influence development. His approach has a foundation in the behavioural tradition and his theory argues that cognitive development alone cannot explain changes in behaviour in childhood. As such, social learning theory focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context (Bandura 1986). The presupposition of this learning theory is that people learn from one another, including such concepts as observational learning, imitation, and modelling. Bandura (1986) believes that learners learn by observing the behavior of others. Learning can occur without a change in behaviour, and cognition plays a role in learning.

The social learning theory is credited for easily handling the inconsistencies in the child's behaviour at school. This is true when learners are put in an environment where they learn various religions. The school as a learning environment has a positive impact on the change of behaviour among learners. Zindi and Makotore, citing Bandura (2015:47), support this where they say the theory is based on the model of operant conditioning. The school environment affects behaviour because social interaction at school impacts on learning. Its other strength is that it gives an accurate picture of how behaviour is learned. However, this learning theory places much emphasis on what happens to the child rather than what the child does with the knowledge that is acquired at school. Furthermore, this theory ignores the actual development changes (physical and mental) that occur as the child grows. This theory helps in the changing of the learners' behaviour and attitude towards other religions. Learners' interactions with other learners of diverse religious backgrounds results in the change of behaviour and eventually leading to tolerance and inclusivity. Thus, this learning theory is important because learning of other people's cultures and religions happens at school through formal lesson delivery and social interaction among learners.



#### **2.13.4.1 Application of Social Learning Theory in the classroom**

The learning approach does not use a lecturing method. Religious Studies teachers provide learners with homework assignments and learners then get into class the following day to apply their learning with peers. In remote schools where technology is still lagging, learners are often given tasks to go and research in collaboration and then share their findings. This is followed by a discussion of the concepts they have learned. The teacher is a mentor who designs and provides exercises and materials which encourage Religious Studies students to learn by observation. Social learning theory has a place in the contemporary Religious Studies teaching landscape, helping students make better connections with their education, their teachers, and their peers (Mwamwenda 2004:173).

The learning theory demands Religious Studies teachers to motivate learners through role modelling. Learners pay attention and imitate the behaviour they have observed. This means that learners learn through imitation of what they see. On the other hand, rewards can be utilised as motivators. The learner student who is profoundly motivated to accept religions as the same focuses on how the teacher is modelling them during the learning processes.

#### **2.13.5 Constructivism**

Constructivism is a paradigm that posits that learning is an active, contextualised, or constructive process. Constructivism is a reaction to teaching approaches such as behaviourism and cognitivism. According to Merriam and Caffarella (1999:260) constructivism is an assimilation of both behaviourist and cognitivist ideals. The constructivist approach positions learners as active rather than passive. The learner is seen as part of a process where attaining of knowledge is seen as a function of how he or she creates meaning from his or her own experiences. This means that the learner acts as an information constructor. Learners construct knowledge based on their personal experiences and hypotheses of the environment. Learners actively construct or create their own subjective or objective reality. Learners, through social negotiation, continuously test their hypotheses and create new knowledge, correct previous knowledge, or confirm present knowledge. Learners link new knowledge to prior knowledge. Constructivists argue that the learner is not a blank slate (*tabula rasa*) but brings past experiences and cultural factors to construct new knowledge in a given situation. I argue that in this study, constructivism promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism by learners who are active in the learning process. It also allows learners to construct knowledge about Indigenous

Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam which are taught from a multi-faith approach under the updated curriculum.

#### **2.13.5.1 Application of Constructivism in the classroom**

The Religious Studies teacher uses collaborative learning to facilitate engagement with specific learning targets, ensuring heterogeneous student groupings. All learners are valued as geniuses, and the teachers teach their learners to acknowledge and utilise the strengths of their classmates, creating synergy in the Religious Studies class. The teacher allows purposeful student interaction, collaboration and higher order thinking during the learning process. During Religious Studies learning the teacher makes students work together, aiding each other to answer one another's questions as a strategy for classroom applications of constructivism (Ertmer and Newby 1993). Students can teach each other on the selected topic. One student would lead the learning process and respond to questions by other students during the Religious Studies lesson. Finally, the teacher makes use of group work and presentations on selected Religious Studies topics. Learners are given research topics of concepts that are controversial like the concept of the jihad in Islam, concept of sin in Christianity and concept of life after death in Indigenous Religion which they present in class. This allows learners to discover and maintain their individual intellectual identities (Caffarella 1999). This forces learners to support their own ideas and become tolerant to other learners' religious views. The teacher can then conclude the lesson by giving open-ended questions and leaving time to allow the students to think and analyse a response, based on their experiences and personal inquiry (Caffarella 1999). Open-ended questions and critical thinking encourage students to seek more than just a simple response or basic facts and incorporate the justification and defence of their organised thoughts (Merriam and Caffarella 1999). The teacher then allows sharing of ideas on the open-ended questions asked so that learners exchange ideas. In the process, the teacher also shares his own understanding. This shows that constructivism supports the philosophy of learning which builds students' and teachers' understandings.

#### **2.13.6 Principles of teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe.**

The Religious Studies updated curriculum framework stresses the need to embrace the learner-centred approaches. The prime objective of learning is to make learners active participants in the learning process as they engage in the search and discovery of new knowledge about various religions of the world. The teacher acts as a co-explorer and facilitator in knowledge discovery in order to arrive at an objective understanding of content and demonstration of skills

so acquired (MoPSE 2015:40). The focus of teaching and learning in Religious Studies is to mould learners into problem solvers as they engage in collaborative learning experiences in the classroom. The school is only a centre of knowledge exchange. Thus, this generates knowledge among learners who are regarded as important stakeholders in the learning process, not blank slates ready to be filled with information. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (2015:40) has laid down the following characteristics of the evolving methods of teaching and learning: research oriented, participatory, collaboration, interdisciplinary, use of media, assessment procedures, and learning as hierarchical from lower to higher levels of cognition.

From the above it is clear that the Religious Studies learning approach is rooted in constructivism punctuated by connectivism. This is because the approach advocates for a learner-centred method to teaching and learning which is inquiry-based learning. The aim of such an approach is to nurture critical thinking, reflection and problem-solving among learners. Religious Studies learning has to improve questioning, research and communication skills, problem-solving, collaboration, developing an in-depth understanding of Religious Studies content and encouraging critical thinking. This is known as the inquiry-based learning approach which covers a number of methods of teaching and learning that utilise inquiry. These include discovery method, project-based learning, problem-based learning and design-based learning.

## **2.14 WHAT IS CURRICULUM REFORM**

Curriculum reform refers to the change in the objectives of learning, namely; which competencies, knowledge, values and attitudes should be acquired (Gourdard, Pont and Huang 2020:8). Gilbet (2010) views curriculum change as the change of content knowledge, including its selection and organisation is curriculum reform. This implies that curriculum change means change in learning content, teaching methodology and learning outcomes.

Literature has shown that curriculum reform is being done more in less economically developing countries than developed countries (Isaacs 2018) Developed countries have shifted from curriculum that is irrelevant to the needs of their economy, political and religious environment. Studies by Gourdard, Pont and Huang (2020) on curriculum reform in Indonesia, South Korea, Finland, Japan, Norway, United Kingdom and Australia have indicated that curriculum reform has been done to make schools enter 21<sup>st</sup> century and respond to the fast changing world. They note that modern societies are facing challenges which include environmental, political, economic, health related or societal which have influenced curriculum change. For this reason, learners need to be equipped with knowledge, skills and competencies

so that they cope with challenges affecting the contemporary world. However, studies have shown that curriculum reforms are demanding in terms of implementation, since they require changes in many aspects that may change existing beliefs and subjective realities deeply embedded in individual and organizational contexts (Fullan 2015). In Indonesia, South Korea, Finland, Japan, Norway, United Kingdom and Australia curriculum reform has had obstacles such as high costs, high uncertainty outcomes, problems of materialising changes in curriculum, high investment in training and capacity building for the teacher workforce to take up the new curriculum. Curriculum change has been hampered by resistance to change in these countries, especially Japan (Gourdard, Pont and Huang 2020).

In Africa, there has been curriculum change in southern and eastern African countries where Malawi, Botswana, South Africa, Uganda and Kenya have undergone curriculum reform (Cunningham 2018:3). These curricula have embraced many models which include competence based, outcome based, learner centred, and child centred or thematic (Cunningham 2018). These reforms have been motivated by political aspirations, change in educational trends and the need to produce learners who are marketable in the current global environment. Empirical studies in Eastern and Southern Africa have shown that curriculum reform has occasioned change of pedagogy and learning outcomes (Cunningham 2018). New curriculum requires a shift in pedagogy, from passive pedagogy to child-centred pedagogy. Material to suit new curriculum is often not available in time and inadequate. Teachers struggle to identify, source or create additional learning material often required to implement the new curriculum. In Africa as well, curriculum reform has been too expensive to implement as it requires relevant learning material, human resources and teacher training institutions to cope with the change in learning content, pedagogical skills and learning outcomes.

This study focuses on curriculum reforms in Zimbabwe where transitioning from knowledge based curriculum to competence based curriculum, from teacher-centred to learner-centred curriculum, from undemocratic curriculum to democratic, exclusive to inclusive curriculum has been implemented from 2017. Curriculum change in Zimbabwe was done amidst global isolation which impacted on its implementation. It is within this context that curriculum reform in Zimbabwe gave birth to Religious Studies curriculum reform. In the context of this study, it can be argued that there is a tendency of preferring the status quo to a change in curriculum as indicated in literature reviewed. This tendency is overt in Religious Studies curriculum reform and this is why this study is concerned with implementation of policy, putting religious studies policy into reality.

## **2.15 RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM REFORM IN ZIMBABWE**

Many scholars acknowledge that Religious Studies curriculum reform in recent years has been motivated by the need to cater for the needs of the multi-religious society. This is because societies have become more pluralist in nature. The pluralistic nature of many societies the world over, has made the teaching and learning of subjects like intercultural, values and citizenship education inevitable (Musaka 2012:26). The world over, reforms in Religious Studies curriculum has been done to strengthen personal and national identity; promote democracy, patriotism, individual rights and responsibilities; reduce moral decadence; cultivate social cohesion and tolerance as well as intercept young people's disengagement with political processes (Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi 2012:63). In this study, I argue that Religious Studies was reformed to promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism because the curriculum teaches about religions and instils respect for other religions regardless of one's religious affiliation.

Studies show that Religious Studies has undergone reform the world over (Grimmit 2007; Prinsloo 2008; Dinama 2010; Matemba 2011; Khozin 2018). Consequently, a number of scholars have dealt with Religious Studies reform in countries other than Zimbabwe. Grimmit (2007; 2016) focuses on Britain's Religious Education reform and he establishes that change in the religious composition of the British society to a pluralist one facilitated Religious Studies reform. This means that reform in Religious Education, particularly in Britain was motivated by the intention to educate learners on various religious traditions from a non-confessional approach. Thus, in 1970, the Birmingham syllabus was introduced to promote multi-faith learning (Grimmit 2007). The aims of these types of multi-faith Religious Education are consistent with what became known as 'multicultural education' and less commonly as 'multi-ethnic' education (Grimmit 1987). Many religious educators saw their contribution to multicultural education in terms of aiming to change negative attitudes towards the religions and cultures of Britain's new citizens through knowledge and understanding, sometimes enhanced by personal acquaintance (Hull 1984:15). Grimmit questions the practice of teaching young people traditional Christian thought forms, without reference to the questions that arose from their human experience. It is this which motivated the curriculum reform in Britain. It should be noted that most of these studies on Religious Studies reform were conducted in Britain, mainly because it is the country that pioneered the multi-faith type of RE (Dinama 2010). Studies in Britain are important in this study because the old curriculum evolved from

Britain. I argue in the context of this study that curriculum reform in Britain offers a nuanced understanding of how modern societies have changed to become multi-faith and multi-cultural.

In Indonesia also, there was Religious Education reform. The reform was done to embrace different religions and beliefs in Indonesia. Khozin (2018:1) believes that religious-based conflict and religious diversity caused Religious Studies curriculum reform in Indonesia. Constitutionally, Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Kong-Huchu are recognised in Indonesia. To reduce religious conflicts and promote human rights, the government of Indonesia reformed the Religious Studies curriculum. The teaching of RE was a way to manage existing diversity of religions and beliefs, and it certainly fits with the basic function of religion, namely; creating peace and harmony for human beings (Khozin 2018:1). Khozin (2018:3) further states that in order to meet the right of religious people in Indonesia, in the realm of education, government has issued a policy which obliges non-religious schools to provide Religious Education for all the followers of religions constitutionally acknowledged by government. This clearly shows that reform in Indonesia was done to manage diversity, especially the diversity of religions and beliefs. It is hoped in this study, that curriculum reforms in Indonesia will assist in understanding how to cope with challenges created by reforms to manage religious diversity.

In Africa, reforms in Religious Education or Religious Studies have been done in Malawi, South Africa and Botswana just to mention a few. In Malawi, Religious Studies curriculum reform was motivated by the need to respond to the needs of the society as well as to undo the colonial legacy (Matemba 2011). In South Africa, reform in Religion Studies was motivated by the end of the apartheid era which had been marked by exclusivism, intolerance and segregation of other religions (Chetty and Smit 2016). Thus, curriculum reform was caused by the need to embrace religious diversity in South Africa as well as upholding human rights (Chidester 2003). Dinama (2010:16) opines that Botswana had a Religious Education in 1994 which was caused by a policy shift from Christian based Religious Education (RE) curriculum to a multi-faith Religious Education curriculum. The main reason for reform in Botswana was to embrace religious diversity because the Christian syllabus was exclusive and was hated by curriculum implementers. The Christian inclined Religious and Moral Education curriculum was unpopular amongst Botswana teachers mainly because it had the clear intention to openly convert learners into the Christian faith (Mmolai 1988; Morake 1993; Seretse 1990; Dinama 2010). Matemba (2011) also did a comparative study of the evolution of Religious Education in Malawi and Scotland from 1970 to 2010. The study sought to draw analogies between the

two nations and to indicate significant points of difference regarding key issues that underpin this development between two countries that also have a historical relationship dating back to 1859. Most research studies in Africa have shown that reforms in Religious Studies were motivated by decoloniality, where most African countries wanted to reverse the colonial legacy as well as suit the Religious demography of these African states.

While the above literature provides valuable information about Religious Studies reform and its challenges, caution needs to be exercised before applying what has happened in Britain, Indonesia, South Africa, Malawi and Botswana to the Zimbabwean context. I argue that the challenges in South Africa, Indonesia, Britain, Botswana and Malawi can be experienced in Zimbabwe, especially under the context that Zimbabwe is under international sanctions which may affect the implementation of policy due to shortage of learning material and lack of international support in curriculum reform. However, empirical evidence from elsewhere concerning Religious Studies reform cannot be generalised to the Zimbabwean case. There is plenty of literature which deals with Religious Studies in Zimbabwe. However, the literature available has a narrow focus as it focuses on challenges of Religious Studies, methods of teaching of Religious Studies and the multi-faith gap of the abolished Religious Studies. Literature available notes that Religious Studies of the abolished curriculum has largely been Christocentric, ignoring pluralistic nature of the Zimbabwean society. Like other nations such as South Africa, United States of America, Canada, Britain, Wales and Australia, Zimbabwe relooked at and revisited her curricula with a view to align it with pluralistic trends and realities (Museka 2012:26). This is what has been called for by Religious Studies scholars. In 2017, the updated Religious Studies curriculum was introduced under the broad policy framework known as the updated curriculum. From the current studies, it can be inferred that Religious Studies has undergone reform because of several reasons which I articulate from the foregoing discussion.

The Religious Studies curriculum was reformed in order to uphold constitutionalism and human rights. This is because the new Constitution of Zimbabwe of 2013 supports the updated curriculum (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020:304). There was realignment of key tenets of the new constitution to the education curriculum. Religious Studies had to embrace religious plurality and diversity which was lacking in the old constitution. It became a salient characteristic of the new constitution. According to the new constitution (2013), all religions should be accorded the same status. Therefore, there seems to be agreement amongst a number

of researchers that Zimbabwe was in need of curriculum reform in Religious Studies (Museka 2012; Machingura 2015; Dube 2016, Zivave et al 2020).

Secondly, literature reviewed shows that decolonising Religious Studies curriculum was the prime reason for reform. At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited an education system plagued with negative legacies (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020:304). One negativity was that the outgoing syllabus overlooked the value of Indigenous Religion and Islam, making the Religious Studies curriculum appear to have little or no relevance to the majority of students in Zimbabwe (Curriculum Development Unit 1999; Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi 2013; Musaka 2012:64). For this reason, there was need to decolonise the curriculum and give the Religious Studies curriculum the Africanness it ought to have. From 1980 to 2017 Religious Education at Ordinary Level was known as Bible Knowledge or Religious Knowledge, glorified colonial legacy (Makuvaza 1996:68-69). Religious Education in particular, in Zimbabwe, became more of catechetical and biblical teaching alone. The main intention of the Religious Education was mainly to ensure that Africans lose their religious identity and follow or adapt the European Christian view (Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi 2013:222). There was need to shift to a multi-faith syllabus like other countries in the Southern African region. Musaka (2012) argues that the introduction of the multi-faith approach to the teaching of Religious Education in African countries like Botswana, Malawi and Zimbabwe, among others, is a milestone attempt by African governments to unite African learners with their cultural heritage. The old Religious Studies syllabus was a threat to African heritage as it alienated learners from their cultural religious values and experiences. For this reason, I believe that the Zimbabwean Updated Curriculum Framework, 2015-2022, was crafted to revolutionise the “colonial” education system the country had been using since independence (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020: 305). This implies that the Religious Studies curriculum was reformed to undo the colonial legacy and revive African heritage, which was about to disappear due to the dominance of one religion, Christianity.

Zivave and Muzambi (2022) have also shown that the change of the religious composition of the Zimbabwean society has led to the reform of the Religious Studies curriculum. This is because the racial, ethnic, cultural, political and religious diversity of Zimbabwe is not debatable (Musaka 2012:28). Religious diversity in Zimbabwe reflects a multiplicity of religions in society and this makes a multi-faith approach to the study of religion imperative, (Association of Religion Data Archives 2013). The old curriculum had a multi-faith gap (Machingura 2015). This is because the abolished curriculum favoured Christians who only



constituted 86% of the population ignoring more than 10% of the population which is now practising religions which were not recognised in schools before independence such as Judaism, Hinduism and Islam (Muhamba 2020:2). Zimbabwe's religious landscape has become more pluralistic than before because of the history of colonisation, internal and international migration, missionary activities, intermarriages, industrialization, and technological developments (Museka 2012:25). This religious diversity has made the study of religions in primary and secondary schools more imperative so as to address pertinent issues such as religious inclusivism, pluralism and tolerance. Dube (2020:1) argues that the new thrust and perceived strengths of the Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum are its attempt to respond to the post-independence era, in which new thinking about teaching religion in public schools emerged, represented by an appreciation of, and emphasis on religious pluralism (Moulin 2012:158). The philosophical underpinning of FRS, as a pluralistic curriculum, is the development of moral responsibility and behaviour, a capacity for discipline, and a sense of sound ethical norms, values and goals, which are to be derived from the perspectives of multiple religions (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education 2015). In this study, it is assumed that Zimbabwe is a pluralistic nation and the updated Religious Studies curriculum proves that.

Inclusivism is one of the main reasons which caused curriculum reform in Religious Studies. The old Religious Studies curriculum was "unfair to other religions because non-Christians complain that their children are being Christianised" (Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi 2013:222). It promoted exclusivism and religious intolerance thus, the updated curriculum seeks to inculcate inclusivity among learners so that they can appreciate that all religions are mediators of salvation (Netland 2004; Zivave et al 2020:305). The old Religious Studies Curriculum was segregatory and promoted stereotyping in society (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020:305). Thus, the Religious Studies curriculum was reformed to make the education relevant to the needs of the 21st century learning which promotes inclusivism and religious diversity. Ruzvidzo (2017: 28) states that progressive curriculum reforms should be anchored on the notion of "inclusivity, accessibility, equity, quality, relevance, continuity, respect, gender sensitivity, transparency and accountability." I concur with the above insights that the curriculum reform was caused by religious diversity and the desire to make the Zimbabwean Religious Education more inclusive.

Change from teacher-centred approaches to learner-centred approaches has also been noted as the main cause of Religious Studies curriculum reform by scholars. The old curriculum utilised

a Christian-oriented approach which did not only negate critical thinking but inevitably resulted in the use of the narrative approach to learning because there was no room for cross-cultural comparison of religions (Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi 2015: 243). This means that the reforms in Religious Studies were meant to help learners to develop a positive self-concept by exposing them not only to knowledge about their historical experiences, cultural-religious traditions and ideologies but also the contribution of other cultures and belief systems to the civilisation of the world (Musaka 2012:28). In the context of this study, learner-centered approaches involve the teaching of religions that represent all learners in a class. When teaching is done focusing on one religion and prejudicing learners from learning about the religion which they also belong to, the curriculum can be argued to be teacher-centred and not learner-centred. Learner-centred approaches in Religious Studies value the teaching of various religions from a multi-faith approach.

Lastly, Dube (2020) believes that one of the underlying reasons for reforming the Religious Studies curriculum is that the old curriculum was not premised on *Unhu/Ubuntu*. FRS is accredited for centring the curriculum within the *Ubuntu* philosophy because the theory resonates well with Africanness and the identities of the Zimbabwean learners (Dube 2020). *Ubuntu* or *Unhu* is one of the most discussed African philosophies, and scholars call for a return to *Ubuntu* (Kaunda 2016; Shutte 2001; Tutu 1999). Ramose (2005) believes that reengaging *Ubuntu/Unhu* in the academia emancipates the African people to speak for and about themselves as well as construct an authentic and truly African discourse about Africa. I agree with African scholars that Religious Studies should be built on the principles of *Unhu/Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* or *Unhu* is relevant to African people, hence its inclusion in the FRS curriculum (Dube 2020). Religions have moral principles which resonate with the African concept of *Unhu/Ubuntu* which made the reforms of the Religious Studies curriculum imperative.

In the research literature reviewed, there are few empirical studies in policy implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe and elsewhere from a multi-faith perspective (Ferguson and Roux 2003; Gommers and Hermans 2003). There is limited empirical literature on policy implementation and challenges of the updated Religious Studies curriculum, even in many other countries where Religious Studies reform has been done. Research in Zimbabwe has, thus far, focused on multi-faith gaps of the abolished curriculum (Machingura 2015; Gwaravanda et al 2013) and challenges of the updated Religious Studies at primary school (Dube 2021) as well as general challenges of the whole curriculum.

## **2.16 POLICIES IMPLEMENTED TO ENHANCE THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE UPDATED RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN ZIMBABWE**

Central to this research is the policy on Religious Studies and its implementation. Therefore, in order to situate policy challenges as well as implementation constraints of an updated Religious Studies policy framework, I will not only examine Religious Studies policies, but also the Constitution of Zimbabwe from where all policy documents are derived together with the current educational policy in the light of religious studies. It should be noted that this study was informed by the policies on religion in Zimbabwe, with special interest in the education sector. These policies are important in understanding the challenges associated with implementation of the new policy framework on Religious studies.

### **2.16.1 Defining policy**

There are several definitions of policy and no single definition is enough to cater for the true meaning of the concept. Firstly, the term policy is derived from the French term *policie* and the Latin word *politia* which means a plan of action that is taken by an individual or organisation or the government. For Torjman (2005:1), policy refers to a plan of action that is aimed at achieving the desired objective of all members of the society with the intention to protect, guide and address their concerns. Ozga and Jones (2006:1) define policy as a trajectory that is preoccupied with the construction of a knowledge economy and learning society. Within this trajectory of the curriculum review, the intention is to promote tolerance, pluralism and inclusivism. Dukeshire and Thurlow (2002:2) also believe that policies can be guidelines, rules, regulations, laws, principles or directions. They say what is to be done, who is to do it, how it is to be done and for (or to) whom it is to be done. Dukeshire and Thurlow (2002:3) also define policy from a different perspective as a declaration that defines the intention of the community, organisation or government's goals or objectives. It outlines the roles, rules and procedures, and creates a framework within which the administration and staff can perform their assigned duties. Therefore, policy deals with what is supposed to be done and how it is supposed to be done by administrators and staff. Policy is formulated through public consultations and it involves government officials, members of the upper and lower houses in order to set the agenda for the common good of the citizens of the country. It is because of this reason that Modipa (2014:14) believes that policy is a contentious process which involves negotiation and contestations between different groups. As such, policy is direction in taking a particular action. It is shaped by historical contexts as well as changes in society. Prinsloo

(2008:180) supports this saying policy has been shaped by historical systems of meaning-making and power.

Policy analysis for Potgieter (2004:1) is a form of specialised research aiming at undertaking a systematic comparison and evaluation of the alternatives available to public actors for solving societal problems and assisting in decision-making. Policy analysis, on the other hand (Potgieter 2004:1), is also the study of the causes and consequences of government behaviour (what governments do or do not do). In this context, policy analysis refers to the study of how Religious Studies is done with the aim of solving challenges associated with the subject in secondary schools in Zimbabwe.

It is clear that policy on Religious Studies is used to guide what is to be taught and how it is supposed to be done in schools. The main purpose for policy is to ensure that there is plurality, tolerance and inclusivism since Zimbabwe is a multi-faith society. The preceding chapters have shown how curriculum development and reviews of Religious Studies content have been shaped by historical context, thereby shaping the existing policy. The current Policy on Religious Studies is mainly derived from the Constitution of Zimbabwe, the Education Act and the syllabus for Religious Studies.

### **2.16.2 Policy which enhances the teaching and learning of Religious Studies.**

This section confirms what policies should be implemented in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. In Britain, the policy is a multi-faith one which seeks to offer freedom to all individuals in schools to have religious choice (Dinham 2012:171). The policy demands tolerance towards and acceptance of all religions. South Africa has also moved from the confessional policy to a non-confessional policy. The policy differed from the pre-1994 dispensation in which Christian National Education (CNE) informed school curricula to the exclusion of other religions (Prinsloo 2009:33). This new policy became relevant in exposing learners to a variety of world religions, including African traditional religion, which promoted religious tolerance and inclusivism. It is clear that policy for Religious Studies in Zimbabwe is a multi-faith one and teachers need to implement the multi-faith approach in teaching Religious Studies and use the learner-centred approaches so that learners would appreciate religious diversity and become tolerant to diverging views. This policy was motivated by the Constitution of Zimbabwe which celebrates religious diversity. The main purpose of the current Religious Studies policy is to ensure that all religions have equal treatment. According to the ZIMSEC Syllabus, 2015:3). The Family and Religious Studies policy is based upon a learner-

centred, hands-on, multi-faith, non-proselytising and non-confessional problem posing approach. Changes of the curriculum, particularly Religious Studies, was influenced largely by the adoption of the new constitution. The Constitution of Zimbabwe recognises that Zimbabwe is home to many religions including Indigenous religion, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. I argue from the foregoing discussion that Zimbabwe's policy on Religious Studies is premised on the constitution and the national syllabus. There is scanty information on the Religious Studies policy being connected to the Constitution of Zimbabwe. In fact, studies have overlooked the role of policy in canvassing for a multi-faith policy framework. This current study seeks to analyse the current policy framework so as promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism.

### **2.16.3 Challenges to Religious Studies Policy implementation**

Admittedly, numerous studies on policy implementation and challenges have focused mainly on the constraints and factors that impede the success of curriculum change (Makaram 2015). To appreciate the fact that multi-faith Religious Studies policy is having challenges the world over, I examine in detail findings in Britain, Northern Ireland, Indonesia and South Africa. Challenges affecting Religious Studies policy implementation differ from one school, institution to another or from one country to the other (Jackson 2020). There are a number of studies that have revealed mixed findings relating to Religious Studies policy implementation. The major observation is that implementing a non-confessional Religious Studies policy in spaces where one religion dominates others in terms of followers is very difficult. This is largely because of resistance from the dominating religion. Jackson (2020) underscores that "changing Religious Studies policy to become a multi-faith one, regardless of the heterogeneous religious composition of society which is dominated by one religion is not an easy task". The obstacles to implementing policy on multi-faith are numerous. They include, among others, resistance by some religions or apathy towards a policy, lack of resources, lack of human resources for implementation, and disagreement about how to achieve results. The study by Grimmit (2013) shows that parents have withdrawn their children from schools where learners are taught religions which they do not belong to. In Britain, some have withdrawn their children from mission schools because of fear of indoctrination. I argue that indoctrination of the British society as well as implementation of a multi-faith syllabus has made the teaching of Religious Studies difficult.

Nelson and Yung (2021) have studied the implementation of a policy that introduced the teaching of world religions in Religious Education in Northern Ireland. They identified policy fidelity as the particular challenge for syllabus writers in RE who wish to achieve pedagogical change in a classroom. Policy fidelity is whereby policy guidelines are maintained no matter what. They cite the teacher as the major impediment in Religious Education policy implementation. RE teachers use tactics to “subvert and negotiate” education policy on religious and spiritual development, with positive effects (Nelson and Yung 2021:3). Fancourt (2013:195) understands policy in Religious Education as something that is enacted through social processes that operate in different contexts. This implies that policy can be affected by the context in which it operates.

Khozin (2018) did his study in a multi-ethnic and multi-faith Indonesia where Islam as a religion has the majority followers. It is this background that has motivated the Indonesian government to draft a policy to manage the plurality of religions through the teachings of Religious Education at non-religious schools. The implementation of Religious Education teaching policy is seen as a result of a political decision regulated by law, government regulation and, especially, the regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs. The Religious policy by politicians was drafted amidst tension between the secular nationalists group supported by non-Muslim elements and the Islamic groups. Challenges noted in implementing this policy have been lack of qualified teachers, pedagogical gaps and resistance from Muslims who are the dominant religious group.

Njoku and Njoku (2015:179) looked at the challenges affecting effective implementation of Christian Religious Studies (CRS) Curriculum in Nigeria. Their study notes that teachers and students in Ebonyi State confronted challenges such as the time allocated to the teaching of CRS, vast nature of the curriculum and syllabus, teachers’ beliefs, abstract contents of CRS, lack of concrete instructional materials, moral decadence occasioned by negative internet/media influences and poor understanding of the pedagogical and theological aims of the subject. The study looked at a Christo-centric curriculum rather than the multi-religious curriculum.

Modipa (2014) assessed policy implementation in South Africa and observed that policy on Religion Studies was not being implemented in line with the National Policy on Religion Education (NPRE). He noted challenges such as lack of knowledge on the part of teachers to understand and interpret policy, lack of involvement of all stakeholders, and manipulation of

policy by teachers to suit their own personal objectives. Chetty and Smit (2016) also note that the South African Religion policy had challenges including teachers' lack of qualifications and experience; a gap in conceptual clarity of the Religion Studies; a lack of adequate content and teaching materials for Religion Studies; the absence of critical pedagogical, assessment and moderation skills; need for career advocacy; need for national support; and the need for professional development.

In Zimbabwe, Religious Studies teachers are underrepresented in formulating policies but are expected to implement policies. This makes Religious Studies teachers to have various interpretations of the policy because they do not possess the same knowledge which policy makers have. For this reason, "policies and plans have not been implemented as intended" (Morris and Scott 2003:71). Reimers and McGinn (1997:71) identify a few reasons that are associated with policy failure, which include perception of policy implementation as autonomous from decision making and insufficient attention to the needs of teachers who are responsible for curriculum implementation. Furthermore, policies fail to reach schools as they are because of the distant relation between policy makers and policy implementers. Policies have also failed due to dictatorship which is evidenced by the top-to-down approaches. In Zimbabwe, it appears policy makers are not abreast with the realities and challenges faced by Religious Studies teachers who are curriculum implementers in their implementation of the new policies.

Studies above have revealed that the implementation of the policy has been largely a top-down one. Many policies on Religious Studies are products of centralised organisations and they are designed to protect the political interests of politicians. Morris and Scott (2003:71-84) contend that within centralised organisations, there are often problems with the transmission of policy intent from the most senior level through the mid-level managers to the point of delivery. The Zimbabwe Religious Studies policy is not implemented because of lack of financial resources, qualified personnel and policy inconsistency (Zivave and Muzambi 2021). Religious Studies teachers fail to implement policies because they do not understand policy intent which is relayed from top to bottom. This means that policy is communicated from those who craft it down to those who implement it. Spillane et al. (2002:387-512) remark that implementation agents fail to notice, intentionally ignore, or selectively attend to policies that are inconsistent with their own interests and agendas. In this regard, Religious Studies teachers implement policies that are in line with their doctrinal beliefs and reject or alter policies that violate their religious interests. Some challenges of the updated curriculum policy implementation relate to

the failure by policy makers to formulate vivid policy and lack of monitoring in the implementation process. (Pedzisai, Tsvere and Nkhonde 2014:164) aver that implementation, at a minimum, requires a shared understanding among participants concerning the implied presuppositions, values, and assumptions that underlie the whole implementation process. When Religious Studies teachers comprehend this as curriculum implementers, they can either be receptive or unreceptive to the policy, depending on their working environment. This affects Religious Studies policy implementation. Cohen and Spillane (1992:143-175) contend that the governance system and organisational arrangements that structure principal-teacher relations influence policy implementation. In this study, I argue that policy implementation is done effectively when teachers are included in curriculum design and do not resist curriculum change.

The findings from research studies above indicate that this study will contribute constructively in the evaluation of the policy by policy-makers so that the teaching of Religious Studies in a multi-faith society becomes feasible with little challenges. Due to the complexities of challenges to policy implementation with regard to Religious Studies elsewhere, the current thesis seeks to fill in the gap on implementation of policy and challenges of a multi-faith Religious Studies policy. The area has been surprisingly neglected in scholarship as majority of empirical evidence has looked at general challenges of Religious Studies without tracing these challenges to policy formulation and effective ways of implementing it.

#### **2.16.4 Current policy gaps of the Updated Religious Studies curriculum.**

Very few research studies have focused on policy concerning Religious Studies. Dinham (2012) examined the multi-faith policy gap in Britain. He noted that schools may fail to reconcile the requirements of the constitution with the Religious Studies policy implemented at their school. Dinham (2012) avers that Christian schools find it difficult to stick to the multi-faith policy as they advertise themselves as Christian in character. This causes multi-faith policy to be challenged as the rights of non-Christians are violated. In Zimbabwe, the majority of boarding schools which offer quality education are Christian. I argue that mission schools in Zimbabwe have noted this policy gap and they constantly abuse the policy since tolerance is not promoted in such schools. The policy has not only faced automatic but also systematic resistance from these schools. Dinham (2012:172) concludes that tolerance is not only seen as a political or legal requirement but also as part of Religious Education.



In South Africa, Prinsloo (2008) conducted a research on a critical evaluation of the South African policy on religion and education of 2003. He concluded that historical religions, like Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Indigenous Religion should be treated with great respect. For him, there are current policy gaps in the South African Religion Studies policies. This means that this study can also help in drawing comparisons and can contribute to policy implementation in South Africa as well. I argue that South Africa and Zimbabwe have experienced similar transitions and this current study can influence how Religion Studies is implemented.

In the context of Zimbabwe, Dube (2020) has noted that the current updated Religious Studies policy makes the subject elective. This means that the subject is not compulsory, but this creates challenges in the implementation of the current policy. Although in Zimbabwe the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) curriculum was scrapped and replaced by ZIMSEC examinations in 1995 there are a number of Cambridge schools in Zimbabwe which have continued to offer a Religious Studies syllabus which is bible-centred because of policy weaknesses. Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse (2021) observe that the updated Religious Studies curriculum is competing with the Cambridge Religious Studies which is Christo-centric. The offering of two parallel Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe has affected current policy which aims at promoting inclusivism. Lastly, Zivave and Mhute (2021) also note that the current policy has bias against religions which have very few followers in Zimbabwe like Rastafarianism, Hinduism and Baha'i faith. This is against the Constitution of Zimbabwe which is the principal pillar of the current Religious Studies policy. One can argue that this results in minoritisation of religions which do not have a large following and promotes the so-called world religions. Minority religions in Zimbabwe are subdued. The current policy is bound to cause religious conflict between dominant religions and non-dominant religions. It is these current policy gaps that this research seeks to offer empirical evidence and solutions so that the current policy becomes robust in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

#### **2.16.5 Summative assessment in Religious Studies**

Hayward and Pandya (2016) argue that education consists of three domains: curriculum, i.e. the content of what is taught, such as the disciplines of knowledge and intellectual skills; pedagogy and assessment. This implies that public examinations which are also known as summative assessment are part of curriculum policy and implementation process (Fancourt

2018). Summative assessment is, therefore, used to measure the breadth and depth of learning that has taken place (Petty 1998:401). Put differently, summative assessment is used to judge the aims of a course or program; whether they have been achieved or not (Gonye, Mareva, Gamira and Chiome 2012:1333). In this study, summative assessment is used to judge whether multi-faith objectives are achieved. Achievement of aims and objectives of the syllabus is facilitated through content and pedagogy. Ramden (1992) believes that summative assessment influences learning approaches. I argue that pedagogies are shaped by how assessment is done and vice versa. Studies by Gonye, Mareva, Gamira and Chiome (2012) have shown that summative assessment has to be valid, reliable and objective. In this study, the reliability of the summative assessment of the updated Religious Studies is critical in constantly measuring what is supposed to be measured (Reece and Walker 2003).

In Religious Studies, there is limited literature on summative assessment but summative assessment has been a source of contention in policy implementation. Grimmit (2000) has looked at how implementation of the first National Curriculum following the 1988 Education Act in England had significant implications for assessment in religious education. Grimmit concluded that summative assessment should demonstrate the change of policy and should reflect multi-faith principles. Fancourt (2018) has studied Religious Studies summative assessment in Britain and concluded that issues of examination and assessment in religious education are often glossed over both internally, by researchers and commentators within the field of religious education, and externally, by those interested in assessment more generally. My assumption is that the same examination challenges in Britain may be experienced in Zimbabwe. Policy change must be reflected in summative assessment so that learners value all religions.

Studies by Ilechukwu (2014) indicate that assessment is a necessary tool in education process which can improve learning outcomes. His research studies concluded that improvement in student's knowledge, understanding and skills in Religious Education are measured through assessment. This Religious Education was limited to the study of Christianity in secondary schools. An empirical study by Ilechukwu (2014) focused on general assessment in Nigeria. My study focuses on summative assessment of multi-faith Religious Studies. This study focuses on summative assessment as a vital mechanism not in the education process only but also in policy implementation. I argue that when curriculum reforms are done it should be done in tandem with summative assessment since it is also part of the domain of education. In his

study of curriculum reform in Eastern and Southern Africa Cunningham (2018:3) notes that assessment systems need to be revised to reflect the changes. He further contends that the effect of not changing the whole package of educational process in curriculum change affects the teaching and learning process and may worsen the confusion between the old and new (Cunningham 2018:3). This means that changing curriculum content and overlooking summative assessment creates policy confusion. Therefore, it can be argued that the tension between teachers and examinations boards grow when curriculum change assessment remains glued in the old and not transitioning to the new.

## **2.17 CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AFFECTING RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

In an effort to find out the root causes which generate challenges affecting Religious Studies as a subject, the researcher reviewed literature on new trends in contemporary society which are the basis of Religious Studies challenges. Studies have indicated a number of factors which affect the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in modern society (Matemba 2011). The factors impede the teaching and learning of Religious Studies thereby creating religious confusion and monopolisation of one religion at the expense of the other. New trends which are affecting Religious Studies' policy implementation in Zimbabwe will be explained below as they will have a bearing on the study in chapters to follow.

### **2.17.1 Secularisation**

From a historical perspective, secularisation began in Western Europe before the 16<sup>th</sup> century where Christian teachings were regarded as absolute truth. Matemba (2011:13) believes that people generally lived in homogeneous communities in which morals were strictly enforced by religious officials. This applies to Christian society in which religion permeates every aspect of life as Christian leaders are regarded as people with a direct link to God. Christianity was viewed as “the religion” and many people were associated with this religion. However, there was a radical social transformation between the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the 18<sup>th</sup> century due to the industrial revolution which affected the social, political and religious lives of the people. It is because of these “developments that the primacy of religious institutions was eclipsed by economic and political ones and religious values replaced by secular values (Lyotard 1999:16). Religion was banned from the public domain and society was eventually secularised. Zimbabwe has not shifted to secularism. It is a multi-religious state and the implementation of the multi-faith updated Religious Studies curriculum should be easy.

In relation to the above historical development of secularisation, Religious Education in the contemporary world “is primarily framed and justified by a secularized political discourse” (Lewin 2017:2). This impedes the understanding of the nature of religion as a phenomenon. Secularisation is attributed to the modernisation of education which is now more scientific. It is the scientific nature of contemporary education that religious beliefs have been interrogated and questioned. The other reason for secularisation is attributed to the mobility of people around the globe. The movement of people across the globe has resulted in the borrowing of certain cultures which affect people’s religious beliefs. The cropping up of new religious movements, urbanisation, legislation and Western culture are some factors which have contributed to the secularisation of the modern society. Secularisation has led to the transformation of societies into non-religious societies and Religious Studies as a subject has been affected by secularisation.

Sociologists of religion have also argued that pluralism is the cause of secularisation. Pluralism as a cause of secularisation dilutes religious faith because “the existence of so many religions making competing truth claims undermines the plausibility of religious belief” (Coffey 2001:2). Diverging teaching on religion by family members and Religious Studies teachers in school can result in competition which results in religious intolerance.

### **2.17.2 Religious diversity**

Diversity refers to human beings celebrating differences in their distinctiveness (Dinama 2010:31). Religious diversity, therefore, refers to the celebration of differences in beliefs and practices in terms of their uniqueness. The modern society is characterised by religious diversity caused by the existence of several religions leading to awareness of religious diversity. Klutz (2016:24) argues that the “increase in belief-based and religious plurality due to migration have reinforced this awareness”. Therefore, religious diversity is the norm in the contemporary world where it exists in the form of various religions like Indigenous Religion (s) Judaism, Christianity, and Islam which agree in the existence of one Supreme-Being but with some differences in doctrines and practices. This has often resulted in religious conflict in the modern society.

Religious diversity has not only created religious tension in the secular world but it has also impacted on the Religious Studies curriculum. Wuthnow (2005:3) correctly notes that “diversity is always challenging, whether it is manifest in language differences or in modes of dress, eating, and socializing ... when religion is involved, these challenges are multiplied.”

Religious conflicts have been experienced in the education sector in many countries where Religious Studies has been affected by a lot of challenges which include religious conflict, religious extremism and exclusivism. In support of this Basigner (2010:1) says, public schools in the United States have always been, to some extent, a “melting pot” where children from diverse populations, including children with diverse religious backgrounds, meet and assimilate. This is true to Religious Studies which should have learning content and aims that celebrate religious diversity. The modern Religious Studies curriculum should recognise religious diversity because non-recognition may result in interreligious disagreement not only among learners but also the broader society as a whole. The adherents of different religions appear to disagree on many matters like religious doctrines as well as practical issues, which may be celebrated within a particular Religious Studies curriculum. Thus, religious diversity can breed religious conflict as the “apparent disagreements between members of different religions are not, at least for the most part, genuine disagreements at all; they are instead mere differences that emerge from distinct conceptual schemes, a conceptual scheme being the “general system of concepts with which we organize our thoughts and perceptions” (Harrison 2008:98). This means that religious conflicts are a result of not acknowledging differences in religious beliefs and practices. In this study, it is assumed that the teaching of the updated Religious Studies curriculum does not cause conflict as the curriculum cherishes religious diversity. It is this religious diversity which should create space for effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

### **2.17.3 Democratisation and pluralisation**

Matemba (2011) has identified democratisation and pluralisation of modern society as a major challenge to Religious Studies. Klutz (2016:11) states that religious plurality is on the increase, and that this, in turn, leads to consequences in Religious Education. Furthermore, in some parts of the world like the sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe, political changes have resulted in democratic governance which has influenced Religious Education by encouraging freedom of worship. This has been done in accordance with international Human Rights legislation which encourages non-restrictions on religions to be observed in a given country. As a result, democracy and religious pluralism have also affected the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in many parts of the world by ensuring that the subject is transformed from being an enfaithing subject to a non-enfaithing subject. The non-enfaithing approach makes the learner choose what he or she wants to believe because there has been an increase in the numbers of heterogenic Religious Studies learning groups in contemporary schools resulting in plurality.

Therefore, plurality is important because it leads to “the acceptance of differences in religion and beliefs derived from the idea of universalism of human rights, freedom and equality” (Boven and Morohashi 2002:30). In this study, the updated Religious Studies curriculum reform was done to democratise and pluralise the curriculum. I argue that the teaching of one religion is a mark of autocracy and promotes religious exclusivism and supremacy of one religion.

#### **2.17.4 Globalisation**

Globalisation refers to the changing of the whole world to become a global village. Arguing from the same perspective Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi (2013:225) say the term globalisation refers to the reduction of spatial and temporal dimensions of human life. In a global village there is a high likelihood of plurality and diversity in terms of religious beliefs and practices due to globalisation. The increasing power of globalisation means improved communication, travel, knowledge and also greater effect on Religious Education all over the world. Globalisation affects Religious Studies in so many ways as it connects people of diverse backgrounds to several religions as well as exposing learners to many religions of the world. Basigner (2010:1) states that there is “an increasing number of students who are at least nominally Hindus, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Sikhs, or adherents to other non-Western religions, with no end to this trend in sight”. This is attributed to technology which has increased internet accessibility, thereby exposing students to diverse cultural and religious perspectives in ways unimaginable during the previous era. Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi (2013:225) say globalisation marks the end of ‘mono-cultures’ and also marks the creation of ‘multi-cultures’ or co-existence. This is true within the context of religion where religious diversity and plurality have been created due to the existence of several religions in one space.

Globalisation has resulted in a plurality of religions in many societies. The essence of Religious Studies is to accommodate other religions, and this results in the expansion of global knowledge about religions and connections between religions. Antone (2001:2) says globalisation has both positive and negative effects on people. Such effects are seen in Religious Studies where “nurturing people’s commitment within their respective faith traditions as well as enabling an openness to share and learn with those of other traditions is of outmost importance”. In a religious plural nation like Zimbabwe, it has become increasingly

clear that religions must co-exist to counter the negative effects of globalisation in Religious Studies education like religious aggression and segregation of other religions.

#### **2.17.5 Religious extremism**

One of the fundamental issues affecting Religious Studies in the contemporary world is religious extremism. Religious extremism is whereby “believers go to the extreme in terms of their belief even in situations where they happen to follow blind and unreasoned religious practices by fighting to defend their faith (Zivave, Muzondo, Sidhuna and Takavabvirakare 2019:146)”. Dube (2016:180) says this issue creates religious problems in society where extremists are not willing to moderate their religious views to accommodate different religious views. Religious extremism thus can result in religious conflicts because it “imposes beliefs, ideology or moral values on others” (Baqai 2011:242). It is this approach which leads to the abandonment of the teaching and learning of some religions in the education sector. For example, religious extremism in Islam has led to the resistance to Islam in most educational curricula across the globe. When teaching various religions with the intention of rooting out extremism, the use of a multi-faith approach becomes imperative. This is because the use of a confessional approach can lead to religious extremism as learners resist imposition of religious beliefs on them.

#### **2.17.6 Stigmatisation of other religions.**

The study of other religions is hampered by fear or stigma associated with other religions. For example, Islam’s inclusion in the updated Religious Studies curriculum was strongly resisted in some quarters of the Zimbabwean society. This is because of the misconception of Islam as a violent religion. This results in religious discrimination of people who belong to Islam because of fear. This is supported by Dube (2016:183) who says, “People often become fearful of religions that are known for violence and terrorism, jeopardising efforts to move towards hybridity.” It is this fear that affects learners in the classroom. The fear of other religions compromises efforts to help learners to strengthen their own faiths comprehensively and also be exposed to the range of diverse theologies and practices of the other members of the society (Court and Seymour 2015:530). I concur with these views since the new curriculum created a lot of stigma and discrimination of other religions which resulted in learners fearing other religions which they perceived as archaic, pagan, violent and anti-moral.

### **2.17.7 Clash of faiths**

Clash of faith is a hindrance to Religious Studies as teachers are caught between their faith and learning objectives of the subject. Most teachers do not want to be weaned from their religious beliefs when teaching the subject. They are afraid of corrupting their religious faith when teaching Religious Studies, especially from a multi-faith approach. The teacher in the contemporary society is caught between his faith, the faiths of the learners and learning objectives. As such, the influence of the teacher when teaching Religious Studies is pervasive of religious beliefs in society, by including learners. The teacher has a role of making learners appreciate the diversity and practices of various religions. This can only happen when the teacher brackets his or her faith. However, this is a difficult task on the part of the teacher. The faith of the teacher is always an impediment in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies from a non-confessional approach. In the context of this study, it can be concluded that the updated Religious Studies curriculum has been affected by the personal background of teachers which is largely Christian in outlook. This has affected policy implementation and created challenges for the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

### **2.17.8 Pedagogical rigidity**

Pedagogical rigidity is another challenge to contemporary Religious Studies in the education system. Teachers of Religious Studies have remained in the past in terms of their approach to the subject. Ter Haar, Moyo and Nondo (1992:5) note that the teaching and learning of Religious Studies styles in the classroom favour Christianity more than other religious traditions. This is because Christianity is a dominant religion and many Religious Studies teachers belong to this religion. The old Religious Studies and divinity curriculum have been taught by people who had a bias towards Christianity. In some Christian institutions like the Roman Catholic Church, religious practitioners like nuns are responsible for the teaching and learning of Religious Studies which has hampered the current syllabus to be adopted fully (Musaka 2012). Teachers who trained in Christian mission schools have a bias against Indigenous Religion and Islam. This has made the teaching of Religious Studies very difficult in contemporary schools. In an environment where the Christian religion is elevated, respect of other religions is likely to be compromised (Dinama 2010:18). Teachers are not willing to moderate their religious views to accommodate different religious views when teaching the updated curriculum (Dube 2021). Thus, many pedagogical approaches used in Religious Studies are en-faithing rather than knowledge based. It is because of this reason that there has been pedagogical rigidity where teachers teach to “convince, convert or strengthen commitment to a particular faith” (Lovat 2009:1). Most



pedagogical approaches utilised in Religious Studies have been doctrinal and kerygmatic. This has created exclusivism which is a negation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Religious Studies ethos which advocate for inclusivity, pluralism and tolerance.

This section has presented some contemporary challenges affecting Religious Studies. This is what this study seeks to explore from the Zimbabwean context and proffer solutions so that there may be religious inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The researcher is of the viewpoint that globalisation, change of religious composition of society and pedagogical rigidity have created many challenges in implementing a multi-faith Religious Studies.

## **2.18 THE CHALLENGES IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF RS IN THE ZIMBABWEAN CURRICULUM.**

Empirical evidence suggests that where Religious Studies curriculum reform has been done, there have often been some challenges. In Britain, the National Secular Society complained that students that were withdrawn from RE classes, as a right in the law, were being discriminated against and isolated from their peers (British Broadcasting Service 2004). The challenge noted in Britain is that students were withdrawn from RE classes by their parents during Religious Education lessons. The students were tasked to sweep the school playgrounds whilst their peers were attending religious instruction classes (Grimmit 2007). However, schools in Britain are not forced by the policy to provide lessons for students withdrawn from R.E lessons by their parents, hence this resulted in discrimination against such students as well as indirectly making RE very significant.

In South Africa, Prinsloo (2008) argues that the Religion Studies policy formulation was deeply controversial and various stakeholders from various faith communities contested the different drafts. In South Africa it has been nearly two decades after the new policy has been implemented, but its implementation remains marred by controversy and contests (Chetty and Smit 2013). There are debates in public discourse, especially “with individuals outside the traditional religions complaining that Christianity is still enshrined and privileged in some public schools in South Africa despite the Policy” (Prinsloo 2008). I argue in the same vein, that in Zimbabwe, four years down the line, policy implementation remains a challenge with confusion about the scope of what needs to be taught and how it is supposed to be taught in the 2017 updated Religious Studies. Mission schools and some members in the society either claim that Zimbabwe is a Christian nation or that the policy will drag Zimbabwe into religious and moral anarchy.

In relation to the above, the 2017 updated Religious Studies policy is complex and involves a myriad of new demands and new technologies in a situation where it has not been supported financially for the requisite infrastructure and manpower development (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020). The implementation of the updated 2017 new curriculum framework has faced several challenges which include human, material, physical and financial resources which made its provision more expensive, laborious and cumbersome (Staff Reporter 2018). Ngwenya (2019:16) notes that physical, material and financial resources are the major challenges affecting the updated curriculum because commencement of the curriculum itself was “ill-planned as most public schools were operating at full capacity and had limited space for expansion.” These myriad of problems affecting the implementation of the updated curriculum have also affected Religious Studies as a subject. Firstly, resistance has been a major problem which has affected the teaching and learning of Religious Studies because curriculum planners are condemned for trying to undermine Christian education to which the planners are de facto beneficiaries (Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi 2013:224). Some scholars have also noted that illegal sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe by Western Europe and America have led to the underfunding of the education system since the year 2000 (Bond and Manyanye 2002). From a Zimbabwean perspective, sanctions are illegal in the sense that they were imposed as a response to the land reform program meant to address colonial land iniquities. It blocked access to loans from international organisations like International Monetary Fund and the World Bank which could be used to fund educational reforms. Religious Studies was affected by the sanctions as planning and implementation require funding. Gwaravanda et al (2013:224) believe that Religious Studies reform has so serious financial implications that planners fear to commit themselves. This has affected the sourcing of learning materials as schools have been left to incur expenses alone without the help of the government. The government is not helping out schools because it considers schools autonomous. This means that schools should use tuition fees paid by parents to fund educational and developmental costs. From the studies indicated above, RE can be said to be a fluid subject that can be rejected, accepted or placed in the periphery in the education system. Of significance, Hull (2005) identifies two aspects that can give RE in a particular country its purpose and nature, namely; the religious affiliation of a country and the relationship between the secular and the religious.

Policy gaps have also been noted in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. The current Religious Studies requires a paradigm shift from the old syllabus but questions asked on assessment reflect that the syllabus is still inclined towards the abolished curriculum (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020:310). This shows that the teaching and learning of Religious Studies has been affected by policy inconsistency, especially on assessment procedures.

Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse (2020) have also note that development of learning materials (text books, handbooks and manuals) and induction of all teachers into the updated curriculum are still very grey. There are inadequate resources for the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. The teaching material or textbooks for the updated Family and Religious Studies syllabus are not readily available, yet there are completely new subject topics which have been introduced (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020).

Lack of investment in training of Family and Religious Studies teachers is one of the challenges facing the updated Religious Studies in Zimbabwe. A study by Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse (2020:308) notes that lack of trained teachers is impacting negatively the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. The study concludes that the situation is caused by the lack of availability of teacher education college offering training in FRS for secondary level, despite the subject being offered by almost every school in Zimbabwe. Consequently, the subject is taught by teachers who are trained to teach other subjects, and who are committed believers of a certain religion (Matemba 2011). When the new curriculum was introduced, there were no attempts to address the shortage of trained teachers, and induction workshops were not enough to bridge the knowledge gap of teachers in relation to the new curriculum (Zivave et al 2020). The issue of lack of training for teaching Religious Education has been a concern in Zimbabwe, and various authors lament this curriculum shortcoming (Dube 2019; Matemba 2011). The lack of qualified teachers is problematic because it hinders the effective teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies.

Policy monitoring and supervision has also been noted as a challenge to curriculum implementation. Curriculum change requires monitoring and supervision to ensure effective implementation of policy. Empirical studies have shown that the Zimbabwean curriculum policy implementation has been marred by lack of supervision. Literature by De Grauwe (2001:138) confirms that lack of supervision is a cause of policy implementation challenges in Zimbabwean schools. De Graurwe (2001) empirical data generation observes that the abolition of posts for subject supervision left a skeletal team of education officers to take charge of

general subject supervision from primary through secondary schools, each over and above their field of specialisation, expertise and experience. In the context of this study, supervisors of new policy were not recruited with any specific expertise for or in curriculum development and implementation of various learning areas. The new curriculum requires a shift from old policy monitoring practices. One should take into consideration the fact that the new curriculum was a new policy. I argue that there should be policy supervisors who suit the new curriculum learning areas from district level to national level. Teachers struggle to identify and implement new policies, hence the need for expert supervisors.

Although the curriculum has been implemented from 2017, empirical evidence reflects that there are a number of challenges affecting the subject. These challenges may hinder the objective of the policy to promote religious diversity, tolerance and plurality. It is because of this gap that this study would unlock several challenges associated with the updated curriculum so that solutions may be proffered in order to realise the objectives of the multi-faith Religious Studies policy.

## **2.19 SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM**

As previously noted research on the updated Religious Studies is scanty. As such, little has been offered by researchers as solutions to the challenges affecting Religious Studies. Dube (2021) believes that training of educators to teach Family and Religious Studies is one of the solutions to the challenge of lack of qualified human resources. It is the teachers who ensure that policy is fully implemented as teachers will be more of facilitators of religious knowledge than preachers. Schwartz (2006:449) rightly argues that, “teachers are the filters through which the mandated curriculum passes. Their understanding of it, and their enthusiasm, or boredom, with various aspects of it, colours its nature.” Dube (2020) asserts that curriculum planners in Zimbabwe need to be transformed in the way they perceive religion, especially in relation to teacher capacitation. Teacher training colleges should rethink the relevance of the subject and include Religious Studies in their mainstream curriculum, so that the teachers they produce can contribute significantly to conversations that can make religion to regain the trust it has lost (Dube 2020). Another recommendation is that all untrained teachers in the area of religion should undergo in-service training that exposes them to knowledge of major religions covered by the curriculum, as well as new religions. I concur with literature reviewed here that the teacher is the key factor in policy implementation and eradicating several challenges affecting

Religious Studies. It is within this context that this research will fill in the gap by proffering solutions to challenges that have been shown by empirical evidence.

## **2.20. CONCLUSION**

This chapter sought to examine pedagogical approaches to Religious Education teaching. Firstly, the chapter looked at the concept of Religious Studies where definition of the concept was explored. The chapter further looked at the curriculum planning, designing and implementation in Zimbabwe which critical in understanding how policy is formulated and implemented. The top-down approaches and bottom-up approaches were explained. The chapter also gave a historical survey of religious studies curriculum development from colonial period up to the present highlighting key historical periods which influenced what is taught in Religious Studies. To add on, the chapter examined the historical origins, strengths and weaknesses of pedagogical strategies which are largely grouped into confessional approaches and phenomenological approaches. Confessional approaches examined include confessional (evangelical approach), neo-confessional approach, spiritual approach, doctrinal approach, Kerygmatic approach, life themes approach, critical realist, interpretive approach, dialogical approach and particularistic approach. Phenomenological approaches include typological approach, life experience approach, phenomenological approach, Socio-Religious Hybridity Strategy and Multi-faith approach. The chapter noted that life experience approach, phenomenological approach, Socio-Religious Hybridity Strategy and Multi-faith approach are related to Zimbabwe's Religious Studies while others were used and applicable in European countries. These approaches have been triggered by the need to make learning relevant to the cultural background of the learner as well as the change of society to a religiously diversified one. The chapter also noted pedagogical challenges and criticism of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe.

The chapter also examined philosophical issues related to Religious Studies. These include scepticism, exclusivism, inclusivism, relativism, reductionism and pluralism. This was necessary since philosophical issues are necessary for curriculum design as well as in the actual teaching and learning of Religious Studies. The chapter noted that inclusivism and pluralism are philosophical issues which should guide how Religious Studies curriculum should be implemented in Zimbabwe in a 21<sup>st</sup> century environment.

The chapter further looked at the learning methods in Religious Studies. It noted two broad categories of learning models which include behaviourism and cognitivism. Constructivism

and Connectivism are some of the learning methods also examined. The chapter noted that since Zimbabwe's independence learning methods used were teacher-centred and did not encourage critical thinking among learners.

To add on the chapter gave a literature review of Religious studies curriculum reform in Zimbabwe. It noted that curriculum reform was done to debunk colonial legacy as well as promote religious diversity in Zimbabwe. The chapter further looked at policies implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of the updated religious studies in Zimbabwe. It noted that the multi-faith approach policy enhanced inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism the world over.

The chapter concluded by reviewing of related literature on challenges affecting Religious Studies the world over and Zimbabwe in particular. It noted that the religious composition of modern society has changed, hence, religious studies has been affected by challenges such as resistance, lack of resources to cater for the needs of reforms in religious studies.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodology I adopted to gather evidence that addresses the main research and sub-questions on policy implementation and challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975:75), the term methodology generally refers to the process, principles, and procedures by which researchers approach problems and seek answers. This methodology chapter explains how the researcher conducted his fieldwork so that the research objectives and questions are meaningfully addressed through data collected (Trafford and Leshem 2008). In this chapter the research paradigm, research design, study population, sampling procedures and data collection instruments are discussed. Furthermore, justification of the research method is also done in line with the aims and objectives of the study. Issues of credibility and dependability, data analysis and interpretation, as well as ethical considerations are also examined in this chapter. As such, this chapter is organised in the following sub-headings: research paradigm, research design, area of the study, population of the study, sample and sampling technique, instrument for data collection, validity of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, and the method of data collection and method of data analysis.

### **3.1 Research paradigm**

A research paradigm is a set of ideas, beliefs, or understandings within which theories and practices can function (Chilisa, 2012). This study has utilised a post-colonial theory which is a sub-branch of critical enquiry paradigm. The paradigm offers a different perspective to positivism and interpretivism which offers incomplete accounts of social behaviour without considering the political and ideological contexts of educational research. I adopted this paradigm because critical enquiry believes that:

- Ideas are mediated by power relations in society.
- Certain groups in society are privileged over others and exert an oppressive force on subordinate groups.
- What are presented as ‘facts’ cannot be disentangled from ideology and self-interest of dominant groups?

- Mainstream research practices are implicated, even if unconsciously, in the reproduction of the systems of class, race and gender oppression. (Gray 2009:25).

From the above, it is clear that theoretical assumptions of the critical enquiry approach differs from the positivist and interpretive paradigms because of its nature. For this reason, the postcolonial theory research paradigm adopted for this research, falls under the umbrella of the critical research tradition (Cohen et al. 2011:45; Marshall and Rossman, 2006:1; Punch, 2005:139). The term ‘postcolonial’ is a contested one, however, there is also general admission that there is no realistic alternative (Kennedy, 2012:112). Therefore, this means that “the term ‘postcolonial’ can be used descriptively to refer to the period after colonialism where nations have begun to enjoy their political independence, but it can also refer to a trans-disciplinary, critical, theoretical stance” (Ratele 2006:539). Ratele’s (2006) definition befits my intention in this study, whereby besides considering the postcolonial period as the context of my study, my stance is that of being critical of the current situation where the issue of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is seldom raised as a subject of study in Zimbabwe. In this study, participants were expected to articulate their experiences and views as decolonised subjects, with regard to their perspectives on the implementation of the decolonised multi-faith Religious Studies policy in secondary schools. For that reason, I chose to operate within the post-colonial paradigm which falls under the post-positivist tradition. This means that the ontological, epistemological and methodological orientations of the postcolonial theory influenced the research processes of this study. The postcolonial theory research paradigm is therefore relevant, in view of the postcolonial context in which research participants continue to experience the influence and effects of colonialism (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1998:186-188; Parsons and Harding, 2011:2). The purpose of this study was to explore and gain insight into the perspectives of secondary school Religious Studies teachers on policy implementation challenges of the updated Religious Studies curriculum which encourages teaching of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam in secondary education in Zimbabwe. In this regard the postcolonial theory investigates, and develops propositions about, the religious and political impact of European conquest upon colonised societies, and the nature of those societies’ responses.

The postcolonial theory paradigm is therefore a relatively new perspective, particularly in the education context where curriculum reforms are being made (Mfum-Mensah, 2005:74) regards ‘postcoloniality’ as a new paradigm for critical practice of enquiry which critique issues that



emerge from “colonial relationships and their aftermath, covering a long historical span (including the present)”. This paradigm offers the ‘colonised’ a voice and space to be heard through curriculum change which take into consideration their culture and religion which have been side-lined in preference of Christianity which has been exclusionary in nature. In view of the above observation, the postcolonial theory paradigm was considered appropriate for this study which assumes that the old religious studies curriculum in secondary education was disadvantaging learners and there is need to embrace multi-faith approach in a postcolonial context. Indigenous Religion have been side-lined in the curriculum space during the post-colonial era. It seems that missionaries and colonialists imposed confessional approaches to the study of religions in schools which included biblical centred religions and excluded Indigenous Religion as well as other religions from the academic space. One can say that postcoloniality attempts to assist religions which have suffered under colonialism to find themselves in the curriculum space. It helps give voice to those who, in the past, were not allowed to speak. It revitalises the once trashed cultures of African, Asian and Latin American people

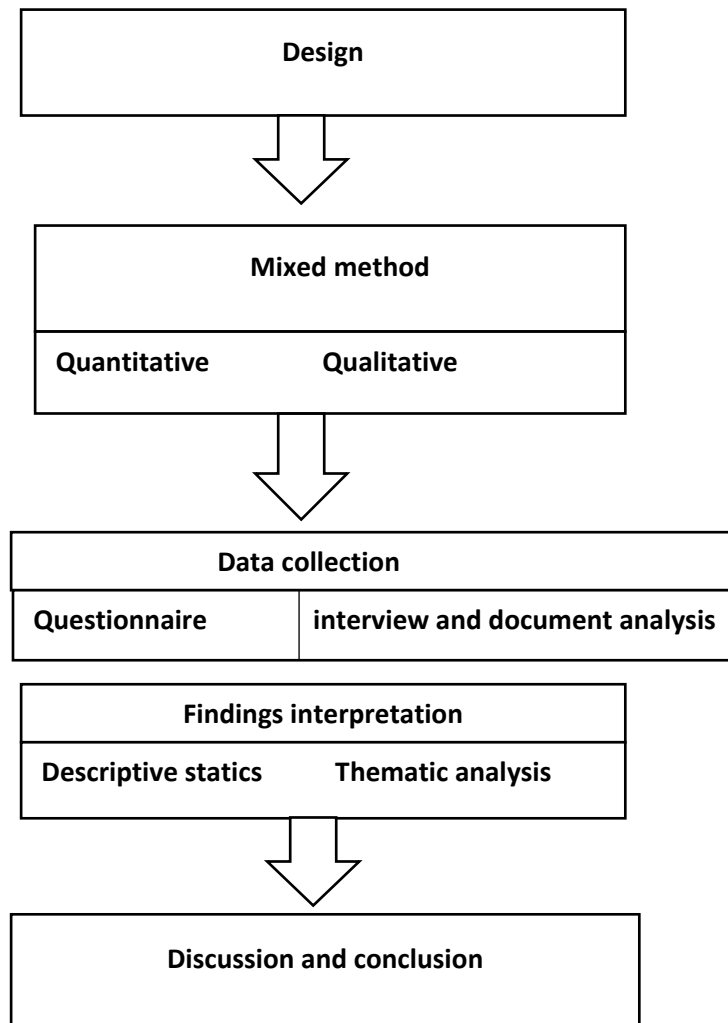
By applying the postcolonial as a research paradigm in this study, it will be a small but significant step in an attempt to integrate this theory into the religious experiences of Zimbabweans in particular. At the same time, such an approach to educational research would expand the application of the postcolonial theory paradigm as a relatively new perspective in educational research in Zimbabwe. In this study, it was intended that policy implementers should learn to appreciate the role of multi-faith approach in teaching and learning in a postcolonial multi-faith religious studies curriculum context, for the benefit of learners. I intended to elicit secondary school teachers’ own experiences in their own words, relating to their practices, beliefs and attitudes towards policy implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum at secondary education level, from a postcolonial standpoint. According to Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia (2006:255), “the main impulse of postcolonial theory is deconstructive and liberatory...” The characteristics of the postcolonial theory cited above could assist policy implementers to reflect on their beliefs and attitudes with regard to the implementation of the multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. Such conscientisation was made possible when the research participants interacted with the researcher.

It should be noted that the Religious Studies curriculum inherited at independence which was reviewed in 2017 reflected colonial legacy. According to Viruru, (2005:10), the legacies of

colonialism should be examined within the field of education, otherwise “our minds, if not our hearts will remain colonised”. Viruru believes that by adopting the postcolonial theory to study the ways in which teachers and learners in various contexts in schools have been subjected to exclusionary Religious Studies curriculum, ways can be explored in which the postcolonial theory can serve as a mechanism to prevent such exclusivism. By analysing policy implementation challenges with specific reference to the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools within the postcolonial context, various patterns and paradoxes in implementation, which might otherwise be overlooked, can be exposed (Bray and Koo, 2004). Through the postcolonial lens, the intervention strategies suitable for the Zimbabwean context were proposed by the researched, with regard to challenges affecting effective policy implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The use of mixed research method in data collection enabled policy implementers in secondary schools to interpret their conceptualization of the Religious Studies policy and presentation of their policy implementation challenges. Through the analysis of the problem of policy implementation challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools, the postcolonial theory perspective assisted me to understand policy implementation challenges that face policy implementers [school teachers, inspectorate and the examination board] in implementing the 2017 updated Religious studies policy from their own perspectives.

### **3.2 Research design**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:22), a research design is the plan and structure of an investigation conducted to obtain evidence geared towards answering research questions. The objective of the research design is to provide the most valid and accurate possible answers to the research questions. A research design is vital in carrying out a research, since certain limitations and restraints in interpreting the results are associated with the research design. It also determines how data should be analysed (McMillan and Schumacher 2006:23). It is because of this reason that Du Plessis (2005:148) argues that a research design is a plan that guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting observations. By so doing, a research design assists acts as a preventative measure of giving information which does not answer the initial research questions. In particular, the details of the research design for the current study is illustrated in Figure 3.1.



*Fig 3.1 showing a mixed research design*

The current study is based on a mixed method research design as illustrated on Fig. 3.1. This design utilises both qualitative and quantitative research methods. As a general rule in such research, both quantitative and qualitative approaches should be taken into consideration when appropriate. As Creswell and Clark (2007:5) state:

Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative in approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.

A mixed methods research methodology is employed in this study because it balances the strengths and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell and Clark 2007). There are many advantages to using a mixed method approach for this particular

research focus on analysing policy implementation and challenges on the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary education. The reason for applying a mixed methods research is justified when answering questions such as:

- Why has Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe undergone reform?
- What are the pedagogical approaches and philosophical approaches to Religious Studies in Zimbabwean secondary schools?
- What are the challenges in the teaching and learning of RS in the Zimbabwean curriculum?
- Which policies should be implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe?
- What are the challenges affecting the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies in the promotion of inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism?

### **3.4 Research methods**

There are two classes of research methods, namely; quantitative and qualitative. A quantitative research deals with numbers in the data collection and analysis while qualitative method deals with words in research methods. This research utilises a mixed methods approach which is characterised by the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

#### **3.4.1 Quantitative research**

Quantitative research is a means of ensuring objectivity, similarity and generalisability of the research findings. This is because quantitative research is independent of the phenomenon studied in the research. Quantitative research is associated with formulating and testing a hypothesis so as to reduce the phenomena to their simplest elements (Remenyi et al 2003). As such, conceptual constructs or variables are measured by means of instruments and the emerging numerical data are analysed by applying statistical tests. In addition, as this research systematically tries to study phenomena through mathematical calculation so as to confirm the findings made by theory without any intervention from the researcher, it has purposefully adopted the quantitative research method. Accordingly, the choice of a particular quantitative research method depends on the research question to be addressed, and based on the above mentioned discussion, the descriptive approach adopted in this research aims to construct an accurate representation of participants, events, situations and conditions, and ultimately to create a holistic view of the phenomena under study (Saunders et al 2007).

Additionally, the quantitative research method encompasses survey, modelling and statistical analysis (Nyame-Asiamah and Patel 2009). Unlike the quantitative method, the qualitative method, which includes action research, case studies, interviews and focus groups, believes in the existence of multiple truths that are socially constructed (Lincoln and Guba 1985) and that understand the experiences of participants in the research as well as their perspectives and thoughts (Hiatt 1986). Hiatt (1986) also argues that qualitative research explores meaning, purpose or reality. The qualitative research method tends to understand personal perception as the observation is the first step in theory building. Likewise, researchers who adopt the qualitative research method believe in the existence of multiple truths that are socially constructed (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

As a result, the quantitative method is selected as a suitable research method. The justification behind this selection is as follows:

- In the quantitative approach, data is obtained from numbers and calculation.
- In the quantitative approach, researchers and subjects are separated.
- In the quantitative approach, the findings are based on well-known theory.

Furthermore, the study utilised qualitative research method since the mixed research paradigm is used in this study. Banks (2012) argues that, qualitative analysis involves a continual interplay between theory and analysis, thus employing such survey one is able to discover patterns such as changes over time or possible causal links between variables. According to Burns and Grove (2003:19) qualitative approach is “a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and situations to give them meaning”. Therefore, the qualitative approach may be defined as a system of study that uses both theory and analysis to describe human experiences and life situations. In this case it will describe teachers, ZIMSEC official and inspectors’ experiences with the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. This research is thus based on a quantitative research approach and qualitative research approach. The aim of this study is to investigate the challenges faced in the implementation of policy in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Therefore, the quantitative approach has been used for collecting valid data in order to help meet the main objectives of this study.

### **3.4.2 The rationale behind mixed methods research**

Social researchers use mixed method approaches to secure the data needed to answer key research questions. As such, the strengths and weaknesses of the quantitative and qualitative methods are dealt with by the use of data collection methods which are appropriate. In this study questionnaires, interviews and document analysis are data collection methods used to obtain empirical data and allow the researcher to ascertain:

- A vivid picture of the information.
- An accurate measurement of the data.
- Evidence that supports the subject matter. (Denscombe 2008:133)

The researcher has employed both of these techniques in this study, in order to provide a complete and clear picture of policy implementation and challenges on the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. Furthermore, this is critical to answer the aforementioned research questions. In this context, mixed methods approach is imperative in complex research situations like of policy implementation, where the researcher is faced with the challenge of studying the feasibility of policy implementation challenges with limitations of official secrecy. In mixed methods strategies there are three ways that are used by researchers: the explanatory strategy, the exploratory strategy and the triangulation strategy to collect data.

Explanatory mixed methods strategy refers to the use of qualitative results to clarify the quantitative results. In this case, quantitative results provide a vivid explanation of the research problem while the qualitative results refine, explain or extend the general picture of the phenomenon (Creswell, Gutmann, Hanson, and Clark 2003). This shows that mixed methods research allows for the “opportunity to compensate for inherent method weaknesses, capitalize on inherent method strengths, and offset inevitable method biases” (Greene 2007:xiii). The exploratory mixed methods strategy is used when a researcher first needs to explore a topic using qualitative data before attempting to measure or test it quantitatively. According to Creswell et al (2003), this design permits the researcher to identify themes and generate theories which will be used to guide subsequent quantitative examination of the initial qualitative results. The explanatory mixed methods and the exploratory mixed methods are time consuming because implementation of two separate phases requires a lot of time.

The triangulation mixed method strategy examines the consistency of findings, such as those obtained through different instruments, which might include interviews and surveys. This

implies that qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analysed at the same time. According to Green et al (2007) triangulation improves the chances that threats to inferences will be controlled. It is complementary in nature where qualitative and quantitative data are cross checked. In support of this, Golafshani (2003) notes that triangulation is cross-checking of information and conclusions through the use of multiple procedures of sources to investigate phenomenon in a single line of inquiry. Triangulation combines quantitative and qualitative methods and allows the respondents to complete the questionnaire and also be interviewed. The use of two methods to produce the same result instils confidence in the results obtained in the study. This means that the use of a mixed methods approach gives more room for one to depend more on the outcome of the research. Gray (2009) asserts that by blending a number of qualitative and quantitative methods, an overall strength of research can be achieved. The responses from both data sets are combined and compared with the idea to arrive at the same conclusion.

The following sub-sections provide overviews of the mixed methods designs as presented by Creswell and Clark (2007: 62-79) and de Vos et al (2011: 441-443).

### **3.4.3 Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods design**

Sequential explanatory design is the opposite of sequential exploratory mixed methods design. In this case, quantitative data is preferred first and followed by qualitative. An analysis of qualitative data is done in the second phase because it assists in building quantitative results. In this design, priority is given to quantitative data. The collection and analysis of data in separate phases makes the design simple to apply but requires a lot of time to implement (de Vos et al 2011: 143).

### **3.4.4 Sequential exploratory mixed methods design**

This is a two phased design that is composed of qualitative and the quantitative phases, respectively, where the qualitative results are used to inform the quantitative data. In this case, qualitative data is preferred first and then followed by quantitative data. This is because qualitative data is used to develop the quantitative phase. According to de Vos et al (2011: 441) this is suitable for studies whereby there is no guiding theoretical framework and when the research is an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon meant to measure the prevalence. This design is simple to use. However, the design is flawed in that it is time consuming.

### **3.4.5 Embedded mixed methods design**

This design entails that qualitative data is embedded within quantitative. The purpose of this embedded mixed methods design is for one set of data to provide a supportive role in a study based primarily on the other data type (de Vos et al 2011: 443). Qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently but the purpose of collecting a second dataset must be specified (de Vos 2011).

### **3.4.6 Triangulation mixed methods design**

This study employs this design which is one phased. In this design, the quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently but separately. In contrast to other designs, quantitative and qualitative approaches are treated equally in terms of value and weighting. Triangulation mixed methods design has become popular because it enables comparing and contrasting of quantitative and qualitative data, produces detailed conclusions and saves time as compared to sequential designs (Creswell and Clark 2007). However, the design requires much effort and expertise for best results. This study has adopted the triangulation mixed methods design in which both quantitative and qualitative data collected are given the same weighting so as to produce a thorough and well-validated conclusion on the policy implementation and challenges faced in the teaching and learning of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. Methods used were the questionnaire, interview and document analysis technique.

### **3.4.7 Reasons for using mixed methods research**

The choice of a mixed method design is meant to generate knowledge about real-world issues based on “pragmatism, which places more emphasis on finding the answers to research questions than on methods used” (Patton 2002). Philosophical issues and pedagogical issues in Religious Studies are understood from diverse perspective using mixed methods approach. The approach helps to solve problems using both numbers and words. This is because it is natural to use both deductive and inductive reasoning in trying to understand the world (Patton 2002). For this reason, triangulation is utilised for both quantitative and qualitative methods and data sources in a single study in order to merge results from the different methods on the same phenomenon.

This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to generate data. The quantitative approach used data from questionnaire and the qualitative approach used in-depth interviews



purposefully selected from those who did not participate in the survey questionnaires. In this particular study, the researcher conducted a survey on the challenges facing the implementation of the updated Religious Studies policy and at the same time conducting focus group interviews and then comparing what was gathered from each method. The use of the mixed method design is cheaper and is more efficient. Critiquing policy on Religious Studies involves a number of practices that draw from disciplines such as curriculum developers, Religious Studies scholars, teachers and the education inspectors. The method reduces bias that may come with the use of one methodology. Patton (2002:247) agrees that, "...no single method adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors."

Document analysis was also used in this method in order to fill in the gap left by interviews and questionnaires. Documents used in this study are primary and secondary sources which include minutes, circulars and national syllabus in order to understand policy implementation and its challenges regarding the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe's secondary schools. The information was categorised to address critical thematic trends in specific research questions. In this study, the ZIMSEC Syllabus and minutes were used to search for the various contexts in which teaching and learning of Religious Studies was done, for example, teaching and assessment. A syllabus is defined as expected topics that are supposed to be learnt (Okai 2010).

Although the mixed methods approach has several advantages, it should be noted that it is difficult to utilise. It is also time consuming and needs a lot of resources to collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell et al 2003). This demands the researcher to be skilled and knowledgeable in the use of two methods to generate data in a clear manner. Great expertise is needed for collection and analysis of two sets of complete but separate sets of data at the same time. As such, mixed research method needs expertise in implementing it. This has been noted by Castellan (2010:3) who cautions that "...though qualitative and quantitative methods share a lot, at one point or the other there may be chaos if they are not properly mixed." In this study of the challenges affecting the policy implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools there is need that quantitative and qualitative approaches be both used to address the research questions.

### **3.5 The interface between qualitative and quantitative research methods**

Studying policy implementation and its challenges in the context in which it is found is important, especially when Religious Studies as an academic discipline is faced with challenges

which may hinder inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. For this reason, the study employed a mixed methods research utilising qualitative and quantitative research methods in a complementary manner. These research methods are closely connected.

In this study, qualitative method employs interviews and document analysis which enables the researcher to acquire in-depth understanding of the respondents' experiences and perceptions about the challenges affecting the updated Religious Studies curriculum in secondary school while quantitative studies use instruments such as tests or surveys to collect data, and relies on probability theory to test statistical hypotheses that correspond to research questions of interest.

Qualitative research methods focus on discovering and understanding the experiences, perspectives, and thoughts of participants, that is, qualitative research explores meaning, purpose, or reality (Hiatt 1986). In other words, qualitative research is linked with the social setting and it locates the observer in the world. It is a naturalistic approach to the world. This implies that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. In this case, the secondary schools are the natural setting where teachers are experiencing challenges in implementing the current policy in Religious Studies. The qualitative research is augmented by quantitative research which focuses on truth, consistency, applicability, and neutrality using figures while taking different procedural approaches to assure quality. For this reason, the quantitative approach is more concerned with statistics and generalised results.

Qualitative research methods are also described as inductive, in the sense that a researcher may construct theories or hypotheses, explanations, and conceptualisations from details provided by a participant (Hiatt 1986). On the other hand, quantitative methods are frequently described as deductive in nature, in the sense that inferences from tests of statistical hypotheses lead to general inferences about characteristics of a population. Quantitative methods are also frequently characterised as assuming that there is a single "truth" that exists, independent of human perception (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

In qualitative approach, the researchers cannot set aside their experiences, perceptions, and biases, and thus cannot pretend to be objective bystanders to the research while in quantitative approach the researcher will set aside his or her experiences, perceptions, and biases to ensure objectivity in the conduct of the study and the conclusions that are drawn. This shows that although quantitative and qualitative approaches contradict, and at times overlap and complement each other, this has the effect of giving checks and balances to the research process

giving a richer and deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. The combination of these two approaches provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of the methods if they are taken separately. This means that each of these approaches allows researchers to gain a specific perspective of the research problem.

### **3.6 Qualitative research**

Secondly the study employed a qualitative method on the basis that it allows the researcher to obtain an insider perspective on the challenges affecting policy implementation as well as teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. This is done to have a comprehension of what is going on from within. Thus, in this study, the researcher immersed himself in the field and interacted with teachers, inspectors and the ZIMSEC subject manager in order to experience challenges being experienced in the implementation of the new policy on the updated Religious Studies curriculum. This was done by obtaining data through document analysis, interviews, observation and questionnaires. This enabled the researcher to collect data and draw conclusions concerning challenges being faced in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum policy in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

The selection of the qualitative method over other method is premised on the nature of data gathered. The method allows participants to present their views and opinions about the value of the programme; both positive and negative responses were given when answering the interview questions. The idea of the data gathering method was not about collating numbers but to understand the challenges affecting the implementation of policy so that the policy can be improved and there be effective learning where tolerance, inclusivity and pluralism can be achieved. The only way to achieve this was through interviewing curriculum implementers who include teachers, subject manager and inspectors of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Qualitative methodology is sometimes criticised for lacking scientific rigour and generalisability (Mouton 2011). This is the reason why the method applied a mixed approach so that quantitative approach will take care of scientific rigour and generalisability. The emphasis of using a mixed methods approach is to evaluate outcomes systematically and rigorously.

The main reason why a mixed research methodology is employed in this study is that it balances the strengths and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell and Clark 2007). There are many advantages to using a mixed method approach for this particular research focus, which is on critiquing policy implementation and challenges regarding the 2017

updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe's secondary schools. This mixed method approach offers the best strategy of responding to key research questions depending on various forms of data obtained from different sources. The quantitative section, which includes questionnaire, addresses the research question related to which challenges are affecting the teaching and learning of RS in the Zimbabwean curriculum and which policies should be implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe. The qualitative section includes interviews and document analyses.

### **3.8 Population of the Study**

A population is a universe of units from which a study sample is selected or chosen. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1997:164), the term population refers to the entire group of people, things, or events that share one common trait. For the purpose of this study, the population included Family and Religious Studies teachers, educational inspectors responsible for Religious Studies as well as the ZIMSEC official in charge of Religious Studies. Thus, the targeted population include all teachers of Family and Religious Studies from selected schools in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland North province as well as Family and Religious Studies Curriculum Specialist from Zimbabwe School Examination Council. The reason why these are the targeted population is that they are policy implementers in the Zimbabwean education system responsible for delivering Religious Studies to learners. Secondly, these know the challenges affecting the subject from an insider's perspective.

### **3.9 Sample and sampling techniques**

The essential purpose of any research is to be able to generalise research findings and there are two basic types of generalisation. The first is, statistical generalisation, when a probability theory is used to assume that the finding from a small sample will yield the same results in a larger population. It depends on the survey research for a representative sample that allows for generalisation.

In sampling respondents, the researcher considered mixed methods sampling. Thus, sampling methods were selected from the probability (quantitative) and non-probability (qualitative) designs. Purposive sampling is quantitative approach that was used to select 40 permanent Family and Religious Studies teachers from the Matabeleland North province of Zimbabwe while interviews from two senior teachers of Religious Studies, one ZIMSEC subject manager in charge of assessment of Religious studies as well as 2 educational inspectors responsible of

the subject under study. This summed up the sample of 45 respondents. The choice of purposive sampling was because the researcher believed that respondents of interest possess the required quality towards supplying the data needed.

### **3.10 Data Collection**

Data collection in research refers “to the gathering of specific information aimed at proving or refuting some facts” (Kombo and Tromp 2006: 99). Information on policy implementation and challenges in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies was gathered to influence government policies in promoting inclusivity, tolerance and pluralism in Zimbabwean schools and the wider society at large. In this part, the researcher presents data collection methods as well as the setting and research participants. The use of mixed data collection instruments was also helpful in establishing the perceptions and views of the participants concerning the policy implementation and challenges with the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. It also enabled the researcher to understand how inspectors, Family and Religious Studies teachers and the subject manager responded to and interpreted the policy regarding the implementation of the Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe’s secondary schools. The main techniques or instruments of data collection used in this study included interviews, questionnaires and document analysis.

#### **3.10.1 Data collection methods**

Here the researcher presents questionnaire, interview, and document analysis as research instruments used to collect data. This study engaged multiple methods of soliciting data on the implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum and the challenges faced in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwean secondary schools regarding the promotion of inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism. Data gathering methods were triangulated in this study to enable verification and validation of the findings.

#### **3.10.2 Interviews**

Interviews can be defined as “a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant” (Maree and Pietersen 2007: 87). This research tool is used by the researcher to solicit data directly from the respondents. Interviewees are considered as

reliable sources of information on the policy implementation and challenges in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe.

There are three types of interviews and these include open-ended interviews, semi-structured interviews as well as the structured interviews. The utilisation of open-ended interview enables the researcher to obtain the participant's views through conversations. It is done over a period of time and has a number of interviews. In a semi-structured interview, the participant responds to a predetermined set of interview questions. This method of using open semi-structured questions is done because it enables the researcher to corroborate data emerging from other data sources. Lastly, there are structured interviews, which are survey researches prepared in advance. Structured interviews are detailed in nature and are often used in multiple case studies. However, the structured interview was not suitable for this study because it limits probing, which is critical in understanding policy implementation and the challenges faced in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies essential in this study.

Semi-structured interviews were used to guide the main data collection instrument which was the questionnaire. Interviews were vital in that they provided a platform for the researcher to probe the interviewees further where clarity was needed. Thus, open-ended questions were used for their flexibility to alter questions depending on the participants' responses. The semi structured interview guide was used for Family and Religious Studies teachers and the experts from Curriculum Development Unit as well as Zimbabwe School Examination council. The interview guides for teachers used in the study were standardised to increase the comparability of responses while reducing prejudices on the part of the interviewer. A tape recorder, notepads, and pens were used to record the information collected from the interviews. This was done as a point of reference in situations where the researcher might have misplaced the information. These tools were important for they enabled alterations and modifications where it was necessary during the research process.

The researcher started with designing the research instruments, particularly the questionnaires, semi structured interview guides, and document analysis checklist. The Family and Religious Studies syllabuses would be analysed followed by questionnaire distribution to teachers of Family and Religious Studies in selected schools from Matabeleland North province. After distribution of questionnaires, data from subject specialists from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education inspectorate as well as ZIMSEC would be collected through in-depth

interviews using a semi-structured interview guide. The study would triangulate methods in order to reduce weaknesses that are associated with the usage of one method.

Interviews were administered in this study in order to effectively access inspectors', subject manager's and teachers' perceptions on the policy implementation and challenges in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe. Interviews gave the researcher an opportunity to observe participants and conditions that influenced their responses, and they ensured more reliability than questionnaires. Interviews also encouraged interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Maree and Pietersen 2007).

This study used one semi-structured interview schedule which was drafted for Religious Studies teachers. The semi-structured interview was advantageous in that it was flexible, with both open and closed-ended questions which enabled the gathering of in-depth information and an understanding of the issue under study (Maree 2006). In this study, the interview sought to establish the challenges faced in the teaching of the reviewed Religious Studies curriculum. Interviews with individual teachers sought their perceptions pertaining the challenges in their teaching of Religious studies, the problems associated with the implementation of the new updated Religious Studies curriculum, and their opinions regarding approaches through which the four religions in the updated curriculum could be taught.

Interviews for this study took the common type of individual, face-to-face verbal interchange since these were mature participants. Only Religious Studies teachers were interviewed because they were the experts in the teaching and learning of the subject and provided valuable information on the challenges and policy gaps regarding the subject in secondary schools. For this study it was the researcher alone who conducted the interviews.

A pilot study had been carried out earlier with teachers, inspectors and the subject manager of Religious Studies at Zimbabwe School Examination council for the researcher to familiarise with the process and get prepared for the real interviews. Interviews were audio-recorded to capture all relevant data for critical analysis with permission from participants. The researcher made field notes and compiled them in an accurate manner. de Vos et al (2011:359) believes that taking down notes is essential in ensuring that the researcher records what he has heard, seen, experienced and thought about in the course of interviewing, her emotions, preconceptions, expectations and prejudices. This integrity of this study was maintained through an honest presentation and judgement of data.

Bookings for interviews were done. This involved arrangement of time and venues for interviews with teachers, inspectors and the subject manager which was done in advance through the educational authorities. Physical follow-ups were done just before the interview dates to serve as reminders and to confirm participants' willingness to participate. The respondents were given the freedom to choose convenient times and environments for the interviews. Most participants preferred to be interviewed at their workplaces. It was more convenient for teachers, inspectors, and the subject manager to refer to official documents whenever they needed. The participants consented to participate at the time and place of their choice.

### **3.10.2 Questionnaire**

This subsection describes and justifies the questionnaire method that was used in this study. A questionnaire is "a document containing questions and or other types of items designed to solicit information appropriate for analysis" (Babbie 2007: 246). In a study concerned with the extent to which respondents hold a particular attitude or perspective such as this, information is collected through the completion of statements and the answering of questions on the spaces provided. In this study, questionnaires were administered to critique policy implementation in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

The questionnaire is one of the basic research techniques for gathering structured information from individuals and is also a product of quantitative research. The quality of the research related to the designing of the questionnaire is important for it leads to collecting precise data in order to answer the research questions and attain the research objectives (Saunders et al 2003). Usually, questionnaires are constructed for a specific research topic and tend to gather various kinds of data such as current opinions or patterns of behaviour.

This study tested the conceptual framework with a larger sample. In other words, the purpose of the questionnaire was to support or refute theoretical propositions. This subsection explains the procedures that were followed in order to develop the questionnaire. It focuses on the scale development, and the questionnaire.

Furthermore, questionnaires were used to collect relevant data which addressed the research questions that were formulated. It was divided into section A and section B whereas section A contained the bio-data of respondents, section B contained 19 structured addressing each research question. Questionnaire was scaled on a 3-point modified like model of agreed (A),



Neutral (N) and disagreed (D). The questionnaire was designed to collect data on the challenges faced by teachers, subject managers and inspectors in the implementation of the new Family and Religious Studies curriculum. The questionnaire had both closed and open ended questions.

### **3.11 Data collection procedure and the application of data collection tools**

An interview protocol was developed with questions based on the ten main research questions of the study. The interview protocol was piloted to Family and Religious Studies teachers. The purpose of piloting the interviews was to verify whether the tool would be effective in gathering relevant data that would answer the research questions; to check if Family and Religious Studies teachers would be able to understand and respond to the questions as posed; and also to have an idea of how long the interview would last.

The second procedure was to identify inspectors, the subject manager and teachers of Family and Religious Studies from which the data were collected. The researcher applied for permission from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as well as Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC) to collect data from the identified officers. Subsequently, the researcher contacted the inspectors, subject manager and teachers identified among various schools to make appointments.

Thirdly, the researcher conducted a preliminary visit to the respondents to familiarise himself with the environment as well as introduce himself to the education inspectors as well as the subject manager and the identified teachers of Family and Religious Studies subject in order to explain the purpose of the interview, indicate its length and the provenance of the researcher, justify the choice of the respondents and find out where these educators taught, and arrange times for interviews with these Religious Studies experts.

The researcher started visiting the identified respondents following the agreed schedule. Firstly, the researcher visited the identified teachers of Family and Religious Studies and conducted the interviews on the challenges they faced in implementing the Family and Religious Studies policy. The subject manager and inspectors were visited secondly to get their views on Religious Studies policy implementation and the challenges being experienced. The researcher clearly indicated to inspectors, subject manager and teachers that the information gained from both the interviews and observations would only be used for academic purposes.

He also assured them of confidentiality and that their names would not be disclosed and no harm would be experienced for participating in this research.

### **3.12 Validity of the instrument**

The constructed questionnaires were submitted to two lecturers of measurement and evaluation at the University of South Africa to ensure validity. Thus, the face validity of the questionnaire was established by giving the questionnaire to experts to comment on its validity. During that period, necessary corrections were made to ensure that the questionnaire conformed to standards.

### **3.13. Method of data collection**

The researchers administered an open-ended questionnaire to the respondents and allowed them some days to study the items and respond accordingly. The researcher went back when the time elapsed and collected the completed questionnaire.

#### **3.13.1 Administering of questionnaires**

After the verification of the reliability and the validity of the questionnaire, the final version of the questionnaire was developed. In order to administer the survey to the research study sample, the following procedure was undertaken: A letter from UNISA was addressed to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Zimbabwe School Examination Council in order to apply the questionnaire to the research study sample of Family and Religious Studies teachers in the secondary schools selected for this research as well as subject manager and inspectors. This letter explained the purpose of these questionnaires, requested the cooperation of the respondents, promising confidentiality of the data collected and requested their responses to the scientific research. In addition, a letter from the Ministry of Education was addressed to the secondary school in order to apply the questionnaire to the research study sample, Religious Studies teachers in secondary schools selected for this research.

The research study sample had been selected purposefully from the research population. The sample included 40 teacher-participants in selected from Religious Studies teachers from Matabeleland North province of Zimbabwe. Furthermore, two senior teachers in Religious Studies, one ZIMSEC subject manager in charge of assessment of Religious Studies as well as 2 educational inspectors responsible for the subject under study were interviewed. This gave a sample total of 45 respondents. A hard copy of the questionnaire was distributed and submitted

to the research study sample and administered by the researcher to respondents around Zimbabwe. The cover letter explained the purpose of this survey, requesting the cooperation of the respondents in the scientific research. The questionnaires were collected from the respondents. The number of questionnaires distributed is forty. A statistical treatment of the data was obtained in order to get the results and the findings of this research study.

### **3.13.2 Document analysis**

Documentation refers to “paper” data which includes public documents such as policy documents, empirical research, and minutes of meetings, official reports and private Internet documents that were used during the process of data collection (Maluke 2015:14). In this study, public and private documents were used to obtain additional information on the policy implementation and challenges on the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The role of these sources was to verify and clarify data collected through interviews and questionnaires.

Document analysis proved to be difficult to use as some information was privy and it was difficult to have such documents released. For instance, the official secrecy law hampered the researcher from getting information from teachers. It was therefore extremely difficult to obtain policy designers’ language and objectives. Nevertheless, the researcher employed document analysis to obtain additional data that was needed to answer the research questions. One of the advantages of analysing documents was that it provided data that were thoughtful and that could be accessed at any time convenient to the researcher (Creswell 2003:23). Document analysis was also suitable because this study aimed at investigating the same policy documents which influenced policy implementation. This study used primary and secondary sources like published and unpublished documents, newspaper reports, past examination question papers and other documents related to Religious Studies policy implementation as well as policy challenges. The information was categorised to address critical thematic issues in this research study.

All the documents used and cited in this study were acknowledged and a reference list was compiled. Special attention was given to documents about policy implementation and challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in secondary schools. The main objective in probing the policy implementation and challenges was to comprehend how curriculum implementers interpreted and responded to policy through their pedagogy, supervision and assessment procedures of Religious Studies curriculum. Policy and practice

were at the core of promoting tolerance, inclusivism and pluralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Data from empirical research studies were used in developing an understanding of how other researchers viewed the policy implementation and challenges of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

### **3.14 Data presentation and analysis**

This section explores how data gathered through interviews, questionnaires and document analysis were examined leading to conclusions and suggestions. Data analysis is the apex of the research which involves selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting the data gathered to provide a reflection of the matter under study. Since data was solicited through mixed methods, it was also analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative and quantitative data were presented and discussed under thematic topics drawn directly from the research questions. All data collected were analysed at a descriptive level and exploratory methods which were used to discover what the data seemed to be saying were employed. This involved describing and summarising qualitative data and quantitative data through lists, use of simple arithmetic and easy-to-draw tables. Data from the qualitative and quantitative sources were compared and information was combined and integrated to create consolidated datasets and come up with a coherent whole (de Vos et al 2011). The process of data analysis was informed by the conceptual framework which was primarily based on curriculum implementation. It was done manually and the variables that were analysed included Religious Studies policy, curriculum implementation and curriculum challenges. The analysis involved comparing the interviewees' responses with observations and the data gathered from related literature concerning Religious Studies policy and implementation challenges. Analysis of data was timeously done after the information had been collected to reduce loss of important information.

### **3.15 Validity and reliability of data collected.**

Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013) explain reliability as concerned with how accurate and consistent the instrument used to gather data is. In a mixed research design, data should be gathered over a time span that is enough to ensure validity and reliability of data collected. This should be collected through the use of multiple instruments. In this study, accuracy of data from two or more participants was done simultaneously through use of different instruments. Hence, this study relied on questionnaires, interviews and document analysis to collect data to

respond to the research questions concerning policy implementation challenges. In analysing, the data, the researcher followed Golafshani (2003) triangulation steps of data analysis in which data analysis is done to verify findings or data obtained from respondents. This ensures that data collected is both valid and reliable as questionnaires, interviews and document analysis have the maximum potential for ensuring validity and reliability, if utilised appropriately. In the case of this study, data collected through questionnaires were validated by interviews conducted and document analysis. Therefore, both the primary and secondary sources of data were consulted and reviewed, as part of ensuring validity and reliability of data collected. Credibility of results was also enhanced through checking of the data and tentative interpretations from respondents.

### **3.16 Ethical considerations**

Since the study was conducted mostly in schools, considerations like the need for approval for conducting research, confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, honesty and accountability when dealing with respondents and ensuring that informants have access to research results were adhered to. In this research, permission from the responsible authorities was secured before the research started from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Clearance letters were obtained throughout the various stages of this research. The purpose of the study was made known to all the participants before their participation in the study. The respondents' informed consent was sought as they were enlightened about their right to participate and to withdraw from the study at any time. The respondents were further requested to sign informed consent forms. This was important because the participants' right to privacy, dignity and informed consent would be upheld and guaranteed. To this effect, the following simple guidelines were adhered to:

- The researcher explained the purpose of the study to the informants before any data was collected. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was on challenges affecting implementation of the updated Religious Studies Curriculum policy. All participants were given the opportunity to ask questions before participating in the interviews for this study.
- Participants were not forced to offer data but participated on a voluntary basis. Efforts were made to work with informants who had interest in the study, without being coerced.

- Participants willing to withdraw from the study and discussion were kindly excused. During group discussions, individuals were not forced to be at the discussion venue.
- The legal and ethical implications of recording conversations without the participants' knowledge and consent were taken into consideration. This was so since it is unethical to record a speech or conversation without the people's consent.
- Participants were assured of respect, anonymity and confidentiality. Only names of key public figures were used in this thesis after seeking their permission. This is in line with Johnstone's (2000:43) recommendations that, "...all subjects, unless they are public figures, remain anonymous."

### **3.17 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented mixed methods research as the research approach for the study whereby the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms were combined in a single research project. This was done to find out the policy implementation challenges and the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The use of the mixed methods research added value/quality to the study. The chapter has also explained the population, sampling, data collection instruments, data analysis and ethical considerations that were adhered to during the study. The chapter justified the use of the mixed methods approach in this study. It also described the methods of data collection used and the research design. Research instruments were triangulated following the explanatory sequential strategy for authentication. Research participants who included Family and Religious Studies teachers, ZIMSEC Religious Studies subject manager as well as education inspectors were selected for purposive sampling designs. Data were analysed and presented using both qualitative (words) and quantitative (numbers) strategies. The next chapter analyses and discusses gathered data. It focuses on the interpretation and analysis of the data emerging from questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. The chapter further provides the findings of the study.

## **CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter 3 has presented research methods for the study. It has highlighted the research approaches, inquiry strategies, data collection methods, location of the study, data analysis strategies and measures in upholding validity and reliability. In this chapter, collected data were analysed and discussed. This was against the perspectives of participants regarding policy implementation and the challenges being faced in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe. Information from interviews and questionnaires was used mainly to support document analysis in an effort to establish policy implementation challenges. The major thrust of the discussion was to critique policy implementation challenges regarding the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The main argument of this study was that there are challenges in the implementation of that updated Religious Studies curriculum. The data presented will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this study. Findings will be interpreted and their implications highlighted.

This Chapter 4 also examines the extent to which the data collected correlates with the objectives of the study. The data are presented in classes that correspond to the broad themes of the research problem. The hypothesis of this study was that the updated Religious Studies policy had implementation challenges which had negative effects on achievement of tolerance, inclusivism and pluralism in a multi-faith Zimbabwe education system. The main purpose of the survey was, therefore, to critique policy implementation and challenges associated with curriculum change with specific reference to Religious Studies at secondary school level.

Most of the respondents of the study were drawn from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) who include inspectors and Religious Studies teachers while the Zimbabwe School Examination Council official was also selected to give insights on policy implementation challenges. Respondents were as representative as possible, including both male and female respondents of the Religious Studies fraternity aged between 18 and 65. The research had a wide coverage of respondents whose educational qualifications ranged from

diploma holders to Master's level. A general questionnaire and the other for experts were distributed to respondents in Zimbabwe. Scholars, critics and stakeholders in organisations that dealt with Religious Studies issues in Zimbabwe were interviewed. The data collected through the questionnaires are presented in tables and their analyses are given below each table while data obtained from interviews and document analysis are presented thematically.

## 4.2 Presentation and analysis of data from questionnaire

A total of 40 copies of a questionnaire were distributed to 40 selected teachers of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe. All the 40 teachers responded to the questionnaire, meaning there was an optimum response. This positively affected the findings of the study as this method was complemented by the interviews that were held, as well as the document analysis. Questionnaire demographic categories include respondents' personal or biographical data and their educational backgrounds.

### 4.2.1 Demographic information of teachers

Demographic information of teachers refers to the information concerning sex, age, level of education attained, highest Religious Studies qualification and the level at which they taught Family and Religious Studies (FRS). This information provides a clear understanding of how Family and Religious Studies (FRS) teachers implemented the curriculum policy on Religious Studies teaching and learning within the humanities learning area.

**Table 4.1 Sex and ages of participants**

The sex and ages of respondents are tabulated below.

<b>Age range (Years)</b>	20-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	Above 50	Total
<b>Male</b>	0	0	2	4	2	4	2	<b>14</b>
<b>Female</b>	2	2	2	4	6	6	4	<b>26</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>40</b>

Table 4.1: Gender and age of participants Age range (Years) 25-35 36-44 45-55 56-65 Male

As shown in Table 4.1, from a total of 40 respondents, 26 teachers who completed the questionnaire were females, while 14 were males. This shows that the number of female



respondents was far more than that of males. This suggests that in Zimbabwean secondary schools, Religious Studies is mostly taught by female teachers who constitute about 57.5% while men are 42.4%.

The ages of the respondents ranged from 25 to 55 years. There was no respondent in the 56-65 age range. This implies that all the teachers in this study still have more years in service and have a better understanding of policy interpretation and implementation challenges as well since they have been teaching Religious Studies for a considerable period of time. The fact that most of the teachers are aged between 36 and 55 suggests that the subject is taught by mature and experienced practitioners who are presumed to be informative in this study. In general, the teachers' experience is crucial as it can either positively or negatively affect policy implementation, especially under circumstances of curriculum review of the Religious Studies subject. The age distribution is also beneficial to the study as it provides a range of views from the different age groups on the policy implementation and challenges being faced in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

Very few teachers in Family and Religious Studies (FRS) are below the age of 30 meaning those who are teaching the subject maybe using out-dated teaching content and approaches. When the subject is taught by teachers with enough technical expertise, there would not be many challenges. This suggests that most of the teachers who are above the age of 30 need retraining since the curriculum which they are experienced in is no longer in use. The new curriculum requires the knowledge of teachers to be updated.

**Table 4.2: Level of education attained by Religious Studies teachers**

<b>Education qualifications</b>	<b>Certificate or Diploma in education</b>	<b>Bachelor's degree</b>	<b>Master's degree</b>	<b>Doctorate</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Male</b>	4	8	2	-	14
<b>Female</b>	6	14	6	-	26
<b>Total</b>	10	22	8	-	40

The above tabulated information from table 4.2 shows that the majority teachers, twenty-two out of forty respondents hold a Bachelor's Degree, eight have a Master's degree and only ten

have a certificate/diploma in education. Data showed that Religious Studies teachers in the schools were highly qualified. Thus, teachers with such qualifications are assumed to be knowledgeable in critiquing policy implementation and challenges of Religious Studies in order to bring to light the aspects that could promote policy implementation in order to have inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism in Zimbabwean society

#### 4.2.4 Highest qualifications in Religious Studies

The table 4.3 below shows that the highest levels to which the respondents had studied Religious Studies as a subject is the master's degree. This highest qualification assists in understanding teachers' skills of implementing policy and their challenges in teaching the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

**Table 4.3: Teachers' highest qualifications in Religious Studies**

Religious Studies Qualification	O' level	A' level	Certificate/diploma	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	PhD	Total
Male		1	1	4	1	-	7
Female		0	3	7	3	-	13
Total		1	4	11	4	-	20

The information above indicates that eighteen of the teachers had specialised in Religious Studies, either at college or university. However, two of the teachers who taught Religious Studies had studied it up to 'A' level only. This means that there were some teachers who taught Religious Studies, though they had not studied it at teacher training institutions. This creates a problem in the teaching of the updated Religious Studies curriculum since they studied a Christo-centric syllabus which does not cover the religions that were incorporated in the updated curriculum. These teachers lack appropriate job-training and content related to Religious Studies. Although some may have strong Religious Studies, they need to be taught how to apply the multi-faith pedagogy and not a confessional pedagogy which does not promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. It is, therefore, possible to conclude that low levels of teaching qualifications can hamper policy implementation and create a challenge in the delivery of Religious Studies content to learners.

#### **4.2.5 Levels at which selected teachers taught Religious Studies component**

The table below shows the different levels at which the respondents taught a Religious Studies component. Such information helped in appreciating how the Religious Studies curriculum implementation is being done at different levels and the challenges affecting these levels.

##### **4.2.5.1 Zimbabwe Junior Certificate and Ordinary Level Religious Studies 4041**

Forty (40) teachers who responded to the questionnaire reflected that they taught Family and Religious Studies (FRS) at junior level. This means that there are some schools where teachers teach Family and Religious Studies (FRS) beginning at form three. It is this practice which creates knowledge base since the curriculum is spiral. 26 teachers indicated that they taught Family and Religious Studies (FRS) at O' level. This implies that many teachers are teaching the subject at O' Level. Therefore, teachers are strained as they try to cover both Junior Certificate Level and Ordinary Level content.

##### **4.2.5.2 'A' Level Religious Studies as a Subject 6071**

The tabulated information indicates that fewer teachers taught across the ZJC, 'O' and 'A' levels, with 14 respondents which is 35% of the sampled population, saying they taught it up to 'A' level. This is a fair population sample to conclude that selected teachers teaching Religious Studies at Advanced level in secondary school education were fewer than those teaching at Ordinary level.

Out of the forty teachers who responded to the questionnaire, 26 (65%) indicated that they taught the Religious Studies component at 'O' level. Most of them taught Religious Studies at ZJC and 'O' levels. Such information helped the researcher to appreciate the respondents' views on the extent to which the updated Religious Studies curriculum was experiencing problems at different levels. In general, therefore, the study suggests that some teachers, especially those who teach Religious Studies at ZJC level only, have no vast experience and qualifications in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies using a multi-faiths approach.

### **4.3 PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS FROM RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM POLICY IMPLEMENTERS (TEACHERS).**

In this section, I present responses of the questionnaire distributed to respondents, interviews and document analysis in order to have a clear understanding of the Religious Studies policy and limitations being faced in the implementation of the policy in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The responses and data from available data sources will enable the researcher to discuss various challenges faced by the implementers of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools in a quest to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The research questions guided the researcher in designing the questionnaire, interview guide and generating data from past examination papers, minutes, circulars and newspapers.

#### **4.3.1 Data presentation from questionnaire responses**

In this section, I present responses of the questionnaire distributed to respondents in order to have a clear understanding of Religious Studies policy implementation gaps and challenges faced in implementing that updated curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The responses will enable the researcher to discuss various challenges faced by implementers of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. The responses to the various questions in the questionnaire are represented numerically in tables as guided by research objectives. A question was asked to establish the respondents' awareness of the policy implementation and challenges affecting the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

##### **4.3.1 Question:** *Do you understand the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum?*

**Table 4.4: An understanding of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.**

<b>Category</b>	<b>number of respondents</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Disagree	16	40
Neutral	4	10
Agree	20	50

The information above indicates that half of the respondents, 50% in Zimbabwe thought that they understood the updated Religious Studies curriculum and 40% of the respondents thought they did not understand the nature of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Only a handful

(10%) of the respondents showed neutrality as to their comprehension of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum.

**Table 4.5: Reasons for the understanding or misunderstanding of the updated Religious Studies curriculum on Table 4.4**

Broad View	Reason of Respondents
Updated Religious Studies is strongly misunderstood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is continuous learner activity which is done differently in different schools.</li> <li>• The teaching of Divinity is still done when teaching Judaism and Christianity.</li> <li>• Schools are dropping the subject thinking the subject is meant to promote religious fundamentalism through Islam.</li> <li>• The top-bottom approach has affected affecting policy implementation.</li> <li>• Learning material available not designed following the syllabus, hence the scope of the subject has been made difficult to understand.</li> <li>• It is the learning of outcast religions.</li> <li>• The banning of Christian education in schools.</li> </ul>
There is uncertainty in the understanding of the updated Religious Studies curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible, but, not in the near future hampered by Christian dominance.</li> <li>• There is no technical support from the above.</li> <li>• The subject is elective</li> </ul>
The updated Religious Studies subject is understood well	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teachers are teaching the four religions without bias.</li> <li>2. Teachers are using multi-faith approach.</li> <li>3. The pass rate has increased</li> </ol>

The responses in the table above are similar to Muhamba's (2020) findings in a related study, in which 50% agreed that they understood the updated Religious Studies curriculum as the

study of all religions in Zimbabwe without bias. It should also be noted that most respondents in this study, like Muhamba's informants, were positive on what they understood as the updated Religious Studies curriculum. This implies that the respondents understood the updated Religious Studies as the promotion of the multi-faith approach in making learners aware of their respective religious identities in the context of religious plurality. Only 10% of the respondents professed neutrality to how they understood the updated. 40% of the respondents expressed that they did not understand the updated Religious Studies curriculum. This implies that some teachers lacked commitment to understand the updated Religious Studies. The lack of understanding is also attributed to empirical evidence by Muhamba (2020) who says that despite these reforms, teachers have failed to understand the updated Religious Studies curriculum in the teaching of Religious Education in the classrooms because the teachers have not yet changed their approaches to the subject. When teachers take time to change teaching approaches it results in a misunderstanding of the new meaning and demands of the subject. This has been the cause of the use of old teaching approaches as well as content by teachers despite curriculum reform.

#### **4.3.3 Question:** *Do you know anything about policy implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum?*

**Table 4.6: Knowledge about policy implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum.**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Disagree	24	60
Neutral	4	10
Agree	12	30

24 respondents (60%) indicated that they knew nothing about policy implementation of the 2017 updated curriculum while 4 (10%) professed neutrality about awareness of the policy implementation. 12 respondents (30%) further claimed that they knew something about the policy implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. This means that curriculum design and dissemination is too centralised and it comes from the top. Empirical evidence from Healy (2011:43) proves that “centrally driven curriculum innovations are usually associated with a large scale curriculum reform initiated by centralised policymaking

bodies” (Healy 2011:43). One of the respondents claimed that the policy was availed to him through interaction with Family and Religious Studies (FRS) teachers. The 12 respondents (60%) who claimed that they knew about the new policy on implementation of the Religious Studies subject gave the reason that there was material on the policy implementation of 2017 on updated Religious Studies. The respondents also noted that the new policy was mainly disseminated through media and there was great confusion on what exactly the policy demanded. It is this little knowledge which led some schools to abandon Religious Studies as a subject claiming that the subject was shrouded with uncertainties. This resonates with Zivave and Muzambi (2020:10) who note that the subject was being dropped because of fears, suspicion and misgivings of the subject. However, 12 respondents which translates to 30% of the population sampled indicated that they understood the new policy while 4 respondents, which translates to 10% of the sampled population confessed neutrality about the new policy. This implies that the lack of direction by policy implementers is caused by lack of knowledge on the policy itself. This indicated the dangers of the top-bottom approach which does not include teachers in policy formulation. This is so because policy makers do not involve people at grassroots in planning and designing of the policy but they only require teachers to implement policy regardless of policy weaknesses.

#### **4.3.4 Question:** *Do you agree that the updated Religious Studies policy has gaps?*

**Table 4.7: Policy gaps in the updated Religious Studies curriculum.**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Agree	<b>20</b>	<b>50</b>
Neutral	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>
Disagree	<b>16</b>	<b>40</b>

20 respondents (50%) indicated that there were some policy gaps in the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. 16 respondents (40%) claimed that there were no policy gaps in the updated Religious Studies curriculum as the religion of the native Zimbabweans, Indigenous Religion was being practiced. This means that policy gaps noted are caused by the exclusion of some religions which have the same numerical representation with the one included, for example, Judaism. It can also be noted that Christian mission schools dropped the subject initially because of the weaknesses of the policy. Empirical evidence from Dinham (2012) confirms

that multi-faith Religious Education has a gap in that Christian schools find it difficult to stick to the multi-faith policy defending their Christian ethos.

**Table 4.8: Reasons why there are some policy gaps on table 4.7**

<b>View</b>	<b>Reasons</b>
There are policy gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers were not involved.</li> <li>• Not all religions are included.</li> <li>• Biblical-centred religions given preferential treatment.</li> <li>• Mission schools are dropping the subject.</li> <li>• Competition with Cambridge syllabus.</li> </ul>
Not sure if there are policy gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not aware of what policy is.</li> </ul>
There are no policy gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four religions are now represented.</li> <li>• Many schools are teaching FRS.</li> </ul>

It should also be noted that most respondents in this study, like Zivave and Muzambi's (2022) informants, noted policy gaps on the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. This implies that the respondents understood policy gaps as the root cause of policy implementation challenges for the updated Religious Studies. Some of the policy gaps noted included that exclusion of minority religions, preferential treatment of biblical religions, elective nature of the subject which encouraged mission schools to drop the subject willy-nilly as well as competition from the Cambridge Divinity syllabus. Dube (2020) has noted that the current updated Religious Studies curriculum policy that makes the subject elective is policy weakness. This implies that the current policy lacked consensus as teachers and other interested stakeholders had not been involved. The policy gaps resonate with Prinsloo's (2008) observation that multi-faith Religious Studies policy tended to respect some religions at the expense of others. This is evident in Zimbabwe's updated Religious Studies curriculum where despite the Religious Studies reforms, there are still some policy loopholes that are capitalised on by mission schools, parents and teachers to undermine effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. However, those who submit to the idea that the policy



had no gaps noted the shift from Biblio-centred religions to the study of religions like Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam as a robust policy that promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism.

**4.3.5 Question:** *Which is the correct Religious Studies curriculum design and approach; the Top-bottom, The Bottom-Up or both in the promotion of inclusivism, tolerance and plurality?*

**Table 4.9: The perception on Religious Studies curriculum design and approach**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Top-bottom approach	12	30%
Bottom-up approach	22	55
Combination of both	6	15

The results on Table 4.9 show that 55% of the sampled population strongly agreed that the bottom-up approach was an effective way of designing and implementing Religious Studies curriculum in order to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. On the other hand, 30% of respondents thought that the top-bottom approach could also promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Lastly, 15% of the respondents concurred that the use of both top-bottom and bottom approach could promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

**Table 4.10: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.8**

Category	Reason
Top-bottom approach	Policies are there to be implemented not to be negotiated. Teachers are there to implement laid down policies and not to be policy formulators
Bottom-up approach	Policy implementers at grassroots are involved and they are afforded the chance to participate and bring what they want so as to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The curriculum reflects the views and opinions of different stakeholders.
Combination of both	There is need for dialogue and consultation. Teachers and policy makers need to be involved. Teachers should not be passive

	recipients of the curriculum while policy makers should craft policies that teachers have agreed on
--	---

The respondents who advocated for the top-bottom approaches stated that policies are there to be implemented not to be negotiated, teachers are there to implement laid down policies and not to be policy formulators. This means that the teachers who value the top-bottom approach believe that it is an effective way of having policy implemented. For this reason, McDonald (2007:2) says the top-down approach provides a tight package of directly linked objectives, content and assessment instruments that are perceived to teacher proof curriculum. However, the top-down approach was used during the colonial period when the Christo-centric Religious Studies curriculum was designed by white missionaries and it was implemented through force (Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi 2013). This reflects that the method is not democratic and may be resisted by teachers who are curriculum implementers. The top to bottom approach is only successful when teachers are motivated. It is observed that Religious Studies teachers lack motivation and it impacts negatively on policy implementation. In her studies Healy (2011:44) notes that in top-bottom approaches teachers tend to “adapt to the curriculum than adopting it.” This means that there is no full implementation of policy. The policy will be partially implemented creating challenges in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. Teachers will not adopt curriculum reform but will use old teaching strategies from the reformed curriculum. The intended objectives may not be fulfilled.

The 55% of respondents who called for the bottom-up approach gave the reason that the approach is best because policy implementers at the grassroots would be involved and are afforded the chance to participate and bring what they want so as to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. This is in line with the observation made by Healy (2011) in Australia where she notes that bottom-up approach is democratised curriculum change which empowers the teacher to be in control of curriculum design, content and implementation at a school level. This means that Religious Studies teachers would be owners of the curriculum as experts of the subject. So, when the teaching of various religions is planned and designed by teachers, the implementation of the multi-faith Religious Studies would be achieved because there would consensus from teachers who are the key drivers of policy implementation. However, the

approach lacks accountability as Religious Studies teachers would not be liable to government when the curriculum becomes irrelevant.

From the questionnaire respondents, 15% supported the use of the mixed approach which involves the use of both top-bottom and bottom-top approaches because they involve dialoguing on what should be found in the curriculum and how it should be implemented. The study observes that the approach has not been used elsewhere because there is no accountability when teachers and policy makers need to be involved in policy making (Healy, 2011). This means that teachers and policy makers are accountable in this approach. Those who advocated for the mixed approach indicated that there should be reciprocity between teachers and policy makers in policy formulation and implementation.

#### **4.3.6 Question:** *How do you rate the curriculum review of 2017 Religious Studies?*

A question was asked to establish the ratings of teachers' awareness of the curriculum review of Religious Studies in 2017. This is because the success of effective implementation of the new policy in Religious Studies depends on how curriculum implementers rate the curriculum reform.

**Table 4.11: Ratings of the updated Religious Studies curriculum**

Category	Good	%	Bad	%	No Knowledge	%	Total no of Respondents	%
Teacher	26	65	10	25	4	10	20	100

The results of Table 4.11 show that 65% of the sampled population rated the Religious Studies curriculum review as good, affirming that it promotes inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. On the other hand, 25 % of respondents of the sampled population rated curriculum review in Religious Studies as bad. This implies that they valued the old curriculum more than the updated curriculum. Lastly, 10% of the sampled population professed ignorance on whether curriculum review of Religious Studies was good or not.

**Table 4.12: Reasons for the rating of the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) on Table 4.11.**

Categories of Respondents	Reasons for Ratings
<b>Good</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It imparts morals in the students and results in moulding of good citizens.</li> <li>• It inculcates values such as inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism which are vital in multi-cultural society.</li> <li>• the subject enables the learner to be a critical thinker and enables them to solve problems in real life</li> <li>• It helps in the preservation of religious identity of learners.</li> <li>• It enables learners to appreciate religious diversity in a multi-faith society.</li> <li>• It helps learners to have knowledge of different religions</li> </ul>
<b>Bad</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is very bad because it did not take into consideration topics covered especially at A' level.</li> <li>• It compacted the three papers into one with additional material, for example, Indigenous Religion and Islam making the teaching of FRS at A level a nightmare.</li> <li>• Christianity, for example, has become too wide and difficult to teach than Islam which is straight forward disadvantaging those who want to teach and learn Christianity.</li> <li>• There were no textbooks for the updated curriculum during the time of its introduction.</li> <li>• Apart from that paper 1, A' level syllabus covers a lot of concepts which cannot be taught in 2 years.</li> <li>• The syllabus is not clear and very difficult to interpret because of the scarcity of the teaching material. The application of contemporary issues is not very easy because of the unavailability of the teaching material.</li> <li>• The teachers were not involved in curriculum review process.</li> </ul>

<b>No knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failed to see the difference between the old and the new Religious Studies curriculum.</li> </ul>

Table 4.11 shows that, 65 % of respondents regarded the review of the 2017 Religious Studies as good. Only 25 % of respondents regarded curriculum review as bad, whilst 10 % showed total ignorance of the review of the curriculum. From Table 4.11 above, it is clear that most (65%) of the Religious Studies teachers rate the subject as good. This agrees with the views of Schwartz (2006:449) who argues that, “teachers are the filters through which the mandated curriculum passes. Their understanding of it, and their enthusiasm, or boredom, with various aspects of it, colours its nature.” This means that when Religious Studies teachers appraise the curriculum as good the implementation would be easier.

The 26 (65%) of the respondents who stated that the curriculum review was good cited that the new curriculum framework embraced other religions. They rated the curriculum as good saying that the curriculum was conducive to all the adherents of different religions. It catered for all people of different religious affiliations. This agrees with the views of Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse (2020) as well as Dube (2021) who note that the updated Religious Studies curriculum moved beyond one religion to religions that are practiced by Zimbabweans. It is this rating, which removes prejudices by teachers against religions that were introduced. Learners are exposed to various religions, thus, promoting a culture of tolerance, inclusivity and acceptance of Religious diversity which are key values of modern societies which have been transformed to multi-religious ones due to globalisation, migration and cross-pollination of religious ideals. One of the respondents claimed in the questionnaire that:

The new curriculum is good in as far as it adopts a multi-faith approach to the study of religions.

The other respondents claimed that the curriculum applied religious knowledge to various facets of life which made the subject relevant to the societal needs by allowing the learner to have problem solving skills as well as critical thinking.

The respondents noted that the updated Religious Studies curriculum imparted morals into the students which resulted in the moulding of good citizens unlike the old one. This implies that the curriculum reform was good and inculcated values which shape learners into inclusive,

tolerant and accommodative humans prone to religious plurality, which are vital in multi-cultural societies. One of the respondents echoed that:

The updated Religious Studies curriculum promotes critical thinking and makes learners problem solvers. This means that the subject is no longer theoretical but practical in dealing with religious and moral issues affecting our society.

For this reason, the reform was commended by the respondents for making learners suit the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning outcomes. Learning outcomes, in this case, include being religious tolerant, inclusive and appreciating religious differences in a multi-faith society.

10 respondents who translate to 25% who responded to the questionnaire believed that the updated Religious Studies curriculum was bad because it was implemented in a hurried manner despite that there were so many changes to it and there were no resources to use at hand. This augurs well with the findings of Zivave et al (2020) who argue that the Curriculum was introduced within a short space of time. One respondent noted that:

Consultation was not fairly done, teachers should have been consulted to air their views hence the curriculum is bad.

The negative rating of the Religious Studies curriculum was caused by an ambiguous syllabus, lack of learning material, underrepresentation of teachers in curriculum review process as well as being a rushed program as noted by respondents. One of the questionnaire respondents underscored the fact that the curriculum was bad because it did not take into consideration the topics covered, especially at A' level. This meant that the new syllabus had compacted the three papers done separately in the old curriculum into one, to which additional material was added. Additional material included, for example, Indigenous Religion and Islam. This made the teaching of the new Religious Studies syllabus difficult. Many respondents cited Christianity as an example of a religion which was too wide and difficult to teach as compared to Islam which appeared straight forward, thus, disadvantaging those who wanted to teach and learn Christianity. This justifies why the curriculum was rated as bad by the respondents. The findings also indicate that when a curriculum review is done clandestinely, and without proper and clear implementation strategies, the implementation becomes very difficult and teachers lack direction on how to implement the policy. Other reasons for rating the curriculum badly included lack of learning material and the top-down approach practice in Religious Studies all of which made teachers feel that they were only implementers of policies which they had not been consulted on.

Four (4) respondents who account for 10% of the sample failed to rate Religious Studies curriculum reform. The respondents professed ignorance about their awareness of the updated Religious Studies policy. This implies that the new policy has not reached all teachers or the teachers were reluctant to change from the old curriculum to the new one. The findings indicate that when curriculum implementers fail to rate the subject which they teach it could mean that the subject was not being well-received.

From the findings, it is clear that quite a number of Religious Studies teachers welcomed the curriculum reform and the new policy on Religious Studies because of its multi-faith outlook which suits the variegated religious composition of Zimbabwe. Very few teachers were against curriculum change.

**4.3.7 Question:** *Do you think there are some reasons for Religious Studies curriculum reform in Zimbabwe?*

**Table 4.13: The reasons why Religious Studies has gone under reform.**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Disagree	6	15
Neutral	8	20
Agree	26	65

Curriculum reform refers to how the Religious Studies learning content and teaching methodology have changed. It affects how curriculum implementation is done by teachers. Curriculum reforms will involve change of teaching methods and the content. The understanding of reasons why curriculum reform was done is of paramount importance to teachers who interpret curriculum reform differently. From the questionnaire distributed to Religious Studies teachers, contributions were made towards reasons why Religious Studies curriculum has undergone reform. Of the forty teachers who responded to the questionnaire, 26 teachers who translate to 65% agreed that they knew the reasons why Religious Studies had undergone reform while 20 % of the teachers indicated that they were not sure of the reasons why the Religious Studies curriculum was reformed. 6 teachers who translate to 15% of the sampled population indicated that they did not know why the Religious Studies curriculum was reformed.

**Table 4.14: Reasons why Religious Studies has undergone reform.**

<b>View</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Agree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was reformed to embrace all the religions in Zimbabwe.</li> <li>• Because the government wanted to follow the constitution.</li> <li>• To decolonise Religious Studies curriculum.</li> <li>• To preserve African heritage.</li> <li>• The curriculum which was there was Christo centric. It did not address the fact that Zimbabwe is composed of people from different religious backgrounds. The curriculum did not also teach learners to be independent thinkers.</li> <li>• To allow diversity by accepting the reality that religion is not about Christianity.</li> </ul>
Neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because the old curriculum had application aspect which bridged the needs of the multi-faith society.</li> </ul>
Disagree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because the old Religious Studies curriculum was better.</li> <li>• It was easy to implement because we are all Christians and I don't know why they reformed it.</li> </ul>

The responses show that majority of teachers (65%) are aware that Religious Studies reforms were necessary. Firstly, they indicated that the inherited colonial curriculum was biased towards Christianity. This resonates with studies by Dube (2021) and Zivave et al (2021) which say that the reforms in Religious Studies had been influenced by the need to decolonise the curriculum which had a bias against Indigenous Religion. This implies that the respondents understood the religious demography of Zimbabwe. Zivave et al (2021) and Muhamba (2020) observe that Zimbabwe is a multi-faith society with diverse religions being practiced. The



respondents of the current study indicated that the adoption of a home-grown constitution in Zimbabwe, which recognised the existence of various religions, was the underlying reason why the Religious Studies curriculum had undergone reform. This implies that reform in Religious Studies was done to re-align the education curriculum with constitutional rights. The research observed what Machingura and Mugebe (2015) had observed earlier that the old Religious Studies curriculum did not uphold the dictates of the Constitution of Zimbabwe which celebrate religious diversity. The number of reasons given by respondents, such as the need to preserve African heritage and the promotion of critical thinking reflect that teachers were aware of the causes of curriculum reform. This enabled teachers to implement the policy without any challenges. This confirms studies by Dinama (2010) and Khozin (2018) which reflect that when teachers are aware of curriculum reform, implementation of reforms becomes easier.

The findings of the current study further revealed that some teachers were not aware why Religious Studies in Zimbabwe had undergone reform. This implies that teachers who did not know the reasons why reforms were done were likely to resist implementation. This was partly because changes were made to the Religious Studies curriculum without asking for teachers' input, especially during the initial stages of planning and designing. Thus, teachers' knowledge about the causes of curriculum reform in Religious Studies were scanty. This affected the implementation of the new curriculum, and it showed that there was no proper information dissemination between policy makers and the teachers who are the curriculum implementers. This resonates well with Prinsloo (2007) who argues that policy in South Africa was marked by controversy with various stakeholders from various faith communities contesting why Religion Studies had been reformed.

**4.3.8 Question:** *Do you think the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum is being implemented smoothly?*

**Table 4.15: Knowledge about smoothness in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	14	35
Neutral	4	10
No	22	55

Questionnaire respondents were of the opinion that the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum was not being implemented smoothly. This is indicated by 55% of the respondents who believe that curriculum implementation had several challenges while 35% indicated that the updated Religious Studies curriculum was being implemented smoothly. Only 10% professed ignorance of how the curriculum was being implemented. They neither denied nor agreed that the curriculum implementation was being done smoothly.

**4.15: Reasons for respondents' ratings of the smoothness of the curriculum implementation on the responses on Table 4.14**

Reasons for choosing 'good'	Reasons for choosing 'bad'	Reasons for choosing 'I do not know'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners are learning all religions thereby promoting religious diversity.</li> <li>• It is anchored on the African philosophy of <i>Unhu/Ubuntu</i>.</li> <li>• It decolonises African education system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortage of textbooks</li> <li>• Examinations are still biased towards the old curriculum.</li> <li>• The syllabus is too long.</li> <li>• The subject is considered an elective one which makes it attractive to learners who are not strong in terms of abilities.</li> <li>• Some mission schools have dropped the subject.</li> <li>• Lack of technical support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total ignorance of the meaning and implications of updated Religious Studies curriculum implementation</li> <li>• Unawareness of the existence of the new policy directive.</li> </ul>

The reasons given by those who regard the updated Religious Studies curriculum implementation as good were plausible, but they underestimated the issue of the challenges that affected the subject. Implementation is only considered as good if it has no problems like shortage of books and dropping of the subject by some schools, especially Christians. Those who took it as bad gave very credible reasons, questioning the preparedness and timing of the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. It is true that the curriculum had

been hurriedly implemented without technical and material support for the subject from the government which is an important aspect that policy makers had overlooked.

The findings from the study on this question indicated that the curriculum was being implemented smoothly with 35% of the sample agreeing that the implementation had no challenges as teachers were teaching all the religions; Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. They indicated that issues to do with African philosophy of *Unhu/Ubuntu* and decolonisation of African education system influenced teachers to implement the policy. This means that teachers were being influenced by nationalism and the moral dilemma of the modern society to implement the reforms without any hesitation.

55% of the sample who admitted that the implementation had been marred by a lot of challenges cited lack of learning material, continuous bias of final examinations towards the old curriculum, particularly at A Level, too many objectives in the syllabus, dropping of the subject in mission schools, and lack of technical support. All these problems had affected the smooth implementation of the curriculum. This resonates with the findings of the staff reporter of the Herald of 04 October 2018 who noted that the implementation of the updated 2017 curriculum framework had faced several challenges which include human, material, physical and financial resources, and which made its provision more expensive, laborious and cumbersome. Ngwenya (2019) also observes that physical, material and financial resources affected the smooth implementation of the updated curriculum as a whole because commencement of the curriculum itself had been “ill-planned as most public schools were operating at full capacity and had limited space for expansion.” This meant that the smooth implementation of the updated Religious Studies had also been affected and this could be attributed to the autocratic top-bottom approach in curriculum policy implantation.

**4.3.9 Question:** *Are there challenges in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum?*

**Table 4.17: Challenges in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Few challenges in the updated Religious Studies policy implementation	4	10

Many challenges in the updated Religious Studies policy implementation	<b>30</b>	<b>75</b>
No challenges in the updated Religious Studies policy implementation	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>

From the table above, the 30 (75 %) of respondents underscored that there were many challenges affecting policy implementation of Religious Studies curriculum. They argued that the implementation of the updated curriculum had been ill-timed and lacked resources. On the other hand, 4 (10%) of the respondents stated there were few challenges affecting the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. These respondents represented schools which received little support from the government. Furthermore, 6 (15%) of the respondents argued that there were no challenges, citing that they were receiving support from government and school authorities.

**Table 4.18: Challenges noted by respondents in the implementation of Religious Studies on table 4.17**

<b>View</b>	<b>Challenge Noted</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Agree</b>	Lack of resources Lack of technical support Personal background Educational levels Pedagogical deficiencies Lack of supervision Responsible authority influence Dropping of the subject Biased summative assessment.	30	<b>75</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	Failing to see the difference.	6	<b>15</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	People are adhering to the policy. The subject is now popular	4	<b>10</b>

The information above indicates that most of the respondents, 75 %, agreed that the implementation of the updated curriculum was punctuated by numerous problems. 15% stated that the implementation of the new Religious Studies curriculum had no challenges whilst 10%

professed ignorance whether implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum had challenges or not.

From the above table it appears that the respondents noted a number of challenges that affected the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The challenges which they noted include lack of resources, lack of technical support, personal background, educational levels, pedagogical deficiencies, lack of supervision and top to bottom approach. This resonates well with Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse's (2020) findings which note that teaching material or textbooks for the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) syllabus were not readily available, yet the new curriculum had introduced completely new subject topics. This implies that Religious Studies had few learning materials. Overall, findings indicate that lack of learning material and financial support were the major challenges affecting policy implementation and the achievement of inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The support from government and policy makers, therefore, seems superficial, cosmetic, hence lacking genuineness and seriousness. This finding is supported by the following remarks from one of the Religious Studies teachers who lamented challenges affecting the updated curriculum:

Teachers have been taught at colleges and universities. We used to teach biblical oriented Religious Studies and in 2017 the government rolled out the new curriculum amidst lack of planning, financial resources and learning material. If they had consulted us, there was going to be a smooth implementation of the new Religious Studies curriculum. We continue to experience challenges of substandard textbooks which were produced hurriedly because the new policy was hurriedly introduced.

The above reaction, taken from the questionnaire, indicates that the new curriculum implementation was ill-prepared and teachers were not consulted during curriculum planning and designing which affected implementation. Schools needed financial assistance from government as well as learning material. Without this support the new curriculum framework particularly for Religious Studies, was bound to experience challenges. So the government needed to engage Religious Studies teachers to ensure effective implementation of the new policy so that inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism could be achieved. This is because the teaching of four religions, namely; Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam encourages peaceful co-existence of religions. Therefore, from these challenges it is clear that the bottom-up approach in policy formulation would result in the successful implementation of the updated curriculum. This is because the teacher would be both the designer and implementer of the policy.

Religious Studies teachers also indicated on the questionnaire that there were some religions which were being shunned by teachers, especially in mission schools. These religions include Indigenous Religion and Islam. This is in line with what Grimmit (2007) observed in Britain where he realised that parents were withdrawing their children from Religious Education classes so that they do not learn any other religion besides Christianity. The challenge of resistance noted by respondents had been noted before the introduction of the updated Religious Studies as a major problem which has affected the teaching and learning of a multi-faith Religious Studies. Curriculum planners were being accused of trying to undermine Christian education since the planners were de facto beneficiaries (Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi 2013:224). In this context, mission schools have not been fully implementing the updated Religious Studies curriculum arguing that the curriculum infringed on the core values of missionary schools. This has contributed to the negative perception of Indigenous Religion and Islam which are considered as bad for Christian believers. Teachers in mission schools have been apologetic to the old curriculum. From the questionnaire, it emerged that the responsible authorities have encouraged Religious Studies teachers to find an alternative subject to teach in place of the updated Religious Studies subject. Furthermore, the responsible authority has also encouraged some of their schools to adopt the Cambridge Religious Studies syllabus which is in line with Christian values (Zivave and Muzambi 2022). The findings provide enough evidence that teachers in mission schools have been influenced to resist the teaching of the updated curriculum, which involves the teaching of Indigenous Religion and Islam. Suffice to say that where the updated Religious Studies curriculum is offered in mission schools, the teaching of Indigenous Religion and Islam is not prioritised since the two religions are at variance with Christian doctrines and practices. I argue that this has created pedagogical rigidity as the confessional approach has been maintained in mission schools. Resistance from mission schools, lack of teaching and learning material, lack of technical support and pedagogical approaches are notable challenges affecting the policy implementation and they present a challenge of promoting exclusivism, religious extremism and a mono-religious culture. I interpreted the teachers' views to imply that policy implementation process is a web which requires technical support as well as financial support.

**4.3.10 Question:** *Do you agree or disagree that there are some challenges affecting the effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools?*

**Table 4.19: Perception on how the challenges are affecting effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Agree	22	55
Not sure	4	10
Disagree	14	35

This study is concerned about exploring the challenges which hinder effective implementation of the 2017 Religious Studies curriculum. It has now been five (5) years since it was introduced, but there are still some pedagogical and philosophical challenges related to the Religious Studies affecting the promotion of tolerance, inclusivism and plurality. There is, therefore, the need to come up with intervention strategies that could be adopted for use in fully implementing the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. For this reason, the above table shows that 55 % of the respondents agree that there are perceived solutions to the challenges affecting implementation of the policy on the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Most of the respondents agreed that the updated curriculum could only be successful in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism if it were supported by educational material, finance and in-service training. This implies that if teachers, parents and learners do not accept the updated Religious Studies policy in the context of bottom-up approach, the subject might disappear from the curriculum space. Thus, there is need for consensus among stakeholders. Dube (2020) calls for all untrained teachers in the area of religion to undergo in-service training that exposes them to knowledge of major religions covered in the curriculum, as well as new religions. On the other hand, Zivave et al (2021) believe that the Religious Studies curriculum needs to be funded so that there is development of educational material, which is relevant to the needs of the subject. This implies that successful implementation of a policy is hinged upon financial support as well as provision of learning material. Syomwene (2013) and Maronge (2015) also note that curriculum reform requires financial support for effective implementation of reforms. Unlike in other countries like China, El Salvador, Malaysia and Indonesia where financial costs for curriculum reforms are shared between the government and parents, in Zimbabwe the costs are handled Government alone. Government does not only pay teachers' salaries but also supports schools with learning material. This is because most schools are owned by government and councils,

meaning that provision of learning material is government responsibility. To ensure that learning material is available, the government should sponsor Zimbabwean teachers to develop content for the updated Religious Studies curriculum as well as fund local publishing companies to produce educational material. An over reliance on old curriculum teaching content and learning material should be mitigated. This will, in turn, result in the incorporation of other religions not found in the old curriculum.

Those who agreed that there are intervention strategies which could be put in place to rectify challenges facing effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in order to promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism further suggested that there should be district subject specialists to monitor the teaching and learning of FRS. An analysis of the responses suggests that having a supervisor specifically for the subject ensures that policy is followed and the policy is explained to policy implementers from an informed person. Others who agreed that there were intervention strategies available noted that the subject should be made compulsory from primary up to secondary level and Government should assist in the procurement and supply of textbooks with syllabus requirements. This would reduce prejudices against perceived feared religions as learners would learn the subject from primary to secondary level using relevant sources that did not indoctrinate learners. Lastly, respondents noted that the multi-faith approach was a robust intervention strategy which inculcated inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism. This was because the approach was not subjective and it encouraged non-confessional approaches in the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) concepts. Teachers who were sampled identified remuneration as the major solution to improve implementation of the Religious Studies curriculum. Their observation concurs with Maluleke's (2015) observation that lack of motivation for teachers hampers curriculum implementation. This implies that remuneration is the key solution to the challenges affecting full implementation of the curriculum.

Fourteen (14) respondents, which translates to 35% disagreed that there were intervention strategies which could be put in place to rectify challenges facing effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in order to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. They argued that they still relied on internet sources and social media for teaching material. The respondents noted that there had not been any government support five years down the line since government rolled out the updated curriculum. The responsibility for sourcing learning material has been left to schools which have less income due to rising poverty



in Zimbabwe. Muhamba (2020) has also observed that economic sanctions have hampered the development of schools especially government and council run schools. This demonstrates that schools alone cannot fund the Religious Studies curriculum reform programme and there is need for proper intervention mechanisms by the government and the private sector. On the other hand, 4 respondents who translate to 10% indicated that they were not sure whether there were any intervention strategies to the problems affecting the implementation of the updated curriculum.

#### **4.3.12 Question:** *What is the best pedagogical approach to Religious Studies?*

**Table 4.20: Good pedagogical approaches to Religious Studies.**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Confessional Approach	2	0.5
Multi-Faith Approach	22	55
Phenomenological Approach	6	15
The Spiritual Approach	2	0.5
The Life Theme Approach	8	20

Questionnaire responses indicated that teachers were aware of the best pedagogical approaches to the updated Religious Studies as spelt out by the contents of the latest policy. This position was revealed in the following responses which are typical of all the teachers' responses to the questionnaire. In Table 4.20 above, the questionnaire results show that 55% of informants agreed that the multi-faith approach was the best approach to the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in order to promote tolerance, pluralism and inclusivism. They agreed that the approach was suitable in Zimbabwe which is a home of various religious traditions. This is line with what Grimmit (2007) observed in his studies in Britain where he notes that multi-faith approaches are the best approaches in reducing indoctrination in a pluralistic society. This empirical evidence is further supported by Matemba (2005) and Dinama (2010) who also commend the use of multi-faith approach in Botswana saying that the teaching of different religions from a multi-faith approach was is in line with current trends and also as a response to the fact that Botswana was no longer considered a homogenous Christian nation. Thus, the findings indicate that the majority of respondents agreed that the learning spaces had been transformed into multi-faith ones. Zimbabwe as nation has become a religiously pluralistic nation where religions have equal standing in the academic and religious spaces.

Informants who rated the confessional approach as the best approach amounted to 0.5%. The low rating of the confessional approach was because the approach was not effective in facilitating the learning of various religious in a multi-faith society. Thus, the paucity of the respondents resonates with the empirical studies by Jackson and O’Grady (2007) who criticised the approach because of its apparent lack of an educational rationale. The respondents agreed that it was difficult to set aside religious beliefs when teaching religious issues. This showed that the promotion of tolerance, inclusivity and plurality was difficult under that scenario. The affirmations of fewer respondents illustrated that teachers had been willing to implement the new policy. I interpreted that the confessional approach was a militating factor which did not contribute towards inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism in a multi-faith society.

6 (15%) of the respondents agreed that the phenomenological approach was the best approach to the teaching and learning of the updated curriculum. They argued that they had used the method to study religions at tertiary level and to promote neutrality in the study of religions. This resonates with Tan’s (2008) observation that the approach was preferred because of its “neutrality, openness and pluralism which are valued” (Tan 2008:3). The Spiritual Approach and the Life Themes Approach had 10% and 20% each, respectively, who admitted that the use of either of these methods meant that learners were not alienated from their life experiences and also promoted tolerance, pluralism and inclusivism.

**Table 4.21: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.20**

Categories of Respondents	Reasons for Ratings
Confessional Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For job security. Teaching using the method enables the teacher to be secure.</li> <li>• Preserving the belief system of the institution and the teacher.</li> <li>• Lack of the appropriate knowledge on other religions apart from Christianity</li> </ul>
Multi-faith Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It’s a policy requirement.</li> <li>• It promotes all religions during teaching and learning.</li> <li>• It is plural in nature</li> <li>• It is multi-disciplinary</li> <li>• It promotes open and diverse viewpoints</li> </ul>

Phenomenological Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not subjective in nature</li> <li>• Enables learners to describe the phenomena from experience.</li> <li>• It does not allow the teacher to make judgement on other religions due to bracketing.</li> </ul>
The Spiritual Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is based on the needs of the learner who are searching for spiritual meaning to pertinent issues of life.</li> <li>• Allows the learner to experience the religion.</li> </ul>
The Life Theme Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considers the <i>sitz im leben</i> of the learner.</li> <li>• It is learner-centred</li> <li>• Its emphasis is on skills and values development</li> <li>• The syllabus requires learners to apply what they have learnt in real life.</li> </ul>

Analysis of Table 4.20 above, makes it clear that the majority of the teachers employed instructional practices that conformed to the multi-faith pedagogy. This could be seen from the following reasons, which teachers gave: policy requirement, promotion of all religions, and making the approach plural in nature. The method is multi-disciplinary and promotes open as well as diverse viewpoints. The reason given by the respondents during the interview confirm Ndlovu's (2004) observation that the multi-faith approach was suitable for multi-religious societies. Multi-faith approach demands that teachers should equally treat all religions in the curriculum.

Concerning the use of life themes approach, the study revealed that most teachers preferred it because of its being learner-centred and because it considered the *sitz im leben* of the learner. It also emphasised on skills and values development which are key objectives underpinning the need for curriculum reform relevant to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, the Life Themes approach makes the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) syllabus meaningful to learners who can apply what they have learnt to different life situations.

However, the data from teachers confirmed that they shunned the confessional and spiritual approaches of implementing the policy as they considered the approaches a negation of policy demands which require celebration of religious diversity through teaching which promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism. Probably the teachers did not want to use these methods because they were afraid of facing rebellion from learners from various religious backgrounds. Only a few respondents used the confessional approach because they wanted to protect their jobs at mission schools where they were employed. The responsible authorities encouraged indoctrination in order to preserve their religious identities. Some lacked appropriate knowledge of other religions apart from Christianity which made them to use confessional approaches. This was caused by failure to accept curriculum change as well as the fact that all religions are essential in human life. On the other hand, the use of the spiritual approach was caused by the need to allow learners to experience the religion as well as to suit learners' needs. This was advocated for by the few respondents. Majority of the teachers took cognisance of the multi-faith pedagogy. This was depicted both in their oral and written responses to the questions asked. Teachers were asked to talk about the best pedagogical approaches that could be utilised in the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum and that could be drawn from the religious concepts from the various religions. They were also asked to talk about the significance of the multi-faith approach in the teaching and learning of various religions.

**4.3.13 Question 12:** *Are there appropriate learning theories which suit the Zimbabwean Religious Studies curriculum?*

**Table 4.22: Appropriate learning theories which suit the updated Religious Studies curriculum.**

Categories of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Disagree	6	15
Neutral	0	0
Agree	34	85

Responses to questionnaire indicated that teachers were aware of the best learning approaches which were relevant to the teaching of the updated Religious Studies. In Table 4.22 above, the questionnaire results show that 85% of informants agreed that appropriate learning theories which suited the 2017 updated Religious Studies were available. However, 15% of the

respondents believed that there were no appropriate learning theories suitable for the teaching of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

**Table 4.23: Reasons for choosing learning theory on table 4.22**

<b>Proposed Learning Theory</b>	<b>Reasons for Ratings</b>
Behaviourism Learning Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour of learners is very important.</li> <li>• It relies on ‘skill and drill’ exercises.</li> <li>• It facilitates mastery of content (i.e. memorisation)</li> </ul>
Cognitivist Learning Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes critical thinking</li> <li>• The learner’s thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and values are considered to be valuable in the learning process.</li> <li>• Allows learners to make connections with pre-existing knowledge.</li> </ul>
Social Learning Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives an accurate picture of how behaviour is learned.</li> <li>• It motivates learners</li> </ul>
Constructivism Learning Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners as active rather than passive.</li> <li>• The learner is important in the learning process.</li> <li>• Learners use their personal experience in the learning process.</li> <li>• Learners make their own informed decision</li> </ul>
Connectivism Learning Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners live in a global village.</li> <li>• Use of ICT is imperative</li> </ul>

Findings from the study revealed that teachers believe that a combination of constructivism and Connectivism was the best learning mechanism in Religious Studies. This means that teachers no longer treated learners as blank slates but active participants who could actively participate in the learning process when learning also occurs through technology. This resonates with Chetty's (2013) findings that constructivism punctuated with Connectivism were effective learning modes in Religious Studies. I argue that with constructivism and Connectives, learners would be able to discover religious truths on their own. It reduces indoctrination and religious extremism among learners as they collaborate and learn various religious traditions as they interact on ICT gadgets. Findings also revealed that cognitivism, behaviourism and social learning theories did not really suit the multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum. Firstly, cognitivism entails that teaching and learning of Religious Studies involves memory, thinking, reflection, abstraction, motivation, and meta-cognition. I content that Religious Studies requires more interaction with religions rather than thinking and applying it in abstract terms. The learning modes appear more teacher-centred and a breakaway from multi-faith approach which demands student-centred approaches. Secondly the findings indicate that behaviourism wants behaviour change, yet the learning of various religions does not seek to change religious behaviour. This may cause resistance among learners.

**4.3.14 Question 13:** *Do you agree or disagree that the current policy should be implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies in Zimbabwe?*

**Table 4.24: Perception on how the current policy should be implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Disagree	4	10
Neutral	4	10
Agree	32	80

The results on Table 4.24 show that most of the informants agreed that the current policy on Religious Studies curriculum was strong enough to promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism. This was evident in its teaching of all religions in Zimbabwe without the need to indoctrinate learners. A few informants thought that there was no current policy that could be

implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies in Zimbabwe since Christianity dominated the religious space, and most teachers were Christians who would present Christianity as a better religion than others. It was clearly evident that a significant majority of the teachers agreed that the Updated Religious Studies syllabus promoted inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism and that conformed to the use of the multi-faith pedagogy. These findings go along with Dinama's (2010:21) who posited that "the multi-faith RE is promising society that it is capable of making young people tolerant, respectful and autonomous of each other and motivate them to search for new knowledge" in order to have a religiously inclusive and plural society.

**Table 4.25: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.24**

Choice	Reasons
Multi-faith policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It promotes equality of religions.</li> <li>• It augurs well with the Constitution of Zimbabwe.</li> <li>• It promotes religious tolerance</li> <li>• It reduces religious conflicts</li> </ul>
Confessional policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zimbabwe has many Christians.</li> <li>• Indigenous Religion has no followers.</li> </ul>
Hybrid policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is socially responsive to the needs of the learners.</li> </ul>

Most of the respondents of the questionnaire viewed multi-faith as the best policy applicable in a multi-faith society. They stated that the policy promoted equality of religions and respect of all religions among learners. Machingura and Mugebe (2015) in their study of the old curriculum saw the multi-faith gap which would be filled by the current curriculum. I argue that the multi-faith policy resonates well with the religious diversity of the Zimbabwean society. Furthermore, I agree that the multi-faith policy promotes respect for the Constitution of Zimbabwe which acknowledges the existence of a variety of religions in Zimbabwe. Those who subscribed to the multi-faith policy commended it for promoting religious tolerance and reduction of religious conflicts.

Few informants, called for the use of a confessional policy in Religious Studies curriculum. They felt that the numerical advantage of Christians in Zimbabwe provided the platform for creating a policy which had made Zimbabwe appear a Christian nation. I argue that Zimbabwe is not a Christian country but a multi-faith society. To make Zimbabwe a Christian nation violates the rights of religious followers who belong to other religions. A confessional policy in this context has the danger of breeding religious hatred, conflict and extremism. This is the reason why Ndlovu (2004) and Machingura et al (2015) have been advocating for a policy which celebrates religious diversity. Those who maintained neutral positions indicated that multi-faith and confessional policies have problems, hence the need for a hybrid policy which considers Christian dominance and the availability of many religions. This is supported by Dube (2017) in his study which observed that the hybrid policy caters for the needs of the learner more than the religion. This implies that inclusivity and religious justice would be promoted through that policy. I, however, disagree with Dube's call for a hybrid policy to address the challenges faced by Religious Studies in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a multi-religious nation which require a multi-faith policy does not promote religious exclusivism. I argue that multi-religious policy firmly addresses issues to do with religious fundamentalism and exclusivism by promoting respect of other religions.

**4.3.14 Question:** *Are there problems associated with the current policy on the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum?*

**Table 4.26: Problems of the current policy on the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.**

Categories of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Disagree	22	55
Neutral	4	10
Agree	14	35

The results on Table 4.26 above show that most participants disagreed that there were challenges with the current policy in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. 22 (55%) disagreed that there were problems associated with the current policy on Religious Studies. A few respondents 14 (35%) said there were no problems with the current policy on Religious Studies in Zimbabwe. Those who had neutral positions were also very few, with 10%.



**Table 4.27: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.26**

Category	Reasons for Choosing this Response
There are no problems associated with the current policy on Religious Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It promotes the teaching of all religions.</li> <li>• It has exit profiles for a Religious Studies learner</li> <li>• It is anchored on the philosophy of <i>Unhu/Ubuntu</i></li> <li>• It promotes diversity</li> <li>• It is centred on inclusivity, equity and fairness</li> <li>• It has addressed changing societal needs</li> <li>• It is relevant to the needs of the society.</li> </ul>
Neutral Respondents' Reasons	<p>If teachers are enlightened about Religious Studies policy there will be no challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If all stakeholders like government, religious organisations, teachers and learners work together through coordinated efforts, there will be no policy challenges.</li> <li>• If material and financial resources are availed there will be no hurdles with the Religious Studies policy.</li> </ul>
There are problems associated with the current policy on Religious Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It excludes some minority religions in Zimbabwe like Baha'i Faith, Hinduism and Rastafarianism.</li> <li>• It is still largely biblical centred since two religions Judaism and Christianity are bible based religions.</li> <li>• The policy does not consider Religious Studies a compulsory subject making religious intolerance difficult to remove in Christian dominated country.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of common vision – Christians may feel Islam and Indigenous Religion want to take their religious space.</li> <li>• Lack of material resources – some books are written from dogmatic perspectives.</li> </ul>
--	--

Most of the informants viewed exclusion of some minority religions in Zimbabwe like Baha'i Faith, Hinduism and Rastafarianism, and bias towards biblical religions Judaism and Christianity. They also noted that the subject was elective; there was lack of common vision, and also lack of material resources which all hampered current policy on Religious Studies. This stance was also supported by respondents with neutral positions who indicated that the problems associated with the current policy on education in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum could be mitigated when policy design, planning and implementation were favourable to the teacher. These reasons are quite credible since without proper policy formulation and implementation, the Religious Studies policy would face challenges. Human, financial and material resources are certainly an integral element of Religious Studies policy implementation. This is supported by Dinama (2014) who found that lack of resources made it impractical to implement the Botswana Religious Studies Policy from a multi-faith perspective. Without government support, the multi-faith Religious Studies policy would be difficult to implement. New religions require learning material which is relevant to the needs of the new curriculum framework.

Those who said that there were no challenges made the wrong assumption that the government would support the policy with the necessary finances. They had been influenced by the advantages of the policy and not bothered to check its implementation. This is also supported by empirical evidence from Chetty and Smit (2016) who observed that South African Religion policy had challenges such as teachers' lack of qualifications and experience and lack of national support, as well as little professional development in the post-apartheid era. This implies that the problems facing Religious Studies requires government intervention and human resources development.

**4.3.15 Question 14:** *Does the Religious Studies curriculum promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality?*

**Table 4.28: Responses on whether the Religious Studies curriculum promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Disagree	6	15
Neutral	4	10
Agree	30	75

In Table 4.28 above, the results show that 75% of the respondents agreed that the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum promoted tolerance, pluralism and inclusivism. They agreed that the Zimbabwe society has become multi-faith and teaching of all religions in Zimbabwe ensured that no religion dominates. This is an indication that the majority of respondents agreed that the updated Religious Studies syllabus was multi-faith in orientation. Informants who stated that the updated Religious Studies did not promote tolerance and inclusivity were few, with 15%, while 10 % remained neutral as to whether the updated Religious Studies curriculum promoted tolerance, inclusivity and pluralism or not.

**Table 4.29: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.28**

Category	Reasons for Choosing this Response
Strongly disagree that the updated Religious Studies promotes inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The subject is optional and some learners who do not do the subject will believe that their religion is the best.</li> <li>• Mission schools have a parallel Christian program which de-teaches what is taught by the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum.</li> <li>• Teaching methods used by teachers promote exclusivism and intolerance.</li> </ul>
Disagree that the updated Religious Studies promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers' background influences them to teach with a bias against some religions.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners' background influences them to learn the subject with certain prejudices against some religions.</li> </ul>
Neutral that the updated Religious Studies promotes inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ignorance of the subject.</li> </ul>
Agree that the updated Religious Studies promotes inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of other religions.</li> <li>• Constitutional support</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The inclusion of Islam and Indigenous Religion in the updated curriculum has enhanced inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.</li> <li>• Some concepts like democracy, gender and ethics promote inclusivism</li> <li>• All religions are given equal treatment and space in the new curriculum</li> </ul>

Reasons advanced by both groups of respondents who agree and disagree to the extent to which the Religious Studies curriculum promoted inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism and helped marginalised religions to be considered in future curriculum review. Hindus, Buddhists, Rastafarians and followers of Baha'i faith could benefit from future curriculum reforms in Religious Studies.

Reasons advanced to show that Religious Studies as a mechanism of promoting inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism were quite plausible. Reasons such as, "inclusion of Islam and Indigenous Religion in the updated curriculum, concepts taught in Religious Studies like social responsibility and human rights and equal treatment of religions" reflect that Religious Studies curriculum has the strong potential to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. This resonates well with empirical evidence brought to light by Musaka (2012) and Muhamba

(2020) that the religious composition of Zimbabwe has changed drastically to include Islam, Hinduism and Judaism to complement the already existing religions in Zimbabwe like Indigenous Religions and Christianity. The pluralistic nature of the Zimbabwean society following missionary work, colonisation, internal and international migration, intermarriages, industrialisation and technological developments makes the updated Religious Studies curriculum an instrument of seeding inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The findings reflect that teachers seem to be convinced enough that the updated Religious Studies curriculum promoted inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

This might be the reason why few teachers, 15%, regarded the issue of inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism as possible if policy were implemented unconditionally and fairly. Thus, teachers who were sceptical about the ability of the updated Religious Studies to promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism cited reasons such as that the subject was an optional one and some learners who did not do the subject might believe that their religion was the best. It was noted that mission schools had parallel Christian programs which de-taught what would have been taught by the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum, and the teaching methods used by teachers promoted exclusivism and intolerance, and also that teachers' backgrounds influenced them to teach with a bias against some religions. Learners' backgrounds also influenced them to learn the subject with certain prejudices against some religions. Matemba's (2011) study shows that when a multi-faith Religious Studies is not implemented well through the use of indoctrinating approaches it could result in intolerance, exclusivism and dominance of one religion. This means that the updated Religious Studies curriculum may create superior religions on one hand, and inferior religions on the other hand because all religions were not included in the updated Religious Studies. For this reason, the current Religious Studies promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism in the light of major religions in Zimbabwe. However, in the light of Baha'i faith, Rastafarianism and Buddhism, the curriculum promotes exclusivism and intolerance. Inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism should not be defined by numerical representation of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Indigenous Religion but by the existence of various belief systems, regardless of numbers. 10% professed neutrality about the ability of the subject to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. This is attributed to the failure by teachers to understand the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

**4.3.16 Question 15:** *Are there solutions to the challenges facing effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in order to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality?*

**Table 4.30: Responses on solutions to the challenges facing effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Disagree	6	15
Neutral	4	10
Agree	30	75

The findings indicated that the majority of the sample believed that there are solutions to the current policy on the implementation of the Religious Studies curriculum. 75% of the sampled population admitted that the current policy implementation challenges being faced in the 2017 updated Religious Studies could be solved so that inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism were promoted. However, 15% of the sample disagreed that the current challenges facing the implementation of the Religious Studies could be solved while 10% indicated that they had no idea as to how the challenges could be solved.

**Table 4.31: Views and reasons on solutions affecting effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum**

View	Solution	Reasons
There are no solutions to the challenges facing effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet connectivity</li> <li>• Curriculum support</li> <li>• Curriculum review</li> <li>• In-service workshops for teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No finance to increase accessibility</li> <li>• Bureaucracy</li> <li>• Its top-down approach.</li> <li>• Schools do not have money for teachers to be in-serviced.</li> </ul>
Neutral view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum review to address challenge of inclusivity.</li> <li>• Government intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It may be hindered by lack of expertise from curriculum designers.</li> <li>• Lack of political will</li> </ul>

There are solutions to the challenges facing effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of resource persons</li> <li>• Internet connectivity</li> <li>• Curriculum support</li> <li>• Curriculum review</li> <li>• Developing relevant learning material</li> <li>• In-service workshops for teachers.</li> <li>• Making the subject compulsory</li> <li>• Assessment procedures to cover syllabus aims</li> <li>• Teacher education and training.</li> <li>• Funding of curriculum implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers lack knowledge on newly introduced religions.</li> <li>• Lack of learning material</li> <li>• Lack of reading material</li> <li>• The syllabus is too long.</li> <li>• Learning material has knowledge gaps.</li> <li>• Teachers learnt about the religions long back</li> <li>• The subject is an elective than compulsory.</li> <li>• Summative assessment has bias towards one religion.</li> <li>• Introducing Religious Studies in all teacher training colleges</li> <li>• No funding from government</li> </ul>
--	--	--

Table 4.30 shows the respondents' perceived solutions to the challenges which affected the effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in order to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Most of the respondents agreed that the solutions to the challenges affecting effective implementation of the updated project could only be fruitful if resource persons, who are well versed in the subject, were utilised. There could also be increased internet connectivity, curriculum support, constant curriculum review, development of relevant learning material, in-servicing and workshoppings for teachers, making the subject compulsory, and having assessment procedures to cover syllabus aims, improved teacher education and training in Religious Studies and funding of curriculum implementation. Dube (2020:8) agrees that:

Curriculum planners in Zimbabwe need to be transformed in the way they perceive religion, especially in relation to teacher capacitation. Teacher training colleges should rethink the relevance of the subject and include Religious Studies in their mainstream curriculum, so that the teachers they produce can contribute significantly to conversations that can make religion to regain the trust it has lost. Furthermore, all untrained teachers in the area of religion should undergo in-service training that exposes them to knowledge of major religions covered by the curriculum, as well as new religions

This confirms the argument that teacher competencies and training have an influence on the implementation of the curriculum. Teachers who are well trained and who constantly receive in-service workshops are motivated to respond to new policies positively. As Chetty and Smit (2016) remark, within the South African context policy challenges such as: lack of qualifications and experience by teachers; gaps in conceptual clarity of the Religion Studies; lack of adequate content and teaching materials for Religion Studies; the absence of critical pedagogical, assessment and moderation skills; need for career advocacy; need for national support; and the need for professional development are all reduced to multi-stakeholder initiative. In the light of the above challenges, one can argue that solutions to the implementation of Religious Studies are mainly centred on teacher capacitation and motivation. If teachers were capacitated materially and knowledgably their implementation of curriculum reforms could be more effective.

The 25% of the sampled population who believed that there were no solutions to the challenges cited reasons such as no finance to increase accessibility of internet accessibility, bureaucracy in approving funding for reading materials by content developers, strong top-down approaches and lack of money for teachers to be in-serviced. This implies that solutions to challenges lay in the government which, according to the finding, lacks political will to sponsor educational reforms. The budget that is confined to curriculum reform is too stringent and this has hampered the full implementation of the curriculum. On the other hand, the 10% of the sampled population indicated that they had no solutions citing reasons such as lack of expertise from curriculum designers and lack of political will. This means that the respondents felt that solutions to the challenges were not with the teacher but with policy makers and the government in general.

**4.3.17 Question 16:** *Do you think Religious Studies curriculum review is of national value in promoting the demands of the New Constitution like tolerance, inclusivism and plurality?*

**Table 4.32: Perceptions on whether Religious Studies curriculum promotes national values such as tolerance, inclusivism and plurality.**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Disagree	4	10
Neutral	4	10
Agree	32	80



The results on Table 4.32 show the responses of informants in assessing the role of Religious Studies in promoting the aspirations of the new constitution which anchors the Religious Studies policy. The results indicate that 80 % thought that the updated Religious Studies was of national significance and promoted inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism as demanded by the new constitution. 10% opposed this and 10% gave neutral responses.

**Table 4.33: Views and reasons for responses on Table 4.32**

<b>Broad View</b>	<b>Respondents' Reasons</b>
Religious Studies curriculum review is not of national value in promoting the demands of the new constitution to practice tolerance inclusivism and pluralism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It side-lines other religions</li> <li>• It has fuelled religious extremism</li> </ul>
Neutral response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It may be hindered by lack of relevant learning material.</li> <li>• Multi-faith approaches to Religious Studies are there on paper and if not implemented then the subject is not of national value in promoting the demands of the new constitution to practice tolerance inclusivism and pluralism</li> </ul>
Religious Studies curriculum review is of national value in promoting the demands of the new constitution to practice tolerance inclusivism and pluralism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity is celebrated in the teaching of Religious Studies.</li> <li>• Teaching of Religious Studies discourages any form religious discrimination</li> <li>• It teaches learners to respect other people's beliefs.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The approach that is used in Religious Studies promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism</li> </ul>
--	--

It can be noted that the number of respondents who said Religious Studies curriculum review was of national value in promoting the demands of the New Constitution like tolerance, inclusivism and pluralism claimed that diversity was being celebrated through the teaching of Religious Studies. This means that the subject values the coexistence of more than one religion in the classroom setting. Thus, Religious Studies complements the Constitution of Zimbabwe in preparing learners to accept religious pluralism in the real world and in turn promotes religious inclusivism and tolerance. This resonates with recent research findings by Jackson (2004:8) who notes that Religious Studies in Britain had responded positively to religious diversity with the emergence of pedagogies which take into “consideration plurality, inclusivity and tolerance within the context for Religious Education”. Furthermore, those who admitted the role of Religious Studies in complementing the constitution in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism noted that the subject discourages any form religious discrimination through pedagogies which augur well with multi-faith setting. This is important in reducing religious conflicts which could be caused by intolerance. For this reason, respondents noted that Religious Studies enabled learners to respect other people’s beliefs. In consonance with this view, the findings of Hendek (2022) in Britain conclude that inclusive Religious Education, which involves the study of various religions and beliefs and their diverse interpretations for all pupils in schools is a means to promote tolerance and understanding and combat ignorance. The reasons the respondents gave were credible because the thrust of the new constitution is to promote tolerance, inclusivity and religious diversity. This is testified by the 2013 Zimbabwe’s Constitutional provisions in which all religions are given equal status and every Zimbabwean has enjoys freedom of worship.

However, the fact that the Religious Studies policy which embraces multi-faith approach was facing some challenges regardless of constitutional support meant that Religious Studies could fail to be of national value in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Other religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Rastafarianism were still side-lined in the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The updated Religious Studies curriculum had also fuelled religious extremism. Dube (2020) in his empirical findings notes that the problem with the updated Religious Studies was that it did not include contemporary religious practice and religious

extremism in the curriculum. Religious practices like that of Rastafarians had been ignored, hence it would be prudent to argue that the respondents were right to criticise the updated Religious Studies as a subject of little national value for its failure to actively promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism as per the constitutional provisions. The updated Religious Studies curriculum had been reviewed to make it more inclusive, but seemed to lack full commitment to implement the provisions of the new constitution also aimed at preserving new religious practices.

**4.3.18 Question 17:** *Is there any supervision done to assess the updated Religious Studies policy implementation in secondary schools?*

**Table 4.34: Responses on the supervision of the updated Religious Studies policy implementation.**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Disagree	22	55
Neutral	2	0.5
Agree	16	40

The results on Table 4.34 show that most of the respondents, 55% of the sample among Religious Studies teachers disagreed that there was proper supervision to assess the implementation of the updated Religious Studies policy in secondary schools. Few respondents, 40% agreed that policy was being supervised to ensure that Religious Studies curriculum was implemented. Only 0.5% professed that they did not know whether supervision was being done or not.

**Table 4.35 showing views and reasons for the choices on Table 4.34**

View	Reason
No supervision is done to assess the updated Religious Studies policy implementation in secondary schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspectors come once in a blue moon.</li> <li>• Inspectors who come to supervise are not specialists in Religious Studies</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some schools have dropped the subject due to lack of supervision.</li> </ul>
Neutral view	
Supervision is done to assess the updated Religious Studies policy implementation in secondary schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adherence to policy is good</li> <li>• Inspectors are supervising</li> <li>• Heads and heads of department are supervising.</li> </ul>

The responses on the table indicate that 55% disagreed that there was supervision done to assess the updated Religious Studies policy implementation in secondary schools. This is in line with the empirical findings by De Grauwe (2001:138) who observed that lack of supervision was causing policy implementation challenges in Zimbabwean schools. Those who disagreed that there was, indeed, supervision being done in assessing the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum indicated that there were educational inspectors who would come once in a while although some of the inspectors were not specialists in Religious Studies. This resonates with the empirical findings of De Graurwe (2004) who observed that the abolition of posts for subject supervisors left a skeletal team of education officers to take charge of general subject supervision from primary through to secondary schools, in addition to their fields of specialisation, expertise and experience. This implies that critical policy issues such as interpretation of the multi-faith syllabi and the development and application of pedagogies that advance inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism have not been fully implemented. I argue that lack of expert supervision related to Religious Studies has resulted in mediocre supervision by non-specialised personnel.

In this study only 40% of the respondents agreed that there was supervision which was being done to assess the implementation of the Religious Studies curriculum. Those who admitted that there was supervision going on in Religious Studies cited reasons such as policy adherence, and that they had been given supervision forms and that supervision was being done at school level by schools Heads and heads of subject. This implies that supervision was being done and promoted adherence to policy and the teaching of religions stipulated in the syllabus. It should also be noted that 0.5% of respondents in this study professed ignorance about the supervision being done to assess the implementation of updated Religious Studies policy in secondary schools.

**4.3.19 Question 18:** *Does the Religious Studies summative assessment promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality?*

**Table 4.36: Responses on the role of Religious Studies summative assessment in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Disagree	10	25
Neutral	4	10
Agree	26	65

From Table 4.36, 65% agreed that the current summative assessment promoted inclusivism while 25% of the respondents disagreed that the summative assessment promoted inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Only 10% of the respondents remained neutral in determining whether summative assessment promoted inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

**Table 4.37: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.36**

View	Reasons
Religious Studies summative assessment does not promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions in the summative assessment reflect the old curriculum.</li> <li>• Summative assessment is largely Bible-centred.</li> </ul>
Neutral view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not so sure</li> </ul>
Religious Studies summative assessment promotes inclusivism, tolerance and plurality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All religions are catered for in the assessment.</li> <li>• There are questions which deal with gender and the importance of religious diversity</li> </ul>

The respondents shared different views on what they felt about the assessment procedures vis-à-vis the implementation of the new policy. Most teachers still expressed satisfaction with the current summative assessment. For this reason, 65% of the respondents who agreed that Religious Studies' summative assessment promoted inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism argued that question papers included the four religions, and included questions on gender and the importance of religious diversity. Findings from Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse (2020)

indicated that the updated Religious Studies curriculum promotes inclusivity. Other respondents who amounted to 25% of the sampled population were of the view that Religious Studies' summative assessment did not promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism giving reasons such as reduplication of the summative assessment questions from the old curriculum. Some also noted that the summative assessment was largely biblecentred. 10% of the sampled population remained neutral on whether Religious Studies' summative assessment promoted inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism or not.

**4.3.20 Question 19:** *Is the currently available learning material relevant to the needs of the updated Religious Studies curriculum objectives?*

**Table 4.38: Responses on the availability of relevant learning material to the needs of the updated Religious Studies curriculum objectives.**

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Disagree	24	60
Neutral	4	10
Agree	12	30

From the table, 65% of the participants disagreed with the view that the learning material was relevant to the needs of the updated Religious Studies curriculum while 30% of the respondents agreed that learning materials available were relevant to the needs of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The latter argued that some of the available textbooks had syllabus oriented information. Only 10% of the respondents remained neutral.

**Table 4.39: Reasons and views for the different choices in Table 4.38**

View	Reasons
Learning material currently available is relevant to the needs of the updated Religious Studies curriculum objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They cover all the religions.</li> <li>• They are syllabus-oriented</li> <li>• They teach about family values</li> </ul>

Neutral response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No money to buy textbooks</li> </ul>
Learning material currently available is not relevant to the needs of the updated Religious Studies curriculum objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some are apologetic</li> <li>• They just cut and paste from the internet sources without looking the syllabus</li> <li>• Still using old curriculum textbooks</li> <li>• Some concepts are not yet fully explored.</li> </ul>

From these responses, it was found that although in some secondary schools there were some relevant materials for the teaching of Religious Studies, in other schools they actually relied on irrelevant learning material, especially at Advanced Level. Generally, the sentiments suggest that some schools were either ignorantly or intentionally not committing themselves to buying relevant learning material for the updated Religious Studies curriculum which made it difficult to enable learners to have an appreciation of various religions in Zimbabwe. The use of relevant learning material in the updated Religious Studies promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism in secondary schools. Earlier studies found that learning material was scanty for the purposes of teaching the updated Religious Studies curriculum (Zivave and Muzambi 2021). Chetty and Smit (2016: 147) had earlier highlighted the importance of relevant learning material in ensuring that the multi-faith Religious Studies was implemented in the South African context and that lack of relevant learning material impeded the implementation of the reformed Religion Studies. Research in curriculum implementation implies that provision of relevant learning material is a prerequisite for any curriculum change to realise its educational goals. This means that all teachers would have teaching/learning materials which are the basis of any policy implementing programme. Those who said learning material was relevant also argued that some textbooks were of an apologetic nature. This means that some textbooks were written to defend one religion instead of making learners know about the religion. It is this apologetic feature of the current learning material which can promote religious fundamentalism and breed intolerance. The findings also noted that material compiled in some textbooks had simply been plagiarised from the internet. Some content developers had simply cut and pasted from internet sources without looking at the syllabus of the Religious Studies subject. It emerged that some schools still relied on learning material from textbooks of the old curriculum which are biased towards Christianity or the Bible. This creates challenges of creating bias among learners. Religious inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism would be compromised. It also

emerged that some of the relevant material sources available have half-baked concepts which are not well-explained to suit the syllabus objective.

The findings also noted that some relevant material applicable to the updated Religious Studies curriculum was still available. Respondents noted reasons such as availability of books to cover all the religions, meet syllabus objectives and teach about family values which are part of the updated Religious Studies objectives. Those who remained neutral explained that they had no textbooks and it was difficult for them to ascertain the relevance of learning material in Religious Studies.

#### **4.4 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES FROM INTERVIEWS**

Responses of interviewees are presented below and analysed. Interviews were carried out in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), as well as with a Zimbabwe School Examination Council subject manager to solicit for their perceptions on the policy implementation challenges affecting the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. The interviewees are tabulated in Table 4.40

**Table 4.40: Interviewees and their designations**

<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Interviewee 1	FRS Teacher 1
Interviewee 2	FRS Teacher 2
Interviewee 3	ZIMSEC Official
Interviewee 4	Inspectorate 1
Interviewee 5	Inspectorate 2

Themes and analysis derived from interviews augmented the results from questionnaires so that there could be a vivid explanation of issues under study. The researcher identified themes and formulated sub-themes which were used to guide subsequent presentation and analysis of data gathered during interviews. In the analysis of results, the actual words that were spoken by the participants as responses to individual interviews are captured verbatim and are indented for vividness in the presentation.

**Table 4.41: Themes and categories of responses from the interviews**



<b>Theme</b>	<b>Category</b>
<b>Theme 1:</b> Curriculum Framework	Policy Document Change of Syllabuses Home Grown Course Outline Change of Teaching Methodology
<b>Theme 2:</b> Curriculum Reform in Religious Studies	Colonial Religious Education Independence Religious Studies Nziramanga Commission of Enquiry Change in Religious Demography Updated Religious Studies
<b>Theme 3:</b> Reasons For Religious Studies Curriculum Reform	Decolonising Religious Studies Religious composition of the Zimbabwean society. Change of learning content Implementing multi-faith approaches The New Constitution of Zimbabwe.
<b>Theme 4:</b> Teachers Involved In Religious Studies Curriculum Planning And Designing	Top-bottom approach Bottom approach Mixed approach
<b>Theme 5:</b> Policy Dissemination To Teachers	Use circulars and minutes Schools heads Cluster meetings Media
<b>Theme 6:</b> What Is Policy	Laws Syllabus Government declaration
<b>Theme 7:</b> Policy Guidelines For Religious Studies	Teaching from a multi-faith perspective All religions should have equal treatment
<b>Theme 8:</b> Policies Which Enhance the Teaching and Learning of Religious Studies	Multi-faith approach
<b>Theme 9:</b> Adherence of Teachers to the Teaching Of Updated Religious Studies (FRS)	Teaching of all religions Bias against Indigenous Religion and Islam Dropping of the subject in schools

	Teaching of Cambridge syllabus
<b>Theme 10:</b> Problems Associated With The Current Policy	Religious extremism Exclusion of other religions Subject is elective
<b>Theme 11:</b> Religious Studies Curriculum Relevant in Promoting Inclusivism, Tolerance And Plurality?	Teaching of all religions Exclusion of minority religions Multi-faith approaches Constructivism
<b>Theme 12:</b> Pedagogical Approaches And Philosophical Approaches	Learner-centred Teacher-centred
<b>Theme 13:</b> Learning Methods	Cognitivism Learning Theory Constructivism Learning Theory Connectivism Learning Theory
<b>Theme 14:</b> Teaching Style	Confessional Approach Multi-faith Approach Hybrid Approach Life-Theme Approach
<b>Theme 15:</b> Summative Assessment Is Inclusivism, Tolerance and Pluralism Being Promoted in Religious Studies	Bias towards old curriculum Neutrality of questions Questions create religious bias against other religions.
<b>Theme 16:</b> Challenges Affecting Religious Studies in Secondary Schools?	Learning material Interpretation of the syllabus The syllabus is too long Dropping of the subject in mission schools Bias towards the old curriculum Lack of training of teachers. Pedagogical rigidity. Failure to accept diversity Lack of technical support Personal background of Teachers Lack of supervision.

	Congestion of Religious Studies curriculum
<b>THEME 17:</b> Solutions to the Challenges of Religious Studies	Supply of reading material Curriculum review Training of teachers of religion In-service training Supervision Employing subject specialists as supervisors at district and provincial level Religious Studies to become a core subject Bureaucracy in publishing Supporting teachers to develop content Interreligious dialogue should be promoted

#### **4.4. THEME 1: WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND WHEN YOU HEAR ABOUT THE UPDATED CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK?**

In this theme, I report on how participants in this study responded to the question seeking their understanding of the updated curriculum framework that gave room for Religious Studies reform in secondary schools. I identified two categories from this theme, namely: changes of the syllabus and change of teaching methodology. I focus on participants' explanations on how they understood the updated curriculum which was implemented in 2017. It emerged in this study that different curriculum implementers understand the new curriculum framework differently.

##### **4.4.1.1 Change of syllabus and learning content**

It emerged in this study that in schools and at the education district level, participants were of the opinion that the updated curriculum referred to the changing of learning content. FRS teacher 1 had a lot to say:

The updated curriculum refers to the change of the syllabuses and learning content. This means that what was being learnt before the adoption of the updated curriculum is different from what is taught now. Subjects have changed and even learning content has also changed.

Inspectorate 2 indicated that:

The new curriculum has different terms. It can be referred to as the revised curriculum or updated curriculum. This means that the learning content and the syllabus have been revised.

The respondents' views are similar to how the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) (2015: 5) puts it in:

Curriculum framework is the main guiding elements that cater for the cohesion and consistency of the planned education activities namely education aims, values and principles underpinning the curriculum, learning outcomes, orientation architecture and learning content, teaching and learning, assessment in different learning areas and across the curriculum.

This means that the updated curriculum framework generally means change of topics covered, how the topics are taught and assessed. It guides how policy is designed and how it is directed so that adjustments and improvements are made in the education sector. The participants understood the updated curriculum framework as a curriculum reform which changed the course content.

When FRS teacher 1 was further probed on what the updated curriculum framework implied in the light of updated Religious Studies, the interviewee elaborated that

Updated curriculum framework in the light of Religious Studies refers to the abolition of Divinity and biblical centred Religious Studies to include the study of four religions IR, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

When the inspectorate was asked about their perception of what the updated Curriculum was, Inspectorate 1 indicated that:

The updated Curriculum Framework is an attempt to make Learning Areas relevant to the learners by transforming the learning content and outcomes, a process which started in January 2017.

Inspectorate 2 said;

The new Curriculum Framework is a new educational policy which seeks to make learning relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs. Learning areas have to produce learners who have competencies required in the current environment. I can just say the new curriculum framework is a guideline which makes learning areas competence-based.

Findings from the study reveal that 'updated curriculum' means the change in learning content. Unlike the previous curriculum which was composed of Christian religion in the syllabus, the current curriculum framework offers learning content which ranges from Indigenous Religion,

Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The findings also indicate that the updated curriculum framework is a guideline which makes learning relevant to the needs of the society. I argue that the Zimbabwean society has become more plural and the learning of Religious Studies has to cater for the needs of learners who come from diverse religious backgrounds. Furthermore, I note that inclusivity, tolerance and pluralism are competencies that learners should exhibit in the modern society. This resonates with empirical studies by Gourdard, Pont and Huang (2020) on curriculum reform in Indonesia, South Korea, Finland, Japan, Norway, United Kingdom and Australia who have indicated that curriculum reform has been done to make schools enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century and respond to demands of the fast-changing world. Studies by Prinsloo (2008) observe that the study of religion (s) could contribute to learners' growing in religious competence. I conclude that the new curriculum framework has enabled Religious Studies to shift from the study of religion to the study of religions and to cultivate inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism in a multi-faith society.

#### **4.4.2.2 Home-grown course outline**

Interviewee 5, who is an inspector and an expert in Religious Studies, argued that the updated Religious Studies curriculum implies a course outline designed to suit the current socio-economic as well as religious situation in Zimbabwe. It is a home-grown course outline different from the inherited colonial syllabuses. Inspectorate 1 had to say:

Updated curriculum framework refers to the breaking away from a 'colonial based' curriculum which served the interests of colonialists. The Cambridge University Examination board ensured that learners learned Christianity which was the religion considered as the civilised religion for the Europeans.

The ZIMSEC official also concurred with this saying:

Is a shift from a curriculum that focused on one particular Religion that was alien to learners' experiences. The new curriculum helps learners to understand and interpret religious and moral concept in their everyday lives. Unlike the old curriculum the new curriculum is all inclusive. It is a multi-faith curriculum and incorporates all the four religions existing in the country. In that way, it is all inclusive and accommodative. The new curriculum is thus a non-proselytising approach to the study of religion which makes learners aware of their religious identities in the context of Unhu and religious plurality. This is a reformation of what was missing in the old curriculum that was almost biased (i.e.) against Judaism, Indigenous Religion and Islamic Religion.

The findings reveal that curriculum framework had been reformed in order to have local or home-grown curriculum which served the interests of all native citizens of Zimbabwe. Many

participants believe that the updated curriculum framework made the changes in order to make the curriculum non-confessional. This means that the updated curriculum framework means that the curriculum change has resulted in the change of learning content and teaching methods in in order to make learning more meaningful and effective through the use of hands-on approach. I inferred that the updated curriculum framework meant the change of teaching content from the Biblical centered to a multi-faith syllabus.

#### **4.4.2.3 Policy document**

From the interviews conducted it emerged that the updated curriculum framework is a policy document. Interviewees echoed the view that the updated curriculum framework referred to guiding documents to what needed to be done in the education system. FRS teacher 2 had this to say:

I know that the curriculum framework is the main reference document which is the basis of curriculum planning, designing and implementation. It deals with the development of syllabuses, teaching aids and pedagogies.

The above verbatim citations provide clear verification from respondents that the curriculum framework is a document with guiding principles with regard to syllabus planning, designing, curriculum implementation and assessment procedures in the teaching and learning of various subjects. This was a response to the recommendations of the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry (1999). Zivave and Muzambi (2022:15) believe that the updated Religious Studies curriculum is influenced by that Commission's report of 1999 which called for inclusive education. Thus, the curriculum framework is consolidation of the views of the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry (1999) to make education relevant to the needs of Zimbabwe. Therefore, the Curriculum Framework is a policy document which transforms the education system to meet the opportunities and challenges of the growing economy. The Curriculum Framework is a written plan with the aims and objectives of the education system which result in sustainable transformation of the education system. This document enables the curriculum to be relevant, problem solving and a reservoir of critical thinking to deal with contemporary challenges. The view of inspectorate 1 was also echoed by inspectorate 2 who said:

Curriculum framework is a document that provides direction as teachers shift from the old curriculum to the updated curriculum.

In this context, the inspectorate understood Curriculum Framework as a policy document that is legally binding and has obligations to be met by the teacher. He underscored that the curriculum framework directs how policy is implemented in line with the changes that have taken place in terms of teaching methodology and learning content of Family and Religious Studies (FRS). Thus, the updated curriculum framework is relevant in driving policy.

#### **4.4.2.4 Teaching methodology**

From the interview responses, the updated curriculum framework means change of pedagogies from teacher-centred pedagogies to learner-centred pedagogies which treats learners as active participants in the learning process. For this reason, FRS teacher 1 stated that:

Curriculum Framework refers to the shift from teacher-centred to student-centred approaches. In the context of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) it means focusing on all the religions that the learner interacts with in his or her daily life.

The above excerpt further concretised what the other interviewee had said that the updated curriculum is about change in curriculum content and teaching approaches. This validates findings by Zivave and Muzambi (2022:17) which say teaching approaches were influenced by curriculum reforms in Religious Studies. Therefore, it was established that the updated Curriculum Framework has resulted in the change of teaching approaches and methodologies.

From this discussion, it can be concluded that respondents demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of the updated curriculum framework, appreciated educational reforms, particularly in Religious Studies which incorporated side-lined religions such as Indigenous Religions and Islam. Curriculum would enable creation of a more religiously inclusive, tolerant and plural society.

#### **4.4.3 THEME 2 WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF CURRICULUM REFORM IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES?**

Teachers' understanding of curriculum reform in Religious Studies means interpretation of curriculum and its implementation, adhering to pedagogical and philosophical demands. A vivid comprehension of curriculum reform is vital for the smooth implementation of the course

of Religious Studies. Implementation of a Religious Studies curriculum reform requires teachers' input and cooperation. As such, curriculum reform implementation deals with the teaching approaches which suit the objectives of the syllabus in promoting religious diversity. This is so because there are various pedagogical approaches and philosophical approaches to Religious Studies which promote and undermine religious diversity as well as inclusivity. From this category, four subcategories emerged, namely; colonial Religious Studies, inherited post-colonial Religious Studies, the Nziramasanga report on Religious Studies, and the updated Religious Studies curriculum and implementation of an inappropriate policy.

#### **4.4.3.1 Colonial Religious Studies**

From the interview it emerged that curriculum reform in Religious Studies is understood in the context of decolonising the curriculum. Hence, the need to understand that the updated Religious Studies was a reaction to the colonial Religious Studies. It emerged from the interview that curriculum reform in Religious Studies has undergone several historical processes starting with the colonial period. When I asked about the curriculum reform in Religious Studies in Zimbabwe, FRS teacher 2 had to say:

I think colonialism brought Religious Education in Zimbabwe and other religions different from Christianity have been looked down in order to maintain Christian dominance which served as the religion of the colonisers. The Religious Studies curriculum reforms have never been so drastic. Christianity continued to dominate the learning spaces and public spaces.

The findings indicate that the previous curriculum reform in Religious Studies tended to undermine other religions which were not Christianity. This validates findings from Zivave and Muzambi (2022) who note that non-biblical religions were treated as inferior and unworthy of academic study in Zimbabwe's colonial schools. This has been caused by colonial indoctrination which created a hierarchy of religions with Christianity at the top of that hierarchy. In that process, it had been difficult to incorporate other religious traditions other than Christianity. This has led to the exclusive dominance of Christianity even after independence.

#### **4.4.3.2 Inherited colonial Religious Studies**

Be that as it may, the participant strongly concurs with the majority of the participants who felt that the Religious Studies curriculum reform was necessitated by the inherited colonial



syllabus. The inherited curriculum had a bias towards biblical religions, Judaism and Christianity which were all covered in Divinity. FRS teacher 1 had to say:

The inherited syllabus did not take into consideration that we are Africans. It undermined indigenous people's beliefs. Furthermore, the inherited curriculum identified Christianity as the only religion which provided avenues of salvation, disregarding Islam as well as Indigenous Religion. Thus, curriculum reform in Religious Studies meant doing away with the inherited colonial Religious Studies and embracing religions that are practiced by all native Zimbabweans and residents of the country.

The findings stress that curriculum reform in Religious Studies was unavoidable so that all religions had equal treatment in the educational curriculum. Religious Studies should not be exclusive but inclusive, tolerant and accepting that we are living a plural society as revealed by the findings. Again, it has to be reiterated that these sentiments calling for the inclusion of Indigenous Religion and Islam promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism and have already been raised in the presentation and discussion of the data obtained from the questionnaire above. When FRS teacher 1 was asked about the strengths of the curriculum reform in Religious Studies, the interviewee said:

Curriculum reform in Religious Studies broadens inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism as learners learn different religions that are found in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. This promotes religious diversity and prepares learners to relate to different groups of people with divergent religious faiths.

Inspectorate 1 underscored that the updated Religious Studies curriculum was reformed because:

The government wanted to do away with the Christianised curriculum that existed before independence and move to the one that is all inclusive.

Inspectorate 2 indicated that:

I will take it as the change of learning content from bible-centred learning content to a more inclusive one, which is better for our learners.

From the above verbatim quotes, the study observed that curriculum reform in Religious Studies resulted in the change of learning content. This enabled the learners to appreciate the religions of other people. Hence, it might result in the creation of multi-faith communities which respect other people's beliefs. By multi-faith communities, the interviewee meant societies in which Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Indigenous Religion, among other religious

traditions, live in harmony and without religious conflicts. This validates findings by Khozin (2018) in Indonesia which note that conflicts between Muslims and Christians were resolved by the use of multi-faith Religious Studies syllabus. The interviewee went on to indicate why curriculum reform was done in Zimbabwe.

#### **4.4.4 THEME 3 WHY HAS RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM IN ZIMBABWE UNDERGONE REFORM?**

In this theme, I report on the reasons why Religious Studies has undergone reform as perceived by participants interviewed in this study. I have identified five categories from this theme. The categories are: Decolonising Religious Studies, Religious composition of the Zimbabwean society, Change of learning content, Implementing multi-faith approaches, and the Constitution.

##### **4.4.4.1 Decolonising the curriculum**

FRS teacher 2 stated that decolonising the Religious Studies was one of the reasons why Religious Studies has undergone reform. The following remark was made by interviewee 2 on decolonising Religious Studies curriculum:

The settlers brought a colonial Religious Studies which helped in colonising Africans. It was through this curriculum that Africans were made to hate their own religious beliefs and practices. This continued after independence and there was need to decolonise the Religious Studies curriculum so that appreciation of African heritage would be attained.

The finding from the study reveals that Religious Studies curriculum reform was the best way of reviving the African religious heritage which had been undermined by the Christian oriented Religious Studies curriculum. Zivave and Muzambi (2022) concur with this observation saying the updated Religious Studies curriculum offers a great opportunity in the revival of lost African religious heritage. One of the interviewed implied that hanging on to colonial syllabus which underestimated African belief system was a form of coloniality. The introduction of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum was crucial in decolonising Religious Studies to make it more inclusive, tolerant and applicable in a pluralist society. Empirical studies by Muhamba (2020) indicate that Zimbabwe inherited a colonial Religious Studies curriculum which undermined Indigenous Religion and Islam. The interviewee emphasised that curriculum reform in Religious Studies should enhance a sense of inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism since the Zimbabwean society has become multi-religious. When I asked about the strengths of the curriculum reform FRS teacher 2 said:

The previous curriculum undermined other religions; I think other religions are worthy studying too. The old curriculum in form of Divinity concentrated only on biblical oriented religions, Judaism and Christianity. However, the curriculum reform has made it possible to study other religions which are practiced in Zimbabwe. Inclusivism and respect of other religions are underlying principles for the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Curriculum reform has mitigated religious extremism and exclusivism by incorporating Indigenous Religion and Islam in the Religious Studies curriculum reform.

FRS teacher 1 commenting on the same note indicated that:

I think curriculum reform in Religious Studies has exposed different religions to the learners. The curriculum reform has prevented dominance of one Religion. We need a curriculum which recognises the existence of other religions. Religious Studies should not convert learners to a particular religion. Thus, the curriculum reform has treated religions equally.

Inspectorate 1 had to say:

The old Religious Studies at Ordinary level had two syllabuses, syllabus A which had synoptic gospels and Syllabus B had Luke-Acts. This means that the syllabus was biased towards Christianity. You can see that the reforms were done because not everyone is a Christian. The other religions, which are being practiced in Zimbabwe like Indigenous Religion, Hindiusm and Islam which had not been covered by the syllabus are now covered. The reforms were done to remove some blinkers on Christian religion and ensure that learners' needs are met.

The findings of the study indicate that Religious Studies curriculum reform was motivated by the need to expose learners to different religions in Zimbabwe. This validates findings by Dube (2017:166) which say that for religion to be viable in society and meet the needs of learners, it is important for schools to ensure that all religions and culture available in community are taught not in principle but in praxis. I argue that Zimbabwe is home to various religious traditions and, hence, the reforms were caused by the need to embrace religious diversity. It is clear from the findings that the essence of Religious Studies curriculum is not to promote exclusivism by elevating one religion at the expense of the other. Thus, curriculum reform in Religious Studies seeks to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

#### **4.4.4.2 Compliance to the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry in Education and Training report**

One of the underlying reasons for curriculum reform in Religious Studies revealed by the study is compliance to the Nziramasanga Commission recommendations. This was revealed by the FRS teacher 1 who noted that:

The Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry recommended Religious Studies curriculum reform which would result in celebration of religious diversity and preservation of

religious heritage of all religions in Zimbabwe. The mandate of the curriculum reform is to make the Religious Studies relevant to the needs of the society in which it operates.

The findings reveal that Religious Studies reforms were made in order to comply with the Commission of Inquiry on education of 1998 which made an observation that there was need to move from Christo-centric Religious Studies to a multi-faith one. The curriculum reform in Zimbabwe has been pushed by the recommendations of the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (CIET 1999) (Zivave and Muzambi 2022:15).

#### **4.4.4.3 Change of learning content and methodology**

Reforms to me mean a new way of teaching in terms of content and methodology. This means introducing things which were not there in the former curriculum. It involves introducing religions such as Judaism and Islam which had not been part of the learning content in the old curriculum. The participants argued that the old curriculum was Christo-centric and it did not address the fact that Zimbabwe is composed of people from different religious backgrounds. The curriculum did not also teach learners to be independent thinkers. During interviews, the study observed that the old curriculum was biased and it did not cater for the needs of a heterogeneous society in terms of religious affiliation. In their reflections, they articulated that colonialism and oppressive education system contributed to the dominance of Christianity in the Religious Studies curriculum.

#### **4.4.4.4 Change of the religious composition of Zimbabwe**

All the participants were quick to state that no one would dispute that the religious demography of Zimbabwe has changed. The religious composition of the Zimbabwean society, they believe, resonates with the need for a multi-faith Religious Studies syllabus. FRS teacher 1 had to say:

Zimbabwe is never a Christian country. Neither do we have one religion. We have a rainbow of religions in Zimbabwe like Indigenous Religion, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Chinese religions being practiced in Zimbabwe. To say Zimbabwe has Christians alone is distortion of reality on the ground...many people who profess to be Christians double as followers of Indigenous Religion and Christianity.

The above excerpt from suggests that Zimbabwe has a variety of religions. Christianity does not dominate the religious space as indigenous people are followers of two religions at the same time. This insinuates that Religious Studies curriculum reform was caused by the change in the religious composition of the society. The notion that Christianity is the only religion in

Zimbabwe is fallacious. Perceived dominance of Christianity is caused by failure to recognise that Africans are practicing Indigenous Religion and Christianity at the same time. This means that Indigenous Religion is a tradition.

Inspectorate 2 noted that reform in Religious Studies was caused by the need to cater for the religions found in Zimbabwe. The inspectorate who is interviewee 4 had to say;

There was need to accommodate other religions that have penetrated the country due to globalisation, international migration and missionary work which is a trend world over. I feel the reform was motivated by the change of the religious composition of Zimbabwean society.

The above observation by inspectorate 5 indicates that Zimbabwe's religious demography has changed because of migration, missionary work and globalisation. This is in line with what Matemba (2011), found in her studies that societies are changing and therefore Religious Studies syllabi are becoming out-dated because of the change of religious composition. I argue that reform in Religious Studies in this context has been motivated by the change of religious composition of the Zimbabwean society and the reform was made to make the subject more inclusive and tolerant to other religions in a pluralistic society.

#### **4.4.4.5 Implementing multi-faith approaches**

One of the interviewees also indicated that curriculum reform in Religious Studies was influenced by the need to implement the multi-faith approach that has been lagging behind since independence up to 2018. FRS teacher 2 had to say:

Call for multi-faith approach during the old curriculum was not logical in the sense that only one religion was dominating. The approach can only become viable when other religions are introduced in the curriculum.

The implication of the above quote is that Religious Studies reforms were caused by the need to move from mono-faith approaches to multi-faith ones because Zimbabwe has become a multi-faith society (Machingura and Mugebe 2015). Thus, one of the findings from the study is that Religious Studies was reformed in order to fill in the gap needed by the multi-faith approaches.

When interviewee 3 who is a ZIMSEC official was asked whether the Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe had undergone reform, the official had this to say:

The old curriculum was selective, segregative and confessional. It focused more on one particular religion while ignoring other religions in the country. There is a large percentage of the Zimbabwean population who are non-Christians and yet they were

not considered. It was somehow not fair. There was need to come up with a curriculum that was accommodative so that learners become aware of their respective identities in the context of religious plurality, a curriculum that seeks to develop a critical reflection of social-economic and political issues, religious tolerance, and initiative in terms of formulating ideologies and contributing to sustainable development.

The above verbatim quote indicates that the reform was caused by the need to cater for multi-faith factors since the old curriculum was focused on one religion. This is in line with what Gwaravanda et al (2013) observe in their investigation of the old curriculum where they concluded that the old curriculum was biased and did not cater for the needs of the society. I argue from the above interview excerpt that curriculum reform was caused by the need to accommodate other religions and ensure that the curriculum was not discriminatory.

#### **4.4.4.6 The Constitution of Zimbabwe**

One of the interviewees also indicated that curriculum reform in Religious Studies was a noble idea which was motivated by the need to uphold Zimbabwe's constitution which demands acceptance of religious diversity and respect of other religions. Inspectorate 2 indicated that Zimbabwe was a multi-faith society which required a multi-faith curriculum as demanded by the constitution. This led to the curriculum reform because Zimbabwe is not a Christian country but a multi-religious state as enshrined by the 2013 Constitution, Chapter 4 Section 56 as well as Chapter 4 Section 60 which guarantee freedom of worship and the right to belong to any religion in Zimbabwe. Interviewee 2 said that:

The Constitution of Zimbabwe is secular and regards Zimbabwe as a multi-faith nation which recognises various religions found in Zimbabwe.

Interviewees indicated that the new constitution necessitated curriculum reform to cater for the needs of all religions. FRS teacher 2 underscored that the new constitution treated all Zimbabweans regardless of religion. The interviewee stated that:

The Religious Studies has undergone reform in order to uphold constitutionalism and promote inclusivism. It is being used to promote freedom of worship in Zimbabwe

The findings indicate that constitutionalism was one of the reasons for curriculum reform in Zimbabwe. The need to uphold the constitution has led to curriculum reform. This is because the new constitution recognises religious diversity in Zimbabwe and any Religious Studies curriculum which does not respect the Constitution of the country undermines respect for other people's religious beliefs.

It is clear that interviewees shared the same sentiments that the old Religious Studies curriculum was irrelevant to the Zimbabwean situation in every sense. The curriculum reform in Zimbabwe has been pushed by the desire to decolonise the curriculum, globalisation, change in religious composition of Zimbabwe and the need to uphold the Constitution of Zimbabwe, among other reasons. The above reactions demonstrate that this curriculum reform in Zimbabwe was motivated by several factors. There are mainly three categories of Religious Studies, the colonial one, inherited post-colonial and the updated religious studies.

#### **4.4.5. THEME 4: WERE THE TEACHERS INVOLVED IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM PLANNING AND DESIGNING? IF NO-WHY?**

For a curriculum review to be successful in terms of implementation, teachers, who are the implementers of any policy, need to be involved in the process of curriculum planning and designing. Teacher participation in curriculum review influences the success of the curriculum. This is because teachers are aware of the needs in the classroom and community in which they operate. For this reason, teachers and inspectors were interviewed to ascertain whether curriculum review was done from bottom to top or from top to bottom as it has a bearing on the success of the curriculum. Teachers interviewed noted that they were largely not involved in the curriculum review process.

##### **4.4.5.1. Top bottom approach**

The general sentiment from the respondents in the study was that curriculum reform in Religious Studies did not involve teachers. FRS teacher 1 had to say:

Teachers were not heavily involved in the planning and designing. Only a few were consulted for the designing of the curriculum. The reason most probably is because the curriculum designers did not have enough money to hold workshops with the bulk of teachers across the country.

Interviewee 5 who inspectorate 2 also concurred with teachers, saying:

Not all teachers were included in the design of the new curriculum because the programme had monetary benefits from UNICEF. Heads and heads of department in most cases attended workshops which were meant for Religious Studies teachers and other learning areas. I am saying the school heads got into the programme, disadvantaging the teachers who are the major stakeholders in curriculum implementation. Most subjects were affected because of this.

The above quotation reflects that the top-down curriculum planning and designing was utilised leaving out from the curriculum planning and designing, the teachers who are the curriculum implementers. Ndamba (2013) in her studies found out that teachers had not participated in curriculum planning and designing but in the implementation phase. The top to bottom curriculum planning, designing and implementation was utilised because curriculum planners were probably aware that teachers would not support the new curriculum because teachers do not want change. The findings of the study reflect that teachers were only curriculum implementers and were expected to follow the policy religiously, therefore, they did not wholeheartedly implement the policy. When asked why they had not been involved, FRS teacher 1 stated that:

It was best known to the curriculum designers why we were not involved. We only knew about the new religions to be taught after the curriculum design was completed.

Inspectorate 1 who is interviewee 4 echoed that:

Personally, I have no certainty as to the involvement of teachers in the planning and designing. However, through association with others in the field I learnt that if there was any involvement of teachers in curriculum planning and designing it was negligible. This is because the teacher is expected to teach and follow policy.

Findings from teachers revealed that curriculum planning and designing was not negotiated and teachers were told to implement it by the top officials. I argue that, to a larger extent, the top-down approach was used. This approach gave teachers no room to question the curriculum but commanded teachers to implement the policy. I argue that Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum was designed from the top, an allegation denied by the curriculum policy makers. Policy makers argue that they involved teachers while teachers deny that they were involved. This shows that differences in perception on the planning and designing of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) vary from one group to the other.

#### **4.4.5.2 Mixed approach**

Findings from the study reveal that curriculum designing used a mixed approach. This means that teachers were involved in the curriculum review process as well as deciding what needed to be included in the curriculum. FRS teacher 1 indicated that:

We were there to select what to be taught and we had been sent by our district to go and represent the subject at national level.

Inspectorate 1 had to say:



I noticed that there was a broad consultation. School teachers and heads were part of this broad consultation between government and the interested stakeholders.

From the above statement, it reflects that teachers were involved in the curriculum review. However they may not have been enough to represent the interest of curriculum implementers. This resonates with Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary education (2015-2022: vii) which claims that the updated curriculum reflects the views and opinions of Zimbabweans. This suggests that the top-bottom to approach was not used but a mixed approach as Zimbabweans were consulted on what they wanted included in the updated curriculum. This is seen by some consultations which were made in the curriculum review process. However, curriculum implementers were underrepresented. This caused discontent among teachers and the conclusion that Family and Religious Studies (FRS) was designed from the top. Teachers were only partially consulted to make an impression that curriculum planning and designing was inclusive. This observation is cemented by Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe president Takavafira Zhou who is quoted in the *Newsday* of 5 February 2018 saying the awkward updated curriculum was imposed on teachers.

All the inspectors interviewed mentioned that the teachers had been involved in curriculum planning and designing and teachers were supposed to implement Family and Religious Studies (FRS) without any discontent. Inspectorate 2 had to say:

Workshops were organised and teachers were tasked to give their input on curriculum review process. If teachers were not involved, the reforms would not have been done. It is the teachers who came up with the ideas that all religions should be presented in the syllabus.

The quote from the inspector above resonates with what other teachers said that they were involved. I argue that though the teachers were involved, the representation was not enough as the majority of the teachers indicated that they had not been consulted. It is, however, possible that in some districts teachers were not involved due to information dissemination constraints and monetary constraints. Inspectors as supervisors of policy implementation argued that they expected to teach and not preach when teaching Family and Religious Studies (FRS). Inspectorate 2 stated that teachers were hesitant to implement the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum because of Christian indoctrination.

Teachers blame government because they are afraid of change.

The findings from the study reveal that there are accusations from teachers against the government. However, inspectors dismissed the perception that the updated curriculum was forced on teachers. On the other hand, teachers still think it was necessary to have them

involved in syllabus development since they are the ones in the classroom. It is clear from the findings of the study that teachers have different understandings of how curriculum planning and designing was done. This is evidenced by discord among teachers regarding their involvement in the curriculum process. They indicated that some of the curriculum demands were unrealistic because the demands were made by a policy maker who was not a classroom practitioner. It was further revealed that teachers were unable to complete teaching the syllabus content and implement policy regarding Family and Religious Studies (FRS). This was partly because what the curriculum planners had planned was impractical because the planners were not classroom practitioners.

#### **4.4.6 THEME 5: HOW WAS THE UPDATED FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES (FRS) CURRICULUM DISSEMINATED TO TEACHERS?**

Policy dissemination is often overlooked, even though it is an important dimension of policy implementation. It comprises of the presentation of curriculum through the distribution of thoughts and concepts in order to make relevant people aware of the envisaged curriculum; ensuring that a curriculum reaches the target population, that is, the deliberate intention to inform clients of an innovation (Carl 2002). For this reason, the updated Curriculum policy dissemination was key in ensuring that an updated curriculum framework became a success by making Religious Studies teachers aware. In this study, curriculum dissemination means how information about the updated Family and Religious Studies curriculum (FRS) was delivered to teachers who are the curriculum implementers. This includes dissemination mechanisms such as legislation, memoranda, personal, or collective. Regardless of dissemination mechanism used, the policy must be clearly communicated to all stakeholders and, in particular, teachers, who are the implementers of the curriculum. This is consistent with Maluleke's (2009:39-58) contention that information about curriculum change needs to be disseminated in a manner that makes teachers important stakeholders. In this theme, I report how information about the updated Religious Studies curriculum was disseminated to teachers because it affects policy implementation. I identified five categories from this theme and these are: media, use of circulars and minutes, schools heads, and cluster meetings.

##### **4.4.6.1 Media**

During interviews with Religious Studies teachers and educational inspectors both responded to the question: "*How was the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum disseminated to teachers?*" FRS teacher 2 had a lot to say.

We heard it through the media and social media platforms that the subject has changed to the teaching of Indigenous Religious, Judaism, Christianity and Islam from the bible knowledge that we used to teach.

From the above, information it would mean that dissemination to teachers was not done properly as the Family and Religious Studies (FRS) teachers only received the information on the curriculum change through the media. This resonates with the Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education (2015-2022: v) which states that there was extensive media coverage which included advertorials, newscasts, features and interviews in all platforms which disseminated curriculum change in Zimbabwe. FRS teacher 2 during the interview further said:

The new syllabus came as a surprise by the head and full information on how to implement the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) was scanty. We were made to implement the curriculum without conducting a single workshop to make sure that we are informed about demands of the updated Religious Studies curriculum now called FRS meaning Family and Religious Studies (FRS). We only heard it through the media.

Teachers were made to respond to curriculum change despite receiving information through the media. Some of the heads were also ignorant about the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum. Such communication should have taken into account the knowledge and situational expertise of policy implementers (Maluleke 2015). There was an assumption that all teachers had knowledge about syllabus interpretation. It is clear that the way information was disseminated indicated that there was no adequate time to prepare for new policy implementation. Policy was disseminated haphazardly to the teachers. Teachers should be accorded sufficient time to comprehend Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum policy before implementation. The interviewed teachers highlighted the impact of inadequate information on curriculum change on the Family and Religious Studies (FRS) learning area. This had been caused by the use of improper ways of information dissemination which limited teachers' abilities to implement policy objectives. Consequently, teachers implemented Family and Religious study policy from an uninformed position. Information dissemination to do with the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum should have ensured that the teachers, who are policy implementers, have ample time to dialogue with the policy with fellow teachers. This would facilitate a common understanding of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum policy which ensures that there is no policy resistance or misinterpretation. There is a tendency that when teachers do not receive information to do with policy change from policy makers through the right forum, they disregard policies that they do not understand (Maluleke 2015). This forces teachers to implement what best suits them, according to the environment under which they operate. This reinforces the view that successful curriculum

change and policy implementation depends on effective information dissemination mechanisms.

FRS teacher 1 underscored that he had heard information about the policy implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum from peers. The teacher had this to say:

Honestly speaking, I heard about curriculum from my peers in our cluster after I heard the initial information on the news. We had to consult each other to implement the policy that came as a surprise to us.

This means that information to do with updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) was possibly disseminated to few schools using the proper channels while the majority had to rely on other informal means. Modes of information dissemination affect policy implementation because teachers implement what they know. It becomes difficult for them to implement what they do not know. It must be emphasised that relaying information about curriculum change has an impact on how policy is received. Issues of disseminating information to curriculum implementers needs to be done in an organised manner. This resonates with what Hope (2002:40-44) observes in his study where he says “transforming educational policy into practice, regardless of the level from which it emanates requires proper information dissemination.” In our case, failure to disseminate information to teachers was a major obstacle to successful implementation of the new policy. The obstacles include resistance to change, insufficient time for implementation, and disagreement about how to achieve results.

#### **4.4.6.2 Workshops and cluster meetings**

From the findings of the study, it emerged that workshops and cluster meetings were also a means through which the curriculum changes to Religious Studies were disseminated to teachers. FRS teacher 1 had to say:

We held a meeting in our cluster to discuss the policy that was being introduced to us from nowhere. Religious Studies teachers in our cluster had to meet and assist one another in implementing the policy.

FRS teacher 2 had this to say:

I still don't have adequate knowledge to teach Family and Religious Studies (FRS) because the information was disseminated through the district workshop and I still need more guidance on the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The workshops we attended as Religious Studies teachers were done in a hurry because time was limited.

The above verbatim quote was also echoed by inspectorate 1 who said:

The information was also disseminated to teachers through workshops which were organised by Better Schools Program of Zimbabwe (BSPZ). Every school was represented by the school head and head of department. This means that the information was disseminated through proper channels.

Inspectorate 2 also noted that the top-down approach was used. The inspector said:

Teachers were told what to do by the inspectors and there was no room for teachers to question the curriculum change because policy is not negotiated. It has to be implemented and we convened workshops from district to cluster level cascading the information about curriculum change.

The above proclamations from interviewees indicate that not all subjects were represented during policy dissemination. School heads and Heads of Department (H.O.D) who represented the school during these workshops may have disseminated information incorrectly to Religious Studies teachers. This resulted in some challenges affecting policy implementation. I argue that when policy change is disseminated to schools it should be done according to subjects. The idea of one size fits all affects implementation of policy. One may argue that workshops and cluster meetings as a means of disseminating information were ineffective since teachers had to interpret policy from how they understood it and not what policy makers intended. This resonates with Mawila's (2007) study who notes that there are certain curriculum dissemination strategies and tactics that are critical and should be considered if dissemination is to bear the required fruits. Use of cluster meetings and workshops did not bear the expected fruits. In this case, workshops and meetings at cluster level were not led by an informed person but were a common way of policy dissemination.

#### **4.4.6.3 Organisational hierarchy**

It emerged from the study that information was disseminated to teachers through the school hierarchy. This is echoed in the interview with FRS teacher 2 who had to say:

I was told by my head of department who had also received the information from the head who had been informed by the district about the updated curriculum framework.

The same sentiments were echoed by inspectorate 2 who said:

We had to relay the information to the school heads after we had been informed from the top that curriculum change was coming. The heads had to go and tell their constituents. This is how information is disseminated in our education system.

The use of hierarchy is a clear testimony that curriculum reform was done from top to bottom. This is the reason why the information had to be cascaded from top to bottom until it reached

the teacher. The hierarchy system has some challenges in the sense that some inspectors are not specialists in the subject areas, hence their interpretation of information from the above may affect how policy is implemented (Ndamba 2013:33). One of the inspectors indicated that heads were told about curriculum change and it was the duty of the heads to tell their constituency about curriculum change. This indicates that ways of information dissemination were blanketed and not subject specific. They covered all subjects. In this context, Family and Religious Studies (FRS) as a subject was affected as it had undergone major transformation from the old curriculum. So, when curriculum change is done, information dissemination should focus on individual subjects in order to avoid misinterpretation of policy.

#### **4.4.6.4 Minutes and seculars**

The study further observed that information about the Religious Studies curriculum reform was disseminated from top to bottom through minutes and circulars. Inspectorate 2 had this to say:

Dissemination was done in stages from top to bottom. Few memos were used and in some cases minutes were used.

There are circulars and minutes to prove that information was disseminated to the teachers. It should be noted that incorrect dissemination of policy affects its implementation as teachers interpret and respond to policy differently. One of the teachers interviewed indicated that the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum was being implemented differently within the same cluster of schools because, each teacher responded to the curriculum policy implementation the way that he or she had understood it. This was caused by the way information on the updated curriculum was disseminated. They interpreted information from the syllabus and media differently. It became evident that information dissemination was important in ensuring successful implementation of new policy. Another teacher suggested that policy makers should ensure that a feasibility study is conducted before the implementation of the new curriculum policy. Policy should not be directed to all schools before conducting a feasibility study which could assist in policy interpretation and implementation.

#### **4.4.7 THEME 6: WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY THE TERM POLICY?**

Teachers' understanding of the term 'policy' significantly influences how they interpret and implement a policy. This means that understanding of policy affects the successful implementation of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum. This is in line with Wedell's (2009:39-58) contention that an understanding of the concept 'policy' directs its

implementation. Indeed, teachers and inspectors indicated that they understood policy differently. It should be noted that the inspectorate and teachers' understanding of the concept 'policy' made it easier to implement the guideline. I noted that the inspectorate and teachers were generally knowledgeable, especially about policy implementation of the Religious Studies curriculum, as indicated by one of the teachers' interviewed who said in Shona (verbatim):

*Hurongwa hwezvinodzidzwa nevana takatarisana navana ava*

Translated: it is a plan of organisation of material that learners use in their learning process.

Another response emerged from FRS teacher 1 indicated that:

Policy implementation is a general plan of action or way of doing something which is prescribed by a specific body

FRS teacher 2 underscored that;

Policy is a law, regulation, procedure or voluntary practice of governments and other institutions.

In this case, the teacher referred to the procedures of doing Family and Religious Studies (FRS) as well as what was supposed to be taught as enshrined in the syllabus. When the ZIMSEC official was asked about his or her understanding of policy, the official had this to say:

This is a principle of behaviour or conduct thought to be desirable or necessary, especially as formally expressed by a government administration.

Inspector 1 also defined 'policy' by saying:

Policy is an enactment that comes from the government which has to be followed.

Inspectorate 2 defines 'policy' by saying:

Policy is government directive which stipulates how things should be done. There are also laws and regulations about how the government wants to achieve the objective of the updated curriculum.

From the above responses, I interpreted that the teachers, ZIMSEC officials and the inspectorate all knew what the policy was although very few differed on what policy implementation should be. The definitions above are in line with Maluleke (2015:16) who

defines policy as a general plan of action or way of doing something which is prescribed by a specific body. I interpreted policy as a set of plan of action prescribed by the government which explains how the vision of the country is to be achieved. From the interview responses, it is clear that the stakeholders were aware that they use the national syllabus which they would break down into teachable units for classroom use. One can therefore conclude that interviewees understood what the policy was in the light of Religious Studies. This suffice to say that the teaching of the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) syllabus was a policy document which influenced how policy would be implemented. So, the success of policy implementation in the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) was hinged upon the teachers' interpretation and implementation of the national syllabus. The findings of the study further revealed that teachers' experience had a bearing on the understanding of the concept 'policy'. This is partly because policy planning and designing had been done without involving teachers. Thus, teachers' interpretation of the policy was based on their background and the environment under which they operated. During the interviews, teachers highlighted that their implementation of policy was based on what their heads said than what they knew. Many of the teachers interviewed believe that there had not been a total curriculum change in Zimbabwe prior to the 2017 one. Thus, teachers' understanding of policy in Zimbabwe was not uniform.

#### **4.4.8 THEME 7: WHAT ARE THE POLICY GUIDELINES FOR RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND HOW DOES IT INFLUENCE YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE?**

The researcher sought to establish policy guidelines for Religious Studies and how it influenced the teaching of Religious Studies in secondary schools. Two sub-themes, namely; multi-faith guideline and equality of religions in the syllabus have been generated.

##### **4.4.8.1 Teaching from a multi-faith perspective**

Respondents were aware of policy guidelines for Religious Studies and how they influenced teaching practice. This is reflected in the identification of the multi-faith approach to the teaching of religions in the updated Religious Studies. Such comprehension of policy guidelines was viewed as a contributory factor towards the successful implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. From the study it was discovered that policy demands multi-faith approach as said by FRS teacher 1 who stated that:

Policy Guidelines in Family and Religious Studies (FRS) indicate that indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are supposed to be taught from a multi-faith approach as part of their implementation of the updated Family and Religious Studies



(FRS) curriculum policy. This influences the teacher to utilise teaching approaches which are non-confessional.

Further explanation to the above verbatim quote indicate that changes to the Family and Religious Studies (FRS) or updated Religious Studies curriculum policy required a shift from the dogmatic approach which was used in the old curriculum. FRS teacher 2 indicated that:

The multi-faith approach is a policy guideline which resonates well with the teaching of the religions that were introduced in the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

The responses by the teachers were echoed by inspectorate 2 who said:

The syllabus is a policy on its own, which needs to be followed. It stipulates what is to be taught and how it is supposed to be taught. In fact, the syllabus has policy objectives and how the policy is supposed to be implemented. This means that the syllabus, as policy guideline, requires teachers to teach using multi-faith approaches.

Findings from the study indicate that teachers and inspectors are aware that policy guidelines are derived from available written documents such as syllabuses, which influence how teaching practice is done. With this policy guideline, teachers are considered facilitators of religious beliefs and practices of various religions in the syllabus rather than evangelists representing various religious affiliations. I argue that the updated Religious Studies curriculum is based on the multi-faith policy guidelines. If implemented, it could promote religious inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Teachers are influenced by policy in implementing a multi-faith approach which fits well in a society composed of various religions. This resonates with evidence from Ndlovu (2002:177-228) who remarks that the Zimbabwean society has varied beliefs and that the use of the multi-faith approach was imperative. A classroom is not a church but a space to acquire unlimited and uncensored religious information without considering one's affiliation. I strongly content that the Religious Studies syllabus should be neutral, unbiased and honest for the avoidance of prejudice to the learner. It is evident that all interviewees accepted that the policy guideline for the updated Religious Studies curriculum was centred on the multi-faith approach. Implementation of that policy guideline was vital in ensuring that the objectives of the updated Religious Studies curriculum were met. As a result of religious diversity in Zimbabwe, all the interviewees in this study conceded that policy in Religious Studies was guided by the multi-faith approach.

#### **4.4.8.1 Equality of religions**

Respondents were aware of the policy guidelines for Religious Studies and how it influenced teaching practice as they also noted equality of religions. This is echoed in the interview response of the FRS teacher 2 who said;

The current policy guidelines demand equal treatment of religions in the classroom environment. Treating one religion as superior to the others is a violation of policy guidelines. This means that we are teaching all religions without bias.

From the above quote, the policy guidelines positively influenced teaching practice which inculcated positive attitudes among learners as they appreciated that religious tolerance was key for human survival in a multi-faith society. Thus, in line with the above finding on multi-faith approach, the teaching and learning of the updated curriculum presented a paradigm shift from indoctrination to teaching of religious faiths. It is in the light of this that I argue that when policy guidelines are followed, they can bring out the much desired goal. Adherence to these policy guidelines by teachers, would ensure Zimbabwe moves towards religious tolerance, pluralism and inclusivism as demanded by the Constitution of the country that all religions are equal. As Machingura and Mugebe (2015) and Dube (2017) observe, any effort that results in successful implementation of policy begins with acknowledging the different religious composition of our society. The study acknowledged the existence of various religions in Zimbabwe.

From the study, policy guidelines refer to issues that are supposed to be adhered to in Religious Studies curriculum implementation. They direct how teaching content, methodology and assessment procedures are done in the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS). Policy guidelines are derived and observed from minutes, circulars, syllabus and the final assessment of examinations.

From the responses, it was found that although multi-faith and equality of religions are policy guidelines it is difficult to implement them in secondary schools owned by Christian churches. Generally, the sentiments suggest that teachers and inspectors are aware of policy guidelines which guide the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies. The use of the syllabus as a policy guideline promotes inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambu (2013) had earlier on highlighted the importance of the multi-faith policy in the teaching of Religious Studies in order to cater for all religions in Zimbabwe. This is because a multi-faith policy guideline is a prerequisite for religious inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. This means that all policy implementers need to utilise the multi-faith approach and equality of all religions to promote religious inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

#### **4.4.9 THEME 8: WHICH POLICIES SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED TO ENHANCE THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES (FRS) IN ZIMBABWE?**

Policy implementation refers to the execution of government plans and directives. In this case, the government made the teaching of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam a policy when the government revamped the Religious Studies curriculum to Family and Religious Studies (FRS) in 2017 for secondary schools. Hence, it is crucial to ensure that teachers implement the teaching of those religions. In order to understand how the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) should be done from the curriculum implementers, responses indicated that there were some policies which needed to be implemented to enhance the teaching of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) in a multi-faith society like Zimbabwe. Only two sub-themes, multi-faith policy implementation and confessional policy emerged.

##### **4.4.9.1 Multi-faith implementation**

Since findings indicated that all participants had agreed that the multi-faith policy guidelines for the teaching and learning of Religious Studies were acceptable. I then sought clarification on which policy enhanced the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe. I interpreted the situation to be one of the factors which contributed to the successful implementation of Religious Studies in a multi-faith society. On policies which should be implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) in Zimbabwe, inspectorate 2 declared that:

The multi-faith approach enhances the teaching of all religions. It enables religions to be treated equally and it is a good policy that should be embraced in all centres of learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS).

In the light of the above, FRS teacher 1 interviewed concurred that:

Multi-faith approach as a policy is important in a country with a rich religious demography like Zimbabwe. The policy enhances the teaching of Religious Studies since it is impartial and learner-centred.

The study observed that most teachers indicated that a multi-faith approach should be a policy that guides the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS). They cited the

fact that Zimbabwe is not a Christian country but a home of various religions. These teachers felt that all religions were equal and in order to reduce resistance from learners of diverse religious backgrounds, a multi-faith approach needed to be the major thrust of the policy in the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS). They also stressed that mission schools needed to support government policy on Family and Religious Studies (FRS) by making their schools centres of learning and not centres of evangelism. Clearly, the interviewees' responses discussed above indicate that they agreed that Zimbabwe was not a Christian country and that there was need to respect other religions, hence, the need for a multi-faith approach.

When questioned about the policies which enhanced the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS), FRS teacher 1 also indicated that:

Every learner should learn Family and Religious Studies (FRS) so that they can familiarise themselves with the indigenous systems of governance and worship as well as cherish *Unhu/Ubuntu* (morality).

This means that policy implementers advocated for the teaching of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) in all secondary schools as it could help in the preservation of African identity as well as the moral fabric of the society. Teachers understood the vitality of the subject in shaping morality in society. One of the interviewees indicated that teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) should be learner-centred. This implies that a multi-faith approach should be utilised.

Inspectorate 2 indicated that policies should enhance inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. In this context, the schools inspector had this to say:

Pluralism and tolerance oriented policies should be implemented in the teaching and learning of FRS.

When interrogated about the exact policy which should be used to promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism inspectorate 2 had this to say:

The multi-faith policy is a guideline which should be used in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies to reduce religious conflicts, extremism and bias among learners.

When the ZIMSEC official was asked about policies to be implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe, the official said the policy should be a multi-faith one in nature because it has to:

- Appraise the four religions in Zimbabwe.
- Cherish religious beliefs in shaping the character and behaviour of the learners basing on *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy which should be integrated from various religions.
- Develop critical consciousness of how religion shapes identity and national values.

Findings from the study indicated that a multi-faith policy was critical in ensuring that Religious Studies catered for the needs of the learners of diverse religious backgrounds. Jackson's (2013) study notes that today, the teaching of Religious Education is based on a multi-faith approach in a multi-cultural situation. He further notes that policy should promote tolerance, dialogue, respect, sensitivity to religious diversity, appreciation of religious diversity, knowledge of religious diversity, inclusivism and religious pluralism (Council of Europe 2007; Jackson 2014). This policy is enhanced through in-service training which makes teaching and learning of the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum a success in a multi-faith environment. Curriculum implementers need to be supported with friendly policies such as the multi-faith one which guarantees the effective implementation of the curriculum as all religions are represented in the curriculum space. Furthermore, teachers indicated that policy on Family and Religious Studies (FRS) did not need a top-bottom approach, where policy makers decided the content and methodology of teaching the subject. Teachers stated during the interviews that inclusive policy formulation ensured enhancement of the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) in Zimbabwe. This was because teachers would be participating in the programs which they had designed.

#### **4.4.10 THEME 9: TO WHAT EXTENT DO TEACHERS ADHERE TO THE UPDATED POLICY ON FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES (FRS) IN YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE?**

When curriculum changes, teachers resist the new policy in their teaching practice. For this reason, many teachers are found either partially or holistically implementing the policy. To establish how the implementation of the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum was happening, teachers were interviewed. The following sub-themes emerged from the interview responses: teaching of all religions, bias against Indigenous Religion and Islam, dropping of the subject in schools, and teaching of the Cambridge syllabus.

#### **4.4.10.1 Teaching of all religions**

Teachers interviewed admitted that they adhered to the reforms that had been introduced in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies as they were teaching all the religions as per the requirements of the syllabus. FRS teacher 1 interviewed had this to say:

I am very happy to say that I am adhering to the reforms. I am teaching all the religions and I am now using the knowledge that I learnt at university to deliver my content to learners. You know that the previous curriculum was biblical centred and we could not teach Indigenous Religion, and Islam that we had learnt at college. Now I am teaching and appreciating all the religions as demanded by the new syllabus.

Inspectorate 1 stated that teachers were adhering to policy and everyone was teaching the prescribed religions in the syllabus. The interviewee said:

Adhering to policy is a mandate for the teacher. Non-compliance to policy is an act of misconduct and teachers are adhering to policy. There are no complaints about Religious Studies teachers not adhering to policy.

The above interview responses indicate that teachers were adhering to policy. This means that teachers were teaching Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, thus adhering to the policy. Findings reflect that teachers have moved from the old curriculum and are geared towards implementing the new policy. For this reason, teachers are teaching all the religions without bias. This shows that implementing a policy is based on how the policy is received by the teacher. It is also crucial to note that the inspectorate ensures that policy is adhered to. The findings of this study reflect that education inspectors have a duty to monitor policy adherence in schools.

#### **4.4.10.2 Bias against Indigenous Religion and Islam**

From the findings of the study, it emerged that some teachers are not adhering to policy. Some are teaching the updated Religious Studies with a bias against newly introduced religions. This is evidenced by the echoes from one of the interviewees who indicated that they were implementing the policy partially because of their Christian background and the environment they were teaching in. FRS teacher 1 stated that:

To a lesser extent, I am partially adhering to policy implementation. I cannot teach about Islam and Indigenous Religion because they are against my religious beliefs. For, it is better to drop the subject because my beliefs do not allow me to teach things which are against my faith disposition.

FRS teacher 2 concurred with the above assertion:

Adhering to policy is difficult because I am working at a mission school. Of course, we teach all the religions but we have to defend the responsible authority's doctrines.

Indigenous Religion and Islam, we teach, but we recommend learners not to take them seriously for they are only learnt for academic purposes only.

Inspectorate 2 had this to say:

Some teachers are blinkered and they are not supposed to reveal their beliefs when teaching the updated Religious Studies curriculum. This is a challenge with this learning area where newly introduced religions are concerned. The teachers are diverting their core business of teaching by seemingly preaching in class. Teachers should not have emotions when teaching Indigenous Religion and Islam.

It is clear that the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) policy adherence has some challenges as some teachers have found it difficult to teach other religions which are not Christianity because of their personal backgrounds and working environments. This resonates with Khozin (2018) whose empirical investigation in Indonesia noted that Muslim teachers found it difficult to teach other religions besides Islam. Literature also confirms the same scenario where the Christian background of teachers has hampered the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum (Zivave and Muzambi 2022). In this study, this implies that the teaching of Indigenous Religion and Islam is against Christian principles for many teachers. In Christian mission schools, teaching of Indigenous Religion and Islam are difficult in such environments where Christian values outweigh pedagogical objectives. This means that the religious backgrounds of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) teachers as well as the mission schools' values have become an impediment for teachers to adhere to the new policy in Religious Studies.

#### **4.4.10.3 Dropping of the subject in mission schools**

Another emerging theme from the main theme was that in some mission schools the Religious Studies subject was being dropped. FRS teacher 2 noted that teaching at mission school had proved to be a challenge if one needed to adhere to the current policy. The findings of the study also indicated that the responsible authority or the owners of Christian mission schools were influencing policy adherence negatively. FRS teacher 2 revealed that:

Mission schools have their own core values which are grounded on their doctrinal beliefs. The coming of the updated Religious Studies has made it difficult for us teachers to teach other religions without bias. We are supposed to de-teach learners in some cases so that they do not deviate from Christian ethos.

When inspectorate 2 was asked about the adherence to policy in mission schools she said:

We are aware that this learning area has some challenges in mission schools. Mission schools prefer the teaching of Christianity as a religion. I can say this is attributed to misconceptions about the updated Religious Studies that it is meant to divert souls won by mission schools to other religions.

The findings of the study reveal that mission schools were resisting to implement the teaching of other religions in the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum due to misconceptions about Indigenous Religion and Islam. Contrary to the misconception that the inclusion of IR in the updated curriculum pushed learners back to paganism, the inclusion of IR actually helps Africans to reclaim their African identity and appreciate their rich religious heritage without being culturally alienated from what they experience at home (Muzambi 2018). For this reason, teachers are supposed to put more emphasis on Christianity and Judaism which are biblical oriented religions rather than on Indigenous Religion and Islam. This is because Christian mission schools view Christianity as the only religion which is an avenue for salvation. From the respondents' perspectives on policy adherence, it is clear that policy adherence in mission schools is a bit shaky. This results in intolerance, and an exclusive and mono-religious community as some Christian mission schools discriminate against other religions. The findings from the study reveal that teachers were supposed to tell students that other religions should not be taken seriously while learning them. FRS teacher 2 showed that policy adherence in Family and Religious Studies (FRS) was difficult in mission schools because the subject had been dropped from the school curriculum because mission schools perceived Indigenous Religion and Islam as anti-Christian.

#### **4.4.10.3 Teaching of Cambridge syllabus**

It also emerged that the current policy has been difficult to adhere to in some Group A schools because of the option of the Cambridge examinations syllabus. FRS teacher 1 indicated that:

We have reverted back to the Cambridge syllabus. The local examination board is the one which implement the study of religions and ours we teach Divinity, which is about the bible.

The findings reveal that the competition between the local examination board, Zimbabwe School Examination Council and Cambridge has led policy adherence to be hazy. Some schools prefer the Cambridge syllabus to ZIMSEC because it is Bible-centred. This throws into jeopardy, the current policy which seeks to ensure that learning of all religions in Zimbabwe is done. The transition from exclusivism, intolerance and mono-religious societies to inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism is threatened by the competition of the two examination boards. This implies that policy adherence is difficult in Zimbabwe as a whole.

The inspectorate lamented lack of supervision of policy due to lack of resources. Inspectorate 2 said that:



I feel the adherence of teachers to the policy is lacklustre as teachers have little supervision because we do not have cars to effectively supervise schools in our district. Most of the supervisors are demotivated to fully supervise new policies by the low remuneration.

The above excerpt indicates that lack of supervision has hampered the success of the updated Religious Studies as teachers use teaching approaches which they want and some schools are offering parallel syllabus opposed to the updated curriculum framework. This validates De Graurwe (2001) whose empirical data generation of 2004 observed that the abolition of posts for subject supervision has left a skeletal team of education officers to take charge of general subject supervision from primary through to secondary schools, each over and above their fields of specialisation, expertise and experience. I argue that school inspectors do not have resources to monitor all educational policies. There is remote monitoring of policy, which is not effective. I argue that lack of supervision has led schools and teachers to implement policies the way they want and not what the policy stipulates.

#### **4.4.11 THEME 10: WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CURRENT POLICY ON EDUCATION IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES?**

In order to understand why some schools were not adhering to policy, I examined the current challenges associated with the current policy. The following sub-themes emerged as the problems associated with the current policy in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies.

##### **4.4.11.1 Religious extremism**

The challenges raised during the generation of the data on the impact of the current policy on the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) include religious extremism. FRS teacher 2 said:

The coming of Indigenous Religion and Islam has made us extremists as Christians. If you look at mission schools, religious extremism has been on the increase due to the updated curriculum. Christians do not want to hear anything about Islam.

The above quote indicates the presence of religious extremism as a challenge of the current policy. This confirms empirical evidence from Dube (2021) which notes that the introduction of other religions in a syllabus dominated by Christianity presents problems with the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS). The introduction of other religions in the current policy has resulted in Christians refusing to embrace the teaching of Indigenous Religion and Islam which they consider anti-Christ. This increases religious extremism among

Christians. Teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies has been impacted on as some learners and educational institutions have failed to accept the current policy which requires the use of multi-faith approach in the teaching of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is this attitude that has resulted in students being vulnerable to stereotyping and bullying by classmates and even teachers. It has also created hostile environments that could make it difficult for students to learn (Dube 2016). Findings reveal that the current policy has failed to eliminate religious extremism as evidenced by some mission schools dropping the subject and some learners dropping the subject due to fear of being corrupted of their faith. This observation is true as reflected by Dube (2017) who avers that Zimbabwe has, generally, not experienced the dangers of extremism, it is susceptible to it. The Herald of 17 December 2017 states that religious intolerance is an elephant in the room threatening to stomp the Zimbabwean society. This is because Christianity was being given preferential treatment while other religions had been peripherised.

#### **4.4.11.2 Bias towards Christianity**

The policy has thus forced conservative Christians to shun the subject thereby affecting the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS). This was noted by FRS teacher 1 who stated that;

The major problem is that of failing to embrace the multi-faith approach. Many still have some bias towards and against certain beliefs.

Inspectorate 1 also contributed by saying:

The bulk of teachers in the field are Christians. They are used to the old curriculum that venerated Christianity. So, they are finding it a challenge to get used to the new curriculum which puts four religions at par- that is Islam, IR, Christianity and Judaism. Bias towards Christianity and bias against Indigenous Religion and Islam has continued despite the change of policy. This has caused religious fundamentalism among Christians in Zimbabwe who often blame Islam for being too fundamentalist. Zivave and Muzambi (2022:20) note that the association of Islam with violence is not only a fallacy of hasty generalisation and error of judgement but also a result of years of a proselytising approach used before curriculum reform. I argue that Christians do not realise their religious extremism, which is so overt that they have not been receptive of the current policy. They believe Christianity is the only religion which has the legal and religious standing to be studied in schools.

#### **4.4.11.3 Dropping of the subject in the school curriculum**

From the findings of the study, the subject has become unpopular in mission schools where some have dropped the subject. FRS teacher 1 had this to say:

The subject is no longer studied. It is a threat to the stability of our society because it teaches terrorism through the teaching of Islam. Learners should not learn anything about Islam because they will become rebellious.

FRS teacher 2 also shared the same sentiments saying:

I am a trained pastor teaching Religious Studies, I cannot teach the learners about spirits found in Indigenous Religion and I have recommended that the teaching of the subject has to be stopped at our school. It is a threat to Christian values.

From the above excerpt, respondents noted that the subject had become unpopular in some schools because of its inclusion of Indigenous Religion and Islam. This was caused by the misrepresentation of religious facts which had negatively impacted on the current policy in the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS). Data that emanated from the empirical evidence showed that the policy had resulted in the misrepresentation of religious facts concerning religions. This confirms Cunningham's (2013) study which points out that if curriculum reform were done haphazardly, without support of relevant learning material, there would be misrepresentation of religions. Islam and indigenous religion have been misrepresented by authors who rushed to print learning material. FRS teacher 2 commented as follows on the impact of the current policy in the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS).

I teach FRS but I am a Muslim, the sources available misrepresent our religion. Sources are written from a Christian perspective by authors who have contributed to the hating of Islam as well as indigenous religions by learners. As a result, the current policy has impacted on the way other religions are viewed.

Analysis from interviewees shows that the subject had been dropped in the schools because of the misrepresentation of religions by sources developed to cater for the needs of the students. Some textbooks have Christian bias against the current policy. Islam and Indigenous Religion have been written from a Christian perspective, thus creating a challenge for the current policy. The critical observation is: Why is policy changed without planning and support to Family and Religious? One might argue that there was abrupt policy change which has affected how Family and Religious Studies (FRS) policy has been implemented. The lack of proper planning has resulted in content developers developing learning material which has also affected the perception of other religions.

#### **4.4.11.4 Exclusion of other religions**

One of the emerging themes from the interviews was that the current policy had the problem of excluding other religions. One of the interviewees argued that:

I am a Rastafarian and my religion is not included in the curriculum. It seems like they excluded other religions like mine, Hinduism, Baha'i faith and new religious practices.

The above quote reflects that the current policy was not a representation of all religions in Zimbabwe. Zivave (2019:4) has shown that Zimbabwe has followers of Indigenous religion, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Rastafarians, Hindus, Buddhist and members of Bahai faith. This means that the failure by the current updated Religious Studies to include some religions noted generally implies that it is still exclusionary. I argue that the current updated Religious Studies curriculum does not embrace the constitutional rights of every Zimbabwean. I argue that any curriculum which excludes religion on the basis of numerical strength does not promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

#### **4.4.11.5 The subject is elective**

Findings from the study reveal that the subject is viewed as an elective one. It is this status which affects the uptake of the subject. I argue that because of its role in shaping moral and human development Religious Studies should be treated as a core subject. Human survival in any society is based on religious beliefs and practices. It is prudent for all learners to be exposed to the subject. Therefore, the current policy has a challenge of treating the subject as an elective and, therefore, peripheral.

When asked about the current policy challenges the ZIMSEC official noted that:

I would like to believe that the current policy makes the subject an elective. Most of the schools and learners do not value the subject. This has affected policy implementation. The policy makes Science and Mathematics core subject and undermines the value of religion in shaping learners' behaviour and values.

From the above, it can be concluded that the implementation of the subject has been affected by the treatment of the subject as an elective. Due to fears and misgivings that the subject is against Christian ethos, many schools and learners have dropped the subject arguing that it compromises their Christian beliefs. This confirms what Zivave and Muzambi (2022) say about how the valuing of subjects such as Mathematics, Sciences and Technology has affected the implementation of the updated Religious Studies subject by invoking attitudes among parents,

learners and teachers. I argue that the optional nature of the subject has created policy implementation challenges as the subject is dropped and pushed to the periphery.

#### **4.4.12 THEME 11: TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE CURRENT RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM RELEVANT IN PROMOTING INCLUSIVISM, TOLERANCE AND PLURALISM?**

In response to the question: “To what extent is the current Religious Studies curriculum relevant in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality?” The participants had a lot to say. It would appear, as Zivave and Muzambi (2022) put it, that “the updated Religious Studies curriculum promotes inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.” The participants mentioned numerous ways through which the current Religious Studies curriculum promoted inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Sub-themes that emerged include multi-faith approaches, constructivism, teaching of four religions which have religious demographic representation in Zimbabwe, as well as the exclusion of minority religions.

##### **4.4.12.1 Multi-faith approaches**

The findings indicated that the current updated Religious Studies curriculum promotes religious inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism due to its multi-faith outlook and approach. FRS teacher 2 noted that:

The syllabus is very relevant in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Learners are now able to tolerate people who have different religious beliefs from theirs because at school they now have deeper insights of those religions which were once unfamiliar to them. This is done through the multi-faith approach that is used in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies.

The above quote is an admission that the current Religious Studies curriculum addresses the needs of the learners as the four major religions found in the country are represented in the curriculum. Teachers are mandated to use the multi-faith approach and desist from being preachers in the classroom under the current Religious Studies policy guideline. The subject is now a deviation from the old Religious Studies which was confessional and neo-confessional (Jackson 2004). The subject has ceased to be Eurocentric and Christ-centric as it cherishes African heritage and all other religions in Zimbabwe. The current Religious Studies curriculum does not “marginalize, disorient, disfigure and displace African learners” (Ndlovu 2004). It is inclusive, tolerant and takes cognisance of religious pluralism in Zimbabwe.

##### **4.4.12.2 Constructivism**

Constructivism is a theme which emerged when probing was done on the role played by the current Religious Studies curriculum in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism. One of the interview respondents had this to say:

The learner learns all religions and is able to construct knowledge from his personal experiences in the multi-faith community where he or she lives. So, I view learners as being inclusive, tolerant and accepting of religious diversity through constructivism.

The above proclamations reflect that learners are valued as geniuses who are able to construct knowledge on their own. Thus, the finding of this study was that through constructivism, the teacher allowed purposeful student interaction, collaboration and higher order thinking during the learning process. This learning process enables learners to accept religious differences.

#### **4.4.12.3 Exclusion of minority religions**

The findings of the study reveal that, to a lesser extent, the current Religious Studies syllabus does not promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism as it excludes other religions. FRS teacher 1 noted with reservations that:

The current policy is biased towards religions with large following. Some religions like Rastafarianism, Baha'i faith, Buddhism and Hinduism are excluded despite having few followers in Zimbabwe.

The above quote suggests that some religions are excluded in the current Religious Studies curriculum, making it difficult to say the curriculum promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism. Muhamba (2020:7) has been quoted saying Buddhism, Hinduism and Rastafarianism had been excluded from the Religious Studies curriculum because of their numerical inferiority. I argue that religious knowledge is valuable regardless of the fact that the religion has few followers. Learners should be exposed to all religious knowledge. Minoritisation of religions generates exclusivism and intolerance.

Inspectorate 2 also echoed that:

The current curriculum is a step in the right direction. However, it does not do justice as Zimbabwe has more than four religions. More needs to be done to include all the religions in Zimbabwe into the curriculum.

The ZIMSEC official also noted that the current updated Religious Studies syllabus promoted inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The official said:

To a large extent, it is relevant because all the religions in the country have been given a priority. Teachers and learners from different religions feel honoured and respected as their religions are represented in the Religious Studies curriculum. To say the least,

there is free and fair treatment of all, fostering and an awareness of tolerance in the context of a plurality of religions.

The excerpt from inspectorate 2 and ZIMSEC official indicate that the updated Religious Studies curriculum is appraised for promoting inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism because it involves the study of four religions. The findings reveal that more could be done by including the religions that have been excluded. This resonates with the findings of Khozin (2018:1) who notes that exclusion of minority religions bred ethnic-based conflict and religious conflicts in his study of the Indonesian Religious Studies curriculum reform. I admit that inclusion of excluded religions makes learners exposed to all religions, regardless of numerical representation in society.

#### **4.4.13 THEME 12: CAN YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN THE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES THAT YOU OFTEN USE IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES (FRS)?**

In this theme, I report on how participants in this study responded to some pedagogical approaches in Religious Studies. I identified two categories from this theme, namely: learner-centred pedagogies and teacher-centred pedagogies. In the first category, I focus on participants' explanations on how they taught the current updated Religious Studies curriculum.

##### **4.4.13.1 Learner-centred pedagogies**

Findings from the study reveal that teachers knew about pedagogy. FRS teacher 1 stated that:

Pedagogies refer to ways of delivering lessons and in Religious Studies there are so many ways.

The above sentiments echo Grimmit (2000) who describes pedagogy as the science and art of teaching. This means that teachers understood pedagogies as strategies or styles of instruction. For this reason, there are procedures or strategies (methodology) for teaching and learning which are applicable to Family and Religious Studies (FRS). Pedagogy also deals with how learning content in Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam is delivered to learners. When asked further about the best pedagogy in Religious Studies FRS teacher 1 stated that:

Teachers employed discovery method in the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS).

The findings indicate that religious beliefs should not be taught but should be discovered by the learner. In this context, the teacher plays the facilitator role in the teaching and learning of the subject rather than the transmitter of knowledge. This augurs well with the conclusion that learners are not blank slates as they already have the knowledge about various religions. For this reason, FRS teacher 1 argued that the use of discovery ensures that learners learning different religions are not indoctrinated but they understand the religious phenomena on their own. Therefore, discovery deals with how best a student could learn and be receptive to the learning process. FRS teacher 2 noted that:

Religious Studies requires the use of research, presentations, dramatising, and question and answer to facilitate learning among learners.

It was during this interview that the lecture method was condemned for use in the teaching of the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) syllabus because the method has bias.

Inspectorate 1 who is specialist in Religious Studies noted that:

The new Religious Studies Syllabus 2015-2022 requires teachers to move away from biblical-centered pedagogy to learner-centered pedagogy which takes into account that all religions are equal. Methods of teaching should cultivate tolerance and inclusivism. For me lecture method has a tendency of revealing the religious beliefs of the teacher. This means that teachers have to shift from the old method which represented Christianity as if it were a religious affiliation of many classroom practitioners.

The study revealed that teacher-centred pedagogies undermine the essence of multi-faith society. For this reason, teachers advocated for methods like role plays, group works, question and answer, research and discovery methods. Muhamba (2020), in his study observes that teaching methods in Religious Studies have not changed despite the change of learning content. To remove bias against other religions due to limited knowledge the interviewees called for the use of resource persons and researches relating to communities or environments in which it is used. In so doing, the teacher was also calling for the life themes approach which takes into account the real experiences of the learner (Owusu and Danso 2014:79). However, during the interview it was revealed that the use of the life themes approach was biased towards one religion. This implies the learner would base learning from his or her faith position, thereby limiting the learning of other religions.

#### **4.4.13.2 Teacher-centred pedagogies**

It emerged from the study that the lecture method was a teacher-centred approach that was used in the current Religious Studies. Pedagogy deals with how teachers pass content to learners.



Ways of transmitting knowledge by Religious Studies teachers is dependent on the mastery of the subject by the policy and curriculum implementer, i.e., the teacher. One of the interviewed teachers claimed to use the lecture method in delivery lessons. This is shown in the interview response by FRS teacher 2 when asked about the best pedagogical way of teaching students to learn the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

Normally I use the lecture method in my class. I give them instruction and knowledge about the subject so that they do not get lost. That tends to be more effective than when a teacher utilises group works and research techniques.

FRS teacher 1 hoed the same sentiments

I use lecture method because there is no reading material. I do researches myself and lecture to learners so that they use uniform information. The lecture method is good because the calibre of learners that we have needs to be given information by the teacher.

The above quote suggests that lack of learning material in schools and the learners' personal attributes are considered when using the lecture method. However, I argue that the use of the lecture method may indirectly make the teacher represent his religious affiliation. The teacher may become confessional during the lecture delivery and may demonstrate bias against other religions. Furthermore, the method is not learner-centered and it does not promote learner's exploration of various religious beliefs.

The findings of the study revealed that teachers who utilise learner-centred approaches in the teaching and learning of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) promote tolerance, inclusivism and pluralism among learners. The findings further reveal that there is no universal pedagogical approach for Family and Religious Studies (FRS). This implies that pedagogies differ due to concepts being taught in Family and Religious Studies (FRS), availability of learning material and calibre of learners. It was further revealed that teachers were unable to run away from teacher-centred pedagogies which promote bias towards one religion at the expense of others because of their personal religious backgrounds. Be that as it may, the study discovered that learner-centred pedagogies were popular in implementing the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) policy in Zimbabwe because they suited the multi-faith approach.

#### **4.4.14 THEME13: HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERISE YOUR TEACHING STYLE? CONFESSIONAL, MULTI-FAITH, HYBRID, LIFE-THEME APPROACH.**

In order to understand how teachers were implementing the updated Religious Studies curriculum, I asked them about their teaching styles in ensuring that learners developed a sense

of inclusivity, tolerance and pluralism. It emerged from the interviews that I conducted with teachers that the teaching style that was most popular was the multi-faith approach which was premised on the teaching of a variety of religions. The sub-themes that have emerged from the interview include confessional, multi-faith, hybrid and life themes styles.

#### **4.4.14.1 Multi-faith approach**

When I asked about the teaching styles implemented and their strengths, FRS teacher 1 had this to say:

I am using multi-faith styles because learners are from diverse religious backgrounds and there are other religions to be taught other than Christianity. I need to expose these learners to other religions from an impartial approach.

Inspectorate 1 echoed the same sentiments by saying:

Policy demands multi-faith approaches because Zimbabwe is home to various religious traditions. It is a breach of policy to treat learners as converts, learners should be treated as learners who come to school to learn about religions and not to be evangelised by teachers.

The findings of the study indicate that the multi-faith style was common among teachers who wanted to expose learners to other religions. On the other hand, the inspectorate realised that the policy demanded the exposure of learners to various religions through multi-faith approach. The interviewees indicated that learners' knowledge about other religious traditions was enhanced through a multi-faith approach. This resonates with what Masaka and Mukungurutse's (2017:218) view that the 'multi-faith approach' is a corrective measure to the present exclusive dominance of the Christian religion in the study of religion, which has been a permanent feature of the old curriculum. Ndlovu (2004) and Grimmit (2007) have also noted that multi-faith style suits multi-religious classes and takes into account the diversity of beliefs and practices. It seems that style promotes understanding of other religions without bias and it promotes inclusivism. The findings reveal that multi-faith styles remove prejudices against other religions and promote unbiased understanding of religions.

#### **4.4.14.2 Life-themes approach**

When I asked about the alternative teaching styles implemented, FRS teacher 1 had this to say:

The experience of the learner also influences my teaching style. Learners have to explore issues in their real-life contexts before moving to the religious texts.

From the above verbatim quote, it is clear that teachers preferred the life-themes approach as the next style in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies. Empirical studies prove that the style assists “learners as they relate religion to their life experience and enables learners to have better understanding of their heritage and also their moral principles of “*Unhu/Ubuntu*” (Ndlovu 2004:116). The findings of the study show that the learner’s experience is important and it is the one which determines an understanding of religions in their proper context as they interact in real life experience. The findings show that the teacher notes that the confessional approach is not appropriate considering that more than one religion is taught in the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Also, the use of a hybrid approach has proved to be unpopular because it confuses the learner.

#### **4.4.15 THEME 14: TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT PROMOTE INCLUSIVISM, TOLERANCE AND PLURALISM BEING PROMOTED IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES?**

In order to understand how summative assessment was contributing towards promoting inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism in the updated Religious Studies curriculum, I asked teachers, inspectors and the ZIMSEC manager for their perceptions regarding summative assessment. It emerged from the interviews that I conducted that summative assessment had bias towards the old curriculum as questions in Judaism and Christianity reflected the Divinity syllabus. The sub-themes that have emerged from the interview include: bias towards the old curriculum, neutrality of questions and questions create religious bias against other religions.

##### **4.4.15.1 Bias towards the old Religious Studies curriculum.**

During empirical data generation there was common concern among teachers, who believed that the summative assessment was unfair and biased towards the old curriculum. FRS teacher 1, however, ascribed this bias to policy inconsistency.

The summative assessment is not a reflection of the updated Religious Studies principles because questions asked are not in line with the curriculum objectives. The questions in Christianity and Judaism sections remind us that we are still doing the old curriculum when teaching those religions.

The findings of the study reveal that teachers were not happy with the summative assessment questions. This has affected how teachers implement the curriculum. They argued that when teaching Christianity and Judaism, one has to teach the old curriculum. It was clear that the summative assessment in Christianity and Judaism did not reflect a clear demarcation between

the old curriculum and the updated curriculum. I argue that when questions in summative assessment have an outlook of the old curriculum, it creates more confusion than clarity on the nature of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

#### **4.4.15.2 The updated Religious Studies' summative assessment promotes inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.**

Another sub-theme which emerged was that the summative assessment promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism since the questions asked came from all religions. The study further observed that questions asked concerning religions were not asked from the negative side so as to promote equality of religions. According to FRS teacher 1.

I applaud the updated summative assessment in taking into consideration sensitive issues concerning religions as well as other concepts related to religion like gender, human rights and conflict transformation. The questions in summative assessment reflect inclusivity, tolerance and acknowledgement of religious diversity. The structure of the papers and how questions are asked justify that the summative assessment is inclusive.

When asked to justify the assertion that the summative assessment was inclusive, FRS teacher 1 had this to say:

There are no questions like “Indigenous Religion is an evil religion. Discuss” or “Islam is a violent religion. Discuss.” It is the absence of such questions that inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism are celebrated. The absence of such questions since the first summative assessment makes it more inclusive, tolerant and upholding of religious diversity.

The above remarks reflect that although summative assessment was blamed for being biased towards the old curriculum on sections covering Judaism and Christianity; the inclusion of Indigenous Religion and Islam in the summative assessment as well as the question framing reflect that the current summative assessment was more inclusive, tolerant and pluralistic. I argue that when summative assessment treats all religions as equal, the multi-faith approach becomes easy to implement in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in secondary schools. The discontentment by some sections of the society that the summative assessment was not inclusive, tolerant and pluralistic was largely attributed to the first two summative papers where the examination board was taken to task for lack of proper preparation. To conclude that summative assessment was biased on the old curriculum on the basis of two papers, would be to be unappreciative of the curriculum reforms in Zimbabwe. It should be noted that when curriculum reforms are done, there are bound to be problems during the initial stages of the transition.

The ZIMSEC official was also interviewed in order to get his perceptions on how the current summative assessment in (FRS) promoted inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The officer echoed that:

Yes, the current summative assessment promotes inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. This is because the curriculum now focuses on four major religions. This allows learners to grasp and appreciate different religions in the country. I strongly believe that this will eventually enhance appreciation of religious and cultural diversity in Zimbabwe.

Findings from the examination board indicate that the updated Religious Studies curriculum promoted inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. This is a contradiction to what curriculum implementers said about assessment. This resonates well with the research findings by Gonye, Mareva, Gamira and Chiome, (2012:1333) who observe that the examination policy in Zimbabwe has tended to be contradictory and inconsistent. I argue that ZIMSEC cannot claim that it is following policy through summative assessment. This means that the 2017 updated Religious Studies policy and implementation will be only be successful when assessment or examination criteria by ZIMSEC is valid, reliable and objective when it adheres to policy by promoting inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism through equal treatment of religions.

#### **4.4.16 THEME 15: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS?**

The crux of the study is on the challenges affecting the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. For this reason, respondents were interviewed on challenges that were affecting the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Views from the interviewees are important in proffering solutions that might assist in improving the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Sub-themes such as shortage of relevant learning material, resistance to the subject, the syllabus being too long, interpretation of the syllabus, lack of technical support, lack of professional development, lack of qualified teachers, lack of supervision, pedagogical deficiencies, congested syllabuses, failure to accept religious diversity and Christian dominance.

##### **4.4.16.1 Shortage of relevant learning material**

The challenge raised during the generation of data was the shortage of relevant learning material in secondary schools. This validates literature stating that the lack of learning material

presents problems in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Zivave and Muzambi (2022) had revealed earlier that the availability of relevant teaching and learning material is critical to solve challenges affecting the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Relevant teaching and learning material refers to textbooks, Bibles, Qurans, maps and commentaries. The findings from the interviews pointed to a lack of relevant learning material. FRS teacher 1 had this to say:

The issue of teaching and learning material is a cause for concern in schools. We bought one textbook when the updated curriculum was introduced in 2017 but the textbook was not syllabus oriented.

FRS teacher 2 expressed the same sentiments which were in agreement with the above interviewee. FRS teacher 2 said;

The issue of relevant learning material is problematic. The subject was introduced before they secured the learning material to support the learning of Indigenous Religion and Islam. We had to rely on university notes and the internet.

The ZIMSEC official underscored that the updated Religious Studies (FRS) in secondary schools was hampered by a lot of challenges. The official stated that:

The diction, especially from Judaism and Islam is difficult for our learners. It is the foreign language which they may never use in their lives.

The findings of the study revealed that the new Religious Studies curriculum was affected by lack of resources in form of textbooks, e-books, financial resources and the jargon which was alien to learners. Schools bought the textbooks available on the market despite its shortcomings because there was no alternative. Respondents suggested that there was no adequate preparation in terms of resourcing the learning area. This consummates the idea noted in literature review that the top-down approach to curriculum implementation means policy decisions that are made by those in power and who control the education system only to be implemented by those at lower levels such as teachers (Healy 2011). However, the policy makers failed to avail requisite reading material to ensure availability of adequate reading material. If the bottom-up approach had been used, commencement of implementation of the new curriculum would have been deferred. I also posit that the jargon that has proved to be a challenge was a result of bias towards one religion which is common in the society that learners live.

#### **4.4.16.2 The syllabus being too wide and congested**

The other challenge that was established in the study was the very long nature of the syllabus. This has affected the learning of Religious Studies as teachers cannot cover the syllabus. Those who manage to complete teaching the syllabus would not have exhausted the syllabus objectives. FRS teacher 2 had this to say:

For me it is difficult to complete the syllabus. The updated Religious Studies curriculum is too wide and congested with basic tenets of various religions, contemporary issues and religion as well as cross cutting themes.

FRS teacher 1 indicated that:

It's nightmarish to teach Religious Studies. The syllabus is too long yet only ten five questions are asked per religion at Advanced Level while the Ordinary Level requires us to teach all concepts from form one up to form six.

When the ZIMSEC official was interviewed on the challenges surrounding implementation of the updated Religious Studies (FRS) in secondary education in the desire to promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism the official stated that:

Apparently, the syllabus is too long, even though the topics are repeated at all levels from Form 1-4. It is sometimes hard for learners to memorise all the concepts, especially from a religion from which one is not an adherent.

The ZIMSEC official further explained that:

The syllabus is too broad; there is a lot to be covered. The jargon of the subject, especially from Judaism and Islamic texts is hard to grasp for learners. Thus, the problem of shortage of learning materials in circulation since most have not yet been approved by the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU).

From the above quotation, the challenge noted is closely connected with syllabus objectives which are too wide and its so many topics. This has been validated by Dube (2019) who notes that the syllabus is overloaded with a variety of topics all of which should be interrogated within the religious space. He further notes that there was a deliberate shift from pure Religious Studies to interdisciplinary Religious Studies curriculum to solve contemporary challenges. This has affected the full implementation of the policy on Religious Studies. The respondents lamented that it was impossible to complete teaching the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Although the updated Religious Studies subject promotes inclusivism, tolerance and plurality, the curriculum was too congested and that resulted in teachers picking up topics which best suited them. This affected the implementation of the updated curriculum as the teacher could

not fully teach the syllabus to completion. This has caused “weak framing” (Dube 2019) which refers to the teacher shifting from one topic/content to the other without limitations affect the organisation, pacing and timing of religious lessons, given that teachers are different (Fancourt 2016). Topics like ‘sin’, ‘salvation’ and the concept of the Supreme Being are examples of topics which are affected by weak framing because they are culturally specific and theological. Weak framing affects learners during summative assessment as they attain poor grades because of subjectivity. Seen in this light, Muhamba (2020:52) observes that the syllabus of Religious Education was very dense, with a lot of material to be covered over a short period of time. I argue that the congestion of the Religious Studies content is an impediment to a multi-faith approach as the teacher might end up being subjective and concentrating on one particular religion.

#### **4.4.16.3 Interpretation of the syllabus**

Another challenge to the implementation of the updated Religious Studies observed by this research was about the correct interpretation of the Religious Studies syllabus. By interpretation, I mean unpacking the syllabus objectives and teaching content required as reflected in the syllabus content. Syllabus interpretation informs pedagogical approaches in Religious Studies. As reflected in the interview by FRS teacher 1;

Interpretation of the syllabus is a major challenge associated with the updated curriculum. We do not know how to interpret the syllabus as what is asked in summative assessment is not in line with syllabus objectives. Our interpretation often and this affects implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

The above excerpt from the interview indicates that some teachers were teaching Religious Studies although they did not have a professional teacher training background. Hence, the failure to interpret the demands from the syllabus. This is in line with the observation made by Dube (2019) and Zivave et al (2021) that many Religious Studies teachers have not undergone teacher training although they are academics who did Religious Studies as an academic subject. Teacher training is important in moulding teachers who interpret the syllabus correctly. The findings here indicate that successful implementation of the updated Religious Studies lies in the correct interpretation of the syllabus objectives. The syllabus demands the teaching of religions from a multi-faith perspective. It is the failure to interpret the syllabus which may result in the use of the confessional approach in teaching the updated Religious Studies in Zimbabwe. This resonates with Modipa’s (2014) study on policy implementation in South Africa where he observed that lack of knowledge by teachers to interpret policy, lack of



involvement of all stakeholders, manipulation of policy by teachers to suit their own personal objectives contributed.

#### **4.4.16.4 Lack of technical support**

The transformation towards religious inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism in the light of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is threatened by lack of technical support from the government. Dube (2019) has observed in his research on the updated Religious Studies curriculum that “policy implementers of Religious Studies in the classroom situation have not received enough technical and material support from the government.” Under these circumstances, teachers have resorted to peer consultation because of lack of support from technocrats from curriculum planners. For this reason, teachers have interpreted policy the way they wanted to and not what the policy said. By the same token, lack of technical support resulted in uneven implementation of the curriculum (Shayamunda 2013:17). Zivave and Muzambi (2022:16) confirms that lack of technical support when there is curriculum change impedes the success of implementation. Unfortunately, this may also result in the dropping of the subject in the curriculum. FRS teacher 2 had this to say:

I think the government has force-marched the updated Religious Studies on us. Lack of technical support is evidence of the government’s unpreparedness to reform the curriculum. For me, curriculum reform needs proper backing from technocrats who provide their expertise in syllabus interpretation and implementation of policy.

The verbatim quote above suggests that government was not well-prepared for curriculum reform as the backing of the reforms lacked technical support. This is one of the reasons why there have been varied interpretations of the Religious Studies curriculum. Chetty and Smit (2016:180) state that “government should commit itself to curriculum reform by providing required technical expertise.” They further state that there is need for government support in any reform, especially in Religious Studies. Findings of this study also prove that the government of Zimbabwe compelled teachers to implement curriculum reforms in Religious Studies without providing them proper technical support. In this regard, I concur with Khozin (2018:3) who says: “there is need for government to offer technical support in Religious Studies curriculum reform to avoid policy inconsistency among curriculum implementers.”

#### **4.4.16.5 Lack of professional development**

Lack of professional development among teachers was cited as an impediment to the full implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. As Chetty and Smit (2016) note

in the South African Religion policy, the need for professional development is a panacea to multi-faith Religious Studies policy implementation. Literature also confirms that the teacher's professional development addresses challenges brought by curriculum reform. The current updated Religious Studies curriculum, with new religions coming on board requires teachers to upgrade themselves educationally so that they can meaningfully contribute to the success of Religious Studies curriculum reform. During the interview FRS teacher 1 commented:

I have a diploma in education which I did in 1992. During my training as a teacher we never studied religions such as Islam and Indigenous Religion. Now, there is curriculum reform and I certainly do not know these religions. I will have to read first before attending lessons.

The above excerpt reflects lack of professional development among Religious Studies teachers. For this reason, the study observed that one of the trajectories that continue to haunt implementation of the updated curriculum is the level of education of teachers in the secondary schools. The study rightly observed that the majority of classroom practitioners had diplomas and first degrees. There was little upgrading of teachers' levels of education due to lack of motivation in the education sector. In the case of Zimbabwe, teachers' levels of education have remained low due to teaching profession challenges. Thus, few teachers have bothered to upgrade themselves in order to meet the challenges associated with the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Consequently, teachers have been teaching using information which they got from the media without objectively separating relevant content that would meet the syllabus objectives. In such a milieu, it is very difficult, or even impossible, for teachers to impart appropriate knowledge to the learner. Furthermore, this level of education of teachers has limited them to a Christo-centric Religious Studies and thus neglecting the multi-faith approach. Commenting on the levels of education of teachers, Schwartz (2006:450) states that the teachers' low levels of education indicate that teachers now value self-enrichment more than self-upgrading. This approach has limited the knowledge of teachers and has resulted in them embracing the confession approach at the expense of the multi-faith approach in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies.

#### **4.4.16.6 Lack of qualified teachers**

Research findings have shown how the teaching and learning of Religious Studies has been influenced by teachers' lack of training. Any curriculum review should ensure that teachers receive in-service training. This is because curriculum change should be in synch with the progression of time as has been the case with Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe adopted the new

curriculum in 2017 where changes to the learning course of Religious Studies changed to embrace other religions. However, teachers of Religious Studies failed to implement the updated curriculum due to their clinging to the old curriculum which had a confessional approach, which promoted one dominant religion at the expense of the others. Dube (2019), in his recent study, notes that there was limited training of Religious Studies teachers in Zimbabwe. This has been caused by lack of a teacher's training colleges which offer the subject. Only one secondary school teacher Education College trains teachers in Religious Studies. This college is Mutare Teachers college. This is despite the subject being offered by almost every school in Zimbabwe. Consequently, the subject is taught by teachers who are trained to teach other subjects, and who are committed believers of certain religions (Matemba 2011). I argue that any implementation of curriculum reform should be done in tandem with teachers' training and induction workshops to empower teachers with new knowledge and pedagogies in religious studies.

The lack of training for teachers of religion indicates what the Zimbabwean government values as valid knowledge for transmission. It supports Bernstein's (1970:47) observation that "how a society selects, clarifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principle of social control." I agree with Dube (2019:258) and Matemba (2011:22) who observe that "lack of training for teaching in Religious Education has been a concern in Zimbabwe, and various authors lament this curriculum shortcoming." This affects policy implementation as the teachers lack the subject content and skills needed to implement the demands of a new curriculum. This resonates well with empirical evidence by Dube (2017) who notes that the lack of qualified religion teachers was due to the fact that there was only one secondary school teacher's training college that offers RS, the Mutare Teachers College. Muhamba (2020) also observes that religious education in Zimbabwe suffered lack of trained personnel in the schools. This hampers the objective of the syllabus to promote inclusivism, tolerance, and pluralism as teachers will remain biased towards one religion.

During interviews, it emerged that there were some concepts in the syllabus which were very difficult for teachers to teach. The following topics were identified: mediumship in Indigenous Religion, land in Judaism, the concept of sin in Christianity, concept of Jihad in Islam, and conflict transformation in Islam. Some of the reasons given were lack of relevant material and textbooks and lack of professional development.

#### **4.4.16.7 Christian background of teachers**

The study also revealed that the majority of teachers came from Christian families, which did not tolerate the existence of other religions. FRS teacher 1 had to say:

I am Christian by birth and I find it difficult for me to teach other religions which violate my faith. As a Christian, I find some concepts like belief in ancestors difficult to teach.

FRS teacher 2 had this to say:

I am a Muslim by birth. For me to teach that Jesus is the son of God in Christianity violates my religious standing. With such topics I normally give learners tasks to present in my absence because it affects me religiously.

The finding of the current study reveals that many teachers were of Christian background. Their professionalism in teaching Religious Studies from a multi-faith approach thus became doubtful. On the other hand, Muslim teachers were also affected by their background in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies. Teachers brought the influences of their personal backgrounds into the classroom and this has proved to be dangerous as it promoted religious extremism and exclusivism. It is difficult for teachers to move away from their past and, this, in turn, led to the preferential treatment of Christianity over other religions. Indigenous Religion was presented as backward and a hindrance to salvation while Islam was presented as a violent religion whose aim was to promote terrorism in Zimbabwean society.

#### **4.4.16.8 Lack of supervision**

The study also observed that supervision by experts from the inspectorate was too little to ensure policy implementation. FRS teacher 1 had this to say:

Since the inception of the updated Religious Studies curriculum, we had never been visited by inspectors. We lack policy direction because of that and I would want to believe that someone is sitting on his or her job in the offices.

In the light of the sentiments, FRS teacher 2 had this to say:

I have been supervised once by a mathematics inspector who did not know anything about Religious Studies. When I asked the inspector about pertinent issues in Religious Studies, he professed ignorance and promised to come back with feedback after consultation.

When the inspectors were asked about their supervision expertise in Family and Religious Studies, Inspector 2 had this to say:

No, I am a science inspector but we can supervise any subject using the syllabus. We expect the teacher to follow the syllabus. At this district we have two inspectors for secondary and the other one is for languages and humanities. In fact, the inspector is a

language specialist and this means here we do not have an inspector for humanities and specifically for Religious Studies. However, we can supervise Family and Religious Studies teachers.

When Inspectorate 2 was further asked on how often they supervised teachers in schools, the inspector had this to say:

We are expected to supervise them once per term. However, we know that there is internal supervision done at schools by heads of learning areas, deputy heads and schools heads. Ours is external supervision which focuses on policy implementation.

The remarks from the interviewee have led me to conclude that there is lack of expert supervision in schools. It is this lack of supervision of policy in schools that results in lack of guidance on how to effectively implement policy on the updated Religious Studies curriculum. On the other hand, it is clear that while supervision should be done, resistance may also occur, which may hamper effective implementation of policy. There is a general indication that inspectors who supervise the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum are not experts in the subject. It is clear from that study that teachers lack supervision in schools. Again, supervision is not done by experts who are well-versed in the subject content as well as the teaching philosophy and methodologies that are used in Religious Studies. Subsequently, this has led to partial fulfilment of the new curriculum framework on Religious Studies. Lack of supervision is an impediment to the successful implementation of the new Religious Studies curriculum. Supervision should also be done by experts in the subject. I argue that, exclusivism and religious extremism have been promoted due to lack of supervision. Some schools have silently removed the subject from the school curriculum due to lack of supervision. Against this background, I argue that supervision should be done in schools so that the multi-faith Religious Studies is wholly implemented. I conclude alongside De Grauwe (2001:138) who says “lack of supervision was causing policy implementation challenges in Zimbabwean schools.”

#### **4.4.16.9 Dropping of the subject in mission schools**

It emerged in this study through the interview that the updated Religious Studies was being dropped from the school curriculum in some mission schools. FRS teacher 2 testified that:

We dropped the subject when it was introduced and we have since started offering, though with a bias towards Christianity. Mission authorities are against the teaching of Indigenous Religion and Islam in their schools. They gave us an instruction to drop the subject since they viewed it as a direct threat to Christian doctrines.

In response to the remarks from the interviewee above, yet another interviewee indicated that: “We at mission our jobs as teachers are insecure. The responsible authority is sceptical about the updated Religious Studies curriculum.”

For this reason, the subject has been dropped soon after the subject was introduced in 2017. The inspectorate also observed that the dropping of the subject was caused by the optional nature of the subject. Inspectorate 2 said:

The challenge is that FRS is an optional subject. School authorities do not pay serious attention and thus are not providing the necessary teaching requirements.

The above quote indicates that the current updated Religious Studies subject is being shunned by schools which have a Christian orientation. A study by Zivave and Muzambi (2022:15) observes that some Christian schools have dropped the subject from their curriculum as they believe that FRS is a subject that adulterates their religious faith. For this reason, Dube (2017:168) also notes that “Missionary schools have the power to resist any practice which may seem contrary to their beliefs.” The dropping of the subject was caused by the inclusion of Indigenous Religion and Islam, which are religions characterised by contestation and discrimination among Christians. Matemba (2011) indicates that in Malawi the multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum has resulted in religious fighting among religions, and ultimately the formation of two religious education syllabuses. Personally, I go along (Dube 2016) who avers that Christianity has concepts that are conflicting with Indigenous Religion and Islam. Despite these differences, the religions should be taught among learners without bias. Dropping of the subject is a mark of religious extremism which negates the principles of inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Against this background, I argue that mission schools should allow the learning of the updated Religious Studies without prejudice. This would allow the Religious Studies subject to become a subject that does not only provide religious knowledge but also shape the moral fabric of the society. This is because there is no religion without morality and soteriological beliefs. I submit that both public and mission schools should be spaces for spreading religious knowledge rather than spaces for preaching. This is because the Zimbabwean constitution explicitly states that Zimbabwe is a secular country (section 1) and every learner has the constitutional guarantee of the freedom of thought and conscience (section 60). So, the teaching of religions and about religions in schools should uphold the Constitution of Zimbabwe. I strongly assert that the updated Religious Studies should maintain the multi-faith approach and disengage the confessional approaches advocated by some mission schools.

#### **4.4.16.10 Rejection of the subject.**

Rejection of and resistance to the subject is a sub-theme that emerged on the problems affecting the subject. Despite the value of the subject in moulding learners to become good citizens, some schools have rejected the subject. During the interview, FRS teacher 1 commented:

The subject is being rejected by parents who feel that their children are being taught evil practices and terrorism through religions such as Indigenous Religion and Islam. I should say the subject has lost respect with teachers, parents and learners who are of Christian background.

FRS teacher 2 had this to say:

I am failing to get learners at Advanced level because parents believe that we are teaching their children wrong religious beliefs and practices. It is hard to convince parents and other stakeholders that we do not indoctrinate learners in Religious Studies.

Mission schools have contributed to the rejection of the subject. This is echoed in the empirical studies done by Zivave and Muzambi (2022) who note that mission schools have contributed to the challenges faced by the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The observation is also cemented by Dube (2017) who argues that missionaries have resisted the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The following extract from the Chronicle newspaper of 2 May (2016) indicates the power missionaries have to control what happens in their schools:

As BICC Zimbabwe conference, together with like-minded organisations, we are unequivocally against the pledge and its implementation. We therefore appeal to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) and the government to rescind the decision. Our position is that we will neither participate nor encourage our institutions, members and our children to participate on matters contrary to our beliefs and conscience. (Chronicle, 2 May 2016:1).

The above extract reflects that mission schools have the power to drop the current Religious Studies curriculum when they feel that the subject is contrary to the beliefs and conscience of Christianity. This is augmented by the findings from the study which reveal that mission schools and religious personalities have rejected as anti-Christ, the updated Religious Studies curriculum, because it includes the study of Indigenous Religion and Islam. This resonates well with the empirical studies by Dube (2017) who observes that many post-colonial states, including Zimbabwe, continue to struggle to accept people of different religions. This lack of acceptance can be extended to race, tribe, nationality and other characteristics. This has generated negative attitudes among learners and Zimbabweans to accept the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The updated Religious Studies curriculum represents various religions and the negative attitude requires decolonisation of the learners', parents' and teachers' minds in

order for them to accept that colonial Religious Studies was inconsistent with the modern pluralistic society.

There is a general indication that parents and mission schools believe that they have every right to protect their children from learning content that compromises their religious standings. This has been caused by the misconception that learning about Indigenous Religion inducts learners into spirit cultism, while learning about Islam makes learners too fundamental as well as deny Jesus as the saviour. Learning about other religions does not make learners Muslims or adherents of indigenous religion, but they become more open-minded and informed about these religions. I argue that the success of overcoming challenges associated with Religious Studies lies in the acceptance that Zimbabwe is a multi-faith society and learners should be exposed to various religions in the country. This points to the contestation that learning of other religions corrupts one's religious faith. Rather, the learning of other religions promotes tolerance and inclusivity.

#### **4.4.16.11 Bias towards the old curriculum**

The findings of the study also showed that there was bias towards the old Religious Studies curriculum. This hampers the effective implementation of the new policy on the updated Religious Studies in secondary schools. Interviewee 1 indicated that:

We are confused as to whether we are still in the old era where we used to teach Bible Knowledge and Divinity. If you look at each and every past examination paper, questions asked are more inclined towards the old curriculum. You would think we are still teaching the old curriculum when you consider the summative assessment procedure since 2018 when the first examination was written.

The above excerpt indicates that the updated Religious Studies curriculum has suffered from policy inconsistency. Findings reveal that the assessment procedure was more inclined to Biblical religions. These findings resonate with Maposa's (2014:79) study who notes that "the teaching and learning of Religious Education as a school subject during the old curriculum was founded on a monolithic Christocentric approach that espoused the Biblical Scriptures". The current RS syllabus has a bias towards Christianity and Judaism, which were taught during the old curriculum era. In order for the curriculum to respond to the inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism paradigm, it is important that there be an appreciation of all religions in Zimbabwe in the teaching and assessment. This is because when assessment seems to revert back to the old curriculum, it tends to confuse teachers' methods and content of teaching. The findings



reveal that it is difficult to move away from the old curriculum as long as assessment remains biased towards biblical religions in terms of questioning techniques and learning content.

#### **4.4.16.12 Pedagogical rigidity**

The study's findings reveal that there are some pedagogical rigidities and deficiencies that affect the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. From the interview responses below, the issue of pedagogical rigidity is a challenge. FRS teacher 1 had this to say:

When teaching we employ the confessional approach which does not allow learners to discover for themselves the religious truths about religions.

When asked why her pedagogical approaches had not been influenced by the updated Religious Studies curriculum, the teacher said:

We teach at a mission school and our pedagogy is influenced by the environment we are teaching in.

Inspectorate 1 highlighted that:

We want a broadminded teacher, a teacher who teaches the subject as it is. You teach what is there in the syllabus using the pedagogy required. The pedagogical rigidity of attaching feelings and emotions, while using the confessional approach when policy demands a multi-faith approach is violation of the policy.

The above remarks reflect that pedagogical rigidity was influenced by the working environment and the Christian background of the teacher. The findings of the study reveal that teachers continued to use the confessional approach despite the fact that the updated curriculum has a multi-faith approach to cater for the needs of all learners. In most missionary schools Religious Studies was taught by Church Ministers who had become teachers of Religious Studies because of their call to evangelise (Muhamba 2020). This has caused pedagogical deficiencies as some teachers avoided the teaching of topics which affected their beliefs. For example, the teaching of ancestors in Indigenous Religion was against Christian beliefs as well as the Muslim teaching on Allah. Teachers have doubled as both facilitators of education and preachers as they defend their Christian beliefs. This was influenced by the religious background of many teachers which was largely Christian. From this observation, the quest for inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism remains a mirage as teachers take the classroom environment to defend Christian beliefs using the curriculum space at the expense of other religions.

#### **4.4.16.13 Failure to accept religious diversity/Intolerance**

The study has also noted that teachers have failed to embrace the teaching of other religions due to personal backgrounds and pedagogical rigidity. Zimbabwe's Religious Studies has been a carbon copy of colonial Religious Studies which advanced Christianity at the expense of other religions. Christianity should not be exclusively promoted in the education system; it should not be used in the education system to fight other religions. This exclusive dominance of Christianity in the context of Religious Studies curriculum reform, has posed a challenge of accommodating other religions like Islam and Indigenous Religion. These religions have been wrongly interpreted by teachers and the society at large because of Christian influence. Judaism has not suffered the predicament of Islam and Indigenous Religion because Christianity is an offshoot of Judaism. However, Indigenous Religion has been pushed to the periphery in the religious space and curriculum space. This, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2003:182), has led to "contestation and compliance, fascination and repulsion." Dube (2019) notes that accommodation resistance often results in withdrawal from curriculum practices in protest of the inclusion of other religions, which are perceived to pose a threat. To this end, there is need to promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism by accommodating all religions. This is because all religions are mediators of salvation and there is no religion with the monopoly of salvation. In the view of decoloniality scholars, such a monopoly creates the problem of exclusion of other religions and the resistance to cooperation by teachers. Dube (2019) notes that the Christian religion wants to occupy the curriculum space undisturbed, despite the fact that some learners subscribe to other religions. Thus, I agree with decolonial scholars who contend that colonialism and Christianity have contributed to the problem with accommodation of other religions. The challenge that still exists among religious players is failure to accept the religious other, whether intra-religion or inter-religion, making it difficult for religious players to map the best curriculum. Febbe (2014:437), buttressing the foregoing argument, believes that the "situation is worsened by religious leaders who teach that compromise between religions is forbidden" thus making issues of religious pluralism a sensitive focal point in contemporary debates.

#### **4.4.17 THEME 16: SUGGEST THE BEST WAYS OF ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AFFECTING THE UPDATED RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

This study was concerned about critiquing policy implementation challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. It has been six years

since the adoption of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools and challenges affecting implementation of changes in the subject need solutions. Accordingly, in this theme I report on the suggestions given by participants in this study. I identified eleven categories from this theme, namely; supply of learning material, curriculum review, training of teachers of religion, in-service training, supervision, employing subject specialists as supervisors at district and provincial level, making the subject a core subject, removing bureaucracy in publishing, supporting teachers to develop content and interreligious dialogue. These categories are elaborated in the sections below.

#### **4.4.17.1 Provision of learning material**

Provision of relevant learning material as an intervention strategy was regarded by all the participants as the major solution to the problems associated with policy implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The following are remarks by the interviewees on learning material in Religious Studies.

FRS teacher 1 had this to say:

The subject was introduced regardless of the paucity of learning material. I would like to say the new religions that were introduced had no relevant learning materials that meet syllabus objectives. For this reason, government and other interested stakeholders should provide learning material in schools.

FRS teacher 2, on the other hand, said:

Science subjects have been receiving learning material. As for Religious Studies, the government should ensure that it supplies schools with textbooks that are needed in the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

The findings from the above excerpt indicate that provision of relevant learning material is necessary in solving the challenge of shortage of learning material. Alidou et al. (2006:16) are of the view that lack of appropriate educational materials tends to negatively impact on the teaching of African children. Zivave and Muzambi (2022) note that the updated Religious Studies curriculum was implemented hurriedly without prior warning to book publishers and suppliers of educational literature, which resulted in the acute shortage of relevant material. In light of the above submission, lack of content development and shortage of relevant Religious Studies learning material may affect how learners perceive other religions. I argue that provision of relevant learning material needs in the updated Religious Studies curriculum positively influence the implementation of curriculum reforms. Citing the case of South African Religious Studies curriculum reform, Chetty and Smit (2016) submit that successful

implementation of multi-Religious Studies curriculum relies much on development of learning needs. In the Zimbabwean context and with reference to this study, I argue that if relevant learning material is availed in the updated Religious Studies, teaching of newly introduced religions without bias would be done effectively. Therefore, before teachers are blamed for failing to implement policy guidelines, government and the private sector need to support curriculum reforms in Zimbabwe with the necessary and relevant learning material. Due to lack of relevant learning materials, the teaching of various religions in the updated curriculum is done from a poorly informed position. In the context of my empirical investigation, if Religious Studies teachers have no relevant learning material it may contribute towards worsening challenges faced in the implementation of the Religious Studies policy. Therefore, schools should be provided with teaching and learning material such as teachers' guides, textbooks, reference books and syllabi so that the curriculum implementation becomes successful.

#### **4.4.17.2 Internet connectivity**

During the interview it emerged that there was shortage of learning material and, therefore, to ensure that learners researched on their own, affordable internet accessibility should be provided. Thus, teachers who participated in this study claimed that shortage of learning material could be solved through tele-communication infrastructure. However, internet affordability and accessibility were a challenge in many parts of the country. This has also impacted on the implementation of the updated Religious Studies policy. The following are the remarks of the interviewees during interview sessions:

FRS teacher 1 had this to say:

We are living in a technological world, the challenges of shortage of learning material would have been better had it been that internet was affordable and accessible in schools. I suggest that the government and the private sector play a role in improving internet services in schools so that learners and teachers have current information on concepts taught in Religious Studies. Of course, this will complement, reading material that is already there and alleviate the problem.

The findings of the study reveal that there were some areas that had challenges of internet connectivity needed for research by learners. During the study, interviewees recommended that the government provide schools with free Wi-Fi, especially all secondary schools in addition to laptops so that teachers and learners could research freely. Empirical studies in Indonesia by Khozin (2018) reveal that constructivism, supported by connectivism were the 21<sup>st</sup> modes of

learning that improved learning. Siemens (2004) observes that learning in modern trends is done through connectivism. Connectivism is a learning model which requires learners to learn beyond institutional boundaries and learning material in form of hard copies. Chetty (2013:194) calls for technology-centred pedagogical transition in Religious Studies. This enables learners to contribute to the knowledge base by producing their own content based on their own lived experiences in religious studies. I argue that such transition is only feasible when technological infrastructure is improved in schools. As a result, teachers may become facilitators of knowledge and make learners learn through research and collaboration. In essence, I support the idea of internet accessibility and provision of laptops and any other technological gadgets to learners so that learners can learn wherever they are. Internet provision and affordability in RS is appreciated because “learners maintain their own unique religious worldviews and are able to network with other nodes (learners and other sources of information) both locally and globally” (Chetty 2013:188). This means that the internet provides the platform for learners to learn various religions through constructivism punctuated by Connectivism.

#### **4.4.17.3 Curriculum review**

Because the updated Religious Studies has excluded some religions like Baha’i Faith, Buddhism, Hinduism and Rastafarianism which have the same religious demographic representation with Islam, the subject has become contentious and subject to scepticism. Some religions have called for the curriculum review of the current updated Religious Studies curriculum so that it becomes more inclusive and tolerant to minority religions. This means that the curriculum review should include the excluded religions. During the interview FRS teacher 1 had this to say:

Although we applaud the updated curriculum for their inclusion of Indigenous Religion and Islam which have not been in the curriculum, it is prudent that the curriculum review slated for 2023 should also consider minority religions so that the policy becomes more inclusive, tolerant and taking cognisance that religious pluralism is not defined by including Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam into the curriculum. Religious pluralism means acceptance of all religions regardless of their numerical representation.

A ZIMSEC official suggested the following measures in mitigating challenges affecting the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The official said:

Policy makers should find out ways of reducing the learning content so that the syllabus could be covered within the prescribed timeframe. I suggest that during the 2023 review, these suggestions be considered.

The above quote shows that minority religious groups felt excluded in the current updated Religious Studies curriculum and there was need to review the curriculum to make it more inclusive as per the demands of the Constitution. Seen in this light, I argue that minoritisation of religions on the basis of numerical representations negates the principles of inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. I subscribe to the notion that all religions are mediators of salvation (Netland 2001). Hence, the call for curriculum review in Religious Studies to cater for excluded religions becomes more imperative. I argue that the so-called minority religions could be studied optionally on the current curriculum. This means that learners will have to learn the four religions and choose one minority religion as an option. As such, this will promote the study of these religions.

I further content that when curriculum review is done in 2023, it should be more inclusive as in the cases of Botswana and Indonesia, where the problems caused by multiple religions were addressed by offering various curricula which catered for the needs of all religions. However, I disagree with a situation where schools are to have Christian religion, Islam religion and Indigenous Religion as disciplines on their own because the numerical strength of Christianity would overshadow other religions and the religions with fewer followers would have the potential of becoming extinct. Learners should be exposed to different religions, which is vital in promoting religious coexistence and acceptance of religious differences. I submit that it is prudent that learners acquire knowledge of other religions besides Christianity as reflected by the syllabus objectives of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Studies by Feinberg (2014:403-404) observe that “religion can be seen as a part of the human experience and as a way for students to understand their own traditions and those of others with intention of cultivating coexistence”. In this context, I agree with Yusuf (2013: 229) who says that “Seeds of peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance should be planted early in the hearts of children at the basic level of education in order to raise a new generation of peace-loving citizens of this great country.” It is within this context that the future Religious Studies curriculum review should also embrace other religions left out so that tolerance, inclusivity and religious diversity are cultivated among secondary school learners. I express reservations on the maintenance of the current Religious Studies curriculum because it hinders learners and deprives them from understanding minority religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Rastafarianism and Baha’i Faith which are needed to achieve complete inclusivism, tolerance and religious diversity.

#### **4.4.17.4 Establishment of religious boards to oversee the curriculum**

Policy on Religious Studies was decided by the policy makers. This means that the inclusion and exclusion of religions in the updated curriculum was decided by politicians. There was no shared consensus between the government, religious organisations and parents. Therefore, the updated Religious Studies curriculum faced stiff resistance from various sections of the society. In this study it emerged that establishment of religious boards, as was the case in Britain and Malawi reduces challenges associated with multi-faith curriculum. From FRS teacher 2 was revealed that:

The updated Religious Studies policy is a unilateral decision by the government. Not all religions are represented and even concerns of parents were not considered. I therefore suggest that there should be a board which looks specifically at religious studies.

The quote reflects that there was no consensus between the interested stakeholders. Thus, setting up religious boards ensures that a compromise is reached. Polinska (2011: 398) suggests that there should be religious dialogue which is guided by “open-mindedness, curiosity, and cognitive complexity which are valuable experiences that promote non-judgmental attitudes towards practitioners of other religions which make transformative learning possible.” Studies by Kasomo (2010:24) reflects that religious boards “eliminate[s] any suspicions and misunderstanding” and “unreasonable prejudices” (Gwaravanda et al 2014: 243). From that observation I argue that government has a role to bring all religions to the table and agree on what is supposed to be learnt. Literature has shown that the use of religious boards in Britain and Malawi has managed to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

#### **4.4.17.5 In-service training**

When the updated Religious Studies curriculum was abruptly introduced in 2017, Religious Studies lacked guidance on how to teach the new subject. Despite the presence of the curriculum framework document, requisite syllabus interpretation and pedagogical skills lacked, thus, hampering the effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Teachers were overwhelmed with the need to implement curriculum reforms amidst little guidance and support from educational inspectors. This was despite the fact that the subject had new topics and religions introduced. Because the updated Religious Studies curriculum has included Indigenous Religion and Islam which had not been offered in teacher training, there was need to empower the teacher through in-service training. Many teachers have a content knowledge gap of the subject. Studies by Muhamba (2020) have proved that the

challenge with the new syllabus was that there was no in-house training for those who were teaching it and teachers had been trained to teach Christianity and many of them had never encountered any other religion which was demanded by the new curriculum. This means that for effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies to take place so that inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism could be achieved, in-service training was essential so that teachers were capacitated. During interviewees it emerged FRS teacher 1 that:

It does not necessarily mean that we are afraid of curriculum reform. We trained long back in teacher training institutions which only taught us about Christianity which was the cornerstone of the old curriculum. Surely, we have never been capacitated to teach these newly introduced religions and government should fund the in-service training of teachers.

The ZIMSEC official suggested the following measures in mitigating challenges affecting the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The official said:

Staff development workshops in the subject are still required to help teachers. Some teachers lack content. What is exhibited by learners during summative assessment shows that the learners did not actually have problems but the challenge is with curriculum implementers who lack content and technical expertise. I think the government should conduct workshops to equip teachers with pedagogical skills and the learning needed in implementing the updated curriculum.

Inspectorate 1 also provided solutions on challenges affecting the updated Religious Studies curriculum saying:

All schools should be compelled to send their tutors for workshops so that they are constantly reminded of the demands of the new curriculum.

Inspectorate 2 had to say:

We need to de-teach the misconceptions about religions through in-service training of teachers. They need to be staff developed, these teachers.

According to the interviewee, in-service training is very important because it empowers the teacher to teach the updated Religious Studies curriculum without constraints. It could be done through workshops and seminars at cluster level as well as district level. Teachers do not have financial resources to upgrade themselves and the onus is on Government to fund the in-service training of teachers so that effective implementation of Religious Studies takes place. On the other hand, FRS teacher 2 believes that the government has bias towards science and maths subjects when it comes to in-service training sponsored by the government. This denotes that the government should facilitate the in-service training of all teachers so that they implement the curriculum reform effectively. The literature review showed that in-service training for Religious Studies teachers was lacking in Zimbabwe (Dube 2016). In the light of this, I concur



with the view that in-service training has the capacity to empower the teacher not only in content but also in pedagogies that are commensurate with the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning modes. Seen in this light, Dube (2016) states that there is need for in-service education for teachers to bridge the gap of lack of knowledge and professionalism in relation to RS.

Findings from the study revealed that teacher training institutions have stopped offering Religious Studies in their institutions. Dube (2016), in his empirical study, notes that there was only one teacher training institution offering Religious Studies for secondary education, namely, Mutare Teachers College. The majority of Religious Studies teachers were from universities where they learned the subject as an academic subject. This means that the majority of Religious Studies teachers did not have adequate guidance regarding the pedagogical aspects of the Religious Studies curriculum in secondary schools. From a teacher professional development perspective, it was urgent that teachers get in-service training. I content that teachers who used to teach the old curriculum which taught Christian concepts only were not re-trained for a multi-faith updated Religious Studies curriculum. It is, therefore, prudent that in-service training in form of workshops and seminars assist teachers to embrace the new philosophy of implementing the updated Religious Studies whose content now include a multiplicity of religions.

#### **4.4.17.6 Training of teachers of religion**

For the success of the implementation of Religious Studies reforms in Zimbabwe, participants suggested that teacher training in Religious Studies should be strengthened. This is because teacher training prepares teachers to implement pedagogies relevant to curriculum change in Religious Studies. Empirical evidence has shown that over the years, Zimbabwe has reduced its investment in the training of teachers of religion, leaving the subject in the hands of personnel who, though committed, are not always qualified to be teachers of religion (Dube 2016). This has also been observed in the study by Muhamba (2020) who states that most teachers of Religious Studies had been trained to teach Christianity yet but the subject had lost relevance leading to the dropping of the subject in many teachers training institutions. I argue that government should invest in teacher training education, which would meet the needs of the current Religious Studies curriculum. The value of religious teacher education is echoed by Schwartz (2006:449) who states that,

Teachers are the filters through which the mandated curriculum passes. Their understanding of it, and their enthusiasm, or boredom, with various aspects of it, colours its nature.

In the light of the above, the study noted that teacher training was critical in the development of teachers and key to the achievement of success in implementing the updated Religious Studies curriculum. I submit to the idea that effective teachers in Religious Studies require appropriate support and training which will make the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwean secondary schools more effective.

#### **4.4.17.7 Improved supervision**

Another solution to the challenges affecting the effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is located in the educational inspectors' and directors' increased supervision of the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. This means that any reluctance by the teacher to implement policies that could jeopardise inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism would be minimised. Supervising teachers in policy implementation assists teachers to follow policy guidelines related to Religious Studies. During interviews it emerged from FRS teacher 2 that:

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should ensure that inspectors should always be in schools seeing how policy is being implemented. As the situation stands, we are sheep without a shepherd, we do not know whether we are in the right track or not.

Sharing the same sentiments above, FRS teacher 1 noted that:

There is need for government to empower teachers through proper guidance and maximum supervision. We, teachers, welcome a situation that we have inspectors who are technocrats in the subject rather than inspectors who believe they know it all.

Participants in this study were generally agreed that supervision in schools played a key role of guiding teachers on how to implement the updated Religious Studies policy. The issue of supervision are the responsibility of the government through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE). Empirical studies have shown that the abolition of posts for subject supervision in Zimbabwe left a skeletal team of education officers to take charge of general subject supervision from primary through to secondary schools, each over and above their field of specialisation, expertise and experience (De Graurwe 2004). There should be expert inspectors at district, provincial and national levels responsible for overseeing how different subjects are delivered and handled in schools. The practice of using inspectors who are not specialists in Religious Studies has contributed to ineffective policy implementation

and policy abuse in schools. Hence, there is need for effective supervision in schools so that the updated Religious Studies is implemented not only from a multi-faith perspective but also in line with policy direction. I argue that supervision in this case does not mean finding fault with how the teacher implements policies, but it means empowering the teacher to deliver the updated Religious Studies policy implementation effectively.

#### **4.4.17.8 Increased technical support**

Another sub-theme that emerged during empirical data generation was the increased technical support for teachers in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The updated Religious Studies curriculum has a lot of technical issues that need to be addressed so that curriculum implementers implement the policy effectively. Against the background that some teachers are struggling to teach the updated Religious Studies curriculum, technical support becomes imperative in addressing challenges affecting the subject. I sum up my argument by noting that technical support is very important to bridge the knowledge gap that exists within teachers.

#### **4.4.17.9 Removing bureaucracy in approving books**

During interviews, teachers indicated that they wanted to contribute in the successful implementation of the updated curriculum by developing learning content that was in line with the syllabus objectives but there were challenges in developing content. FRS teacher 1 had this to say:

The process of writing books until they reach the learners is cumbersome. There is a lot of bureaucracy and no wonder there is scanty learning material in book shops. The Curriculum Development Unit takes more time in approving books, and this has killed the zeal amongst teachers who want to contribute to the success of the updated curriculum. I suggest that these challenges could be mitigated by removing the bureaucracy that characterises book publication.

The sentiments above were echoed by the ZIMSEC official who suggested the following:

I encourage stakeholders to come up with more publications through the Curriculum Development Unit and probably ban those learning materials that do not follow correct publication channels.

The lack of relevant teaching and learning material is a challenge that is caused by bureaucracy in the production of learning material. Therefore, successful implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum lies in the removal of bureaucracy in the approval and publishing of learning material. This means that bureaucracy jeopardises all attempts to solve the

challenges of shortage of learning materials in schools. Solving religious problems could only be feasible if adherents were moderate in their approach to religion.

#### **4.4.17.10. Supporting teachers to develop learning content**

For policy implementation to be successful learning materials are needed. The findings reveal that teachers who are curriculum implementers should be empowered to develop content for the subject. Participants suggested that teachers should be supported with sufficient funds so that they develop content that is required in the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The following quote represents the views of FRS teacher 1 regarding solutions to the challenges affecting the teaching and learning of Religious Studies, particularly shortage of learning material.

They must support teachers with technical and monetary support so that they develop learning content required in schools. Content development should not be a sole responsibility of private players, but the government should fund teachers.

The valuable role of the teacher in content development in support of curriculum reform and in addressing the challenges affecting implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum are aptly summarised by the following remarks from FRS teacher 1;

Content development should not be a major challenge. Teachers should be empowered to develop content in support of the updated Religious Studies curriculum policy implementation. If the government could provide funds for teachers to develop the content required to implement curriculum reforms.

Thus, participants in this study were of the view that if content development were done by teachers it could reduce the challenges of shortage of relevant learning material. For this reason, government should avail funds to allow teachers to produce learning materials by teachers. I argue that content developed by teachers could meet syllabus objectives.

#### **4.5 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

Documents refer to both public documents such as policy documents, empirical research, minutes of meetings, examination papers, as well as official reports and private documents such as personal journals and diaries, letters, and internet information that were analysed in the context of this study (Maluleke2015:14). To be informed on policy implementation and challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools, this study also used document analysis as a data collection tool. This would enable the researcher to get additional data on what informed policy implementation of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe's secondary schools. I also used content analysis to analyse policy documents

and the official reports which included the New Curriculum Framework 2015, the Family and Religious Studies (FRS) syllabus, RS past examination papers and information from the media which dealt with Religious Studies in Zimbabwe. Document analysis was used to establish the similarities and differences in texts that would confirm data collected through interviews.

#### **4.5.1 Updated curriculum framework**

The new curriculum framework is a policy document that was approved by Cabinet on 22 September 2015. According to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) (2015:2) the updated curriculum framework is the main policy document which informs the syllabus, development and use of learning resources and creation of policy guidelines for curriculum implementation. This means that the updated curriculum framework is a policy which is hinged on a national economic policy, and is modelled along the Constitution of Zimbabwe as well as the regional and international treaties to which the country is a signatory. This policy seeks to make education relevant to modern day trends by imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes that result in sustainable socio-economic development as well as prosperity (New curriculum framework 2015-2022). It is in this context that the curriculum framework revamped the Religious Studies curriculum to make it relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century trends. Because of its thrust on religious diversity and ability to enhance peace and stability the subject was reformed so as to ensure nation building and economic prosperity. I argue that the curriculum framework as a policy cherishes religious diversity, which is part of national vision and part of upholding the nation's cultural heritage as embodied in various religious traditions.

The main aim of the Curriculum Framework as a policy is to:

promote and cherish the Zimbabwean identity in particular the following, patriotism, awareness of heritage, history, culture and traditions; inter-cultural understanding and tolerance, self-respect and respect for others (*Ubuntu/Unhu/Vumunhu*); being open, receptive, assertive and optimistic. (Dokora 2015:4).

Intercultural understanding and awareness of heritage results in respect of other people's religious persuasions and, eventually, leads to inclusivity, tolerance and plurality. As such, the new curriculum as a policy seeks to strengthen and promote inclusivity, equity and fairness, respect of other religions, which are components of *Unhu/Ubuntu*, as well as celebrating religious diversity. This reflects that the new curriculum framework is a competence-based one because learners have exit profiles which seek to make them graduate from school into the society with attributes such as being inclusive, tolerant and respectful of religious pluralism. They gain through the learning of Religious Studies, among other subjects. Religious Studies

as an academic subject prepares learners for the current and future opportunities and challenges.

In terms of the implementation of the new curriculum, the policy took a phased approach by engaging in teacher development, production of learning materials and raising awareness. However, the situation on the ground shows that teacher development, production of learning material and awareness of the needs of the Religious Studies curriculum were very minimal (Zivave and Muzambi 2022). The policy implementation started in 2017 with form 1 to form 6 doing Religious Studies. The subject is treated as one of “the Necessary Electives” (Dokora 2015:14) which falls under humanities. My submission is that Religious Studies should be a necessary core subject rather than an elective subject because of its positive role in shaping the identity, morals and stability of the individual in society. According to the new curriculum policy framework there is a “five pathway system which includes the following; Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM)” (MOPSE 2017:2). Religious Studies falls under the Arts path way, whose aim is to produce learners who, among other skills and attitudes, are able to embrace religious diversity. The new curriculum policy framework has the mandate to promote religious inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism in a multi-faith Zimbabwe through the teaching and learning of Religious Studies from primary to secondary level. The policy also indicates that all learning areas have equal weight. This implies that Religious Studies has the same weight as the other subjects in other learning areas. However, Chimininge and Chikasha’s (2016) study has shown that learners are dropping the subject because it has less weight than science subjects. In this regard, I contend that weak policy framing has caused the downgrading of Religious Studies in schools, which has affected policy implementation. This has also hampered inclusivity, tolerance and plurality in the classroom and the society at large.

#### **4.5.2 Religious Studies national syllabus.**

To understand the Religious Studies policy, an analysis of the syllabus as a policy document is necessary to identify challenges related to the current policy. Therefore, the Family and Religious Studies (FRS) policy document, namely; the syllabus guides how Religious Studies should be taught in Zimbabwean secondary schools. There are two syllabuses for Religious Studies in secondary schools, one for Ordinary level (form 1-4) coded 4047, and the other for Advanced level (form 5-6) coded 6074. The two syllabuses are interrelated, and the topics are arranged in a developmental and spiral way. This means that concepts develop as one gets into

the next form and results in learners growing “into a mature relationship with religious and moral thinking and practice” (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:3)

#### **4.5.2.1 O Level 4047 and Advanced Level 6074 syllabus**

The Family and Religious Studies (FRS) 4047 is a four-year syllabus while the Advanced level is two-year course with learning areas which enable learners to “understand, interpret and apply religious and moral concepts to their everyday life” (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:1). The syllabus is hinged on a multi-faith approach to the study of religion to promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism. As such, the 4047 and 6074 syllabuses concentrate on Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This is the reason why the policy document seeks to promote awareness among learners of their religious identities in a multi-cultural society as well as understand the essence of religious plurality. According to ZIMSEC Family and Religious Studies (FRS) syllabus, the subjects “seek to develop critical reflection of socio-economic and political issues, religious tolerance, and initiative in terms of formulating ideologies that help in transforming the learners to contribute to sustainable development” (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:3). The Religious Studies syllabus indicates that learners are assessed through both continuous assessment and a summative examination.

The rationale of the 4047 and 6074 syllabuses is on “the study of the respective historical backgrounds, beliefs and practices, practitioners, rites and rituals of selected religions in Zimbabwe and their impact on an individual, family and local, national and global communities, respectively.” This means that Religious Studies facilitates respect for religious diversity that results in religious inclusivism, tolerance and plurality in the Zimbabwean society. Learning the subject results in the “understanding of the role of religion in the formulation of appropriate ideologies that may help motivate, propel and sustain development” (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:1). This means that Religious Studies has a role in promoting religious diversity in a multi-faith society. Religious Studies helps learners formulate ideologies that are based on inclusivity, tolerance and plurality which helps in socio-economic development. I argue that a society that respects religious diversity could propel the nation to higher levels in terms of social, religious and economic development.

The Family and Religious Studies (FRS) syllabus as a policy guide seeks to enable learners to develop skills such as “problem solving, critical thinking, decision making, conflict resolution, leadership, self-management, communication and enterprise” (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:3). This

means that the Family and Religious Studies (FRS) promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism as these values are results of self-management, problem solving and conflict resolution skills. Religious extremism and religious conflicts are thus mitigated by this policy guideline. I, therefore, argue that the use of Religious Studies as an instrument to convert learners in school to a particular religion leads to extremism.

In terms of methodology, the policy is founded on “learner-centred, hands-on, multi-faith, non-proselytising and non-confessional problem posing approach” (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:3). It is this pedagogical approach which promotes inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism. According to the ZIMSEC Syllabus, “the approach encourages initiative, self-motivation, reflective thinking and practical application of concepts to everyday life” (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:3). The approach is, therefore, aimed at promoting religious diversity through the teaching of Religious Studies in a multi-faith approach. The teacher is not a missionary but a conveyor of religious truth claims in an objective manner. The policy further demands the following teaching and learning methods, namely; “lesson delivery and note taking, discussion, drama, role-play and simulation, video and film show, e-learning, group work, research, case studies and educational tours” (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:4). These are learner-centred approaches that do not indoctrinate the learner but enable the learner to understand various religious issues in a non-confessional but collaborative manner. This is supported by the ZIMSEC Syllabus which states that the methods are “enhanced by the application of methods that employ multi-sensory approaches to teaching such as individualization, totality, concreteness, tactility, stimulation and self-activity” (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:4).

The form 1-4 syllabus further states that the subject is allocated four periods of 40 minutes per week. On the other hand, the form 5-6 subject time allocation has eight periods which are 80 minutes long each per week. This time allocation is considered adequate for syllabus coverage according to the policy. The time allocation has a bearing on the successful implementation of the curriculum. Time is an important resource that ensures that teachers tacitly teach all concepts without abandoning the others. The syllabus also has the following assumptions: that learners belong to a family institution, learners are cognisant of the moral values (*Unhu/Ubuntu*) which they should follow, learners are affected by religion in every aspect of life, learners interact with peers of diverse religious backgrounds, and that learners are aware of the diversity of religions and culture. I argue that the policy assumptions provide a fertile ground for one to argue that Zimbabwe is a multi-faith society and that any elevation of one religion at the expense of the other



is bound to promote exclusivism, religious conflicts and religious extremism. This is because learners have an awareness of their religious belonging which should be respected through the teaching and learning of religions which every learner belongs to.

The syllabus of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) also comprises cross-cutting themes which include gender, health, environmental management, enterprise, children's rights, human rights, sexuality, heritage, good citizenship, social responsibility and governance, conflict transformation, tolerance and peace-building. The cross-cutting themes of heritage, human rights, conflict transformation, tolerance and peace-building call learners to respect other people's beliefs which are different from theirs. These cross-cutting themes promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism as Religious Studies should preserve religious-cultural heritage, human rights and result in peace building through recognition of religious diversity through the teaching and learning of various religions. This means that the Religious Studies curriculum seeks to respect freedom of worship as well as religious heritage of learners and the Zimbabwean community at large.

The aim of the updated Religious Studies syllabus is to “promote the religious and moral development of the learner as well as to enable the learner to appreciate religious and cultural diversity in Zimbabwe...promote national heritage and identity” (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015:3) among other aims which intend to strengthen religious inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism in the Zimbabwean society. Therefore, the aim of the Religious Studies policy is to recognise religious diversity as well as preserve religion which is part of the cultural heritage of many people in Zimbabwe. It is because of this reason that the syllabus is composed of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam which are dominant religions in Zimbabwe. Thus, learners are encouraged by the policy to cover the historical background, key beliefs and practices of the four religions as a means of understanding religious diversity in Zimbabwe. This enables learners to be respectful of other people's beliefs without being a believer of that religion.

#### **4.5.2.2 Continuous Assessment**

With regard to assessment the policy is grounded on the principle of inclusivity. According to the ZIMSEC Syllabus (2015-2022 :) arrangements, accommodations and modifications should be visible in both the continuous and summative assessment to enable all learners to access assessments. This means that assessment should promote religious diversity. It should not be means

of converting learners but a platform for religious exploration from a multi-faith perspective. According to the ZIMSEC Syllabus assessment policy objectives aim to:

- identify various religions in Zimbabwe
- identify the main features of a religion
- identify places of religious importance in Zimbabwe
- explain the significance of the heritage sites and how they foster national identity
- define the concept of *Unhu/Ubuntu*
- relate the concept of *Unhu/Ubuntu* to the various religious beliefs in Zimbabwe
- explain the role of religion in fostering teamwork, hard work and good citizenship

From the objectives of the assessment policy, it is clear that Zimbabwe is recognised as a multi-faith nation which celebrate religious diversity as well as promotion of values which exhibit good citizenship like inclusivity, tolerance and plurality by Zimbabweans. This means that inclusivism, tolerance and plurality are cherished values which depict *Unhu/Ubuntu*.

### **Models of Assessment in Religious Studies in Zimbabwe**

<b>Form of assessment</b>	<b>Weighting</b>
Continuous	30%
Summative	70%
Total	100%

From the above table, the policy states that learners are assessed in two forms of assessment, continuous and summative forms. Continuous assessment entails that a student is assessed using research and problem solving tasks that are done during the tenure of the course. The learner needs 6 Continuous Assessment Learner Activities (CALA) during the A level course which carries 30% weight of final grade of the graduation of the learner. However, this form of assessment is being amidst several challenges like standardisation of the continuous assessment in schools. This hinders Religious Studies policy implementation and results in policy discord.

At the end of the four years for form 1-4 and two years for form 5-6, learners undergo a summative examination which consists of two component papers which are FRS 1 and FRS 2. Form 4 learners write FRS paper 1 in 2 hours which consists of 20 structured questions on all the four religions in this syllabus. The component is in three sections, of which Section A is compulsory, covering Indigenous Religion and Christianity. Candidates will then choose either Section B on Judaism or

Section C on Islam. Candidates also sit for FRS paper 2 in 2 hours 30 minutes. Paper 2 consists of 16 essay type questions which cover all the four religions. The component is in the four sections of which Section A is Indigenous Religion, Section B Christianity, Section C Judaism and Section D Islam. Each section has four questions each carrying 25 marks each. A candidate is required to attempt four questions. Sections A and B are compulsory while candidates may choose either Section C or D. For A level, learners write FRS paper 1 in 3 hours. This paper consists of 10 essay questions on two religions in this syllabus. The component is in two sections, of which Section A, covers Indigenous Religion and Section B covers Judaism. Learners also sit for paper 2 in 3 hours. The paper is composed of 10 essay questions on two religions studied in the syllabus. In both papers, candidates must answer four questions, choosing at least one question from each section.

Analysis of the above syllabus indicates that the syllabus is too congested with a lot of learning and teaching material as well as activities. At O' level the topics such as family, religion and the liberation struggle, religion and the natural environment as well as rites of passage and rituals seem to be repetitive from form 1 to form 4. This has crowded the syllabus with topics which overlap into one another, for example, rites of passage and rituals. This resonates with data collected during interviews which suggested that the syllabus was too long. Furthermore, cross-cutting themes were not specified, therefore, not stating what was supposed to be taught particularly at advanced level. Cross cutting themes such as heritage rights and responsibilities were not examined during summative assessment. However, the syllabus does not indicate any cross-cutting objectives to be taught. I, therefore, subscribe to the observation that summative policy in Zimbabwe has tended to be contradictory and inconsistent (Gonye, Mareva, Gamira and Chiome, 2012:1333).

#### **4.5.3. Past Examination Papers**

A content analysis of past examination papers, especially those covering the first two years following the introduction of the updated Religious Studies curriculum was important in validating data on policy and implementation challenges of the reviewed curriculum.

##### **4.5.3.1 Family and Religious Studies November 2018 paper**



**ZIMBABWE SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL**  
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level

**FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
PAPER 1 Indigenous Religion and Judaism

**6074/1**

**NOVEMBER 2018 SESSION**

**3 hours**

Additional materials:  
Answer paper

**TIME** 3 hours

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

Write your name, centre number and candidate number in the spaces provided on the answer paper/answer booklet.

Answer **four** questions.

Answer at least **one** question from Sections A and B.

Write your answers on the separate answer paper provided.

If you use more than one sheet of paper, fasten the sheets together.

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

All questions in this paper carry 25 marks.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

**This question paper consists of 2 printed pages and 2 blank pages.**  
Copyright: Zimbabwe School Examinations Council, N2018.

**[Turn over**

## Section A

## Indigenous Religion

- 1 Analyse the significance of ancestral spirits in Indigenous Religion. [25]
- 2 Explore ways that minimise divorce in Indigenous Religion. [25]
- 3 Discuss the effectiveness of taboos in the conservation of nature. [25]
- 4 To what extent have women in Indigenous Religion been involved in politics? [25]
- 5 "Missionaries did not bring God to Africa". Examine the relevance of this statement. [25]

## Section B

## Judaism

- 6 Distinguish between a seer and a prophet in Israel. [25]
- 7 Examine how Moses was a Model of good leadership. What lessons do leaders in your society learn from him? [25]
- 8 Assess the theme of reconciliation in Hosea. What methods are used to address misunderstandings in your society? [25]
- 9 Analyse how Isaiah of Jerusalem used names of his children to deliver his message. Illustrate how your society uses names to communicate issues. [25]
- 10 Discuss the Jewish understanding of marriage. [25]

A

9  
9  
11  
10

B

(11) +  
17 +  
14 +  
13

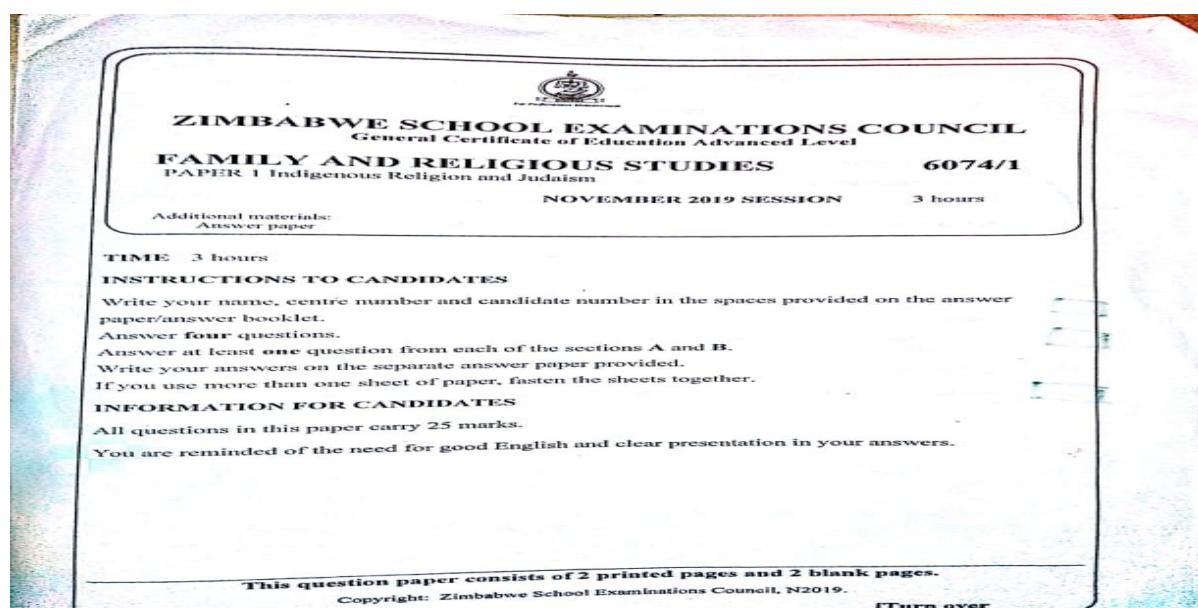
Above is the first paper that was written by all advanced level students in Zimbabwe after the introduction of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. This paper realises that the learner has to answer four questions in three hours. Candidates have to address each religion in at least one question. Paper 1 is composed of Indigenous Religion and Judaism. However, section B

of the paper above reflects that 80% of the questions that were asked had a bias towards the old curriculum. The old curriculum focused more on canonical and pre-canonical prophets. This paper still insinuates that seership of Moses, Hosea and Isaiah on whom question numbers 6, 7, 8 and 9 examined. The syllabus indicates that people should have knowledge about prophets in general. For example, the ZIMSEC Syllabus (2015-2022:26) has laid out that by the end of the topic Prophets in Israel learners should be able to

- explain functions of prophets
- assess functions of prophets.

The above syllabus objectives on prophets in Israel do not specify in-depth study of prophets as demanded in the question in paper 1 section B. Furthermore, analysis of questions 6, 7, 8 and 9 reflect exclusivism and complete digression from the essence of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. This observation is in line with that by Bulawayo24 online newspaper which revealed that the paper had glitches ranged from non-inclusive questions, questions that diverged from the requirements of the new syllabus to different instructions on the specimen paper and those on the real examination papers. I argue that the first paper to be written was more biased towards the old curriculum because the questions were exclusive in nature and had no link with the updated Religious Studies syllabus. It is this policy inconsistency which affects the implementation of the updated Religious Studies.

#### 4.5.3. A Level FRS November 2019 paper 1





## Section A

## Indigenous Religion

- 1 "Surely, *ngozi* / avenging spirits are important in enhancing human relationships." Discuss. [25]
- 2 Analyse the process of divorce and its effects in Indigenous religion. [25]
- 3 To what extent are women important in Indigenous religion? [25]
- 4 Examine the causes of illness in Indigenous religion. [25]
- 5 Discuss how gender roles are developed in Indigenous religion. [25]

## Section B

## Judaism

- 6 Discuss any **three** covenants found in Judaism. [25]
- 7 'Just like Samuel, Zimbabwean leaders have different functions in the society'. Discuss. [25]
- 8 Examine how Amos and Jeremiah's political messages alienated them from the society. [25]
- 9 Analyse pre-burial rituals in Judaism. [25]
- 10 Discuss how the story of Naboth helps one to understand the Jewish land tenure system. [25]

It is interesting that in 2019 bias towards the old curriculum persisted. For instance, 3 questions, specifically question number 7, 8 and 10 focused on individual prophets negating the syllabus objective which demanded general functions of prophets. In this question paper, shifting from the old policy to the new policy was difficult as questions remained bible-centred. Through the paper, teachers are forced to remain glued to the old policy rather than shifting to the updated curriculum. What is of great concern about this summative examination paper in light of the study is the fact that after the adoption of the 2017 updated curriculum, the critical challenge became assessment procedure which has remained biased towards the old curriculum.

**ZIMBABWE SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL**  
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level

**FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
PAPER 2 Christianity and Islam

**6074/2**

**NOVEMBER 2019 SESSION**

Additional materials:  
Answer paper

**3 hours**

**TIME** 3 hours

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

Write your name, centre number and candidate number in the spaces provided on the answer paper/answer booklet.

Answer **four** questions.

Answer at least **one** question from each of the Sections **A** and **B**.

Write your answers on the separate answer paper provided.

If you use more than one sheet of paper, fasten the sheets together.

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

All questions in this paper carry 25 marks.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

**This question paper consists of 2 printed pages and 2 blank pages.**  
Copyright: Zimbabwe School Examinations Council, N2019.

**[Turn over]**

©ZIMSEC N2019



**2**

**Section A**

**Christianity**

- 1 To what extent does sin affect good citizenship? [25]
- 2 Contrast the infancy stories in the gospels, showing how they give prominence to women. [25]
- 3 Discuss the importance of Jesus' parables to Zimbabweans. [25]
- 4 Identify incidences of entrepreneurship in the early church and show how they can be applied in Zimbabwe. [25]
- 5 Analyse the relationship between the early church and Roman officials. Draw lessons for the church in Zimbabwe. [25]

**Section B**

**Islam**

- 6 Discuss the nature of the Koran in Islam. [25]
- 7 Assess the use of Shariah law. [25]
- 8 Write explanatory notes on the following:
  - (i) Shahaddah [5]
  - (ii) Salat [5]
  - (iii) Sawm [5]
  - (iv) Zakat [5]
  - (v) Hajj [5]
- 9 Examine Islamic teachings on love. [25]
- 10 Analyse the contribution of national and international Muslim organisations in Zimbabwe. [25]

6074/2 N2019

Bias towards the old curriculum is also evident in paper 2 where Christianity and Islam are the religions of study. The paper above reflects that question 2, 3 and 5 reflect that the paper was more hinged on the abolished Divinity paper 2 and 3. This paper paints a picture that learners

were still learning the old curriculum. According to Section 1.2 of the Family and Religious Studies (FRS), religious education should not be for the purpose of proselytising, but to educate. However, these summative assessment questions still reflect proselytisation. This is clear testimony of policy confusion as the mixture of old and updated Religious Studies questions reflects a challenge in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The paper has a Christian bias and makes teachers stick to the old curriculum, thus, creating bias against the newly introduced Islam religion in paper 2.

An analysis of the question paper reflects that the updated curriculum was hurriedly done without plan. This is because most questions are biased towards the old curriculum and this has impacted on the teaching of other religions like Indigenous Religion and Islam that were introduced by the new policy. To be precise, the questions show that ZIMSEC as an examining board was also not prepared for a Religious Studies curriculum change. This resonates with Zivave and Muzambi (2022) who observe that there was a conflict between the examining board and the Religious Studies teachers. Teachers' unions also echoed the same sentiments stating that the November 2018 examinations had ambushed teachers and learners as the examination questions did not tally with the syllabus objectives. I argue that summative assessment should be in line with the objectives of the syllabus so as to reduce confusion, fears and misgivings about the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

#### **4.5.6. Newspaper Reports**

Findings from the media show that the updated Religious Studies curriculum had been introduced amidst contestations, rejections and suspicions among different stakeholders including parents, learners, teachers and teachers' unions. I argue that these contestations and suspicions in the media reflect that curriculum had been imposed from the top. There was no consensus on what needed to be included in the updated Religious Studies curriculum despite the good picture portrayed by government that curriculum change had been fruitful and without challenges. As such, *The Sunday Mail* of 12 February 2018, barely after a month from the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum, reflects on the challenges in curriculum reform in Religious Studies as well as indigenous language. Teachers had written a letter of complaint to ZIMSEC stating that the November 2018 examination had ambushed both the teachers and students, after presenting questions which did not tally with the new syllabus template (*The Sunday Mail*, 2018). This resonates well with research findings from interviews which note that the updated Religious Studies summative assessment was, by and

large, biblical-centred. My submission is that item writing in the updated curriculum has not changed. Summative assessment procedures in the updated Religious Studies still lack validity when they continue to use confessional approach in questioning during the final examination.

*The Sunday Mail* of 12 February 2017 had an article entitled “We don’t plan to fail on the new curriculum: Religious Studies and mother tongue issues cleared” where it was revealed by the then Minister of Primary Education, Dr Lazarus Dokora that:

The Religious Studies reform is in the 1987 policy, it is not a new provision. There are not going to be any sermons in the schools; those are places of learning. We are not converting our children to be Hindus, no.... They live in the same world with people of different religious beliefs and therefore they need to understand each other.

The above verbatim indicates that the Religious Studies reform was necessitated by the confessional Religious Studies syllabus which aimed at converting people and did not celebrate religious diversity. This statement suggests that the new Religious Studies policy is based on a pluralistic approach.

The *Bulawayo24* online newspaper of 22 Dec 2018 carried an article entitled “Religious Studies teachers confused over new curriculum”. In this article, it is revealed that the Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC 2015-2022) offered the November 2018 Religious Studies examinations which were marred with lots of irregularities. The newspaper argued that there were non-inclusive questions but included questions that diverged from the requirements of the new syllabus. The instructions on the real examination papers were different from those on the specimen paper as shown in the November 2018 A’ Level paper presented in the previous sub-section. It is these anomalies which resulted in the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) writing a letter to complain on many issues including lack of coherence between the syllabus and the examination questions. In the letter of November 1, 2018, PTUZ secretary general, Raymond Majongwe, said:

We write this letter to complain about certain papers that have disadvantaged learners in the current examination session. While the new curriculum exposes the learners to four religions in the two-year course which is commendable, the FRS 6074 Paper 1, written in November 2018 lacks validity and is not in line with the syllabus.

We believe some of the mistakes that found their way into the paper are either a symptom of arrogance or incompetence on the part of the officer(s) who oversee setting the items or compilation or both.

One major problem that we noted is that there is a difference between the specimen paper and the paper that came in the final examination.

The letter reflects policy infidelity on the party of ZIMSEC as well as the exclusion of inclusive questions which caused much prejudice to the learners and teachers. The issue of summative assessment has caused many challenges in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The examination paper should provide learners the opportunity to show their wide knowledge on religions rather than confine them to biblical religions alone. The paper should provide learners with what is in the syllabus more than the belief systems of item writers and markers. I argue that the summative assessment violated the Constitution of Zimbabwe, and encouraged feelings of religious intolerance and exclusivity in the classroom.

The O' Level 2018 papers had a lot of typing errors. It was as if the typist just edited the paper 1 which required candidates to answer five and titled it Religious Studies Paper 2 examination paper. There were structured questions, each with 20 marks, but then they did not change the allocated time and the number of questions to be answered. Such incidents have affected the implementation of policy as teachers were left confused as to what the policy guideline said on summative assessment. These errors demonstrate the stakeholders' unpreparedness to implement curriculum reform in Religious Studies.

Another media report from *The Sunday News* entitled "Criticism of new curriculum based on misinformation – Ministry: Maths, Science to be taught in English from Grade 3: Religious Studies still part of curriculum" revealed that there were some religious groups that claimed that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education had scrapped the teaching of Religious Studies in schools, particularly Christianity. The paper revealed that the then permanent secretary of Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Dr Utete-Masango, had indicated that the learning area of Religious Studies had been further expanded under the new framework. The permanent secretary noted that:

Nothing has really changed from the old syllabus. Under the new curriculum this area has been enhanced to include 'Family, Religion and Moral Education' so nothing has been banned. Stakeholders should celebrate because the new areas will help mould the Zimbabwean that we all yearn for

The above extract shows that there are a lot of challenges facing Religious Studies as evidenced by the sentiments of various religious groups who felt Christianity was being banned from the Religious Education curriculum. Analysis of the verbatim suggests that the updating of Religious Studies curriculum from bible centred religions to multi-faith one was construed as a scrapping of the subject. The claim by the permanent secretary that ‘nothing has changed from the old syllabus ...’ unfortunately influenced policy implementation as teachers would continue to use the old teaching methods and learning content. The remarks by the then permanent secretary may have contributed to policy infidelity by teachers.

Furthermore, *The Newsday* of 5 February 2018 headlined that “Teachers fume over new curriculum textbooks”. This article reflects that the media recognises the shortage of learning material as an impediment to the effective implementation of the updated curriculum. Regarding Religious Studies, the media revealed that the available textbooks misrepresented the newly introduced religions and cultures. *The Newsday* described the learning material as “wrong and malicious” with some statements not applying to any particular religious cultures. This is in line with what Zivave and Muzambi (2022:20) established that teachers had to ‘introduce terror’ in the teaching of the subject. This means that teachers used information which they received from colleagues and forced it on learners despite its lack of authenticity. It appears the updated Religious Studies learning material has been biased against newly introduced religions. This is validated by the research findings from questionnaires and interviews. It is such contentious issues which raise fears among parents and teachers. Indeed, some sections of the society have advocated for the suspension of the Religious Studies curriculum. These sentiments were echoed by one of the teachers recorded in *The Newsday* who was quoted as saying:

This was rushed, you can’t implement such a huge project when the economy is not stable. Such loopholes allow us to measure the level of intelligence of our leaders. Students must not be fed poisonous information, we will not support that.

The above quote from *Newsday* indicates that teachers were challenging irrelevant learning materials that had been availed by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education for having wrong content. The observations from the media are valid, and curriculum implementation should be done when relevant learning material has been developed instead of trying to implement it when learning material is in short supply, which exposes learners to wrong information.

The issue of shortage of learning material has also been revealed in *The Sunday Mail* of 2019 where it was noted that there was a serious shortage of material which resulted in teachers and school children across the country sharing textbooks, as well as relying on social media. According to *The Sunday Mail* of 2019's article entitled "New curriculum textbooks scarce" Government had delayed in inviting tenders for the new curriculum textbooks. Publishers were therefore given a short period within which to produce large quantities of texts, with minimal funding. The findings resonate well with empirical evidence in South Africa which suggest that curriculum reform requires funding for it to be successful (Maluleke 2015).

In 2022, *Bulawayo24* online publication, in a report entitled "Teachers clueless on new curriculum 5 years on" revealed that curriculum implementers (teachers) were still reportedly failing to interpret the syllabi of the competence-based curriculum, five years after it had been introduced. It noted that since 2017, the implementation of the updated curriculum faced several challenges such as inadequate funding and lack of understanding by both teachers and learners (*Bulawayo24 online news*). I contend that teachers of Family and Religious Studies as a subject are failing to interpret the syllabus. This is because there are arguments over which topics are in the Religious Studies syllabus or not. I concur with this because if we look at the Judaism section on prophets, teachers might interpret the syllabus to mean in-depth study of the topic prophets as was done during the old Religious Studies curriculum. This resonates with *Bulawayo24* claims that Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC) examinations brought in questions from topics that were not in the syllabus, or that questions covered the wrong sections, thereby causing teachers to vacillate in syllabus interpretation.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter I presented data on policy implementation and challenges to the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. I utilised questionnaires, interviews and document analysis to collect data pertinent to the study. Teachers, inspectors and the directorate indicated different understandings of policy, which I submit was the cause of the challenges in the implementation of the updated curriculum. The chapter demonstrated that the updated curriculum framework gave rise to the updated Religious Studies curriculum which was implemented commencing 2017. The respondents indicated their understanding of why Religious Studies had undergone reform and argued that in the process the updated Religious Studies curriculum promoted inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. They appraised the updated Religious Studies curriculum for promoting the study of more religions that are practiced in Zimbabwe. Respondents advocated for multi-faith pedagogies which promote

equality of religions rather than confessional approaches which create a hierarchy of religions. However, some participants revealed that the current Religious Studies curriculum has, once again, side-lined minority religions, which still promotes religious exclusivism, intolerance and the dominance of Abrahamic religions namely Christianity and Judaism. It was revealed that there were some policy gaps as well as challenges which impacted negatively on the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. These policy gaps and challenges were attributed to the top-bottom approach that was used to design, plan and implement Religious Studies curriculum. Notable challenges revealed in this study include: policy infidelity, lack of supervision, lack of relevant learning material, lack of qualified personnel, lack of technical support, dropping of the subject and pedagogical deficiencies, among others. Analysis revealed that most of these challenges were caused by lack of preparedness, lack of funding and the shortage human resources to implement the current policy on the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Further analysis revealed that teachers also lacked motivation to implement the curriculum reforms in religious studies. On the other hand, some mission schools were found to be resistant to curriculum reforms in Religious Studies as they were afraid that newly introduced religions, Indigenous religion and Islam had become a threat to Christian beliefs and practices. It emerged that these several challenges could be solved through continuous curriculum review, provision of learning material, in-service training of teachers, teacher capacity development programs, religious dialogue as well as policy fidelity on the part of examination boards. All these mitigatory measures could ensure that inclusivism, tolerance and plurality were realised in a multi-faith society.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND LITERATURE CONTROL**

### **Introduction 5.0**

The previous chapter presented data and analysed the data thematically. The data was collected through semi-structured questionnaire, interviews and document analysis. In this chapter, I present a detailed discussion of the findings of the study linking them with existing literature. The main thrust of this study was to critique policy implementation and challenges regarding the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. From the data collected, it is clear that centralised curriculum design and implementation has affected policy implementation. There was need for Religious Studies reform. The policy implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum had challenges which could be mitigated through several intervention strategies. Below is a discussion of policy implementation challenges affecting the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools that emerged from the study.

### **5.1 Updated Curriculum Framework**

The findings of the study revealed that the recommendations of the 1999 Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry have influenced curriculum change in Zimbabwe, especially in 2017. It took eighteen years for Government to effect the recommendations of the Commission that the Zimbabwean curriculum needed to respond to the global changes as well learners' needs. Zivave and Muzambi (2022:15) note that the updated Religious Studies curriculum has been informed by the Commission's report of 1999, which called for inclusive education. This means that the inclusivity and celebration of religious diversity in a plural society was of essence to the Commission of Inquiry. Thus, the curriculum was reviewed to cater for the recommendations, which, among other things, suggested that religions in Zimbabwe should be recognised in the Religious Studies learning area. The inclusion of multi-faith Religious Studies is part of the broad objectives of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning models.

Thus, the findings revealed that the inherited colonial education system was divorced from the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs. That system turned African graduates into employees instead of employers, more literary rather than problem solvers. It also peripherised the learning processes instead of including them. In the context of Religious Studies, learners were alienated from their indigenous beliefs as Christianity was viewed as the religion more worthy of academic study. Literature argues that since Zimbabwean society is no longer under colonialism the policy



networks in religious circles should exorcise coloniality, which had centred religion on a contested terrain, within the mainstream curriculum practice (Dube and Tsotetsi, 2019:241). Inheritance of the colonial Religious Studies syllabus at independence resulted in the perpetuation of Christo-centric Religious Studies, thereby prejudicing the native religious beliefs and other religions in Zimbabwe. The Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education (2015-2022:1) notes that Zimbabwe has inherited the legacies of discrimination, pyramidal structure in education and unequal investment in the education sector. It is within this context that religions were presented in a hierarchical nature with the discrimination of Indigenous Religion, Islam and other religions, hence the need for reforms in Religious Studies. I observed that the need to disentangle itself from the colonial legacy resulted in the curriculum reforms including in Religious Studies. There was need to shift from a syllabus which aimed at converting learners to a religion to a syllabus which aimed at informing learners about other religions. In this regard, the findings of the study revealed that the colonial and the inherited syllabuses were both against inclusivism and pluralism.

The findings of the study also revealed that the curriculum framework had been motivated by the Constitution of Zimbabwe of 2013 which boldly states that Zimbabwe was not a Christian nation. Literature has revealed that the new Constitution of Zimbabwe has led to the realignment of key tenets of the education curriculum (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020:304). This observation is evident in this study as religions like Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all recognised by the Constitution of Zimbabwe. The updated Religious Studies curriculum needed to embrace religious plurality and diversity which had been lacking in the old curriculum. According to the new constitution (2013), all religions should be accorded the same status because Zimbabwe is a secular state in which all religions have equal treatment. This is against the backdrop of the colonial curriculum which made Zimbabwe a Christian nation by default. By declaring that Zimbabwe was a Christian nation, the colonialists implicitly and overtly indicated their intention to cement colonial hegemony by making the learning of religion bible-centred; Christianity became the hallmark of civilisation, educational attainment and complete spirituality. Thus, the establishment of the new constitution led to a new curriculum framework which was meant to decolonise the education system in Zimbabwe as well as reaffirm the religious identities of Zimbabweans.

In line the above findings, in 2017 the government of Zimbabwe implemented the new policy in the teaching of Religious studies. There was a shift from the teaching of Christianity alone

to the teaching of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam under the new policy in secondary schools. Zivave and Muzambi (2022) have also shown that the change of the religious composition of Zimbabwean society led to the reform of Religious Studies curriculum. The policy has shifted to a multi-faith one and it is currently being implemented amidst several challenges. However, the policy, despite challenges, teaches about the importance of the family in African societies. It also teaches the importance of religions in promoting *Unhu/Ubuntu* in Zimbabwe. Unlike in Britain where policy in the teaching of Religious Studies differs from one school to the other, the Zimbabwean policy is very much similar to that of Indonesia, South Africa and Botswana where all public schools offer multi-faith syllabi. The findings revealed that Zimbabwe is a multi-religious country. The 2017 updated curriculum policy has been under implementation, but it was designed using the top to bottom approach. This confirms findings from Pedzisai, Tsvere and Nkhonde (2014:164) who note that policy implementation in the Zimbabwean education system is a mandate of the teacher. For this reason, teachers have been implementing the teaching of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam since 2017.

## **5.2 Curriculum Planning and Designing**

The issue of curriculum design and approach is pertinent to this study. For this reason, the findings of the study note that, in Zimbabwe, curriculum design is done at the top and teachers are only implementers of the curriculum. In Zimbabwe, curriculum design and approach is not democratic as it is not negotiated like in Australia. The top-down approach used has affected the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum because teachers lacked motivation. This confirms literature which says the top to bottom approach is only successful when teachers are motivated and has led teachers to “adapt to the curriculum than adopting it” (Healy 2011:44). The challenges affecting Religious Studies should not be blamed on the teachers alone but policy makers who designed the curriculum without involving the teachers as well. The top-bottom approach has created many challenges as confirmed by empirical data from Ramparsad (2001:287) and Dinama (2010:29) note that policy design from the top faces resistance from teachers and parents who feel threatened or underrepresented in the curriculum. I conclude that implementation constraints in Religious Studies are caused by the non-involvement of curriculum implementers.

The study also notes that curriculum planning, designing and dissemination is too centralised and comes from the top. It is this centralisation that makes curriculum policy implementation

problematic as teachers are resistant to policies which are made from the top. This resonates well with empirical evidence from Healy (2011:43) whose studies in Australia note that centrally driven curriculum innovations are usually associated with a large scale curriculum reform initiated by centralised policymaking bodies which have challenges with teachers. This suggests that since the updated Religious Studies curriculum was designed from the top there were challenges faced in the implementation as a result of this centralisation. The top-down curriculum planning and designing approach was utilized in the Religious Studies curriculum designing which excluded Religious Studies teachers who are the policy implementers. This observation is similar to Ndamba (2013) whose studies find out that teachers are not involved in curriculum planning and designing but in the implementation phase. In this context, policy implementation is hampered by reluctance and hesitancy by teachers. This is true of the updated Religious Studies curriculum where teachers were not involved in designing curriculum, yet religious issues have to be understood from the bottom and not from the top. Involving teachers in the designing and planning of Religious Studies curriculum could have prevented exclusion of some religions and might have helped in creating syllabus objectives which are achievable.

The findings further revealed that curriculum planning and designing are not negotiated, and teachers implement policies as given by policy monitors. For this reason, the study concludes that the top-down approach was used in curriculum designing and approach despite claims by policy makers that teachers had been involved. The study further presents that teachers were not given any room to question the curriculum but to implement policy. This is evidenced by the resistance by the teachers and their continued use of old teaching approaches as well as students' dropping of the subject in some communities. It can be concluded that the Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum was designed from the top because of the challenges linked to the acceptance of the subject by teachers, parents and other stakeholders.

### **5.3 Curriculum Policy and Implementation**

The findings also revealed that there were differences in perception of what policy and its implementation were in Zimbabwe. Policy monitors understood policy as a general plan of action in implementing the updated Religious Studies syllabus. This plan involved syllabus designing, teaching of content and assessment procedures. On the other hand, teachers understood policy as the teaching of content only. Because of this understanding, the implementation of policy became difficult because policy monitors and policy implementers

do not have a common understanding of policy. Lack of direction by policy implementers is caused by lack of knowledge on the policy itself. This indicates the dangers of the top-bottom approach which does not include teachers in policy formulation. Policy planning and designing should involve teachers so that teachers are accountable for the implementation challenges that may arise when curriculum is reformed.

In terms of new curriculum implementation, the findings revealed that the new policy was implemented as from 2017. The study noted that the implementation phase saw the Religious Studies learning content and teaching methodology changing. The subject was described as one of “the Necessary Electives” (Dokora 2015:14) which falls under humanities in the updated curriculum. When a subject is treated as an elective, the subject is not treated as compulsory. The findings revealed that the treatment of the subject as an elective has also contributed to the implementation challenges as the learning areas are underestimated. This has resulted in the maintenance of Christianity as the dominant religion and has resulted in intolerance and exclusivism.

The study further revealed that the Religious Studies policy in Zimbabwe is marred by lack of policy monitoring and supervision. This resonates with De Grauwe’s (2001:138) findings that lack of supervision causes policy implementation challenges in Zimbabwean schools. This means that there is no supervision done in assessing the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The study notes that policy monitoring and supervision in secondary schools are done by inspectors who are not subject specialist in Religious Studies. There are no Religious Studies inspectors who deal with that learning area. This is further cemented by empirical findings of De Grauwe (2001) who observes that posts for subject supervisors at district and provincial level were abolished. This means that policy, from primary through to secondary schools, was generally being supervised by inspectors who had been promoted basing on their experience in the teaching field rather than their specialisation and expertise. I, therefore, note that teachers are implementing policy haphazardly because there is no critical policy monitoring mechanisms, especially relating to multi-faith syllabi, as well as the development and application of pedagogies that advance inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism by inspectors available.

## **5.4 PEDAGOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

The teaching of indigenous religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam from a multi-faith perspective can only be enhanced when the multi-faith approach is practised in the classroom environment. This study observed that Zimbabwe is not a Christian country but a home to various religions. For this reason, the study concluded that policy enhancement could be done through teacher training, in-service training and material support from government, which will capacitate the teacher to implement the policy. The study further discovered that there should be inclusive policy formulation and review which might strengthen the current policy on Religious Studies. This confirms Chetty and Smit's findings (2016) that there should be inclusive dialogue between teachers, parents, government and religious organisations in order to enhance Religious Studies policy implementation.

### **5.4.1 Pedagogical Issues in Religious Studies**

I found out that pedagogical issues in the updated Religious Studies curriculum were more inclined to the multi-faith approach. This means that the study of Indigenous religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam could only be done using the multi-faith approach because the confessional approach was only applicable to the study of one religion. In his empirical studies in Britain, Grimmit (2007) concludes that multi-faith approaches were the best approaches in reducing indoctrination in a pluralistic society. This empirical evidence is further revealed by Matemba (2005) and Dinama (2010) who reveal that the multi-faith approach in Malawi and Botswana, respectively, has been utilised to teach different religions in response to the change in the religious demography of those nations. I discovered that the confessional approach was not the best pedagogical approach in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum because it promoted exclusivism, religious intolerance and led to minoritisation of other religions. This dispels the notion that Zimbabwe is a Christian country, and promotes the study of all religions found in Zimbabwe.

#### **5.4.1.2 Multi-faith approach**

The study further revealed that the multi-faith pedagogical approaches are student centred. These complement learners' desire to learn religions without any prejudice. There is need to utilise "productive pedagogies" which are student-centred as well as being stimulants to the learners so that they become critical thinkers. This resonates well with Gundani and Ndlovu

(2000:113) who contend that the multi-faith approach is desirable because it makes learning more interesting. It gives learners an understanding of religion and an enquiring critical and sympathetic approach, promotes tolerance and develops knowledge, understanding as well as ability to evaluate religious facts and ideas. This is attested by Museka (2012:64) who also notes that the multi-faith approach seeks to redress the pedagogical concerns of Religious Studies in a pluralistic environment, in the sense that it rejects the claim that there is a religion that is uniquely true and superior to others. I argue that the Zimbabwean religious demography and the Constitution of Zimbabwe have made it imperative for Government to suggest that the multi-faith approach was the best pedagogical approach in the promotion of religious inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism. This is because no religion is elevated above the others, and chances of indoctrination are minimised.

The study also revealed that the confessional approaches were no longer relevant to the teachings of the multi-faith syllabus. This is because Zimbabwe has moved from the confessional policy introduced by colonialists through missionaries to a non-confessional policy which is more inclusive, tolerant and recognises plurality. Document analysis has revealed that the updated Religious Studies policy was based upon a learner-centred, hands-on, multi-faith, non-proselytising and non-confessional problem posing approach (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015-2022:3). This was because the use of a confessional approach could lead to religious extremism as learners resist the imposition of religious beliefs on them leading to the dominance of one religion at the expense of other religions. It is also a violation of the Constitution of Zimbabwe which is the backbone to the new Religious Studies policy.

#### **5.4.2 Philosophical Approaches in Religious Studies**

With regard to the best philosophical approaches to the updated Religious Studies curriculum, inclusivism and pluralism have been noted as the best underpinning philosophies in the updated curriculum. Inclusivism is important because it is a philosophical concept which deals with accommodating others, and it acknowledges the existence of a multi-faith society as well as the advantages of having such a society. Mokotso (2017:53) observes that from an educational perspective, “inclusivism seeks to address all barriers to learning and participation and create a situation where all are provided with resources to support their learning and participation in the education system”. It is a philosophical approach which is tolerant and promotes religious dialogue. Hobson and Edwards (1999) conclude that “though one has his or her religious beliefs, there is something to learn from the religious beliefs of others” through inclusivism. I

contend, from a philosophical position, that there is no religion which contains all truths. As such, the study notes that the abolishment of the old curriculum and the adoption of the new curriculum framework are commendable as they facilitate the use of inclusivism. The study also notes that inclusivism should be supported by pluralism as a philosophical approach to the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Pluralism allows learners to interact with each other despite their diverse religious backgrounds. This resonates with studies by Mokotso (2017:47) who observes that with pluralism, “religion is learnt from the inside and outside” and that the comparative approach is used to “promote understanding and appreciation rather than judgment” of any religion. I, therefore, argue that Zimbabwe is pluralistic and that the updated Religious Studies curriculum allows the study of religions to embrace inclusivism and pluralism. For this reason, pluralism reduces religious fundamentalism and extremism which are a danger to peaceful co-existence in the modern world. The use of exclusivism and reductionism are philosophical approaches which are not in line with multi-faith society.

#### **5.4.3 Learning Methods in Religious Studies**

In terms of the appropriate learning theory, the research found that constructivism, augmented by connectivism, was appropriate for the learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The current updated Religious Studies curriculum does not treat learners as blank slates but as active participants in the learning process and that learning could also take place through information communication technology. Constructivism and Connectivism allow learners to collaborate and learn about various religions which they relate to in their day to day lives. This is substantiated by Chetty (2013) who notes that the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning modes did not require teachers to be centres of knowledge but facilitators of knowledge in a technological era. ZIMSEC (2015-2022:3) also validates this observation as it calls for research, group work and discussion, E-learning and discovery learning mechanisms which exude constructivism and connectivism. The learning of various religions requires learner-centred approaches which consider learners’ learning environment, and in this case, multi-faith environments.

In relation to the above, the research findings reveal that the teaching style should reflect a multi-faith approach. This is because the classroom is composed of various learners with different religious backgrounds. Ndlovu (2004) reveals that the multi-faith approach was more “academic and open study of religion in Religious Education” because it allows the teacher to be a facilitator of learning rather than a distributor of knowledge. In the same light, the new curriculum framework makes learners active participants in the learning process (ZIMSEC 2015:

3). Learners are encouraged to discover the true nature of multi-faith Religious Studies as they develop insights into various religious truths. In the process, learners solve problems such as exclusivism on their own. Teaching styles which maintain multi-faith approach solve problems in the classroom, including extremism, religious bullying and dominance.

### **5.5 FACTORS WHICH LED TO THE CURRICULUM REFORM OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN 2017.**

Findings in this study show that Religious Studies reforms have been motivated by a lot of factors. International research points out that Religious Studies reforms have been motivated by change of religious composition of society (Jackson 2007, Khozin 2018, Prinsloo 2008). This resonates with findings of this study that multi-religious states have moved from mono-religion syllabuses to multi-religions syllabuses. In fact, the whole curriculum has been reformed in countries such as South Korea, Indonesia and South Africa. Reform was also in response to the changing socio-economic world. It is under these reforms that Religious Studies has also been reformed in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe adopted an updated curriculum framework in 2017 as a reaction to the changes in the global world so that teaching and learning could be relevant to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. Zimbabwe followed the South Korea competence-based curriculum in transition from the old curriculum. However, the study observed that, in Zimbabwe, there was no adequate preparation for the educational reforms as well as adequate technical, material and financial support from the government. This confirms the findings of Mufanечиya (2015) which say that the updated curriculum framework was implemented hurriedly.

With regard to the reasons why the Religious Studies curriculum has undergone reform, study findings say that it was because of the need to embrace all the religions in Zimbabwe (ZIMSEC Syllabus 2015-2022). This confirm researches by Musaka (2013), Gwaravanda et al (2012) and Zivave et al (2020) who argue that Religious Studies curriculum reform was largely motivated by the need to embrace all religions in Zimbabwe. I agree with this observation though the reform did not cater for all religions in Zimbabwe. Reform minoritised religions such as Baha'i faith, Buddhism, Rastafarianism and Hinduism. This confirms Manyonganise (2016) who note that Christianity, IR, Judaism and Islam are not the only religions practised in Zimbabwe. Although Rastafarianism is precluded from Manyonganise's list, a study by Sibanda (2012) reveals that it is part of the religious space in Zimbabwe. The other reason for reform was to decolonise the Religious Studies curriculum which had persisted in upholding colonial legacies which had made Christianity the supreme religion of Zimbabwe while others were considered



inferior and not worthy of academic study. Literature underscores the fact that the Zimbabwean government inherited the colonial syllabus, and in 2017, therefore, the colonial syllabus was being overhauled as a means of decolonising it. Dube (2021) and Zivave et al (2021) believe that the current updated Religious Studies curriculum was meant to correct the colonial injustices that were evident in the abolished Religious Studies curriculum. Other reasons cited which have been confirmed by literature available include upholding the constitution, preservation of African heritage and celebration of religious diversity. Reforms in Religious Studies were both political, educational and religious because they permeate all aspects of life.

During the empirical generating of data, it was revealed that the updated Religious Studies curriculum has its origins from the colonial period. Religious Studies has undergone a lot of transition from the colonial period in order to cater for the needs of African beliefs systems and other religions which are found in Zimbabwe. The study notes that the Religious Studies curriculum was reformed to undo the colonial legacy, incorporate other religions and promote learner-centred approaches in the 21<sup>st</sup> century following the recommendations of the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry (1999). This confirms literature which says that the updated Religious Studies curriculum was a reaction to colonial legacies in education and a movement towards a multi-faith society (Dube 2019; Dube 2021; Zivave and Muzambi 2021). The old curriculum was a colonial one and there was therefore the need to decolonise the curriculum so that the curriculum became relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century realities. The continued use of the colonial Religious Studies curriculum was causing hierarchies in societies basing on religions. It is therefore prudent to say that curriculum reform was imperative to undo that colonial legacy.

The study also reveals that the adoption of the updated curriculum was motivated by the use of the new constitution which recognises Zimbabwe as a secular state and not a Christian state. Literature confirms that the updated Religious Studies curriculum ought to be viewed as a positive response to Chapter 4, Section 60 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act, 2013 (GoZ 2013), which recognises ‘freedom of conscience’ including ‘(a) freedom of thought, opinion, religion or belief; and (b) freedom to practice and propagate and give expression to their thought, opinion, religion or belief (Zivave and Muzambi 2022:14). The main objective of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is to promote inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism. This is confirmed by Hendek (2022) whose study in Britain concludes that

inclusive Religious Education, which involves the study of various religions and beliefs and their diverse interpretations, for all pupils in schools, is a means to promote tolerance and understanding and to combat ignorance and intolerance. In the Zimbabwean context, Zivave and Muzambi (2022) applaud the role of the new constitution in ensuring that the multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum is taught in order to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

The study also reveals that the religious composition of the Zimbabwean society has changed. Literature confirms societies are changing from mono-religious societies to multi-faith societies, hence, the need for curriculum reforms in Religious Studies (Grimmit 2007, 2013; Jackson 2004; Jackson 2013). I argue that Zimbabwe has transitioned to that stage where plurality has increased and the continued use of the Christian-centred curriculum could increase religious extremism and exclusivism, hence the need to shift to the updated Religious Studies curriculum which recognises the existence of various religions. Literature confirms that Zimbabwe is a fertile ground for many religions, notably, African Indigenous Religion, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Baha'i Faith, Hinduism and Rastafarianism (Sibanda 2010; Muhamba 2020; Zivave and Muzambi 2022). It becomes clear that the reforms in Religious Studies were logical in promoting tolerance in a plural society.

It also emerged that the need to change the learning content was a factor which contributed to the reforms in Religious Studies curriculum. In chapter one, curriculum has been defined as the learning content that is offered in Religious Studies. For this reason, curriculum change means a change in the learning content. Literature confirms that reforms in Religious Studies include change in learning content and in most cases, teaching/learning methods (Chetty and Smit 2016; Khozin 2018; Zivave and Muzambi 2022). The old curriculum content based on the bible had to be changed into a more inclusive one. Learning content now includes the study of Indigenous Religion, Islam and the bible.

Implementing multi-faith approaches was another reason that led to reforms in Religious Studies. Literature has confirmed that multi-faith Religious Education is consistent with what became known as 'multicultural education' and less commonly as 'multi-ethnic' education (Grimmit 1987). I argue that the shift to the multi-faith syllabus like in other countries the world over and in the Southern region in particular, had become imperative. The multi-faith approach to the teaching of Religious Education in African countries like Botswana, Malawi and Zimbabwe, among others, is a milestone attempt by African governments to unite African learners with their cultural heritage. It has promoted inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism in

multi-faith states. The old Religious Studies syllabus was a threat to inclusivism, tolerance and pluralism as it alienated learners from their diverse religious affiliations. For this reason, the Zimbabwe updated curriculum, 2015-2022, was reformed to accommodate the use of multi-faith approaches to the study of religions. It is an approach that has been lacking in Religious Studies in secondary schools since the colonial period until 2016.

The findings also reveal that the old Religious Studies curriculum had some policy weaknesses in the sense that it required the teaching of the bible from a multi-faith approach yet the syllabus objective was confessional in nature. Literature confirms that the old curriculum had a multi-faith gap (Ndlovu 2004; Gwaravanda et al 2013; Museka 2013; Machingura and Mugebe 2015). The old curriculum appeared to favour Christians who only constituted 86% of the population while ignoring more than 10% of the population which practiced different religions such as Judaism, Hinduism and Islam, which were not recognised in the schools before independence (Muhamba 2020:2). This suggests that reforms in Religious Studies were necessary to make the curriculum a multi-faith one in orientation, so that inclusivism, pluralism and tolerance could be promoted. My submission is that all religions including Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Indigenous Religion, which are practiced in Zimbabwe, should be treated with respect and be given equal treatment. This had been lacking in the old curriculum where policy had gaps which promoted exclusivism and intolerance by elevating Christianity at the expense of others. This means that reforms in Religious Studies were done to fill policy gaps extending from the old curriculum. The multi-faith gap in the old curriculum has resulted in policy makers changing the policy so that every Zimbabwean is represented in the updated curriculum. However, some religions have been excluded and there is still some discomfort because of the peripheral treatment of minority religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Rastafarianism and Baha'i faith which have been excluded in the updated curriculum.

#### **5.5.1 The Value of the Updated Religious Studies Curriculum**

The study also observed that the updated Religious Studies curriculum is of national value in promoting tolerance, inclusivism and plurality. This is because the subject adhere to constitutional provisions of treating religions as equal and encourages freedom of worship. Report by the Nziramasanga (1998) observed that the abolished Religious Studies curriculum was little significance in promoting tolerance, inclusivism and plurality. This is because it promoted one religion at the expense of the other resulted in religious animosity between suppressed religions and the dominating religion. For this reason the updated Religious Studies

curriculum was designed in line with the national goal of promoting tolerance, inclusivism and plurality hence complementing the 2013 constitution in supporting national values, goals, culture and aspiration of being one nation but many religions. Literature from Indonesia support the value of multi-faith Religious Studies in promoting national values in line with constitutional provisions. Khozin (2018:1) in his empirical studies in ethnic-based conflict and religious diversity in Indonesia revealed that Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Kong-Huchu which are constitutionally recognised reduced religious conflicts and promote human rights. I therefore argue that the updated Religious Studies curriculum is boon in managing existing diversity of religions and beliefs in Zimbabwe. The updated Religious Studies certainly is of national value in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality by creating peace and harmony for multi-faith Zimbabwean nation.

The findings of the study reveal that the curriculum review of 2017 is appraised for embracing religious pluralism in Zimbabwe as well as taking cognisance of the importance of family in shaping the moral values of young people. For this reason, the study revealed that the subject is important in restoring African identity as well as removal of Christian dominance in the curriculum space. This confirms literature from argues that the world over, reforms in Religious Studies curriculum has been done to strengthen personal and national identity; promote democracy, patriotism, individual rights and responsibilities; reduce moral decadence; cultivate social cohesion and tolerance as well as intercept young people's disengagement with political processes (Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi 2012:63). In the light of this, Zivave and Muzambi (2021) have shown that the change of religious composition of Zimbabwean society led to the reform of Religious Studies curriculum hence the review of the curriculum is appraised in making sure that religious diversity is celebrated in Zimbabwe.

The findings of the study revealed that the updated Religious Studies curriculum has the ability of promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality through the use of multi-faith approaches as well as constructivism learning modes. Religions introduced which include indigenous religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam has the ability of to promote values such as inclusivity, tolerant and acceptance of religious diversity when multi-faith approach is used to implement the new policy. This confirms literature which reveal that multi-faith Religious Studies syllabi promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality (Grimmit 1987, Wright 1993, Prinsiloo 2008 and Matemba 2011). In Zimbabwe, literature has been calling for the multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality (Ndlovu 2004, Gwaravanda, Masitera and Muzambi 2013; Dube 2016). However, the study findings

also noted that exclusion of minority religions may affect the role of the current updated Religious Studies curriculum in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. This is because the current curriculum is biased against minority religions despite the fact that they are practiced in Zimbabwe.

## **5.6 RELIGIOUS STUDIES POLICY AND POLICY GAPS IN ZIMBABWE.**

The findings of the study with regard to the understanding of the term policy in the light of the Religious Studies policy revealed that many teachers had no clear understanding of the current policy. This confirms the study by Maluleke (2015) that policy understanding is key to the implementation of it. Failure to understand policy result in the misinterpretation and shoddy implementation of policy. However, there is need to inform teachers of what is policy and how it must be implemented. This can be done through staff development in secondary schools. Policy documents should be availed to teachers in time. In this regard, teachers failed to understand policy as there was no policy documents available in schools at the inception of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

The findings of the study revealed that the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe influenced the Religious Studies policy to become a multi-faith one. It should be noted that constitution is the supreme legal document which regulates how other policies are formulated and implemented. As such section 4 chapter 56 focuses on discrimination and this discrimination all include religious decimation. The Constitution of Zimbabwe calls for non-discrimination of each other on the basis of religion. Literature confirms that the constitution has provisions and protections which assist in adjudicating religious interests within a secular state (Chidester 2006:8). This implies that the Zimbabwean constitution provides all religions legal support to exist as well as being taught in the educational curriculum. This is because the constitution is “religion neutral” (Damons 2017:43). I argue the inclusion of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Religious Studies syllabus is premised on the Constitution of Zimbabwe. This means that curriculum reform was motivated by constitutional demands of the Zimbabwean constitution.

The findings of the study revealed that the national syllabus is policy document which regulate how teaching and learning of Religious Studies is done. The Family and Religious Studies (FRS) syllabus is a policy document which guides how Religious Studies should be taught in Zimbabwean secondary schools. There are two syllabuses for Religious Studies in secondary schools, one for Ordinary level (form 1-4) coded 4047 and the other for Advanced level (form

5-6) coded 6074. These two syllabuses demand the teaching of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam from a multi-faith approach. It also stipulates that the teacher is the facilitator of learning and learning should be learner centred.

On policy guidelines which influence the teaching and learning of religious Studies, the findings of the study revealed that the multi-faith policy guideline is being used. This resonates with the document analysis available which admonishes the use of the multi-faith policy. According to ZIMSEC Syllabus (2015-2022:3) the updated Religious Studies syllabus is a learner centred, hands-on, multi-faith, non-proselytising and non-confessional problem posing approach. This resonates with the findings of Nelson and Yung (2021) who studied the implementation of a policy that introduced the teaching of world religions in Religious Education in Northern Ireland as multi-faith one. Muhamba (2020) further confirms this by noting that the policy in Zimbabwe like that of Northern Ireland which is multi-faith oriented one which has an aim to promote religious inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The study further revealed that teachers are aware of the multi-faith policy guidelines as enshrined in the national Religious Studies syllabi. The policy demands teachers to be facilitators of religious knowledge than preachers. I argue that this multi-faith policy demands to exhibit pedagogical change in a classroom so that there is effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. If the policy is implemented correctly, all religions will be treated as equal and problems such as indoctrination in the classroom will not be realised.

With regard to adherence to policy of the updated Religious Studies curriculum, the study findings reveal that many schools are adhering to the policy by teaching the multi-faith syllabus. Teachers have moved from the abolished curriculum, and they are adhering to the new policy. The findings augur well with what is found in the syllabus that the four religions should be taught from a multi-faith approach. This finding is in line with what Ndlovu (2004:159) advocated for in using multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching to answer Zimbabwe's past problems regarding the subject Religious Education in secondary school. Furthermore, the study echoes what the Constitution of Zimbabwe encourages, celebration of religious diversity. However, the study has noted that there are some resistances by mission schools, bias against newly introduced religions by teachers as well as dropping of the subject by some schools and the alternative teaching of the Cambridge syllabus are some of the non-adherence of policy in Zimbabwean secondary schools. This resonate with Chimininge and Chikasha (2016) who noted that the Religious Studies as an academic discipline was being dropped by learners for being exclusionary. However, in this study the subject is being resisted

and dropped from schools' curriculum because of its multi-faith outlook which is being resisted by mission schools and Christian parents. Zivave and Muzambi (2021:16) in their analysis concluded that mission schools are dropping the subject for allegedly causing recession to paganism, heathenism and uncivilised way of life.

When the new policy was introduced, the policy was supposed to be disseminated to teachers who are policy implementers through effective ways. For this reason, this study found out that policy dissemination had challenges as reflected by the varied ways of implementing the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The study noted that media was the main platform through which teachers got to know about policy change. They were also informed through workshops and cluster meetings. I concur with Zivave and Muzambi (2021) in their analysis of information dissemination when the updated curriculum was introduced, that induction workshops were not enough to bridge the knowledge gap of teachers in relation to the new curriculum. The top to down approach in information dissemination had challenges in conveying the message to the teachers. Teachers were largely not involved in policy design and the policy was to be disseminated in a manner that makes teachers important stakeholders in policy implementation. I can conclude that there was no adequate time to prepare for policy implementation and policy dissemination to teachers was done haphazardly.

#### **5.6.1 Policy gaps in the Updated Religious Studies Curriculum.**

The findings of the study revealed that there are gaps associated with the current policy. Firstly, it emerged that there was exclusion of minority religions in Zimbabwe like Baha'i Faith, Hinduism and Rastafarianism. This insinuate that the current policy is not robust enough in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality as religions were included in the curriculum basing on numerical superiority on the religious demography of the country. For this reason, Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam have preferential treatment in the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. Thus, the policy has created much discontent among minority religions who believe that the curriculum is not inclusive as it has some bias towards dominant religions in Zimbabwe. The observed challenge validated the argument that multi-Religious Studies is about the study of religions and not only dominant religions (Jackson 2003, Dinham 2013). I therefore concluded that Religious Studies curriculum should not overlook minority religions as it can result in religious conflicts between dominant religions and minority

religions. This hampers the quest for inclusivism, tolerance and plurality in a multi-faith nation like Zimbabwe.

The other policy gaps revealed in this study is that the current Religious Studies policy is still centered on the bible because Judaism and Christianity are biblical religions. This means that Judaism and Christianity which are bible-based religions still dominate the curriculum ignoring non-biblical religions like Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Rastafarianism and Hinduism. Muhamba (2020) believes that Judaism and Christianity are still dominating in the updated Religious Studies curriculum. This observation is evident in this study where Judaism and Christianity contribute to 50% of the religions being studied as well as summative assessment which is biased towards the old curriculum which is inclined towards the bible. On analysing the implication of including two biblical religions in the 2017 updated Religious Studies, the findings confirm that colonial legacy and strong Christian influence have contributed to this biased curriculum review in Religious Studies. This will make learners to feel that Religious Studies largely involve the study of the bible which impedes the principles of multi-faith policy.

Furthermore, the findings of the study reveals that the policy makes the updated Religious Studies curriculum an elective one. This means that intolerance amongst Christians will be difficult to eradicate. This has been accelerated by the lack of common vision among Christians who feel Islam and Indigenous Religion want to take their religious space. The observed policy challenges validate the argument that multi-faith Religious Studies policy has several challenges in religious diversified nations (Prinsloo 2008). For effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies to become a success, policy should reduce religious bullying and discrimination in the curriculum space as well as making the subject an elective due to its valuable role in society. For Jackson (2013), it is important to consider the value of Religious Studies in modern society.

Findings reveals that the current policy has failed to eliminate religious extremism as evidenced by some mission schools banning the subject and some learners dropping the subject due to fear of being corrupted of their faith. Literature confirms that Zimbabwe is susceptible to religious extremism (Dube 2016). This is because assessment is still biased towards the bible and teachers still utilise confessional approaches in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. This has led newly introduced religions to be treated with



contempt in mission schools as well as by teachers whose personal background is anchored on Christian values.

## **5.7 POLICY AND CHALLENGES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UPDATED RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN ZIMBABWEAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

The study also observed that the updated Religious Studies curriculum is of national value in promoting tolerance, inclusivism and plurality. This is because the subject adheres to constitutional provisions of treating religions as equal and encourages freedom of worship. Report by the Nziramasanga (1998) observed that the abolished Religious Studies curriculum was little significance in promoting tolerance, inclusivism and plurality. This is because it promoted one religion at the expense of the other resulted in religious animosity between suppressed religions and the dominating religion. For this reason, the updated Religious Studies curriculum was designed in line with the national goal of promoting tolerance, inclusivism and plurality hence complementing the 2013 constitution in supporting national values, goals, culture and aspiration of being one nation but many religions. Literature from Indonesia support the value of multi-faith Religious Studies in promoting national values in line with constitutional provisions. Khozin (2018:1) in his empirical studies in ethnic-based conflict and religious diversity in Indonesia revealed that Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Kong-Huchu which are constitutionally recognised reduced religious conflicts and promote human rights. I therefore argue that the updated Religious Studies curriculum is boon in managing existing diversity of religions and beliefs in Zimbabwe. The updated Religious Studies certainly is of national value in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality by creating peace and harmony for multi-faith Zimbabwean nation.

Table 4.37 shows that schools were operating without adequate teaching and learning materials, requisite pedagogical skills and the congested syllabus. This confirms findings of the Nziramasanga Commission (1999) and Dube (2017) which observed that generally, secondary schools were under-resourced and that textbooks were in short supply and there were pedagogical deficiencies amongst secondary school teachers. However, Zivave and Muzambi (2021) advises that government should provide learning material and ensure that internet connectivity is improved so that teachers can research for learning material on the internet instead of utilising hard copies only. Admittedly, schools should not wait to be provided with relevant teaching and learning updated Religious Studies material to improve the teaching and

learning of the subject in secondary schools. Teachers should begin to write learning material to be used in secondary schools. In-service training should also be done to capacitate the teachers who feel that they have pedagogical and content deficiencies in Religious Studies.

### **5.7.1 Top-down policy planning and designing**

The study revealed that the use of top-down initiative in policy design and implementation by policy-makers is great challenge which is affecting the implementation of the updated Religious Studies. Teachers resist policy made without their input and as a result there is lack of commitment on policy implementation. Findings in this study were that top-down approaches in curriculum designing and planning led to the inclusion of topic and religions which teachers feel was not in line with their pedagogical competences due to lack of investment in Religious Studies teacher education. Such approaches which exclude policy implementers is caused by lack of political will, which results in continued resistance to curriculum reforms. For Dinama (2010) teachers as curriculum implementers tend to resist policy change when policy is dictated to them. This implies that top-down approaches create room for resistance and hamper curriculum reform implementation in Religious Studies. The top to bottom is only successful when teachers are motivated. It is observed that teachers Religious Studies teachers lack motivation and it impact negatively on policy implementation. This is complemented by Healy in her empirical studies who noted that in top-bottom approaches teachers tend to “adapt to the curriculum than adopting it” (Healy 2011:44). This means that top-down approaches affect policy implementation. However, the top-down approach used by policy makers is meant to drive the nation towards one common goal of respecting religious diversity in a multi-faith nation like Zimbabwe.

### **5.7.2 Intolerance in Christian mission schools**

Another challenge associated with implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is of intolerance in Christian mission schools. My study findings suggest that the Government did allow inter-religious dialogue between religions in coming up with the updated Religious Studies curriculum which is necessary in reducing suspicions, fears and misgivings amongst religions. According to literature, mission schools have a tendency of resisting curriculum change which involve the teaching of religions which are in direct contradiction with Christian principles (Grimmit 2007). In the Zimbabwean context, literature by Zivave and Muzambi (2022:15) observed that some Christian schools have dropped the subject from their curriculum as they believe that FRS is a subject that is meant to adulterate their religious faith. For this

reason, Dube (2017:168) in his findings also noted that “Missionary schools have the power to resist any practice which may seem contrary to their beliefs”. If the Government does not have the power to stop religious bullying of other religions in Christian mission schools then the implementation of the updated Religious Studies as indicated by participants in this study, it therefore implies that these policy implementation may not be in a position to ensure equal treatment of religions and use of multi-faith approach in the using the current Religious Studies policy in secondary schools. This is because mission schools have not been fully implementing the updated Religious Studies curriculum arguing that the curriculum tampered with the core values of missionary schools. The findings also revealed that teachers in mission schools have been apologetic to the old curriculum in order to preserve their teaching posts in mission schools which are considered as better in terms of allowances for teachers and living standards. For this reason, teachers in mission schools have a parallel Christian program which de-teach what is taught by the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum so as to preserve Christian values.

### **5.7.3 Lack of training institution**

Another challenge associated with the implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies is inadequate secondary teacher training institutions (Dube 2016). My study findings suggest that there is only one teacher education training institution which offers Religious Studies as a learning area and most Religious Studies teachers are from university. This implies that pedagogical skills amongst teachers from universities are weak because university graduates have studied Religious Studies from an academic perspective and not teacher education perspective. Therefore, Mutare Teachers college alone is not enough in producing teachers with pre-requisite pedagogy in Religious Studies. According to literature, the paucity of teacher education training institution in Religious Studies affects the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum (Zivave and Muzambi 2022). If the Government does not have teacher education training institution to empower teachers in Religious Studies with pedagogical skills as indicated by participants in this study, it therefore implies that the multi-faith policy implementation may not come to fruition in the light of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. It is urgent that teachers need in-service training in pedagogy as well as philosophical skills needed in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. These in-service training can be in form of workshops and seminars to assist teachers to embrace new philosophy and pedagogy necessary in implementing the updated Religious Studies from a multi-faith.

#### **5.7.4 Lack of funding from government**

Study findings also revealed that there is lack of funding from government to ensure full implementation of the updated curriculum. The findings resonate well with empirical evidence in South Africa that curriculum reform requires funding for it to be successful (Maluleke 2015). Funding is needed for in-service of teachers, providing schools with learning material, setting up Information and Communication Technology in schools as well as human resource production to ensure that curriculum reform is done successfully. Media in Zimbabwe has also observed that the updated curriculum faced several challenges in implementation because of inadequate funding and lack of understanding by both teachers and learners since 2017 (Bulawayo24 online news). Religious Studies has been affected by lack of funding as new learning material which caters for newly introduced religions is required.

#### **5.7.5 Lack of relevant Learning material**

The scope of this study is on the challenges affecting the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in secondary schools. It is within this context that the study has revealed that there are a myriad of challenges affecting Religious Studies under the pretext of 2017 curriculum reform. Challenges like shortage of teaching and learning material emerged as the major hindrance in the implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. The observed challenge validated the argument that teaching and learning material is required for a new curriculum and must be provided to schools (Chetty and Smit 2016). Some of the available teaching and learning material are not in line with the syllabus objective. Most secondary schools rely on textbooks from the abolished curriculum in the teaching and learning of Judaism and Christianity while textbooks for Islam and Indigenous Religion remain scanty. Teachers rely on information which they find on social media platforms like Whatsapp. This validates observation by Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse (2020:305) that the teaching material or textbooks for the updated Family and Religious Studies (FRS) syllabus are not readily available, yet there are completely new subject topics which have been introduced. On the other hand, Zivave and Muzambi (2020:1) noted that shortage of relevant teaching material caused chancers to produce sub-standard learning material which was confessional and non-biblical religions were misrepresented. This generally affected the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

### **5.7.6 Syllabus interpretation**

The other notable findings of the study are that there is no proper interpretation of the syllabus. Syllabus interpretation is critical in using appropriate pedagogical skills in the classroom. Since many teachers are not adequately trained in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in teacher training institution there is pedagogical deficiencies which generally affects syllabus interpretation. This observed challenge has been noted in the empirical investigation by Muhamba (2020) who noted that the new syllabus was introduced but there was no in-house training for those who were teaching it and teachers had been trained to teach Christianity and many of them had never encountered any other religion which is demanded by the new curriculum. I argue that most teachers in Zimbabwe therefore are not well equipped in syllabus interpretation which affects the delivery of the updated religious studies.

### **5.7.7 Lack of qualified personnel**

The study also further revealed that there is lack of Religious Studies teachers. This is caused by the paucity of teacher training institution which offer the subject. Most Religious Studies teachers are university graduates who did Religious Studies as an academic subject hence these teachers lack pedagogical skills and philosophical skills needed in the teaching and learning of the subject. Empirical evidence from Malawi by Matemba in 2011 and Chetty et al (2016) noted that lack of qualified teachers hampers the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Malawi and South Africa respectively. Those studies have been proven by Dube (2017) in Zimbabwe also shared the same sentiments as he echoed that there is only one teacher training college which offer Religious Studies for teachers, the rest are university graduates who are not real professional teachers with adequate teacher capacity to teach the subject and interpret the syllabus. I admit that teachers who offer Religious Studies in Zimbabwe have pedagogical deficiencies which require in-service training for them to cope with the demands of the multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum.

### **5.7.8 Teachers' personal background**

The finding of the study reveal that many teachers are of Christian background, and this has affected the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Literature affirms that Religious Studies teachers are expected to teach other religions like Islam, Judaism and Indigenous Religion despite the fact that many of them are of strong Christian background (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020). My submission is that the faith of the teacher is always an

impediment in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies from a non-confessional approach. In the context of this study, I concluded that the updated Religious Studies curriculum has been affected by the personal background of teachers which is largely Christian. Teachers have brought influences of their Christian personal background into the classroom. This has proved to be a challenge in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum as Indigenous Religion and Islam are taught from Christian perspective. This is because it is difficult for teachers to move away from their past and this in turn leads to the preferential treatment of Christianity than any other religions. Indigenous Religion is presented as backward and hindrance to salvation while Islam is presented as a violent religion whose aim is to promote terrorism in Zimbabwe society.

#### **5.7.9 Congested syllabus**

The study also noted that the syllabus is too long and congested with a lot learning needs. This congestion of the syllabus is attributed to the top-bottom approach which ignored the role of the teacher in syllabus construction. Studies in Britain by Grimmit (2013) reveal that syllabus is constructed by teachers and community members which makes the completion of the syllabus easier. Nelson and Yung (2021) in their studies on the implementation of the policy on the teaching of world religions in Religious Education in Northern Ireland concluded that syllabus which are constructed by all stakeholders result in policy fidelity. I argue that the current syllabus is too long because it is repetitive in nature since it is spiral. This has affected the completion of the syllabus in many schools.

#### **5.7.10. Dropping of the subject**

The other challenge which emerged from the study findings is the dropping of the subject in many schools. This resonate well with the observation by Zivave and Muzambi (2020) who noted that the teaching of Indigenous Religion was seen as a recession to paganism while Islam was reduced to terrorism. For these reasons, most of these schools are Christian run schools which have introduced the Cambridge syllabus which is similar to the abolished curriculum. Dube (2017) noted that missionary schools have the power to stop offering any subject which is against their Christian beliefs and practices. I therefore concluded that Christian fundamentalism is being promoted when the teaching of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is being overlooked on the basis that the curriculum introduced religions which are anti-Christian. The hatred of Indigenous Religion and Islam in mission schools is so overt when they drop the subject. This finding is further worsened by the finding that teachers have failed

to accept religious diversity because of their personal background. The findings noted that in many secondary school teachers of Christian background struggle to teach the updated Religious Studies curriculum because of their failure to understand that Religious Studies is not Christian education.

#### **5.7.11 Lack of technical support**

Lack of technical support and lack of supervision are also notable challenges in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum that have been revealed in this study. Studies in South Africa by Chetty and Smitt (2016) have also shown that lack of technical support hamper successful implementation of policy. This has also been noted by empirical studies in Zimbabwe which reveal that there has been reluctance from the government to offer technical support to policy implementers and this has result in the uneven implementation of the curriculum (Dube 2019; Shayamunda 2013). This lack of technical support has been further worsened by lack of supervision in schools.

#### **5.7.12 Internet connectivity**

The findings of the study also revealed that internet connectivity is challenge which is affecting the implementation of the updated Religious Studies. Internet makes learners to be self-reliant in the learning process as they research and collaborate. It makes constructivism and Connectivism learning models practical in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This resonate with the empirical studies by Chetty (2016) and Khozin (2018) that internet helps in ensuring that teaching and learning methods in Religious Studies are improved. However, most schools especially rural schools have no internet accessibility which is affordable. The findings cement the reasons why teachers are lamenting shortage of material because they have no access to online resources as well as hard copies which enhances their teaching and learning of Religious Studies.

#### **5.7.13 Lack of Supervision of policy**

The findings of the study also revealed that the updated Religious Studies policy implementation in secondary schools is affected by lack of supervision from qualified personnel. Inspectors and school heads who supervise the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum are not experts in the subject. This means that supervision is not done by experts in Religious Studies who are knowledgeable with the subject content as well as teaching philosophy and methodologies. Literature reveals that in Zimbabwe supervision of

Policy is a great challenge even in the abolished curriculum. Empirical studies by De Grauwe (2001:138) noted lack of supervision was causing policy implementation challenges in Zimbabwean schools because posts of subject supervisors were abolished, leaving skeletal supervisors in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) officers to take charge of general subject supervision from primary through secondary schools, each over and above their field of specialisation, expertise and experience in Zimbabwe. I therefore conclude that lack of supervision has result in the dropping of the subject in some schools, use of confessional approaches and creation of religious bias towards Christianity by teachers creating policy implementation challenge for the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. Effective policy monitoring is needed to ensure that the multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe implemented so that tolerance, inclusivism and pluralism is promoted.

#### **5.7.14 Biased Summative Assessment**

Research findings also reveal that summative assessment has been biased towards the abolished Religious Studies curriculum. The 2018 and 2019 Advanced level papers as well as the subsequent ones have always reflected that the transition to the multi-faith summative assessment which is totally resemble the objective of the national syllabus remains a mirage. This has hampered the shift from exclusivism, intolerance and mono-religious syllabus to inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The bias of summative assessment has been revealed by Zivave and Muzambi (2021) who noted that there was outcry from teachers, learners and parents on the assessment procedures in the updated Religious Studies curriculum which is more inclined towards the abolished divinity syllabus when Judaism and Christianity questions are asked during summative assessment. The findings have been further substantiated by reports from print media which shows displeasure of the current summative assessment (Newsday 2018). I conclude that if the updated Religious Studies is inclined towards the abolished curriculum, the teaching of new religions like Indigenous Religion and Islam will be treated with contempt especially from teachers and schools with sound Christian ethos. I therefore concluded that summative assessment should reflect that there has been curriculum reform in Religious Studies. Any indelible marks of the abolished curriculum in the updated Religious Studies curriculum creates more confusion than clarity causing policy implementation challenges.

Findings from the study reveal that the assessment procedure is more inclined to Biblical religions. The 2018 Advanced level paper is part of document analysis which has proved that



summative assessment is still has the bias towards the old Religious Studies curriculum. Literature has revealed that summative assessment needs to be valid, reliable and objective. In this study, the reliability of the Religious Studies summative assessment is questioned. The examination has failed to move from the old curriculum to the new curriculum. This has prejudiced learners of their right to multi-faith Religious Education and to sitting relevant purposeful examinations. In the light of the summative assessment written between 2018 and 2020, it is logical to conclude that the current Religious Studies assessment procedure is contradictory and inconsistent (Gonye, Mareva, Gamira and Chiome, 2012:1333). The summative assessment during the updated Religious Studies era has tended to have a bias towards Christianity and Judaism which were taught during the abolished curriculum era. It is this bias which has caused teachers to remain using the old curriculum teaching and learning methods as well as learning material. This has affected the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

#### **5.7.15. The elective nature of the subject**

The findings of this study have also revealed that the subject is treated as a “the Necessary Electives” (Dokora 2015:14) which falls under humanities. This means that the subject is optional but important to be considered in the national curriculum. My submission is that Religious Studies should be a necessary core subject rather than an elective because of its role in shaping identity, morals and stability of the society. It can be concluded that the implementation of the subject has been affected by the treatment of the subject as an elective. Due to fears and misgivings of the subject that it is against Christian ethos, many schools and learners have dropped the subject citing that it compromises their Christian beliefs. This is in line with Zivave and Muzambi’s (2022) observation that valuing of subject such Mathematics, Sciences and Technology has affected the implementation of the updated Religious Studies subject by invoking attitudes among parents, learners and teachers. I argue that the optional or selective nature of the subject has created policy implementation challenges as the subject is dropped and pushed to the periphery.

### **5.8 SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN ZIMBABWE.**

Solutions to the challenges observed in this study have emerged. I found out that supply of teaching and learning material is critical in mitigating challenges affecting the updated Religious Studies curriculum. I concur with Chetty and Smitt (2016) who highlighted the importance of supplying schools with relevant learning material in ensuring that the multi-faith

Religious Studies is implemented in the South African context. Zivave et al (2021) also observed that provision of relevant updated Religious Studies in schools by the government is necessary in easing problems affecting the implementation of the updated curriculum. However, economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe has not only affected the political life of politicians but also the education system. The updated curriculum was introduced amidst economic sanctions which has affected companies which produce learning material. For this reason, more should be done by schools to ensure that learning material is available in schools than to wait for sponsorship from government. I argue that Religious Studies as a subject is one of the learning areas which drastically changed as compared to other learning areas. This means that learning material is required to ensure successful implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Teachers should not rely on abolished curriculum textbooks or textbooks which are generally used in universities in the study of religions. Learning material should address the needs of the syllabus objectives. In relation to the above solution, the findings of the study also revealed that bureaucracy in publishing should be reduced as it has affected effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. This means that content developed by authors takes time to be approved before the books is allowed to be used in schools. I argue that curriculum reform was done hurriedly with no relevant learning material available. The study noted that supporting teachers who are policy and curriculum implementers to develop learning content is required to ensure that relevant teaching material in Family and Religious Studies is made available.

Another finding from the study which emerged is the need for a curriculum review to incorporate excluded religions as well as decongesting the syllabus. This will go a long way in solving the minoritisation of religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Rastafarianism and Baha'i Faith. This is in line with the current policy which reflects that after a period of seven years the curriculum review will be done. Since the curriculum is reviewed after every seven years, I argue that teachers' input on what needs to be taught in Family and Religious Studies and the syllabus objectives should be considered using a mixed approach in curriculum review. Empirical studies in Australia have revealed that when the bottom-up approach is used in curriculum review, it has the disadvantage of making Religious Studies deviate from the national goals while at the same time it gives teachers ownership of the Religious Studies curriculum and make them real experts in their subject areas (Healy 2011). I also argue against the use of the top-bottom approach because many challenges affecting the updated Religious Studies are a result of that approach. Thus, the next curriculum review should use the mixed

approach where policy makers and teachers have to agree on what needs to be done with the current Religious Studies curriculum.

Training of teachers of Religious Studies and not preachers of religions has emerged from the study as the solution to the challenges of lack of qualified teachers. More teacher training institutions should offer Religious Studies so that the pedagogical deficiencies which is seen in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is solved. This resonates with the findings by Piaget (1977:7-8) who noted that training of teachers at colleges and universities should prepare teachers to assimilate and adopt to change when there is a change of a curriculum. The government should therefore invest in the training of Family and Religious Studies (FRS) teachers through establishment of many secondary teacher education colleges which offer training in Religious Studies. This will reduce a situation where the subject is taught by teachers who are trained as pastors, academics as well as teachers trained to teach other subjects. The subject has ceased to be Bible knowledge where everyone who knows the Bible can teach the subject, but the subject has changed to the teaching of religions. Dube (2021) concurs with this saying training of educators to teach Family and Religious Studies (FRS) is one of the solutions to the challenge of lack of qualified human resources. I argue that training of teachers will make curriculum policy implementation effective.

In relation to the above findings, the study also noted that in-service training is vital in ensuring that teacher with pedagogical and content gaps are empowered. In the light of this, the study noted that many teachers who are facilitators of Religious Studies trained long back when the curriculum was still biased towards Christianity and the study of other religions was overlooked. So, the introduction of the updated Religious Studies curriculum created a pedagogical and content gap. The government should sponsor all teachers who want to upgrade themselves through in-service training which can be done through workshops and in-service training in teacher training institutions. Literature confirms that in-service training for teachers bridges the gap of lack of knowledge and professionalism in relation to Religious Studies (Dube 2016). I argue that all under-trained teachers in Religious Studies should undergo in-service training that will exposes them to religions like Indigenous religion, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Rastafarianism, Hinduism and Baha'i Faith which are all practiced in Zimbabwe because of freedom of worship which is guaranteed by the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

Empirical evidence has revealed that policy non-implementation is caused by lack of supervision. The study noted increased and effective monitoring of policy by supervisors who are experts in the field of Religious Studies. Literature confirms that policy supervision is critical in ensuring successful implementation of curriculum reform (De Grauwe 2001:138). Supervision ensures effective policy implementation in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The study further indicated that supervision should be done by specialist as supervisors at district and provincial level who are technocrats in Religious Studies. This will ensure that the multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum is implemented without constraints. This supervision should also be improved at school level where head of departments should ensure that policy is implemented. I argue that expert supervisors offer both technical and content support to teachers with challenges in the teaching and learning of multi-faith Religious Studies.

The other finding from the study reveals that Religious Studies should be made a core subject. This is because the subject is important in ensuring that society has sound moral and religious fabric which is critical in ensuring that there is peace and harmony in the world. It is only when the subject is treated as important when inclusivism, tolerance and plurality is promoted to the fullest. I argue that the fact that the subject is elective makes it appear as if the subject is not relevant hence the negative attitude towards the subject is growing. In this context, the study made findings that interreligious dialogue should be promoted in multi-faith society. This reduces chances by mission schools to paint the subject as anti-Christian. This dialogue is necessary in the quest for a multi-faith learning environment which is characterized by inclusivity, tolerance and plurality.

## **5.9 THE PARADIGM SHIFT TOWARDS RELIGIOUS INCLUSIVISM, TOLERANCE AND PLURALITY**

Colonial religious education was more exclusive, intolerant and recognized one religion. This trend continued when Zimbabwean attained its independence until curriculum reforms were implemented in 2017. The shift to a more inclusive, religious tolerant and plural curriculum became imperative as the religious demography of Zimbabwe had changed to become more diversified. In this context inclusivism, tolerance and plurality as phenomenon cannot be avoided in Religious Studies discourse in Zimbabwe. This is because Zimbabwe like many other countries have experienced diversity in varied living spheres, including in education. For this reason, inclusivism, tolerance and plurality needs to be cultivated in Religious Studies curriculum as learners adhere to different religions. As such, the above empirical data presentation and discussion has shown that the multi-faith Religious Studies policy

implementation has inspired contestations in varying spaces. This is despite the fact that the Zimbabwe is a secular state and the Constitution of Zimbabwe guarantees freedom of worship. The shift to inclusivism, tolerance and plurality is hampered by Christianity which feel that they have bigger rights than other religions in the public domain and the education curriculum included. Christianity has been active in denouncing the updated Religious Studies curriculum so that it continues to enjoy the monopoly on the curriculum space and exposing learners to indoctrination. However, I argue that the updated Religious Studies has set a new trajectory where underrepresented religions have been included in the Religious Studies curriculum. The 2017 Religious Studies curriculum has made the quest for inclusivism, tolerance and plurality more feasible by making the study of religions more inclusive and reduction of prejudice which came because of teaching one religion in the old curriculum. The objective of the updated Religious Studies is to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality by ensuring that religions have equal treatment in centres of learning.

Although religious intolerance by Christians has been a challenge to the quest for inclusivism, tolerance and plurality, the inclusion of Indigenous Religion and Islam which have been labelled as evil and terrorist religions respectively is necessary in making learners aware of the religious knowledge of other religions. Colonialism had no room for inclusivity, tolerance and plurality, religions were hierarchical with Christian at the apex while Indigenous Religion and Islam at the bottom. Africans were socialised to accept one religion from colonial period up to the present. Religious Studies was thus reduced to the teaching of Christianity than the teaching of religions. I argue that the shift towards inclusivism, tolerance and plurality begins by decolonising colonial curriculum followed by embracing the new constitution in its totality with regard to equality of religions. The 2017 updated Religious Studies set a new trajectory in which religions are treated from a multi-faith perspective.

Education, especially Religious Studies is one of the most appropriate vehicles for promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality by forming an inclusive pattern and attitude of religious diversity. This prevents extremism, exclusivism and intolerance caused by doctrinal differences. In this context the updated Religious Studies curriculum facilitates the transfer of values and knowledge critical for the development of students' character and attitudes in a multi-faith society. The multi-faith Religious Studies is vital in achieving understanding and togetherness among students of diverse religious background. Zimbabwe has increasingly become a plural nation; I therefore argue that what is needed in the educational curriculum in the light of Religious Studies is cultivate tolerance in a plural society.

The updated Religious Studies curriculum has made it necessary to have a paradigm shift to a more Inclusive, tolerant and plural Religious Education. All religions in the updated curriculum teaches the importance of inclusivity and tolerance. The refusal by some sections of the society to embrace the updated Religious Studies curriculum is a result of misinformation about other religions. However, the teaching of various religions is meant to promote tolerance within a religiously diversified society. Zimbabwean society is plural, diverse, consisting of various tribes and religions, which makes the need for inclusivism, tolerance and plurality more imperative. To achieve complete inclusivism in Zimbabwe, the updated curriculum should be embraced in its totality and teaching should be done with required pedagogical skills.

The notion used in Christianity that “*extra acclessiam nulla salus*” which literally means there is no salvation outside the church has affected society in transitioning to an inclusive, tolerant and plural society. In this study, the updated Religious Studies curriculum is a form of multi-faith education that broadens the horizon of learners’ understanding of religions and be able to transcend various cultural and religious traditions so that they see religions as vehicles of morality and salvation regardless of differences in beliefs. The updated Religious Studies curriculum promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. In plants competences such inclusivism, tolerance and acceptance of diversity required in current educational trends. The learning of Indigenous religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam ensures appreciation of the existence of adherents other religions and beliefs in the Zimbabwean society. I conclude that the multi-faith policy despite challenges it had encountered has made Zimbabwe to move towards inclusivism, tolerance and plurality like South Africa, Botswana, Indonesia and Britain where societies have become more diversified.

## **5.10. CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I focused on the discussions of the findings from the empirical data. Two strands came out in this empirical investigation with regards to policy implementation and challenges experienced in the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies in secondary schools. The first strand looked at policy planning, designing and implementation during curriculum reform. As a result, top-down approaches compounded by centralised curriculum negatively influence policy implementation. What was disturbing is that there were was broad consultations than subject consultations when curriculum reform was being planned and designed. Family and Religious Studies teachers indicated that they were not widely consulted hence pedagogical rigidity is experienced in the teaching and learning of the subject. According to study informants, top-down approaches affect policy implementation. It emerged

policy dissemination strategies also affects the implementation of policy. Therefore, the discussion in this chapter has illustrated how curriculum approaches contribute to policy implementation failure in secondary schools. It also emerged that the updated Curriculum framework and the Religious Studies syllabus are the main policy guidelines which require the teaching and learning of Religious Studies from the multi-faith approach and treatment of religions in the syllabus equally. It emerged that the policy is facing challenges such as bias against Indigenous Religion and Islam, dropping of the subject in schools, competition of teaching of Cambridge syllabus and inconsistent summative assessment procedures. It also emerged that the current policy is facing challenges such as religious extremism, exclusion of other religions and the subject being treated as an elective.

The other strand discussed in this chapter had to do challenges affecting the updated religious Studies curriculum as suggested by the study informants in implementing the multi-faith syllabus. First it emerged that curriculum reforms in Religious Studies was caused by the need to decolonise Religious Studies curriculum, change in religious composition of the Zimbabwean society, the need to change of learning content to suit religious diversity in the classroom environment, the need to implementing multi-faith approaches like other countries as well as the need to align the curriculum with the Constitution of Zimbabwe which embrace religious diversity and encourage religious inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. This resulted in the introduction of the updated Religious Studies in 2017 and it emerged that the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum is facing a myriad of challenges which include shortage of relevant learning material, failure to interpretation of the new syllabus, the syllabus being too long, congested syllabus objectives, dropping of the subject in mission schools, bias towards the old curriculum, lack of training of teachers, pedagogical rigidity, failure to accept diversity, lack of technical support, personal background of Teachers, lack of supervision and misconceptions about the updated Religious Studies curriculum. In relation to summative assessment, it emerged that there were challenges of bias towards old curriculum. The suggested challenges were caused by lack of inclusive planning in curriculum designing, Christian dominance as well as hurried implementation of curriculum reforms without budgetary support. It was thus argued that for the implementation of the multi-faith updated Religious Studies policy to be successful, it was critical to supply schools with learning material, embark on seven year cyclic curriculum review, establish Religious Studies teacher education institution which train Religious Studies teachers, in-service training of teachers in schools, effective supervision of policy, employing subject specialist as supervisors at district

and provincial level, making Religious Studies to become a core subject, reduce bureaucracy in publishing, support teachers to develop content needed in updated religious studies curriculum as well as promoting of interreligious dialogue between religions. It may be concluded that inherent challenges affecting the updated Religious Studies are due to colonialism and its 'hangover', Christian dominance as well as lack of resources are effective barriers to the implementation of multi-faith religious studies policy which calls for the teaching and learning of Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam from a non-confessional approach in Zimbabwean secondary education. In the Chapter 6, I conclude this study by summing all the chapters, giving the recommendations for further studies in the area of RS and also the final word in this thesis.



## **CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.0 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the findings of this study were discussed, where the main objectives was to interrogate policy and implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The main purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of the study, the conclusions, the recommendations and the areas for further studies.

### **6.1 Summary**

The main purpose of my study was to critique policy and implementation challenges of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. Zimbabwe as a multi-faith nation is striving like other nations to promote religious inclusivism, tolerance and plurality through the multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum which started in 2017 in primary and secondary education. As a result, a policy was put in place under the new curriculum framework with regard to Religious Studies, whereby learners are supposed to learn about dominant religions in Zimbabwe which include indigenous Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Religious Studies learning area in secondary schools. The policy was updated in 2017 to shift from confessional to multi-faith approach in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies. However, since the inception of the 2017 updated Religious Studies policy, which is the focus of my study, there are still some policy implementation challenges affecting the learning area in secondary schools (Machingura and Mugebe 2015, Dube 2016; Muhamba 2020; Zivave and Muzambi 2022). Therefore, the study critiqued policy and implementation challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies in secondary schools so that inclusivism, tolerance and plurality will be achieved at the end.

This study was motivated by the desire to understand why the learning of various religions as opposed to one religion, which is meant to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality in multi-faith societies through the inclusion of Indigenous religion and Islam in the updated Religious Studies curriculum continues to experience challenges. My study is unique because its findings are based on primary data from teachers, schools' inspectors and ZIMSEC officials who happen to be vehicles of the policy implementation in secondary education. Britain, Indonesia, Malawi South Africa and Botswana are some of the countries that have embarked on reforms in Religious Studies and adopted policies in Religious Studies which allows learners

to learn a variety of religions. (Grimmit 2013, Khozin 2018, Matemba 2011, Prinsloo 2008, Dinama 2011).

However, a review of literature on Religious Studies in Zimbabwe have focused on the old curriculum which was not multi-faith in orientation by examining the multi-faith gap in the previous curriculum (Museka 2012, Gwaravanda et al 2013, Machingura and Mugebe 2015, Dube 2016) Few studies, if any, have been conducted in Zimbabwe specifically to examine the policy and implementation of the updated curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools. My study has thus taken a new dimension and has broken new ground by critiquing policy and implementation challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in secondary schools. The study will also assist by revealing how policy designing and planning influence curriculum reform implementation. The study will further assist in exploring challenges experienced in the teaching learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum which has taken Indigenous Religion and Islam on board amidst Christian dominance and prolonged use of bible centred curriculum. Teachers, inspectors and ZIMSEC officials as drivers of the updated Religious Studies policy can influence policy implementation of the multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum. In order to achieve my goal in critiquing policy and implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum, the views of teachers, schools' inspectors and ZIMSSEC officials were therefore sought. The views of teachers were gathered through semi-structured open-ended questionnaires, while two teachers, 2 schools' inspectors and ZIMSEC official responded to individual participant interviews. Documents such as new curriculum framework, syllabus, past examination papers, official letters and Newspapers narratives were analyzed to understand policy implementation and challenges associated with the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. The data gathered from the 10 schools in one and the literature on related studies was used to analyze policy and implementation challenges associated with the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum.

The literature reviewed in chapters two focused on curriculum reform and its implication to the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Literature has shown that curriculum reform particularly in Religious Studies has been caused by the change of religious composition of the society and the need to decolonize colonial Religious Studies curriculum to suit the multi-faith society. However, in the quest to implement the multi-faith Religious Studies policy, there has been a gap which was created between policy and implementation of it (Fullan 1991, Khozin 2018, Zivave and Muzambi 2022). Therefore, my study was premised on the notion that multi-faith religious policy formulation and implementation are two processes which, if not done in an

inclusive manner, may result in implementation resistance (Jackson 2020, Gourdard, Pont and Huang 2020). Accordingly, the literature reviewed covered aspects such as the approaches to curriculum policy planning, designing and implementation. (Item 2.6 and 2.7 in Chapter 2). Policy planning in Religious Studies has been largely discussed, debated, and finally endorsed as part of the entire Zimbabwean national curriculum by literature reviewed (item 2.5 chapter 2).

Literature reviewed has revealed factors contributing towards curriculum development in Zimbabwe secondary education system. These factors according to Lemmer and Badenhorst (1997:267) should take into account the short-term and long-term needs, interests and potential of those who are to be educated. Technological developments, meeting learners' needs political ideology, society expectations, state authority, international influence and globalisation, as well as pedagogical and curricular shifts in education have been cited by literature as the major factors which contribute to curriculum development (Makamure and Chikumbu 2000, Kurasha and Chabaya 2013, Moyo and Hadebe 2018). The updated Religious Studies curriculum development has largely been influenced by societal expectations, the need to have learner centred approaches, globalisation and pedagogical shifts in the contemporary society which has become pluralistic. However, curriculum design in Zimbabwe is highly centralised (Makamure and Chikumbu 2000). This influences the top-bottom approaches in implementation of policy in secondary education.

The history of Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe was explored, and it was evident from the literature that the curriculum has its origin from colonial and missionary education. The policy implementation emanates from the colonial and missionary objective of making Religious Studies a tool to convert people while other religions were treated as evil. This promoted Christian exclusivism and intolerance during colonialism (Item 2.3.1 Chapter 2). Related to the history of Religious Studies, the post-colonial Zimbabwe inherited the colonial curriculum which was implemented from 1980 to 2016. The post-colonial period saw Religious Studies being bible centred and it hampered the implementation of the multi-faith curriculum adopted in 2017 (Items 2.3.2; and 2.3.3: Chapter 2). Therefore, policy implementation challenges of the updated curriculum related to Christian dominance and neo-colonialism has been explored in the literature (Museka 2012, Gwaravanda et al 2013, Machingura 2015, Dube 2016, Zivave and Muzambi 2022) to ascertain the impact of historical factors in fueling implementation challenges of the updated curriculum. The literature further makes it clear that teacher and religious institutions involvement in policy planning and designing influence the

success of policy implementation. Hence, failure to recognize the teacher and religions involved in formulating a policy breeds resistance to policy implementation (Maluleke, Khozin,). Therefore, it is argued in literature that failure to come up with a curriculum negotiated between teachers, religious organizations and government result in fears, misgivings and suspicions of the subject. Literature has also discussed how Britain, Indonesia, South Africa, Malawi and Botswana have been implementing a multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum amidst several challenges, Zimbabwe started to implement its reform in Religious Studies in 2017.

Literature has also revealed how international conventions have influenced curriculum reforms in Religious Studies (Willaime, 2007, Hendek 2022). Most multi-faith Religious Education policy implementation are guided by conventions to promote tolerance, dialogue, respect, sensitivity to religious diversity, appreciation of religious diversity, knowledge of religious diversity, inclusivism and religious plurality. Studies in Europe, Asia and Africa reflected that the Religious Education policy implementation is aimed at promoting neutrality, impartiality, and inclusivity. (Council of Europe 2008, Dinama 2011, Pinsloo 2008, Jackson 2014, Hendek 2022). This implies that the main objective of multi-faith Religious Studies is ensure that learners are exposed to various religions so that they understand and appreciate religious diversity.

The role of multi-faith religious studies in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality was also explored in the literature (Item 2.11: Chapter 2). It was revealed in literature that teaching of religions from a multi-faith approach is a pedagogical approach which promote acceptance of religious diversity and respect of other peoples' religious beliefs (Grimmit 2013, Jackson 2004, Khozin 2018, Muhamba 2020, Zivave and Muzambi 2022). The multi-faith Religious Studies has responded positively to religious diversity with the emergence of pedagogies which promote plurality, inclusivity and tolerance among learners. This implies that the best pedagogy in Religious Studies today is based on a multi-faith approach because societies have changed to become more plural. Through the use of the multi-faith approach, learners would be able to display their religious beliefs and respect other people's beliefs when learning about various concept of religions. Accordingly, it was affirmed in literature that 21<sup>st</sup> learning requires constructivism and connectivism to have an appreciation of religious diversity. (Chetty 2013, Siemens 2004).

Since my study is based on challenges affecting the implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum which is multi-faith in nature, various challenges related to implementation of the multi-faith Religious Studies the world over and in Zimbabwe in particular was explored (Item 2.7 Chapter 2). policy fidelity secularisation, lack of qualified teachers, pedagogical gaps, resistance to multi-faith religious studies curriculum, failure to understand and interpret policy, lack of involvement of all stakeholders, manipulation of policy by teachers to suit their own personal objective, religious extremism, class of faith in the classroom, lack of relevant teaching and learning material as well as lack of investment in teacher training are some of the notable challenges revealed in literature reviewed (Nelson and Yung 2021, Grimmit 2013, Jackson 2020, Modipa 2014, Chetty and Smit 2014, Dube 2016). The policy implementation challenges noted are viewed as impediment inclusivism, tolerance and plurality with the context of Religious Studies.

A critical examination of related literature was also made pertaining to specific pedagogical and philosophical approaches to Religious Studies which are critical in the successful implementation of the multi-faith Religious Studies policy. One of the major pedagogical approaches that have been condemned brought up in literature is the confessional approach in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies because its thrust is to spread a particular belief or doctrine to learners (Matemba 2011). Instead, literature has confirmed that the multi-faith approach suit learners of diverse religious background (Ndlovu 2004, Dinama 2010, Museka 2012). Multi-faith pedagogy becomes vital in the implementation of the multi-faith Religious Studies policy in plural societies. (Details are presented in items 3.2; 3.2.1 to 3.2.5: Chapter two). It has also been asserted in literature that inclusivism and pluralism are the philosophy because they address all barriers to learning and participation and create a situation where all are provided with resources to support their learning and participation in the education system as well as promoting an understanding and appreciation rather than judgment” of any religion (Gardner 1988, Grimmitt 199, Skeie 2002, Skeie2006, Matemba 2011, Mokotso 2017).

It has been asserted in literature review that methods of learning play a dominant role in determining the success or failure of the implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies policy to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality (Item 2.13: Chapter two). Learning is a sine qua non of survival (Ndlovu and Gundani 2000). Constructivism and Connectivism learning theory influence learners’ attitude as well as performance with regard to various religious concept being taught. The success of the implementation of the updated Religious Studies hinges upon learning methods which are learner centred and takes into consideration

learners' diverse religious background. Learning is an active, contextualized, or constructive process as well as collaborative (Ertmer and Newby 1993, Merriam and Caffarella 1999, Chetty 2013). Cognitivism learning theory promote exclusivism and does not allow the learner to learn on his own.

On the issue of summative assessment in Religious Studies, it is assumed that when reforms are done summative assessment should not be left behind so that it becomes valid and reliable in ensuring that policy objectives are met. Summative assessment consists of three domains: curriculum, the content of what is taught, such as the disciplines of knowledge and intellectual skills; pedagogy and assessment (Hayward and Pandya 2016). In this study, the summative assessment is used to judge whether multi-faith objectives are achieved through relevant learning content and teaching pedagogy. Pedagogies influence policy implementation and fulfils summative objectives (Gonye, Mareva, Gamira and Chiome 2012).

With regards to curriculum reform in Zimbabwe, it is assumed in literature that reforms in curriculum the world over are pushed by the need to suit the current global trends and making relevant to the societal needs. In the African context, curriculum reforms are done to decolonize the curriculum since the inherited colonial education systems are pyramidal and exclusive. For this reason, reforms are done to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality which are all the essence of unhu/Ubuntu. Hence, Curriculum reforms in Religious Studies, which appear to be driven by inclusivism, tolerance and plurality contribute to the implementation of the multi-faith Religious Studies policy (Items 2.7 and 2.15: Chapter two: Wright 2004, Prinsloo 2011).

Literature further asserts that the policy which enhances the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in the modern society should seek to offer freedom of all individuals in schools to have religious choice (Prinsloo 2008, Dinham 2012). The policy should not promote the exclusion of other religions (Prinsloo 2009:33). The policy which literature advocated for should be relevant in exposing learners to a variety of world religions including Indigenous Religion. This promotes religious tolerance as well as inclusivism in plural society. It is clear that policy for Religious Studies is inclusive and not exclusive (Item 2.16: Chapter two: Prinsloo 2008).

With regards to solutions to implementation challenges, literature suggested in-training of educators to teach Family and Religious Studies, establishment of teacher education training institutions and provision of learning material (Dube 2016, Dube 2020, Zivave and Muzambi 2022). This is because teachers are the implementers of curriculum reforms and their capacitation is crucial in ensuring the success of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The

development of curriculum is hinged on relevant teaching material which enables the teaching of religions from a multi-faith approach. It was argued in literature that religious Studies involved in implementing the multi-faith Religious Studies are expected to work collaboratively and produce relevant learning material (Zivave and Muzambi 2022).

In terms of methodology, this research is a quantitative and qualitative study which is premised on the effective curriculum implementation theoretical framework. (Item 3.2 and 3.4: Chapter three). A survey of 40 teachers from secondary schools in Hwange District is done through questionnaires and 5 interviews are done with two senior teachers, two schools inspectors and one ZIMSEC official from Hwange district in Matabeleland North was conducted. Data was collected using semi-structured open-ended questionnaires, individual interviews and document analysis. My choice of these instruments was influenced by the effective curriculum implementation which encourages curriculum implementers to speak out on policy and implementation challenges. The research instruments that I used enabled me to get rich thick data from teachers, schools inspectors' and ZIMSEC official's narratives pertaining to the policy and implementation challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies in Zimbabwean secondary schools. In the process, all my research questions and the corresponding study objectives were addressed. I presented data and analysed it to come up with informed conclusions. Conclusion made in the study are summarized below.

### **6.3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The conclusions were drawn from the related literature reviewed in Chapter two, and the empirical data presented in Chapters four and five. It was in the context of these conclusions that recommendations to address policy gaps and implementation challenges of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum were made. This research established that are some policy gaps which affects the overall implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in secondary schools to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. The study also established that when there is curriculum change in Religious Studies from mono-faith curriculum to multi-faith curriculum, there are several challenges that inhibit the success of the study of religions from a multi-faith perspective in secondary schools. Data also revealed policy gaps which include bias against Indigenous Religion and Islam, teaching of Cambridge syllabus, religious extremism, exclusion of other religions and subject is elective. Data from my study further identified 13 challenges affecting the implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum and there challenges include learning material, interpretation of

the new syllabus, the syllabus is too long, dropping of the subject in mission schools, bias towards the old curriculum, lack of training of teachers, pedagogical rigidity, failure to accept diversity, lack of technical support, personal background of teachers, lack of supervision, congestion of Religious Studies curriculum and biased summative assessment. It is these challenges that affects the quest for an inclusive, tolerant and plural society to be unfruitful.

### **6.3.1 RELIGIOUS STUDIES POLICY CHALLENGES**

#### **6.3.1.2 Bias against Indigenous Religion and Islam**

##### **Conclusion**

Analysis of data has shown that mission schools and some Religious Studies of Christian background are biased against the teaching and learning of Indigenous Religion and Islam in the updated Religious Studies curriculum in secondary schools. They view the two religions as a contradiction of Christian beliefs and practices hindering the implementation of the multi-faith Religious Studies. This is a result of failure to acknowledge that the classroom and the school are the environment for learning where religious truth should be explored from a non-confessional approach. Such confessional approach in Religious Studies is a threat to policy implementation and it has contributed towards failure by teachers and schools to understand that the new policy requires a multi-faith approach. Due to this biasness against the newly introduced religions as have resulted in the policy implementation challenges as these religions are labelled and stereotyped in secondary schools. Mission schools and teachers of high Christian background believed that Christianity is the only religion worthy academic study in schools because they had not experienced any policy changes which demands to approach Religious Studies from a multi-faith perspective. They continue to employ pedagogical approaches which suit the old curriculum which had a bias towards Christianity. In other words, teachers had not been exposed to a policy that treats religions as equal and were not aware of the benefits of teaching and learning a multi-faith Religious Studies to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

##### **Recommendations.**

In the light of the conclusions drawn above policy issues, there is need to train teachers to equip them with multi-faith pedagogical approaches so that the updated Religious Studies achieves its desired goal of promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. It is recommended that effort has to be made to devote serious attention to policy advocacy among religious



organizations so that resistance to policy by mission schools is minimized. In order to ensure policy fidelity in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in secondary schools. Policy-makers should consult various representatives of religions and policy implementers, as a way of encouraging policy reception and acceptance by all stakeholders. This will facilitate a smooth transition from confessional Religious Studies policy to the multi-faith Religious Studies policy in the education of secondary school learners. Such an approach would enable mission schools and Religious Studies appreciate the significance of learning multi-faith Religious Studies policy and how to implement such a policy. It will conscientize all stake holders that Indigenous Religion and Islam are religions not different from biblical religions.

### **6.3.1.3 Dropping of the subject in schools**

#### **Conclusion**

It emerged from the study findings that some schools have dropped the subject under the pretext that the subject is now driving Christian converts to other religions. This hampers the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in secondary schools. The Government had prescribed the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum without consulting the church and mission to support the new curriculum which participants attributed to top-bottom policy approaches. It surfaced in the study that participants were of the view that mission schools cannot be forced by government to accept the teaching and learning of religions contrary to Christian beliefs. Since mission schools believe that the teaching of Indigenous Religion was seen as a recession to paganism while Islam was reduced to terrorism, their resistance to curriculum reform result in Christian fundamentalism. The hatred of Indigenous Religion and Islam in mission schools have created policy resistance. This was evidenced by these document analysis' insistence that the updated Religious Studies has never been accepted in mission schools.

#### **Recommendations**

In the light of the conclusions drawn above that there was no inclusive policy planning and designing, it is recommended that effort has to be made to ensure that schools do not drop the subject but adhere to the current policy through policy advocacy in a bid to make mission schools aware of the new policy. In order to allow democratization of Religious Studies policy,

policymakers should seek ideas from mission schools, as a way of making religious educational institutions appreciate the multi-faith syllabus.

#### **6.3.1.4 Teaching of Cambridge Syllabus**

##### **Conclusion**

The provision of an alternative curriculum in form of Cambridge Divinity syllabus came out as policy challenge to the implementation of the updated Religious Studies syllabus. The Cambridge examination board is offering the bible centred religions and it affects the learning of the updated Religious Studies which has included Indigenous religion and Islam. As a result, some schools and parents have advocated for the Cambridge curriculum in Religious Studies. Furthermore, due to beliefs and positive attitudes associated with Christianity in mission schools and Christian's parents, it is difficult to implement the 2017 multi-faith Religious Studies which embraces the teaching and learning of Indigenous religion and Islam. It emerged that mission schools and parents of Christian background are prepared to make their children learn the Cambridge syllabus because the motive of learning religions which are against their religious beliefs, and this has negatively affected the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Therefore, policy change and implementation can only be successful when there are no competing curriculum. The provision of Cambridge alternatively has promoted exclusivism and intolerance.

##### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that local schools should disengage from the Cambridge examination board which collide with the national interests. This can be done systematically by incentivizing schools which offer homegrown curriculum. Mission schools and elite schools should be regulated and obliged to follow the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

#### **6.3.1.5 Religious Extremism**

It also emerged in the study that the updated Religious Studies policy has failed to eliminate religious extremism as evidenced by some mission schools banning the subject and some learners dropping the subject due to fear of being corrupted of their faith. This is because mission schools and Christians feel that Christianity is the only religion that should enjoy the curriculum space. The resistance of other religions by Christianity has accelerated extremism

as followers of various religions perceive Christian attitude as a threat to inter-religious dialogue which is needed to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends interreligious dialogue as a way of promoting mutual understanding between religions. This will assist in allaying fears and misconceptions about religious beliefs and practices of people of the opposite belief system.

#### **6.3.1.6 Exclusion of other religions**

### **Conclusion**

It emerged from the study that the updated Religious Studies curriculum excluded a number of minority religions in Zimbabwe like Baha'i Faith, Hinduism and Rastafarianism. This implies that the updated Religious Studies policy is blamed for promoting dominant religion at the expense of religions with few followers. This has hampered policy implementation as members of the excluded religions feel the curriculum is not holistically multi-faith. It has been noted that the exclusion is a result of bias towards biblical religions as Judaism has fewer followers, but it is included in the curriculum. The exclusion of Hinduism, Buddhism, Rastafarianism and Baha'i faith despite having followers reveals that the quest for inclusivism, tolerance and plurality cannot be fully realised. This exclusion was caused by inadequate policy dialogue which resultantly caused challenges to policy implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends a revisit of policy and make sure the policy does is not selective. This policy review can be done when curriculum review is done. For this reason, excluded religions will be included making Religious Studies completely inclusive, tolerant and recognizing religious diversity.

#### **6.3.1.7 Subject is elective**

### **Conclusion**

Analysis of data has shown that Religious Studies as a learning area is an elective one and this has affected the implementation of the updated curriculum of 2017 as learners and parents do not value the subject in secondary education. The treatment of the subject as elective affect policy implementation as the subject can be sidelined in the school's curriculum. This means

that learners will not be exposed to various religions. Consequently, when the subject is treated as an elective one and not the core one, implementation becomes difficult to execute. This is caused by the lack of clear policy that guides the teaching and learning of Religious Studies without prejudicing the subject. Teachers and schools' inspectors must ensure that the subject is valued in schools, making it difficult, if not impossible underestimate the subject. Many stakeholders believed that Religious Studies was for training pastors, priest and religious practitioners in Christianity because the subject was previously dominated by pastors and priest who implemented policy to convert. In other words, the inclusion of Indigenous religion and Islam has made the subject to lose its value in Christian dominated environment. The subject should not be treated as an elective but a core subject that hold the moral and religious fabric of any society. This indicate that the policy is flawed in making the subject elective hence causing it to be treated negatively in some schools.

### **Recommendations**

For the subject to be valued and ensure that there is policy fidelity, firstly, the subject should be treated as one of the core subjects in the national curriculum which should be done by every learner due to its significance in moulding good citizens. Secondly, Religious Studies subject should be supported by making it one of the entry qualifications into tertiary education institutions.

## **6.3.2 RELIGIOUS STUDIES IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES**

### **6.3.2. 1. Learning material**

#### **Conclusion**

It emerged from the study findings that the updated Religious Studies curriculum was implemented hurriedly hence there was no provision of relevant learning material in schools. The provision of learning material lack in the implementation of curriculum reforms in Religious Studies to sustain the implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. The updated Religious Studies curriculum was introduced without developing essential teaching and learning material to support the multi-faith religious studies policy, a position which participants attributed to lack of planning and lack of political will to ensure that the objectives of the updated curriculum are met. It surfaced in the study that participants were of the view that the Government did not put in place mechanisms to support content developers and publishers with financial resources to ensure that learning material suit the

multi-faith curriculum. Teachers had to rely on old curriculum learning material and the internet which does not provide learning material which is specifically meant for the updated curriculum. Some learning materials that have been produced are sub-standard as they were produced to make money by publishers without meeting the syllabus objectives, thereby contributing to the slow implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. Coupled with lack of support in the form of educational materials, was also lack of schools' support from school heads to support Religious Studies teachers by buying relevant teaching material. This was evidenced by these administrators' insistence on relying on social media and internet to find learning material in Religious Studies, to the extent of not buying hard copies of learning material required.

### **Recommendations**

For learners to appreciate the value of all religions, Religious Studies teaching and learning materials should be availed to all secondary schools so that the challenge of shortage of learning material is mitigated. Publishers should receive subsidies from government when producing learning material related to the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The government can also seek donor funding from Non- Governmental Organizations such as UNICEF to sponsor and donate the supply of Religious Studies textbooks in secondary schools. Teachers can also be supported in producing learning material at cluster, district and provincial level which can enhance the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

#### **6.3.2.2 Interpretation of the syllabus**

### **Conclusion**

Teachers indicated that – generally – that interpretation of the updated syllabus is a challenge which affects the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. They think that they have not undergone enough teacher education training. Consequently, they interpret policy the way that suits them best and teach without following the demands of the updated syllabus. Thus, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should ensure that sufficient in-service training is provided to teachers so that they are able to interpret the syllabus and align their pedagogical practices with the policy messages. This will encourage teachers to embrace policy change and facilitate consistent religious studies curriculum policy implementation in secondary schools.

## **Recommendations**

For teachers to interpret the syllabus objectively, teachers should continuously receive in-service training in syllabus interpretation and implementation. This can be done at cluster level or through the use of technical experts in syllabus development and interpretation in Religious Studies. Syllabus objective of teaching Religious Studies from the multi-faith approach will be achieved through in-service training.

### **6.3.2.3 The syllabus is too long and congested.**

#### **Conclusion**

The study further found that the updated Religious Studies is too long and congested. Teachers indicated that they cannot complete the syllabus as prescribed in the policy document. Data collected revealed that teachers attribute the top-bottom approach in syllabus construction. For this reason the updated Religious Studies syllabus is too long because of the spiral approach taken. Teachers are expected to implement the same curriculum policy as prescribed. Such congestion of the syllabus influences teachers' response to the Updated Religious Studies policy implementation. Teachers teach topics which are convenient to them when the syllabus is too long. This provides a platform for one to argue that the syllabus congestion hinders successful implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum policy. Unless teachers are pedagogically empowered, there will not complete the syllabus. Therefore, it becomes crucial for the Ministry of primary and secondary education to ensure that teachers are trained on how to compress the syllabus, and this will ensure that completion of the updated Religious Studies syllabus is achieved in secondary schools.

#### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that when curriculum review is done some topics which are being repeated should be removed. In fact, the syllabus must be compressed so that the syllabus objectives are met. Furthermore, contemporary issues in the current syllabus should be optional while tenets of religion should be compulsory.

### **6.3.2 .4. Dropping of the subject in some schools**

#### **Conclusion**

The findings of the study further point out that the subject is being shunned and dropped by some teachers as well as schools because of Christian response to the updated curriculum. This

has impacted negatively in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Mission schools have monopolized the old curriculum and the introduction of the updated curriculum did not augur well with their Christian mission. As a result, the updated Religious Studies curriculum implementation is marred with resistance in mission schools. Mission schools have maintained that they cannot teach learners Indigenous Religion and Islam from a non-confessional approach. This is because they are unable to share the Religious Studies curriculum space with other religions. For this reason, teachers in mission schools de-teach what they teach learners in about Indigenous religion and Islam.

### **Recommendations**

Thus, to ensure a smooth updated Religious Studies curriculum implementation process, there should be an all-stakeholder consultation in which religions air their views concerning what is supposed to be taught. Furthermore, the government should make a bold statement that Zimbabwe is not a Christian country, but a multi-faith nation and learners should be exposed to various religions. This makes learning institution and Religious Studies curriculum non-confessional. In this way, schools will become centres of learning and religious conversion which has created resistance of the updated curriculum.

#### **6.3.2.5 Bias towards the old curriculum**

### **Conclusion**

Data analysis and interviews conducted have shown that the teachers are resistant to change and they have a bias towards the old curriculum. This has hindered successful curriculum policy implementation of the updated Religious Studies. Data collected through questionnaires and interviews show that teachers are utilizing old curriculum teaching approaches and learning material because of the bias which they have on the updated curriculum. Studies on Religious Studies reform have indicated that teachers are resistant to change especially when the reforms are meant to affect their religious disposition. During the interviews, teachers revealed that they are comfortable teaching bible centred religions than Indigenous Religion and Islam because of their personal background and the influence of the old curriculum. The observations revealed that teachers prefer teaching Judaism and Christianity which are bible centred religions.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that teachers should be re-trained in the use of multi-faith approaches to remove bias and prejudice against some religions. This will assist teachers to understand

their roles as facilitators of learning than conveyors of religious faith. So in-service training will assist teachers to re-align pedagogy and philosophical approaches to suit the multi-faith syllabus.

#### **6.3.2.6 Lack of training of teachers.**

##### **Conclusion**

The findings of the research further revealed that all the teachers who responded to the questionnaire and interview questions have not been trained on how to implement the updated Religious Studies curriculum as a learning area with new content and pedagogy; yet they are expected to teach Family and Religious Studies from a multi-faith approach which they never utilised. However, these teachers still perceive that the updated Religious Studies curriculum is an important learning area that is crucial in exposing learning to various religions and promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality in multi-faith nation. The findings also highlight a lack of teacher training institution which can also influence implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Most of the respondents referred to in this study indicated that they have been trained in teacher training institution on the multi-faith Religious Studies curriculum.

##### **Recommendations**

The study recommends establishment of teacher training institutions which offer Religious Studies in secondary schools. This means that the subject should not be left to be taught as an academic study in universities, rather the subject should be taught from teacher professional perspective. This training will reduce the number of untrained teachers taking up the subject in secondary schools.

#### **6.3.2.7 Pedagogical rigidity.**

##### **Conclusion**

The findings of the research further revealed that teachers have not changed their teaching approaches to the multi-faith curriculum introduced. This means that the teaching and learning of Religious Studies styles used in the classroom favour Christianity. To be precise, teachers in mission schools as well as other public schools have been using indoctrinating approaches in the teaching of the subject. They reflect their religion in the teaching process. The findings also highlight a lack of teacher capacitation in empowering them to implement the updated



curriculum from a multi-faith perspective so that inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Use of multi-faith pedagogy influence the successful implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The continued use of pedagogy which suit the old curriculum and which are confessional in nature hinders the objectives of the updated Religious Studies curriculum to ensure that there is inclusivism, tolerance and plurality. Teachers indicated that they are used to confessional pedagogy because the old curriculum suit their affiliation to Christianity and it's difficult for them to teach the updated curriculum from the multi-faith approach.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends in service training of teachers that they are always abreast with new pedagogical skills. This can be done through workshops and staff development of teachers. The government can further sponsor teachers who need retraining and those who want to upgrade themselves.

#### **6.3.2.8 Failure to accept diversity**

### **Conclusion**

The study revealed that teachers are failing to embrace the teaching of other religions due to personal background and pedagogical rigidity. This is because there has been exclusive dominance of Christianity in the old Religious Studies curriculum and as such Islam and Indigenous Religion have not been received by some teachers hence there is failure to accept religious diversity. This has threatened inclusivism, tolerance and plurality as teachers fail to accommodate religions that have included in the new curriculum. Colonialism and Christianity have contributed to the problem of accommodating Indigenous Religion and Islam in the updated Religious Studies curriculum.

### **Recommendations**

Interreligious dialogue should be promoted so that religions should not see each other as enemies but as avenues of salvation for all humanity. Furthermore, there is need to make Christians aware that Religious Studies is not Christianity and Christianity is not Religious Studies through embracement of the religious diversity through Constitution of Zimbabwe

### **6.3.2.9 Lack of technical support**

#### **Conclusion**

The study has also established that there is lack of technical support in the Zimbabwean education system and this has impacted on the successful implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. Data collected show that Religious Studies teachers are not well supported by subject technocrats with regard to curriculum policy implementation in the updated Religious Studies learning area. During data collection process it was revealed that there is few or no technical support from government. The observations revealed that teachers want to teach Religious Studies from a multi-faith approach as required by policy, but the lack of technical support hinder them from pursuing that objective.

#### **Recommendations**

The government should employ human resources with technical expertise in Religious Studies to monitor policy implementation in secondary schools as well as empower teachers with technical challenges in Religious Studies as a learning area. These technical experts will ensure policy implementation and reduces any chances of policy inconsistency as well as resistance of policy.

### **6.3.2.10 Personal background of Teachers**

#### **Conclusion**

The findings of the study, based on the questionnaires distributed reveal that teachers' personal background is a challenge to the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The study indicated that most teachers are of Christian background, and some are practicing pastors. This has affected curriculum change implementation as they cannot separate expressing religious beliefs and teaching of Religious Studies in the classroom. They indicated that, at the moment, they are teaching Religious Studies from confessional approach and cannot implement the current policy due to their Christian affiliation. Related to the personal background of teachers, teachers have developed negative attitudes towards newly introduced religions. As a result, teachers insisted they cannot teach religions which are opposed to their personal religious beliefs. Therefore, when teachers do not see that Religious Studies as an academic subject is there to inform learners about religious beliefs and practices of the world and not to convert, they may ignore or resist the multi-faith policy and teaching methodologies which do not promote their religion. This personal background has resulted in the development

of negative attitudes of Religious Studies teachers towards Indigenous Religion and Islam when implementing the updated Religious Studies new policy framework. Such behavior is believed to be linked to Christian indoctrination and colonial mentality, which created negative perceptions of the other religions. Accordingly, they do not want to expose learners to religious beliefs and practices which are contrary to their personal beliefs.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that teachers should be staff developed so that they will have an appreciation that they are not preachers but teachers of religious knowledge. This can be done through teacher training institutions as well as in-service training in schools.

#### **6.3.2.11 Lack of supervision.**

### **Conclusion**

It emerged from the study findings that policy supervision is lacking in the implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in secondary schools. The Government introduced the new curriculum and particularly Religious Studies without putting in place policy monitoring and supervision strategies. The current educational inspectors are very few and they are not specialist in subject areas which they supervise. It also surfaced in the study that participants were of the view that the Government had no capacity to supervise policies put in place as inspectors are poorly resourced to travel consistently in schools to supervise policy implementation. Since schools' inspectors' guides policy implementation, teachers noted that it was difficult for inspectors to guide them as they are not specialists in Religious Studies. Coupled with lack of financial support in the form of vehicles, schools' inspectors are failing to supervise the updated Religious Studies policy. This was evidenced by frequency of supervision trips by schools' inspectors which reflected that it was impeding successful implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum policy.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends employment of subject inspectors and not schools inspectors who will monitor policy implementation as well as assist teachers with pedagogical skills required in the subject. They will not only monitor teachers but mentor them to become professionals who teach the subject from a non-confessional approach. The study further noted that supervision requires logistical support in form of transport which will enable them to visit schools frequently to see how policy are implemented.

### **6.3.2.12 Summative assessment challenges**

#### **Conclusion**

It emerged from the study findings that the summative assessment items were distant from what teachers were teaching in the classroom thereby creating challenges in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. The syllabus is clear on learning objectives in implementing the updated Religious Studies curriculum but ZIMSEC is not sticking to prescribed course objectives of the updated Religious Studies in secondary schools. It surfaced in the study that examinations were still biased towards the old curriculum. This may be due to hurried implementation of the updated curriculum and unilateral decisions from top to bottom. Since summative assessment guides on what is supposed to be taught as enshrined in the syllabuses, the summative assessment is a big challenge in implementing the updated Religious Studies curriculum because it has added confusion to policy implementation. It has jeopardized policy fidelity by continued inclination towards the updated curriculum. This was evidenced by A' level November 2018 and 2019 papers' insistence on old curriculum questioning approach and framing, to the extent of discouraging the teaching of Indigenous Religion and Islam as teachers felt that they could continue teaching the old curriculum content in the new curriculum.

#### **Recommendations.**

The study recommends that the examination board should be resourced with personnel who ensure that the new policy is implemented. This will reduce policy hesitancy amongst teachers when they implement the updated Religious Studies policy. Furthermore, the study recommends examination should be valid and reliable through policy adherence and as such the board should employ people who reconcile policy and summative assessment.

### **6.4 Areas of further study in relation to the findings of my study, I recommend further studies on the following issues that emerged but did not get adequate attention:**

1. A longitudinal study on Religious Studies summative assessment and its impact on policy adherence.
2. A similar study to mine in design but using a different research methodology. The study should focus on:
  - Learners investigating their views on the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum. This would be important to assess learners'

challenges in the updated Religious Studies curriculum since they are also affected by policy change.

- Directorate and inspectorate investigating their perceptions with regard to the policy implementation and dissemination of the updated Religious Studies curriculum
3. A similar study to mine, where one interrogates data from Christians on their own views pertaining the inclusion of Indigenous religion and Islam in the updated Religious Studies curriculum.
  4. A study on the effectiveness of multi-faith approaches as a pedagogical tool in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in accordance with current international research findings.
  5. A study on the impact of learning material in Religious Studies in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality.

## **6.5 Conclusion of chapter**

This chapter has provided a summary of the existing literature on policy and implementation challenges in Religious Studies, the methodology employed in the study and the empirical data on the current study findings. Conclusions with respect to policy and implementation challenges of the updated Religious Studies curriculum, according to my study findings, were summarized and solutions to the challenges were proffered. Policy gaps and implementation challenges such as religious extremism, exclusion of other religions and subject being elective as well as lack of resources, lack of technical support, personal background of teachers, pedagogical deficiencies, lack of supervision, responsible authority influence, lack of relevant learning material, wrong interpretation of the syllabus, the syllabus is too long and congested, dropping of the subject in mission schools, bias towards the old curriculum, lack of training of teachers, pedagogical rigidity and failure to accept diversity were seen main challenges affecting the implementation of the 2017 updated religious Studies curriculum. Therefore, it can be concluded that challenges affecting the implementation of the updated are blamed on the teacher, government, colonial history and Christian dominance who if they can have constructive policy dialogue can ensure that inclusivism, tolerance and plurality are promoted secondary schools. Accordingly, the recommendations that are presented in this study are aimed at empowering teachers, government and religious organizations to overcome the influence of colonialism and Christian dominance which continues to guide and shape their

beliefs and perceptions towards Indigenous Religion and Islam. It is true that in a society dominated by one religion, there is bound to be policy resistance and implementation by teachers, parents and mission schools as they take time to accept religious diversity as well as the fact that Religious Studies is not Christianity. I am strongly aware that it is difficult to embrace religions that have labelled, misnamed and misrepresented when Religious Studies curriculum reform include such religions, but it is worth to approach Religious Studies from a multi-faith perspective so that the desired outcomes of inclusivism, tolerance and plurality are achieved through the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum. It is therefore my hope that the suggested recommendations would assist in closing the gap that exists between the policy intentions of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum and the implementation of the actual multi-faith policy in secondary schools in Zimbabwe.

## Reference

- Ally, M. 2008. Foundations of Educational Theory for Online Learning. In Anderson, T (ed): *The Theory and Practice of Online Learning*. Athabasca: AU Press
- Antone, H.S. 2001. The Challenges of Globalization to Religious Education Some Experiences and Reflections from Asia, *Asia's feminist theological Journal*. Retrieved from <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.604.2845&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. 1998. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Atkinson, N. 1972. *Teaching Rhodesians: A History of Educational Policy in Rhodesia*, London: Longmans.
- Babbie, E. 2007. *The Practice of Social Research*. 11th ed. Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Babbie, E. and Mouton, J. 2011. *The Practice of Social research*, Cape Town: Oxford University press.
- Badugela, T.M. 2012. *Problems Facing Educators in Implementing the National Curriculum Statement: The Case of Tshifhena Secondary School, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa*, Med Thesis: Unisa
- Bandura, A. 1986. *Social Foundations of Thought and Actions: A Social Cognitive Theory*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Banks, L. 2012. *Getting Practical: A Guide to Teaching and Learning*. 3rd ed. Cape Town: OUP
- Baqai, H. 2011. Extremism and Fundamentalism: Linkages To Terrorism Pakistan's Perspectives. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1(66):242-248
- Barnes, L. P. 2001. *What is wrong with the Phenomenological Approach to Religious Education?* *Religious Education*, pp. 445 - 461.
- Basigner, D. 2010. Religious Diversity in Public Education in *the Oxford handbook of Religious diversity* by Chad Meister (Ed), Oxford: Oxford University Press

- Bell, P.M .1983. Justification of multi-faith Religious Education, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 5 (2), 87-95.
- Biseth, H. 2009. Multi-lingualism and Education for Democracy. *International Review of Education*. 55. pp5-20
- Bishop, G. 1985. *Curriculum Development: A Textbook For Students*, London: Macmillan Publishers
- Bless, C., Higson-Smith, C. and Sithole, S. L. 2013. 5TH (Ed). *Fundamentals of Social Research Methods: An African Perspective*. Cape Town: Juta and Company Limited.
- Bond, P. and Manyanya, M. 2002. *Zimbabwe's Plunge Exhausted Nationalism, Neo-Liberalism and the search for Social Justice*, Harare: Weaver Press.
- Borg, W.R. Gall, M.D and Gall, J.P. 1996. *Educational Research 6<sup>th</sup> Ed* White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Botswana Government. 1995. *Three-Year Junior Secondary Syllabus – Religious Education*. Ministry of Education - Curriculum Development Division. Gaborone: Government Printer.
- Boven, K. and Morohashi, J. (Eds). 2002. Best practices using Indigenous Knowledge. An agenda for Indigenous Knowledge Development and integration with other forms of Knowledge. *International review of information ethics* 7(9):1-10
- Boyce, C & Neale, P 2006. *Conducting In-Depth Interview: A Guide For Designing And Conducting In-Depth Interviews For Evaluation Input, Pathfinder International Tool Series, Monitoring And Evaluation-2*. Retrieved from [http://www.pathfind.org/site/DocServer/m\\_e\\_toodocID=6301](http://www.pathfind.org/site/DocServer/m_e_toodocID=6301)
- Brad, L. 1983. *Curriculum Development in Australia*, Sydney: Prentice Hall
- Bray, M. and Koo, R. 2004. Postcolonial Pattern and Paradoxes: Language and Education in Hong Kong and Macao. *Comparative Education*, 40(2), Special Issue (28): Postcolonialism and Comparative Education, 215-239.
- Brickman, W. W. 1964. Comparative Education, *Philosophical and social education framework*, Vol 34, No. 1, pp. 44-61
- Bryman, A. 2008. *Social Research Methods* (3rd Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press



- Buchanan, M. 2005. Pedagogical Drift: The Evolution of New Approaches and Paradigms in Religious Education. *Religious Education*, 100, 20-37.
- Bulawayo24 online news 2 April 2022, '*Teachers clueless on new curriculum 5 years on*'. Retrieved from bulawayo24.com>index-id-news
- Bulawayo24 online news 2017. *Then Religious Studies Teachers Confused over New Curriculum – PTUZ*. Bulawayo 24News. Accessed January 5, 2020. <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-105970.html>
- Bulawayo24 online newspaper of 22 Dec 2018. "*Religious Studies Teachers Confused Over New Curriculum*". Retrieved from Retrieved from bulawayo24.com>index-id-news
- Burns, N. & Grove, S.K. 2003. *Understanding nursing research*. 3rd ed. Philadelphia: Saunders Company.
- Carmody, B. 2010. Interreligious Education and the Question of Truth. In: Engebretson, K., Souza, M., Durka, G. and Gearon, L. (eds.) *International Handbook of Inter-religious Education*: Volume 4. London: Springer.
- Carr, D 1999. Spiritual language and ethics of redemption: a reply to Jim Mackenzie. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 33 (3) pp.451-461.
- Carr, D. 1996. Rival Conception of Spiritual Education, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol 30 p.159-178
- Castellan, C.M. 2010. Quantitative and Qualitative Research: A View for Clarity, *International Journal of Education* 2 (2).
- Challis, R. 1980. *The European Educational system in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1930*, Zambezia, 1 p.1-11.
- Chetty, D. 2013. *Connectivism: Probing Prospects for a Technology-Centered Pedagogical Transition in Religious Studies*, Alternation Special Edition 10 pp.172 - 199
- Chetty, D. and Smit, J.R. 2016. Reflecting on the Decade of Religion Studies Implementation in the FET Phase: A Case Study of Gauteng, South Africa. *Journal of Study of Religion* 29 (2) p.134-156.
- Chidester, D. 2006. Religion Education and the transformational state in South Africa. *Social Analysis*, 50 (30) 61-83 DOI: 10.3167/01559770678045948

- Chikumbu, T.J and Makamure, R. 2000. *Curriculum Theory, Design and Assessment*, the Commonwealth of Learning in General Education Modules.
- Chilisa, B. 2012. *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. London: SAGE.
- Chimhundu, H. 1992. Early missionaries and the ethnolinguistic factor during the “invention of tribalism in Zimbabwe”. *Journal of African history*, 33.
- Chimininge, V. and Chikasha, J. 2016. Patterns characterising the teaching and learning of practices of Religious Education in Zimbabwean secondary schools, *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*, Volume 28 no 3 p.415-433.
- Chirwa, G. and Naidoo, D. 2014. *Curriculum Change and Development in Malawi: A Historical Overview*, Mediterranean Journal of Social Science, Vol 5 No 6
- Chitando, E. 1998. *The Phenomenological Method in A Zimbabwean Context To Liberate Or To Oppress*. Zambezia 1998 xxv (i) pp.90-114
- Chitando, E. 2005. Naming the Phenomena: The Challenge of African Independent Churches, *Studia Historica Ecclesiastica*, Vol XXXI No1 pp.85-110.
- Chung, F and Ngara, E 1985. *Socialism, Education and Development: A Challenge to Zimbabwe*, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.
- Ciaffa, J.A 2008 Tradition and Modernity in Postcolonial African Philosophy, *Humanities XXI* 1&2 pp.121-125.
- Coffey, J. 2001. *Secularisation: is it inevitable?* Cambridge: Cambridge papers Limited
- Cohen, D. K. and Ball, D.L. 2006. *Educational innovation and the problem of scale. A paper presented at a meeting on “Conceptualising Scale-Up”*. Data Research and Development Centre. The University of Chicago.
- Cohen, L. Manion, L. and Morrison, K. 2000. *Research methods in Education*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, London: Routledge Falmer. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203224342> Accessed on 18 June 2022.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L and Morrison, K. 2007. *Research Methods in Education*, London: Routledge

- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. 2000. *Research Methods in Education*. 5th Edition. London and New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. 2011. *Research Methods in Education* (7th Ed.). London: Routledge.
- Cole, W.O. 1983. *Religion in the Multi-Faith School*, Amersham: Hulton Educational.
- Conroy, J. and Davis, R. 2009. Religious Education. In: Barrow, R., McCarthy, C., Carr, D. and Bailey, R. (eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Philosophy of Education*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Council of Europe. 2008. “*Recommendations CM/Rec (2008) 12 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Dimension of Religions and Non-Religious Convictions within Intercultural Education*.” Retrieved from <http://tandis.odihr.pl/documents/hrecompedium/rus/CD%20SECT%20laws/PR%20sec%201/CoE%20CMRec%202008%2012%20EENG>. Accessed 21 February 2021.
- Court, D. and Seymour, J.K. 2015. What might meaningful inter-faith education look like? Exploring politics, principles and pedagogy. *Religious Education*, 110(5) pp.517-532
- Cox, E. (1983). *Problems and Possibilities for Religious Education*, London, Hodder and Staughton
- Cox, E. 1970. *Jews and Christians*. Paper presented to the London Society of Jews and Christians. 18 March 1970.
- Cox, J L. 1996b “Methodological Considerations Relevant to Understanding African Indigenous Religions” in J Platvoet, J Cox and J Olupona (Eds.). *The Study of Religions in Africa. Past, Present and Prospects*. Cambridge: Roots and Branches
- Creswell, J.W and Plano Clark, V. L. 2007. *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE
- Creswell, J.W. 2000. *Research Design; Qualitative and Quantitative approaches*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE
- Creswell, J.W. 2003. *Mixed Research Designs: Qualitative and Quantitative Research Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Creswell, J.W. 2014. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative And Mixed Method Approaches*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. Plano Clark, P. Gutmann, M and Hanson, W.E. 2013. Advanced Mixed research designs in A Tashakkian and C. Teddie (eds), *Handbook of Mixed Research in Social and Behavioral Research*, Thousand Oaks, Sage. Pp.209-240.
- Crowder, M. 1968. *West Africa under Colonial Rule*, London: Hutchinson.
- Cunningham, R. 2018. *UNICEF Think Series: Curriculum Reform In Eastern and Southern Africa*, Nairobi: UNICEF Eastern and Southern Regional Office.
- Curriculum Development and Technical Services Department*. 2016. Harare, Government Printers.
- Curriculum Development Unit. 1981. *Policy Documents*. Harare: Government Printers
- Curriculum Development Unit. 1999. Harare: Government Printers.
- Cush, D. 2007. Should Religious Studies be part of Compulsory State School Curriculum? *British Journal of Religious Education*, 29(3), 217-227.
- Damons, E.O. 2017. *Religious Education in South African Public Schools*, M.A Thesis: University of Pretoria.
- Daniel, K. 2012. The Applicability of Phenomenology in the Study of Religion, *International Journal of Psychology and Behaviour Science*, 2 (5) p.130-137. DOI:10.5923/j.ijbs.20120205.01
- De Grauwe, A. 2001. *School Supervision in Four African Countries: Volume 1: Challenges and Reforms*, Paris: UNESCO/International Institute For Educational Planning.
- de Vos, A. S. Strydom H, Fouche C. B. and Delport, C. S. L. 2011. *Research at Grass Roots: for the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Denscombe, M. 2003. *The Good Research Guide: For Small Scale Social Research Projects*. 2nd Edition. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Denzin N K and Ryan K E 2007 “Qualitative Methodology (Including Focus Groups)” in W Outhwaite and S P Turner (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Social Science Methodology*. London: SAGE Publications

Department of Education. 1940. *Circular No. 1 of 1940*. Salisbury: Government Printer.

Department of Education. *Circular No.1 of 1949*. Salisbury: Government Printer.

Dhlomo, T and Mawere, P. 2020. Curriculum Reform in Zimbabwe: An Analysis Of Early Childhood Development Centre's State Of Readiness To Embrace The New Curriculum, *Journal of African Studies and Development*; Vol. 12(3), pp. 104-114 <http://www.academicjournals.org/JASD>.

Dinama, B. 2010. *How Religious Education Teachers Understand and Implement A Multi-Faith Curriculum – Case Studies From Botswana*, PhD Thesis: University of Pretoria

Dinham, A. (2012). Multi-Faith Paradigm Policy And Practice: Problems, *Social Policy and Society* 11 (4) pp.577-587 doi: 10.1017/514747-4641000025

Dokora LDK. 2015. *Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Ministerial Statement: Update on the Proposed Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015-2022*. Harare: Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

Dokora LDK. 2016. *New Curriculum Implementation in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2016.

Dokora, L. 2015. *Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015-2022*, Harare: Government Printers.

Du Plessis, L.E. 2005. *The Implementation of Outcomes-Based Education in The Eastern Cape. A Management Perspective at Micro Level*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Dube, B and Tsotetsi, C. 2019. State-based curriculum making in a post-colonial Zimbabwe: Making sense of Family, Religious and Moral Education in a global context, *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*. Pp. 241-251 retrieved from [www.jsser.org](http://www.jsser.org) on 20 January 2020.

Dube, B. 2016. *A Socio-Religious Hybridity Strategy to Respond to the Problems of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe*, PhD Thesis: University of Free state.

Dube, B., Mufanechiya, A. and Mufanechiya, T. 2015. Religious Studies and Indigenous Knowledge In Zimbabwean Secondary Schools: Bubi District Case Study, Matabeleland North. *Journal of Pan African Studies* 8(8) pp.75-89

- Dubey, D.L., Dubey, O.E.C and Ndagi, J.O. 1985. *Teaching in the primary school: A course of Active Learning*, Lagos: Longman Group Limited.
- Dukeshire, S. and Thurlow, J. 2002. "Understanding the link between research and policy". *Rural Communities Impacting Policy Project*, Vol 18 pp.1-18.
- Dzvimbo, K.P. 1995. Didactics or educational sciences: Curriculum and Instruction and the search for an Alternative Paradigm For Effective Schools in South Africa, *Journal for Educational Research*, Volume 7 No 1 p.1-22.
- Egan, K. 2003. What is Curriculum? *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies*, Vol 1 No 1.
- Eisner, E. 1985. Five basic orientations to the curriculum. In E. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, New York: Macmillan publishers.
- Ekeke, E. 2010. Phenomenological Approach to the Study of Religion: A Historical Perspective. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 44, 266-7
- Elmore, R.F 2007. *School Reform from the inside out*, Cambridge M.A: Havard Education Press.
- Erricker, C. & Erricker, J. 2000. *Reconstructing Religious, Spiritual and Moral*, London: Routledge
- Ertmer, P.A and Newby, T.J 1993. Behaviourism, Cognitivism, and Constructivism: Comparing Critical Features from an Instructional Design Perspective'. *Performance Improvement Quarterly* 6,4: 50-72. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1937-8327.1993.tb00605.x>.
- Fancourt, N. 2013. *Religious Education across Europe: Contexts in Policy Scholarship. In Exploring Context In Religious Education Research*, Munister: Waxmann.
- Fancourt, N.P 2016. Assessment and Examinations in religious Education: Sixty years of research and analysis, *British Journal of Religious Education*,
- Felderhoff, M.C. 1985. *Religious Education in Pluralistic Society*, London: Hodder and Stoughton.

- Ferguson, R & Roux, C. 2003. Mediation In The Context Of Teaching And Learning About Religions In Tertiary Education, *South African Journal Of Education And Religion*, Vol. 23 pp.292-296.
- Fullan, M. 2001. *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, M. 2015. *The new meaning of Educational change*, New York: Teachers college Press.
- Gardner, P. 1988. Religious Upbringing and the Liberal Idea of Religious, Autonomy. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 22 pp.89-105
- Gasva, D and Moyo, W. 2017. Teachers' Views Regarding the Adoption of the New Curriculum in Zimbabwe: Fostering Quality in Education and/or National Developmental Needs, *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol 5 Issue No 5 pp. 455-465.
- Gatawa, B. S. M. 1990. *The Politics of the School Curriculum: An Introduction*. Harare: Jongwe Press.
- Gatawa, B.SM. 1999. *The politics of school curriculum: an introduction*, Harare: College press.
- Gearon, L. 2013. *Religious Education Master Class in Religious Education, Transforming Teaching and Learning*, Bloomsbury Academic.
- Gelfand, M 1981. *Ukama: Reflections On Shona and Western Cultures in Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo press.
- Gelfand, M. 1968. *African Crucible: An Ethno-Religious Study with Special Reference to the Shona Speaking People*, Cape Town: Juta and Company limited.
- Gilbet,R. 2010. *Curriculum Reform in International Encyclopedia of Education*, Elsevier. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-08-044894-7.00103-2>.
- Gillard, D. 1991. *The Multi-Faith Society: Problem Or Opportunities?* Retrieved from [www.educationengland.org.uk/articles/11multi-faith.html](http://www.educationengland.org.uk/articles/11multi-faith.html)
- Goddard, W. & Melville, S. 2001. *Research Methodology: An introduction*, 2nd ed. Landsdowner: Juta & Co. Ltd.

- Golafshani, N. 2003. Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research, *The Qualitative Report* Vol. 8 (4) pp. 597-607.
- Goldman, R. 1965. *Readiness for Religion: Basis for Developmental Religious Education*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Gommers, L & Hermans, C.A.M. 2003. Beliefs In Action: Teachers' Identity Influences School Identity, *International Journal of Education and Religion*, Vol. 4 p.186-199.
- Gonye, R., Mareva, R., Gamira. D and Chiome, C .2012. Masvingo Province Secondary Schools Pupils and Teachers' View on the Educational Value of Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Examinations, *International Journal of Asian Social Science*.
- Good, T.L and Brophy, J.E. 1990. *Educational Psychology: A Realistic Approach*, White Plains, NY: Longman
- Gourdard, P., Pont, B. and Huang, S.H.P. 2020. *Curriculum Reform: A Literature Review to Support Effective Implementation*, Directorate for Education and Skills: OECD
- Government of Zimbabwe, 1999. *Report of the presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training*. Government Printers, Harare.
- Government of Zimbabwe. 2006. Ministry of Education Sports, Art and Culture, *Directors Policy Circular Number P 77 of 2006*. Harare: Government Printers.
- Government of Zimbabwe. 2013. *The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act*, 2013. Harare: Government Printers.
- Gray, D.E. 2009. *Doing Research in the Real World*, Los-Angeles: SAGE Publishers.
- Gray, D.E. 2009. *Doing Research in the Real World* (2nd Ed.). London: SAGE Publications.
- Gredler, M.E. 2005. *Learning and Instruction: Theory into Practice*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Greene, J.C. 2007. *Mixed Methods in Social Enquiry*, Jossey-Bass.
- Griffiths, P.D. 1990. Religious Education Pedagogical Issues in Secondary Schools. In: Nondo, S.J. (ed.). *Multi-faith Issues and Approaches in Religious Education with Special Reference to Zimbabwe*. Utrecht: University of Utrecht.



- Grimmit, M. 1982. World Religions and Personal Development. In: Jackson, R. (ed.). *Approaching World Religions*. London: John Murrah.
- Grimmit, M. 2007. Religious Education in Europe: Situations and current trends in schools, *British Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 16 pp.133 - 147.
- Grimmitt, M. (1994). Religious Education and the Ideology of Pluralism. *British Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 16 pp.133 - 147.
- Grimmitt, M. 1987. *Religious Education and Human Development: the Relationship between Studying Religions and Personal, Social and Moral Education*, Essex: McCrimmons Publishing.
- Grimmitt, M. 2000. 'Contemporary Pedagogies of Religious Education: What are they?' In M. Grimmitt (ed) *Pedagogies of Religious Education: Case studies in the Research and Development of Good Pedagogic Practice in RE*, Great Wakering: McCrimmon Publishing: (24 – 52)
- Grimmitt, M. 2000. *Pedagogies of Religious Education*. Essex: McCrimmons
- Gundani, P.H and Ndlovu, L 2000. *Interactive Teaching and Learning of Religious Education*. Harare, Zimbabwe Open University.
- Gwaravanda, E.T., Masitera, E. and Muzambi, P. (2013). *Religious Studies And Globalisation: A Critique of Zimbabwe's Current Ordinary Level Syllabus*. Alternation (special edition), Vol. 10 pp.218-248.
- Gwarinda, T.C. 1993. *The Teaching practice*, Harare: College Press.
- Gwarinda, T.C. 2013. *Issues in Education: Sociological Perspectives*, Harare: Zimbabwe Open University.
- Haar, G.T. (Ed.). 1992. *African traditional religions in religious education: A Resource Book with Special Reference to Zimbabwe*. 29-49. Utrecht: Utrecht University.
- Harrison, B. 2008. *Embodying the Path: A call for Kinesthetic learning in Religious Studies*, Oxford: Amherst College.
- Harth, E. 2004. Art and Reductionism. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Vol 11 pp.111-116.
- Hay, D. 1998. Why should we care about children's spirituality? *Pastoral Care in Education*, Vol 16 pp. 11-16.

- Hay, D. and Nye, R. 2006. *The Spirit of the Child*, London: Jessica Kingsely Publishers.
- Healy, H. 2011. *Implementing Curriculum Change in Religious Education: A Case of the Perceptions of Primary school Religious Educators in the Archdiocese of Hobart*, PhD Thesis: Australian Catholic University.
- Hendek, A. 2022. European Religious Education policy, *Journal of Values Education*, Vol 43, p.243-267. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.34234/ded.1102688>
- Hiatt, J. F. 1986. Spirituality, Medicine, and Healing. *Southern Medical Journal*, Vol 79 (6), pp.736-743.
- Hick, J. and Hebblethwaite, B. 1980. *Christianity and Other Religions: Selected Readings*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press
- Hobson, P. and Edwards, J. 1999. *Religious Education in a Pluralist Society: The Key Philosophical Issues*, London: Woburn Press.
- Hofstee, E. 2006. *Constructing a Good Dissertation, A Practical guide to Finishing a Masters, MBA or PhD on schedule*, Johannesburg: EPE.
- Holohan, G.J. 2010. *Catholic Schools in Australia. (Draft Document)*. Canberra ACT, Australia, National Catholic Education Commission, Religious Education Commission
- Hull, J. 1975. Agreed Syllabuses, Past, Present and Future. In: Smart, N. and Horder, D. (eds.). *New Movements in Religious Education*. London: Temple Smith.
- Hurst, P. 1974. *Knowledge and the Curriculum*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Ilechukwu, L. 2014. Adoption of African Traditional Religious Practices in Combating Corruptin in Nigerian Education System, *Journal of Education and Practice*, Volume 5, No 31.
- Isaacs, T 2018. Curriculum Analysis: Policy Review on Designing, Planning and Implementation, Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Available at [https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/Policy\\_review\\_on\\_designing,\\_plan\\_ning\\_and\\_implementation.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/Policy_review_on_designing,_plan_ning_and_implementation.pdf). Accessed 23 July 2022.
- Jackson, R and Everington, J. 2017. Teaching inclusive Religious Education impartially: An English perspective. *British Journal of Religious Education* 39(1) pp.1-18

- Jackson, R. (ed). 1982. *Approaching World Religions*, London: John Murray
- Jackson, R. 1995. Religious Education's Representation of 'Religions' and 'Cultures'. *British Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 43, pp.272-289.
- Jackson, R. 1997. *Religious Education: An Interpretive Approach*, Milton Park, Oxford, Hodder and Stoughton.
- Jackson, R. 2000. *The Warwick Religious Education Project: The Interpretive Approach to Religious Education. Pedagogies Of Religious Education: Case Studies In The Research And Development Of Good Pedagogic Practice in RE*, Great Wakening: McCrimmons, 130-152.
- Jackson, R. 2003. Citizenship, Religions, Cultural Diversity and Education. In: JACKSON, R. (ed.) *International Perspectives on Citizenship, Education and Religious Diversity*. London: Routledge/Falmer.
- Jackson, R. 2004. *Rethinking religious education and plurality: Issues in diversity and pedagogy*, London: Routledge Fame
- Jackson, R. 2004b. *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy*, London: Routledge.
- Jackson, R. 2005. *Intercultural Education, Religious Plurality and Teaching Tolerance: Interpretive and Dialogical Approaches*, Oslo: Oslo coalition on freedom of Religion or belief, university of Oslo.
- Jackson, R. 2007. *European Institutions and the Contribution of Studies of Religious Diversity to Education for Democratic Citizenship*. Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, contexts and debates, 27–56.
- Jackson, R. 2013. *Rethinking Religious Education and Pluralist Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy*. London: Routledge.
- Jackson, R. and O'Grady, K. 2007. *Religions and Education in England: Social Plurality, Civil Religion and Religious Education Pedagogy*. Warwick University. <http://www.waxmann.com/?id=20&cHash=1&buchnr=1765>. Accessed July 2019
- Jackson, R. 2005b. Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: *Issues in Public Religious Education*, 32 (1).p1-10.

- Kanyongo, G.Y. 2005. Zimbabwe's Public Education System Reforms: Successes and Challenges, *International Education Journal*, Vol 6(1) pp. 65-7
- Kaoma, K. (Ed) 2016. *Christian care in Christian Mission*, Oxford: Regnum Books International.
- Kasprisin, L. 2003. "Religious Diversity, Education, and the Concept of Separation: Some Further Questions." In Kal Alston, ed., *Philosophy of Education 2003*. Urbana, Ill: Philosophy of Education Society/University of Illinois, pp. 420–422
- Kaunda, C.J. 2015. *The denial of African agency. A decolonial theological turn*. Black Theology, 13(1), 73-92.
- Kemmis, S., and MacTaggart, R. 1988 (Eds). *The Action Research Planner* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), Geelong, Victoria: Deakin University press.
- Kennedy, M. 2012. "New Directions in Postcolonial Studies," in NUCB *Journal of Language Culture and Communication*. Vol 13 (2), pp.3-12. Online at [http://ci.nii.ac.jp/vol\\_issue/nels/AA11319906\\_en.html](http://ci.nii.ac.jp/vol_issue/nels/AA11319906_en.html)
- Khozin, R. 2018. *An Analysis on the Implementation of Religious Education Policy in Public Schools*. Retrieved from [www.classic.iclrs.org](http://www.classic.iclrs.org).
- Kimmel, A.J. 1988: Ethics and Values in Applied Social Research. *Volume 12 of Applied Social Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- King, N.L. 2008. *Religious Diversity and Its Challenges to Religious Belief*, Philosophy Compass 3 (4), p.830-853.
- Kipsigei, R.N 2014. *An Investigation on Philosophy of Religion: Religious Diversity and Pluralism*, Volume 2, Lambert Academic Publishers.
- Klutzn, P. 2016. *Religious Education Faces The Challenge Of Religious Plurality. A qualitative-empirical study in Vienna Münster*; New York: Waxmann
- Kombo, D. K and Tromp, L.A. 2006. *Proposal and Thesis Writing: An Introduction*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa
- Kothari, C. R. And Garg, G. 2014. *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques 3rd Edition*. New Delhi: New Delhi International (P) Ltd Publishers.

- Kruger, J.S. 1982. *Studying Religion: A Methodological Introduction to Science of Religion*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Kuiper, F.H. 1991. Developments in Multi-Faith Europe. In: Nondo, S.J. (ed.). *MultiFaith Issues and Approaches in Religious Education with Special Reference to Zimbabwe*. Utrecht: Utrecht University.
- Kunzman, R. 2006. "Imaginative Engagement with Religious Diversity in the Public School Classrooms." *Religious Education*, Vol 101(4) pp.516-531
- Kurasha, P. and Chabaya, R.A. 2013. Curriculum Development and Implementation: Factors Contributing Towards Curriculum Development in Zimbabwe Higher Education System, *European Social Sciences Research Journal*, Vol. 1, Issue
- Lemmer, E.M and Badenhorst, D.C 1997. *Introduction to Education for South African Teachers: An orientation to Teaching Practice*, Cape Town: Juta Academic
- Lewin, D. 2017. *Who's Afraid of Secularisation? Reframing the Debate between Gearon and Jackson*, University of Strathclyde presentation paper
- Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E. G. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE.
- Loukes, H. 1965. *New Grounds in Christian Education*. London: SMC Press Ltd
- Lovat, T. 2001. In defence of phenomenology. *Religious education*, Vol 96(4) pp.564-572.
- Lovat, T. 2009. *What is this Thing called RE?* 3rd ed. Terrigal: David Barlow Publishing.
- Lyotard, J. 1999. *The Postmodern Condition*. Modernity: Critical Concepts, Vol 4,
- Machingura, F. and Mugebe, F. 2015. The Multi-faith gap in the light of Zimbabwe junior secondary and O level religious Studies Syllabus, *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*, Vol 27 No 1
- Machokoto, J.B. 1983. *Rethinking Religious Education – What should be taught, and how?* Teachers Forum, (1):29-31.
- Makamure, R. and Chikumbu T.J. 2000. *Curriculum Theory, Design and Assessment*, Commonwealth of Learning: SADC.
- Makaram, D.M. 2015. *Factors Influencing Curriculum Development Process in Secondary School Education in Mogadishu, Somali*, M.Ed. Thesis University of Nairobi.

- Makuvaza, N. 1996. Educatedness In The African Context: The Case for Education for Hunhuism/Ubuntuism in Zimbabwe, *Bulletin for Teacher education*, Volume 4 No 3
- Maluleke, H.M. 2015. *Curriculum Policy Implementation in The South African Context, With Reference To Environmental Education Within The Natural Sciences*, PhD Thesis: UNISA.
- Manyonganise, M. 2016. Christianity in Zimbabwe. In Phiri, I. A. and Werner, D. (eds). *Anthology of African Christianity*, Oxford: Regnum Books International. Pp171-177.
- Maposa, R. S. 2014. The Ethic of Religious Pluralism and Human Rights in Schools: Re-evaluating the Multifaith Approach in Zimbabwe. *Research Academy of Social Sciences* 1 (2): 75–81.
- Marashe, J., Ndana, T.G. and Chireshe, E. 2009. Religious Education. Teaching of African Traditional Religion in Primary Schools in Zimbabwe: *The Official Journal of the Religious Education Association*, Vol 104(1) pp.38-50
- Maravanyika, O. E.1981. *Towards a worthwhile curriculum for Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe.
- Maravanyika, O.E. 1990. *Implementing Educational Policies in Zimbabwe*. Word Bank Discussion Paper No 91. Africa Technical Department Series.
- Maree, K.and Pietersen, J. 2007. The Quantitative Research Process. In Maree, K. *First Steps in Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik. pp 145-153
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G.B. 2006. *Designing Qualitative Research* 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Masaka, D and Mukungurutse, S. 2017. Confronting the Exclusive Dominance of Christianity in Zimbabwe's Advanced Level Divinity Syllabus through Africanisation, *Alternation Journal*, Vol. 19 pp. 206-231. Retrieved from <https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/soa/article/view/848>
- Maslow, A.H. 1987. A Theory of Human Motivation, *Psychological Review*, Vol. 50 (4) pp.370-396.
- Mason, J. 2003. 'Qualitative Research: Asking, Listening and Interpreting' in *Qualitative Research in Action*, edited by T. May. London: Sage Publications. P225-241

- Matemba, Y. H. 2011. *A comparative study of religious education in Scotland and Malawi with special reference to developments in the secondary school sector, 1970-2010*. PhD thesis: University of Glasgow.
- Matemba, Y.H. 2009. Religious Education in The Context of Sub-Saharan Africa: The Malawian Example, *British Journal of Religious Education* Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 41-51
- Mavheneka, A.F. 1999. The Status Of Religious Education At Secondary School Level In Zimbabwe-Sixteen Years After Independence, *The Zimbabwe Bulletin of Teacher Education. Volume 1 No 1*.
- Mawere, D. 2013. Evaluation of the Nziramasanga Report of Inquiry into Education in Zimbabwe, 1999: The Case of Gender Equity in Education, *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, Vol. 3(5) pp.1077-1088
- McDonald, K.E., Keys, C.B. and Balcazar, F.E. 2007. *Disability, Race/ Ethnicity And Gender: Themes Of Cultural Oppression, Acts Of Individual Resistance*. AMJ community, Vol. 39 pp.145-152
- McMillan, J.H and Schumacher, S. 1997. *Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction*, New York: Harper Collins.
- McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. 2006. *Research in Education: Evidence-based Inquiry*. Boston: Pearson.
- Memmi, A.1990. *The Coloniser and the Colonised*, London: Earthscan publishers.
- Merriam, D.B and Caffarella, R.S. 1999. *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Methodist Church. 1946. *The Waddilove Manifesto: The Education Policy of the Methodist Church. A Statement of Principles and Objectives*. February 8- 9. Salisbury: Methodist Church.
- Mfum-Mensah, O. 2005. The Impact of Colonial and Postcolonial Ghanaian Language Policies on Vernacular Use in Schools in Two Northern Ghanaian Communities. *Comparative Education*, 41(1), 71-85.
- Ministry of Education, Sport Arts and Culture. 2002. *Curriculum policy: primary and secondary schools*. Secretary's Circular No. 3. Harare: Government of Zimbabwe..

- Ministry Of Primary and Secondary Education (2015-2022) Family and Religious Studies Syllabus Form 1-4, Harare: Curriculum Development Unit
- Ministry Of Primary and Secondary Education (2015-2022) Family And Religious Studies Syllabus Form 5-6, Harare: Curriculum Development Unit
- Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. 2015. Family and Religious Studies Syllabus (2015–2022). Accessed March 25, 2020. Retrieved from <http://mopse.co.zw/sites/default/files/public/syllabus/FAMILY%20AND%20RELIGIOUS%20STUDIES.pdf>
- Modipa, T.I. 2014. *An Analysis of the Implementation of the Policy on Religion and Education in Schools*, Med. Dissertation: University of Pretoria:
- Mohanasundaram, K. 2018. Curriculum Design and Development, *Journal of Applied and Advanced Research*, Vol 3 Supplement 1. Accessed on 02 July 2019 from <https://dx.doi.org/10.21839/jaar.2018.v3S1.156>
- Mokotso, R.I. 2017. *Religious pluralism for Inclusive Education in Lesotho Secondary Schools*, PhD Thesis: University of Free State
- Moore, B. and Habel, N.C. 1982. *When Religion Goes To School: Typology Of Religion In The Classroom*, Pennsylvania: South Australian College of Advanced Education
- MoPSE. 2015. *Zimbabwe Curriculum Review 2015-2022*, Harare: Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.
- Morris, P. and Scott, I. 2003. Educational Reform and Policy Implementation in Hong Kong, *Journal of Education Policy* 18 (1). 71-84
- Moyo, A. 1983. *The Teaching of Religious Education in Primary Schools*. The Bulletin of the Associate College Centre, Vol. 19 (2) pp.101-104.
- Moyo, L and Hadebe, L.B 2018. Education Challenges Affecting Research And Skilful Teaching-Learning Pedagogies in Zimbabwe, *European Journal of Alternative Education Studies* 3 (1).
- Moyo, R. 1993. Biculturalism, Race and the Bible, *Religious Education*, Vol. 88:3 summer 93, pp.415-4.
- Mufanechiya, T. 2015. *Community Participation in Curriculum Implementation in Zimbabwean Primary School*, PhD Thesis, UNISA



- Muhamba, S. 2020. *The development of Religious Education in Secondary schools in Zimbabwe in Response to Pluralism*, M.A Thesis. University of Cape Town.
- Mungazi, D.A. 1991. *Colonial education for Africans: George Stark Policy in Zimbabwe*, New York: Praeger.
- Munikwa, S., 2011. Analysis of the current Zimbabwe's secondary Two Pathway Education Curriculum. *Journal of Innovative Research in Education*, Vol 1(1) pp.2-35. 13
- Museka, G. 2012. Exorcising the Colonial Jinx. Towards Reconciling Diversity and Pedagogy in Zimbabwe Religious Education Curriculum. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol 5(1) pp.55-68.
- Muzambi, P. 2018. Cultural Alienation and Violence in Zimbabwean Politics: Some Lessons from the Ngozi Phenomenon. In Masitera, E. and Sibanda, F. (eds). *Power in Contemporary Zimbabwe*, London: Routledge. Pp. 121–134.
- Muzambi, P. 2018. *Cultural alienation and violence in Zimbabwean politics: Some lessons from the ngozi phenomenon*, London: Routledge
- Mwamwenda, T.S 2004. *Educational Psychology: An African perspective*, Cape Town: Heinemann Publishers private limited.
- Mwesigwa, F. 2003. *Religious Pluralism and Conflict as Issues in Religious Education in Uganda*. PhD Thesis, Leeds University.
- Ndawi, O. and Maravanyika, O. 2011. Curriculum and Its Building Blocks: Concepts and Processes, Gweru: Mambo press.
- Ndlovu, L. 1999. *New Developments in Multi-faith Religious Education in Zimbabwe*. Paper Presented to Religious Education Panel Workshop. 10 April 1999. Harare.
- Ndlovu, L. 2004 *Religious education in Zimbabwe secondary schools. The quest for multi-faith approach*. Master's Thesis. Pretoria: UNISA.
- Ndlovu, L. 2013. Religious Education Teaching in Zimbabwe Secondary Schools: The Search for an Authentic Value-Oriented Multi-faith Religious Education Pedagogical Model. *British Journal of Religious Education*, Vol 36 (2) pp. 174–201.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2007. Re- thinking the Colonial Encounter in Zimbabwe in the early twentieth century, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 33 no1 p.173-191.

- Nelson, J, and Yung, Y. 2021. World religions in Religious Education in Northern Ireland: Policy implementation analysis strategic action field theory, *Religion and Education*, Vol. 49 (1) pp.1-21.
- Nembaware, L. 2018. *Re: Complaints about Family and Religious Studies 6074/1 Content and Evaluations. Zimbabwe School Examinations Council*. Letter, November 5, 2018.
- Netland, H. 2001. *Encountering Religious Pluralism: the challenge of Christian Faith and Mission*, Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity press
- Ngwenya, V.C. 2019. Curriculum Implementation Challenges Encountered In Primary School Teachers In Bulawayo Metropolitan Province, *Zimbabwe. Africa Education Review*, Vol. 17 (3) pp.1-19.
- Njoku, N.C and Njoku, D.I. 2015. Challenges to Effective Implementation of Christian Religious Studies Curriculum: A Critique Study of Secondary School Pupils in Ebonyi State of Nigeria, *Journal of Education and Practice*, Volume 6 no 18 p.176-180.
- Nkomazana, F and Setume, S.D. 2016. Missionary Colonial Mentality and the Expansion of Christianity in Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1800 to 19001 *Journal for the Study of Religion* 29, pp.29 - 55
- Nondo. S. J. (Editor) .1991. *Muiti-faith Issues and Approaches in Religious Education with Special Reference to Zimbabwe*. Utrecht Utrecht University.
- Nord, W. 1995. *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.Find this resource:
- Ntho-Ntho J. and Neiuwehuis, M. 2010. Religious Intolerance: The Case of Principles in Multi-Faith Schools, *Journal for the Study of Religions*, Vol 29 (1) pp.167-186
- Nyame-Asiamah, F and Patel, N. 2009. Research Methods and Methodologies for Studying organisational learning, *Journal of Proceedings of the European and Mediterranean Conference on Information Systems*, EMCIS
- Nziramasanga, C.T. 1999. *Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training*, Harare: Government Printers
- Okai, A.U. 2010. *History Methods*. Lagos. National Open University of Nigeria.

- Olupona, J.K. 1992. The Dynamics of Religion and Interfaith Dialogue in Nigeria. In: Olupona, J.K. (ed.). *Religion and Peace in Multi-Faith Nigeria*. Nigeria: Awolo University.
- Onsongo, J. 2002. The Life Approach Method in Teaching Christian Religious Education in Secondary Schools. *The Eastern Africa Journal of Humanities and Science* Vol 1(1) pp.1-10
- Owusu, M and Danso, S.A. 2014. Teachers' Use of Life Themes Pedagogy in Christian Religious Studies: A Survey of Senior High Schools in Brong Ahafo Region, Ghana, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 4, No. 11
- Ozga, J. and Jones, R. 2006. Travelling and Embedded policy: The case of Knowledge Transfer, *Journal of Educational Policy* 21 (1):1-17.
- Pain, E. 1982. Developing a World Religions course. In: Jackson, R. (ed.). *Approaching World Religions*. London: John Murray.
- Palys, T. 2008. Purposive Sampling in L.M. Given, (ed), *The Sage Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods* vol 2. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, pp. 697-698.
- Parsons, J.B. and Harding, K.J. (2011). Post-Colonial Theory and Action Research. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Enquiry*, April, 2(2).
- Patton, M. 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Pedzisai, C., Tsvere, M and Nkhonde, M. 2014. The Zimbabwe Two Pathway Education Curriculum: Insights into Policy Implementation Challenges and Opportunities, *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences* Vol. 3, No. 5. [www.garph.co.uk](http://www.garph.co.uk).
- Phillips, J.A. 2008. *HQOE 1 Fundamentals of Curriculum, Instruction and Research in Education*, Open University Malaysia: Centre for Instructional Design and Technology
- Piaget, J. 1977. *The development of thought: Equilibration of cognitive structures*. New York, NY: Viking.
- Potgieter, C. 2004. Stigmatisation of termination of pregnancy provider in State Hospitals, Durban University of Technology.

- Prinsloo, P. 2008. *A Critical Evaluation of the South African Policy on Religion and Education*, PhD Thesis, Pretoria: UNISA.
- Punch, K. 2005. *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Approaches* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). London: Sage Publications.
- Pwiti, G. and Ndoro, W. 1999. The Legacy of Colonialism: Perceptions of the Cultural Heritage in Southern Africa, with Special Reference to Zimbabwe, *African Archaeological Review*. Vol. 16,
- Ramose, M.B. 1986. *A History Denied: African Philosophy and Social Organisations*. A Paper Presented at the University of Amsterdam. 1 September 1986.
- Ramparsad, R. 2001. A Strategy for Teacher Involvement in curriculum development, *South African Journal of Education*, Vol 21 (4). Doi:10.4314/saje.v21i4.24917
- Ratele, K. 2006. Postcolonial African methods and interpretation. In Terre Blanche, M., Durrheim, K. and Painter, D. (Eds.). *Research in Practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 538-556.
- Reece, I and Walker, S. 2003. *Teaching, Training and Learning: A Practical Guide*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, London: Business Education Publishers Limited.
- Reimers, F. and McGinn, N. 1997. *Using Research to shape Education Policy around the World*. Westport, Conn: Praeger.
- Reis, S. 2018. Curriculum reform: Why? When? What? How? And how will we know it works? *Journal of Health Policy Research* Vol. 7(30) pp. 2-4.
- Remenyi, D. William, B. Money, A. and Swartz E. 2003. *Doing research in business and Management: An Introduction to process and method*, London: Sage.
- Report of the Hadfield Commission. 1925. Salisbury: Government Printers.
- Rizvi, F., Lingard, B. and Lavia, J. 2006. Postcolonialism and education: negotiating a contested terrain. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 14(3), 249-262.
- Robb, M. 2003. An Outline and Assessment of the Significance of the "Confessional" Model of Religious Education. *British Journal of Religious Education*, Volume: 26, Issue: 1,
- Rosca, M. 2018. From exclusivism to inclusivism: A Reflection on European Religious Minorities, *The age of human rights Journal*, 10pp139-158. Doi:10.17561/tahrj.n10.7

- Rudge, D. 1998. 'I Am Nothing'--Does It Matter? A Critique of Current Religious Education Policy and Practice in England on behalf of the Silent Majority. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 20, 155-165.
- Ruzvidzo, C. 2017. *Spare a Thought for the Rural Learner in the New Curriculum*. Accessed on 17 November 2020, <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/spare-a-thought-for-the-rural-learner-in-the-new-curriculum/>.
- Ryan, M. 2006. *Religious Education in Catholic School*, Melbourne. VIC: David Lovell Publishing.
- Rymarz, R. 2003. Texts, Texts! An overview of some religious education textbooks and other resources used in Catholic Schools from the 1950s to 1970. *Journal of Religious Education*, 51 (1) 50-57.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. 2007. *Research Methods for Business Students*. 4th Edition, Financial Times Prentice Hall, Edinburgh Gate, Harlow
- Sayed and Jansen. 2001. *Implementing Educational Policies: The South African Experience*, Cape Town: Juta and Company Ltd
- Segal, R. 1989. *Religion and the social sciences: Essays on the confrontation*, Atlanta: Scholar Press
- Shiundu, J. S. and Omulando, S. D., 1992. *Curriculum Theory and Practice in Kenya*. Oxford University Press, Nairobi.
- Shizha, E. and Kariwo, M.T. 2011. *Post-Colonial Curriculum in Education and Development in Zimbabwe*, Pretoria: Africa institute of South Africa p.79-89.
- Shumbayaonda, W.T 2015. *A Guide to School Experiences*, Harare: Zimbabwe Open University Module.
- Sibanda, F. 2012. The Impact of Rastafari Ecological Ethic in Zimbabwe: A Contemporary Discourse. *Journal of Pan African Studies* Vol. 5 (3) pp. 59–76.
- Sibanda, F. 2018. "The legality of witchcraft allegations In Colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe" in *Religion, Law and Security in Africa* (Ed Green MC, Gunn TJ and Hill M), Stellenbosch: Conf-RAP

- Siemens, G.2004. *Connectivism: A Learning Theory for a Digital Age*. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, Vol 2, 1:pp. 3 - 10.
- Sims, S., and Jerrim, J. 2022. *Traditional and progressive orientations to teaching: new empirical evidence on an old debate* (CEPEO Working Paper No. 22-08). Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities, UCL.  
<https://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:ucl:cepeow:22-08>
- Singh, B.R. 1986. *The phenomenological approach to religious education for a multi society*. London: Macmillan
- Skeie, G. 1995. Plurality and pluralism: a challenge for religious education, *British Journal of Religious Education*. Vol. 25(1) pp. 47-59.
- Skeie, G. 2002. The concept of plurality and its meaning for religious education, *British Journal of Religious Education*. 25(2) pp. 47-5.
- Skeie, G. 2012. *Education between Formation and Knowledge – A Discussion Based On Recent English and Nordic Research in Religious Education*, *Utbildning and Lärande* , Vol 6.
- Skinner, B.F. 1974. *About Behaviourism*. United Kingdom: Vintage Books
- Smart, N. 1968. *Secular Education and the logic of Religion*, London: Faber.
- Smart, N. 1975. *An exploration of Religion and Education*, *Education and Pluralism* Vol 1 No 2, pp.99-105.
- Smart, N. 1984. *The Scientific Study of Religion in its Plurality*. *Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion*: The humanities, 365.
- Smith, D.L and Lovat, T.J. 2003. *Curriculum: Action And Reflection Revised*, Wentworth Falls: Social Science Press.
- Smock. D.2005. *Teaching about the religious other*, united states institute of Peace, Special Report 143, [www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org)
- Sowing and Reaping. 1948. *The Story of the Work of God in Rhodesia, 1898 - 1948*. Salisbury: WT Neshan.

- Spillane, J.P., Reiser, B.J. and Reimer, T. 2002. Policy Implementation and Cognition: Reframing And Refocusing Research, *Review Of Educational Research* Vol, 72(3) pp. 387-431.
- Stenhouse, L. 1979. *Curriculum Research and Development in Action*, London: Heinemann.
- Strenski, I. 1990. Four Theories Of Myth In Twentieth-Century: Cassirer, Aliade, Levi-Strauss and Malinowski, *Journal of Religious Studies* 26 (4).pp.548-550
- Strihan, A. 2010. A Religious Education Otherwise? An Examination and Proposed Interruption of Current British Practice. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 44, 23-44
- Svensson, J. 2007. HIV/AIDS and Islamic religious education in Kisumu, Kenya. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, Vol 2 pp.179 -192.
- Swann, M. 1985. *Education for All: A Brief Guide*, London: Her majesty's Stationery office.
- Taba, H. 1962. *Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice*; Harcourt, Brace and Wald New York
- Taiwo O.1998. Exorcising Hegel's Ghost: Africa's Challenge to Philosophy, *African Studies Quarterly* 1, 4. pp.3-16.
- Tan, C. 2008. The Teaching of Religious Knowledge in a Plural Society: The Case for Singapore, *International Review of Education*, 54(2), 175-191.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11159-007-9074-8>
- Tanner, D and Tanner, L. 1980. *Curriculum Development: Theory into Practice*, Columbus, OH: Merrill.
- Teece, G. 2010. *A Religious Approach to Religious Education. The Implication of John Hicks' Religious Interpretation of Religion for Religious Education*. PhD Thesis, Birmingham: University of Birmingham
- Ter Haar, G., Moyo, A. and Nondo, S.J. 1992. *African Traditional Religions in Religious Education: A Resource Book with Special Reference to Zimbabwe*, Utrecht:, University of Utrecht. [www.religiouspopulation.com/africa](http://www.religiouspopulation.com/africa)
- The Chronicle of 1 September 2000. *Religion must be optional*.

- The Newsday of 5 February 2018, “*Teachers fume over new curriculum textbooks*”. Retrieved from [www.newsday.co.zw](http://www.newsday.co.zw)
- The Sunday Mail of 12 February 2017. *Rural schools left behind in new curriculum*. Retrieved from [www.sundaymail.co.zw](http://www.sundaymail.co.zw)
- The Sunday Mail of 12 February 2018. *We Don’t Plan to Fail on New Curriculum: Religious Studies, Mother-Tongue Issues Cleared*. Retrieved from [www.sundaymail.co.zw](http://www.sundaymail.co.zw)
- The Sunday Mail of 13 May 2018, “*New curriculum text books scarce*”. Retrieved from [www.sundaymail.co.zw](http://www.sundaymail.co.zw)
- The Sunday News of 12 February 2017 ‘*Criticism of new curriculum based on misinformation – Ministry: Maths, Science to be taught in English from Grade 3: Religious Studies still part of curriculum*’. Retrieved from [www.sundaynews.co.zw](http://www.sundaynews.co.zw)
- Thomas, M. 1982. *Religious Education in a Multi-ethnic Comprehensive School in Approaching World Religions*, London: John Murray.
- Thompson, P. 2004. *Whose confession? Which tradition?* British Journal of Religious Education, Volume: 26, Issue: 1, pp. 61-72
- Torjman, S. 2005. What is Policy? Caledon Institute of Social policy, Retrieved from [www.caledoninst.org](http://www.caledoninst.org). Accessed on 12 July 2021.
- Tshuma, R. and Mafa, O. 2013. ‘Research Designs ‘in Tichapondwa, S.M (ed), *Preparing your Dissertation at a Distance: A Research Guide.*’. Vancouver: Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth.
- Tuckman, B. 1972. *Conducting Educational Research*, New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Tyler, R.W. 1949. *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, Chicago, Illinois, University of Chicago Press
- Ubah, C.N. 1988. Religious Change among Ibgo during the colonial period, *Journal of Religion in Africa* XVII, 1.



- UNESCO. 2014. *Mutual respect and Tolerance for others must be raised by all*, UN Secretary General Assembly Forum on the Culture of peace. Retrieved from [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org). Accessed on 21 April 2022.
- Viruru, R. (2005). The impact of postcolonial theory on early childhood education. *Journal of Education*, 35, 7-29.
- Watson, J. 2004. 'Educating for citizenship: the emerging relationship between religious Education and citizenship education, *British Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 26 (3) pp.259-271.
- Weightman, S. 1982. Realisation and Religious Education. In: Jackson, R. (ed.). *Approaching World Religions*. London: John Murray.
- Wheeler, D.K. 1978. *Curriculum Process*, London, University of London Press
- White, D. 1996. *Breathing life into RE Classroom*, Buthurst: Catholic Education Office.
- White, D. 2004. *Pedagogy-The missing Link in Religious Education: Implications of Brian based learning theory for the development of a pedagogical framework in Religious education*, PhD Thesis, Australia: Australian Catholic University.
- Wiebe, D. 1990. *The Irony of Theology and the nature of Religious Thought*, McGill: Queens Univesity press.
- Willaime, J.P. (ed). 2007. *Religion and Education in Europe. Developments, Contexts and Debates*, Waxmann.
- Wiredu, K. 1998. *The concept of truth in the Akan in Emmanuel chukwudu African Philosophy: An Anthology*, Oxford: Routledge
- Wiredu, K.2003. *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell
- Wolcott, H.F.1994.*Transforming Qualitative Data Description, Analysis and Interpretation*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Woodward, P. 1982. Multi-faith Teaching in Creative Classroom. In Jackson, R. (ed). *World Religions in Education: Approaching World Religion*, London: John Murray Publishers, pp. 36–52.

- Wray, D. 2010. Approaches to Learning: Behaviourism, Constructivism and Social Constructivism. In Arthur, J and T Cremin (eds): *Learning to Teach*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Wright, A. 1993. *Religious Education in the Secondary School: Prospects for Religious Literacy*, London, David Fulton Publishers.
- Wright, A. 2001. *Spirituality and Education*, London, Routledge/Falmer.
- Wright, A. 2004a. The Politics of Multiculturalism: A review of Brian Berry, 2001, Culture and equality: An egalitarian critique of multiculturalism. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 23, 299-311.
- Wright, A. 2004b. *Religion, Education, and Post-modernity*, London: Routledge.
- Wright, A. 2007. Critical Realism as a Tool for the Interpretation of Cultural Diversity in Liberal Religious Education. In: De Souza, M., Durka, G., Engebretson, K., Jackson, R. and McGrady, A. (eds.) *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education*. Berlin: Springer
- Wuthnow, Robert. 2005. *America and the Challenge of Religious Diversity*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Yusuf, H. O. 2013. Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Religious Tolerance through Supplementary Readers and Reading Comprehension Passages in Basic Education Curriculum. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol. 3 (8) pp. 224– 232.
- Zimbabwe Government. 2006. *Ministry of Education Sports Art and Culture. Directors Policy Circular Number P 77 of 2006*. Harare, Government Printers.
- ZIMSEC November 2018. Advanced Level Family and Religious Studies Paper 1, Indigenous religion and Judaism, Harare: ZIMSEC
- ZIMSEC November 2019. Advanced Level Family and Religious Studies Paper 1, Indigenous religion and Judaism, Harare: ZIMSEC
- ZIMSEC November 2019. Advanced Level Family and Religious Studies Paper 2, Christianity and Islam, Harare: ZIMSEC

- Zindi, F. and Makotore, S. 2015. *Educational Psychology*, Harare: ZOU
- Zivave, W. 2019. *A Practical Approach to Family and Religious Studies form 4*, Harare: Secondary Book Press.
- Zivave, W. 2022. Lies, Fears and the scandals of Missionaries: Contesting Christian Conceptions about God in Africa in Nhemachena Artwell, Mtapuri Oliver and Mawere Munyaradzi (Ed) *Sovereignty Becoming Pulvereignty: Unpacking The Dark Side Of Slave 4.0 With Industry 4.0 In Twenty First Century Africa*, Bamenda: Langaa research and publishing CIG.
- Zivave, W. and Mhute, I. 2020. Misunderstanding and Misgiving Indigenous Knowledge System: A Critique of the Challenges of the Updated Zimbabwean Religious Studies Curriculum in *Education in Africa*, Nova Science Publishers INC: New York
- Zivave, W. and Muzambi, P. 2022. Religious Studies Syllabus: Suspicion, Fears and Misgivings in Dube Edmore and Muzambi Prosper (Ed) *Religious Practice in Pluralist Zimbabwe: Identity, Gender and the Environment*, Braamfontein: UNISA
- Zivave, W. Muzondo, G. Sidhuna and Takabvirakare, C. 2019. *A Practical approach to Family and Religious Studies Form 3*, Harare: Secondary Book Press.
- Zivave, W., Mazuruse, M. and Shoko A.B. 2020. An Exploration Of Gender Representation In The Family And Religion Updated O' Level Syllabus, *Journal of New Vision in Educational Research (JoNVER)*. Retrieved from [gzu.ac.zw](http://gzu.ac.zw). Accessed on 21 July 2021
- Zvobgo, R. J. 1981. African Education in Zimbabwe: the colonial inheritance of the New State, 1899-1979, *Zambezia*, Volume 11 No 3 p.13-16
- Zvobgo, R. J. 1996a. *Transforming Education the Zimbabwean Experiences*, Bulawayo, Belmont
- Zvobgo, R. J. 2004. *Reflections on Zimbabwe's Search for a Relevant Curriculum*. The Dyke 1: 70 – 79.
- Zvobgo, R.J. 1994. *Education in Zimbabwe-Colonialism and Education in Zimbabwe*, Harare, SAPES Books.
- Zvobgo, R.J. 1996b. *The State, Ideology and Education*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Zvobgo, R.J. 1998. *The post-colonial state and educational reform*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.



## APPENDIX 1 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RELIGIOUS STUDIES TEACHERS

Dear Sir/Madam

This questionnaire is designed to collect information on Policy Implementation and Challenges on the 2017 updated Religious Studies Curriculum now known as Family and Religious Studies (FRS) in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools. The aim of this research study is to establish your views and ideas on new policy framework for Family and Religious Studies and its challenges. I kindly request you to participate in this research by completing the questionnaire by inserting your answers in the boxes and spaces provided. Your response will be used for research purposes and is confidential.

*May you please tick whether you agree or disagree to respond to this questionnaire.*

Yes ☐ No ☐

#### Section A

Insert a tick (✓) in the appropriate box and explanations on the spaces provided.

##### 1. sex

Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Age 20-25 ☐ 26-30 ☐

##### 3. Level of education

Certificate/Diploma ☐

Bachelor's Degree ☐

Master's Degree ☐

Doctoral Degree ☐

##### 4. Highest Religious Studies qualification

O' Level ☐

'A' Level ☐

Certificate/ Diploma ☐

Bachelor's Degree ☐

Master's Degree ☐

Doctoral Degree ☐

5. At what level do you teach the updated Religious Studies subject?

Z.J.C ☐ O'Level ☐ A level ☐

6. At what level do you teach the Religious Studies component?

ZJC ☐ O'Level ☐ A level ☐

## SECTION B

1. Do you understand the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum?

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neutral ☐

Explain your choice

.....  
.....  
.....

2. Do you know anything about policy implementation of the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum?

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neutral ☐

Explain your choices

.....  
.....  
.....

3. Do you agree that the updated Religious Studies policy has gaps?

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neutral ☐

Explain the reasons for your choice

.....  
.....

- .....
- .....
4. Which is the correct Religious Studies curriculum design and approach; the Top-bottom, The Bottom-Up or both in the promotion of inclusivism, tolerance and plurality?

Top-bottom ☐

Bottom-up ☐

Both ☐

Explain the reasons for your choice

- .....
- .....
- .....
5. How do you rate the curriculum review of 2017 Religious Studies?

Good ☐

Bad ☐

No knowledge ☐

Explain the reasons for your choice

- .....
- .....
- .....
6. Do you think there are some reasons for Religious Studies curriculum reform in Zimbabwe?

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neutral ☐

Specify reasons

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
7. Do you think the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum is being implemented smoothly?

Yes ☐

No ☐

No Knowledge ☐

Explain the reasons for your choice

.....

.....

.....

8. Are there challenges in the implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum?

Many challenges ☐

Few challenges ☐

No challenges ☐

Explain the reasons for your choice

.....

.....

.....

9. Do you agree or disagree that there are some challenges affecting the effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean secondary schools?

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neutral ☐

Explain the reasons for your choice

.....

.....

.....

10. What is the best pedagogical approach to Religious Studies?

Confessional approach ☐

Multi-faith approach ☐

Phenomenological approach ☐

Spiritual approach ☐

Life Theme approach ☐

Justify your answer.

.....

.....

.....



11. Are there appropriate learning theories which suit the Zimbabwean Religious Studies curriculum?

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neutral ☐

Explain the reasons for your choice

.....  
.....  
.....

12. Do you agree or disagree that the current policy should be implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies in Zimbabwe?

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neutral ☐

Explain your answer

.....  
.....  
.....

13. Are there problems associated with the current policy on the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies curriculum?

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neutral ☐

Explain your answer

.....  
.....  
.....

14. Does the Religious Studies curriculum promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality?

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neutral ☐

Explain your answer

.....

.....

.....

15 Are there solutions to the challenges facing effective implementation of the updated Religious Studies curriculum in order to promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality?

Agree

Disagree

Neutral

Explain your choice

.....

.....

.....

16. Do you think Religious Studies curriculum review is of national value in promoting the demands of the New Constitution like tolerance, inclusivism and plurality?

Agree

Disagree

Neutral

Explain your answer

.....

.....

.....

.....

17. Is there any supervision done to assess the updated Religious Studies policy implementation in secondary schools?

Agree

Disagree

Neutral

Justify your answer

.....

.....

.....

.....

18. Does the Religious Studies summative assessment promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality?

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neutral ☐

Give reasons

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

19. Is the currently available learning material relevant to the needs of the updated Religious Studies curriculum objectives?

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neutral ☐

Justify your choice

.....  
.....

**Thank you for participating in this research.**

## **APPENDIX 2 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS**

1. What comes to your mind when you hear about the New Curriculum Framework?
2. What is your understanding of curriculum reform in Religious studies?
3. Why has Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe undergone reform?
4. Were the teachers involved in Religious studies curriculum planning and designing? If no-why?
5. How was the Religious Studies curriculum disseminated to teachers?
6. What do you understand by the term policy?
7. What are the policy guidelines for Religious Studies and how does influence your teaching practice?
8. Which policies should be implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe?
9. To what extent do teachers adhere to the new reform policies of Religious Studies in your teaching practice?
10. What is the problems associated with the current policy on education in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies?
11. To what extent is the current Religious Studies curriculum relevant in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality?
12. What are the pedagogical approaches and philosophical approaches to Religious Studies in Zimbabwean secondary schools?
13. Which new teaching approaches have you adopted in response to the 2017 updated Religious studies curriculum?
14. How would you characterize your teaching style? Confessional, multi-faith, hybrid, life-theme approach?
15. Do you have other challenges in the teaching of Religious studies? Specify these challenges.
16. Suggest the best ways of addressing challenges affecting the updated Religious Studies curriculum in secondary schools.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!**

### **APPENDIX 3 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS INSPECTORS**

2. What comes to your mind when you hear about the New Curriculum Framework?
3. What is your understanding of curriculum reform in Religious studies?
4. Why has Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe undergone reform?
5. Were the teachers involved in Religious studies (FRS) curriculum planning and designing?  
If no-why?
6. How was the Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum disseminated to teachers?
7. What do you understand by the term policy in relation to education?
8. Is there any policy which guides the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies put in place by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education? Support with minutes and circulars?
9. Are you an expert in the field of Religious Studies (FRS)? If no-how do you supervise the subject in schools?
10. Is there any supervision of policy implementation in schools? How often do you supervise Religious Studies (FRS) teachers?
11. In your own opinion, why are some Religious Studies teachers and schools not willing to adhere to the updated Religious Studies (FRS) policy?
12. What are the problems associated with the current policy on education in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies?
13. In your opinion, what are the challenges in the teaching of Religious Studies in secondary schools? Specify these challenges.
14. Suggest the best ways of addressing challenges affecting the updated Religious Studies curriculum in secondary schools.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!**

#### **APPENDIX 4 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ZIMSEC OFFICIAL**

1. What is your understanding of curriculum reform in Religious studies?
2. Why has Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe undergone reform?
3. What do you understand by the term policy?
4. Which policies should be implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of Religious Studies in Zimbabwe?
5. What are the problems associated with the current policy on education in the teaching and learning of Religious Studies?
6. To what extent is the current Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum relevant in promoting inclusivism, tolerance and plurality?
7. Does the current summative assessment in FRS promote inclusivism, tolerance and plurality? Explain how.
8. Do you have other challenges in the summative assessment of the updated Religious Studies (FRS) in secondary education? Specify these challenges.
9. In your opinion, what are the challenges to the teaching and learning of the updated Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum?
10. Suggest the best ways of addressing challenges affecting the updated Religious Studies (FRS) curriculum in secondary schools.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!**

## APPENDIX 5

### INFORMED CONSENT

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree out of my free will to participate in this research topic: **“A critical assessment of the challenges encountered in implementing the Updated Religious Studies Curriculum in Zimbabwe secondary schools”**. I understand that the information that I will share will be used for research purposes only and that nowhere will my identity be made known in any research report/publication. I am also aware of the fact that I can withdraw at any time during the study without incurring any penalty.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of research participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Hwange Teachers college  
P.O.BOX 153  
Old Thomas coulter Road  
Hwange

21 July 2022

The Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE)  
P.O.BOX CY121  
CUASEWAY  
HARRARE

Dear Sir or Madam

**RE: APPLICATION FOR A PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH IN  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN HWANGE DISTRICT IN MATABELELAND NORTH.**

I am applying for permission to conduct an academic research in 12 secondary schools in Hwange District in Matabeleland North province. My research topic is **“A critical assessment of the challenges encountered in implementing the Updated Religious Studies Curriculum in Zimbabwe secondary schools”**.

I am anticipating a favourable reply from you.

Yours sincerely

Wilson Zivave



**APPENDIX 7: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH REQUEST FOR  
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY**



**Request for permission to conduct research at Zimbabwean secondary schools**

Research title: **A critical assessment of the challenges encountered in implementing the Updated Religious Studies Curriculum in Zimbabwe secondary schools .**

Year: **2022**

To whom: **Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education P. O. Box CY121 CAUSEWAY, HARARE**

Position: **Permanent secretary**

Dear Sir/Madam

I am applying for permission to conduct an academic research at Zimbabwean secondary schools particularly in Matabeleland region. I am a registered student at UNISA (University of South Africa) doing PhD in Religious Studies and the topic of my research is “Towards Religious Inclusivism, Tolerance and Plurality: A Critique of Policy Implementation and Challenges on the 2017 updated Religious Studies curriculum in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools”.

I hope my application will be positively considered

Yours sincerely

Wilson Zivave



## APPENDIX 7 PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM PERMANENT SECRETARY IN THE MINISTRY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

*All communications should be addressed to  
"The Secretary for Primary & Secondary Education  
Telephone: 794895  
Telegraphic address:  
"EDUCATION"*



**Reference: C/426/3**  
Ministry of Primary and  
Secondary Education  
P.O Box CY 121  
Causeway  
**HARARE**

4 August 2022

Zivave Wilson  
Hwange Teachers College  
P.O.Box 153  
Old Thomas Coulter Road  
Hwange

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH IN MATEBELELAND NORTH PROVINCE: HWANGE DISTRICT: GEBUZA, HWANGE, HWANGE GOVERNMENT, CHILISA, NECHILIBI, DETEMA, DAMBA, KALOPE, MOSI OA TUNYA, MARIST BROTHERS, AND NESHISHALA HIGH SCHOOLS.**

**"TOWARDS RELIGIOUS INCLUSIVISM, TOLERANCE, AND PLURALITY: A CRITIQUE OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES ON THE 2017 UPDATED RELIGIOUS CURRICULUM IN ZIMBABWEAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS."**

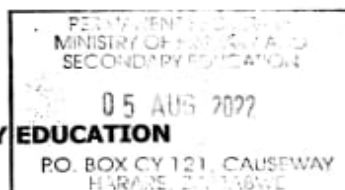
Permission is hereby granted. However, you are required to liaise with the Provincial Education Director Matebeleland North Province, who is responsible for the schools in which you want to involve in your research. You should ensure that your research work does not disrupt the normal operations of the school. Where students are involved, parental consent is required.

You must provide a copy of your final report to the Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M/s T. Thabela'.

M/s T. Thabela

**SECRETARY FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**



## APPENDIX 8 PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR

*All communications should be addressed to  
"The Provincial Education Director"  
Tele-Fax: 67574  
E-mail: matnorth12@gmail.com*



Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
Matabeleland North Province  
P O Box 555  
Bulawayo  
Zimbabwe

22 August 2022

University of South Africa  
Box 392 UNISA  
South Africa

Attention: Wilson Zivave      Reg NO 53309278

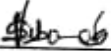
### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRYOUT A RESEARCH PROJECT: HWANGE DISTRICT: MATABELELAND NORTH PROVINCE**

Reference is made to your letter dated 22 August 2022, requesting for permission to carry out a research project entitled "*Towards Religious Inclusivism, Tolerance and Plurality: A Critique Of Policy Implementation And Challenges On The 2017 Updated Religious Studies (FRS) Curriculum in Secondary Schools*" at Gebhuza, Hwange Government, Chilisa, NeChilibi, Detema, Damba, Kalope, Mosi - Oa - Tunya, Marist Brothers, and Nechishala High Schools in Hwange District, Matabeleland North Province.

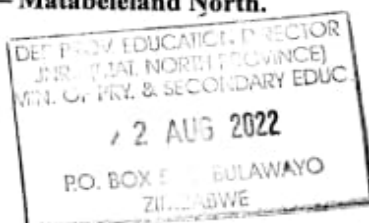
You are hereby granted permission to carry out your research in the above mentioned district. However, your research should not in any way disturb the smooth running of teaching and learning activities in schools.

You will be required to furnish the Province with a copy of your findings after the research.

**NB:** Before proceeding into schools, please ensure that you pass through the District Education Office – Hwange.

  
Sibanda V. (Ms)

Acting Provincial Education Director – Matabeleland North.



## APPENDIX 6: RESEARCHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Hereby, I WILSON ZIVAVE, **Passport Number** , in my personal capacity as a researcher, acknowledge that I am aware of and familiar with stipulations and contents of the

- Unisa Research Policy
- Unisa Ethics Policy
- Unisa IP Policy

and that I shall conform to and abide by these policy requirements.

Signature: 

Date: 04 July 2022